

LOST GOSPELS.

THOSE who affirm and those who deny the trustworthiness of the canonical Gospels will alike admit that their record is imperfect. Nothing can be more certain than that our Gospels do not give the whole narrative, and that there were many, both of the acts and of the words of Jesus, which they do not contain. The last verse of the Fourth Gospel states this, at least as to the acts, most clearly; while a very beautiful and characteristic saying of Jesus, which had escaped the Evangelists, is preserved in the Acts of the Apostles. We need not, therefore, travel beyond the New Testament itself for proof of the fact that there existed in very early times much traditional knowledge of the Founder of Christianity which has not been embodied in the four narratives subsequently recognized as authentic by the Church. These traditions to some extent were passed orally from preacher to hearer, and many of them may have perished with the apostolic generation. But there is evidence that much was committed to writing at a very early date. The very first words of St. Luke prove his acquaintance with a considerable body of evangelic literature; and the earliest Christian writers made use of records which, in some cases certainly, and in others more or less probably, were other than our received Gospels. Without entering upon ground where the orthodox and the heterodox

contend for the mastery, we may take as proved the fact that a very great variety of Gospels, more or less perfect, more or less authentic, more or less fabulous, were current in the first age of the Church. It is also highly probable that, while much or most of this literature deservedly fell into disrepute and perished, some of it contained genuine narratives, which were somehow dropped out of the main current of tradition. It is impossible now to prove that this was so; yet the bare chance that a real saying of Jesus, or an approximately correct narrative of one of his actions, may be preserved in a fragment of a lost Gospel surely makes it worth while to ascertain what those fragments are. If those who have paid no attention to the subject will follow us for a few pages they will probably be convinced that the lost Gospels, or at least one of them, deserve much more attention than they have hitherto received, except at the hands of a few scholars.

First, let us try to understand as well as we may the conditions under which this lost literature came into being. The new religion was carried with great rapidity from city to city, from country to country; but this was done at first, in great part, by men whose knowledge of Christianity was limited to its chief principles, and whose acquaintance with the words and works of Christ was but small. Apollos, we are told, began to preach "knowing only the baptism of John;" and we may infer with something approaching certainty that many went on their way to preach Christ with little knowledge of Him beyond the bare facts that He died and rose from the dead. As soon as the Church began to organize its missionary efforts, the travelling preachers would be furnished with much

oral and probably some written instruction. There is evidence that two brief evangelical records existed in very early times, one of which contained a short summary of the acts, and the other of the discourses or "oracles" of the Lord. It is not improbable that these may have been drawn up in a concise and portable form especially for the use of missionaries, who would treat them as authoritative text, to be amplified verbally from memory. Thus, more or less well furnished, the preachers of the Gospel travelled far and wide; seldom, as it seems, stopping in one place, but founding a Christian community, and then passing on to the same work elsewhere. If this be a tolerably correct account of the way in which Christianity was first spread, it will be evident that many communities had to be content for some time with but a slender stock of information. Their father in the faith stayed no long time with them—months perhaps, or weeks, or possibly only days. During that time he had been chiefly occupied in convincing them of the main truths which he desired to impart; and these would be few and simple. Sometimes he may have left in writing a few anecdotes of the life of Christ; some notes may have been taken of his preaching; or recollections of what he had said may have been written later, when the want of definite records began to be felt, and no new teacher came. In some such way the nucleus of the Gospel of that particular Church would be formed, and might long remain without any addition. Later on some emissary from one of the older Churches would supply fresh matter; or one of their own brethren would travel to Jerusalem, Rome, or Ephesus, and bring back fuller information concerning the words

and works of Christ. But when the Gospel came to be regarded as complete, the stages by which it had grown would soon be forgotten ; it would be jealously guarded as the peculiar possession of that Church, and referred in popular belief to the authority of the first preacher, or to some other name which locally commanded most reverence. Thus in early times almost every Christian community which was in any degree isolated from the rest would have its own Gospel ; or at any rate would keep to the edition of the Gospel which in that region was held in especial regard. Such Gospels would be almost necessarily imperfect, and often heretical, according to the standard of later times. Views which, in their first unformed state, passed current without rebuke came afterwards to be connected with the opinions of declared heretics. Thus an early preacher, who was, or meant to be, quite orthodox, might leave behind him matter which ultimately would be condemned by the Church authorities, and this might linger long unrebuked in remote districts. Thus, and also, perhaps, in consequence of conscious corruptions of the text, it happened that uncanonical Gospels were sooner or later condemned for heresy, and, after a longer or shorter struggle, were disused and dropped out of existence. One instance may be given to shew that this account of the matter is supported by history. A certain Serapion, Bishop of Antioch, visited the Church of Rhossus, in Cilicia, about the year A.D. 200, and found that the Christians of that place used a certain "Gospel according to Peter." The use of this document seems to have caused some searchings of heart to those among the Rhossians who were most anxious for exact ortho-

doxy ; but the bishop, good easy man, assumed that "all were united in a right faith," and, without reading through the local Gospel, gave sentence that "if this is all which seems to give you anxiety, let it be read." But when he returned to Antioch he found that he had been too hasty, and wrote again to the Rhossians to the effect that his attention had been especially drawn to the matter, and heresy had been discovered. The Gospel was then declared to be a forgery, and the bishop announced his speedy return to set the question right. This instance will serve for many. The bishops had much trouble with uncanonical Gospels ; but in the end the episcopal authority prevailed, and the use of the four canonical Gospels became universal in the orthodox Churches.

Enough has perhaps been said to shew the wide difference between these lost Gospels with which we are here concerned and the apocryphal writings which came into existence later. Several of these exist at the present day ; more than enough it may be thought by those who have had the patience to read their ridiculous and sometimes disgusting details. The Prot-evangelium of James seems to be one of the earliest of these ; and Tischendorf thinks that there is nothing in it alien from the spirit of the middle of the second century. Be that as it may, it is no better than a childish forgery, full of absurd and sometimes very unedifying inventions. The Gospel of Thomas represents the infant Jesus as a young god, striking dead the children who interfere with his sports and the master who offers to correct him. The Arabian Gospel describes all manner of prodigies which happened in Egypt, but represents the Divine Infant as

benevolent, until towards the end some of the malicious pranks are borrowed from the narrative to which the name of Thomas was given. Some of these writings undertook to relate the closing events of the life of Christ, basing the narrative upon the Gospel record, and adding further particulars invented by the writer. Of these is the work called the "Acts of Pilate;" and Dr. Sanday, writing recently in *THE EXPOSITOR*, describes this entire class of compositions when he speaks of it as "the earliest perhaps of Christian forgeries." These apocryphal Gospels have some value for scholars, but for our present purpose they have none; for it is certain that wherever they deviate from the canonical narrative their story is pure and late fiction, and we should therefore vainly search among them for any fresh information which might by any possibility be correct. They are therefore to be set aside from the present inquiry, and the rather because it would be in vain to expect readers to take interest in an investigation dealing only with mere forgeries. The claims advanced by many critics in behalf of the lost Gospels allege for them a wholly different value; and it is these that are now to be considered.

Have we, then, anything remaining out of that evangelic literature which grew up in the earliest times; any remnant of the "declaration of those things" which were most surely believed among the men of Luke's time, as set forth by the "many" of whom he speaks; any sayings of Jesus or records of his actions which were believed to be genuine by Christians of the apostolic or sub-apostolic age? No work of this description has come down to us; and of the fragments that remain quoted in the works of later

authors many cannot be assigned with certainty to one rather than to another of the lost Gospels; while in the case of some it is even uncertain whether they may not be merely inaccurate quotations from the canonical writings. We have therefore but little on which to build an argument. Yet if reason can be shewn for thinking that any one or more of the lost Gospels was really valuable, it would be worth while to draw attention to the fact, since the chances of recovery are even yet by no means so small as many may imagine. Let us see, therefore, whether such examples as remain to us, and such further evidence concerning the nature and authenticity of the lost Gospels as is attainable, incline us to encourage search and hope for more matter of the same kind.

The early Christian Writers were in possession of much information concerning the life and sayings of Christ which has not come down to us. Heretical writers had their own Gospels, some of which would be valuable if they were still in existence; but of these we need not speak now. Perfectly orthodox Fathers of the Church cite incidents or sayings which are not in our Gospels. Thus, to take a single instance, Justin, writing in the second century, seems to be as confident that a fire was kindled in Jordan at Christ's baptism as that the Spirit descended in the form of a dove. Besides, some old and important Greek and Latin MSS. have passages of a very curious nature interpolated in their text. It is plain, then, that there was a body of evangelic tradition, whether oral or written, sanctioned by considerable authority, which remains outside the four received Gospels. Very early writers had loose habits of quotation; citing passages from memory and

with little accuracy; and for the most part with no more definite reference than "he says," or, "it is said," or, "the Scripture says." In these cases it must often remain uncertain whether the quotation is taken from our Gospels; or, if the divergence from them is too great to be accounted for by mere inaccuracy, what other source may have been used. Sometimes the name of the authority is given, though occasionally in a form which causes much trouble to critics and apologists. Justin cites the "Memoirs of the Apostles," and whether he means our four Gospels, or three of them, or a different work, is disputed among the learned to this day. Other Fathers refer to the Gospel according to the Egyptians, to the Gospel according to the Twelve Apostles, and so on. With regard to these the greatest uncertainty prevails. We hardly know whether they were really independent works, or editions of the same, or nearly the same Gospel, used in different places; and these doubts are not likely to be cleared up. But there was one Gospel to which most of the extra-canonical fragments and allusions may be more or less certainly referred; the genuine character and even apostolic origin of which is asserted by very high authority, and which, moreover, is, in its entire form, by no means lost beyond chance of recovery. This is the Gospel according to the Hebrews; and those who have sufficient interest to master the contents of a small volume will find all accessible information on the subject in the excellent monograph by Mr. Nicholson.¹ But there are many who will be deterred by the scientific form of this work, and by the

The Gospel according to the Hebrews. By G. B. Nicholson. London: Kegan Paul and Co.

numerous quotations in Greek and Latin, who may like to have the results of the inquiry placed before them in a shorter and simpler form.

It has been already explained how a Christian community, if isolated from others, would often have its peculiar version of the Gospel. But this isolation had sometimes causes other than geographical position. Heretical or even peculiar doctrines might fix a deep gulf between one set of Christians and those in whose midst they lived, or a different language might keep the religious traditions of those who used it apart from those of their neighbours. Now, from very early times there was such a people, living among, yet apart from, other Christians, peculiar in habits, language, and opinions, who for long preserved traditions which once had been almost universal. The name Nazarene, which at first belonged to all Christians, came to be applied to them alone, and with the name they retained the ideas of James and the first Church at Jerusalem, strictly adhering to Jewish rites, and rejecting all things "common and unclean." These traditions they kept unchanged as late as the fifth century, living separate from, yet apparently respected by others; the most in-offensive of heretics, if indeed the main body of them were considered as heretics in any sense. Judaizers of a strict sort, their language, at least among themselves and in the services of religion, was Hebrew; that is to say, the Aramaic dialect then current in Palestine. They had a Gospel of their own in this language, which certainly was very ancient, and may have been brought by them from Jerusalem to Pella; although in that case it probably received subsequent alterations and additions, like other documents of equal antiquity.

However that may have been, their Gospel, after its completion, was carefully preserved. As Greek became the language of most Christians, the Gospel of the Nazarenes was known to others only through report, and was commonly spoken of as the "Gospel according to the Hebrews;" that is, as the version of the Gospel narrative in use among those who were looked upon as Hebrew Christians.

The separation between the Nazarenes and other Christians had a double effect upon this Gospel. As the lava hid the treasures of Herculaneum for ages, but also preserved them to our time in singular perfection, so the solitary life and peculiar language of the Nazarene community kept their Gospel out of general use, but at the same time preserved it from the alterations which it would have undergone had it become current among the whole body of Christians. The small and excessively conservative sect of Nazarenes kept their treasure with jealous care; and there is every reason to suppose that it remained unaltered from a very early time. Had it been written in Greek it would have passed into general use; for until comparatively late there seems to have been no suspicion that it was other than genuine. But then its deviations from the canonical text would have been observed, and it would have been altered to their standard, or suppressed as heretical, unless indeed it had come with sufficient authority to be accepted as a parallel and genuine, though varying, narrative. In fact, however, it was accessible, at least in its purest form, only to the few scholars who could read Aramaic, and had an opportunity of visiting a Nazarene community. It remained therefore untouched and respected, until it

is Matthew xii. 9-14; and in his commentary on the latter passage Jerome tells us that, "in the Gospel which the Nazarenes and Ebionites use," the man with the withered hand speaks thus:

"I was a mason, gaining a living with my hands; I pray thee, Jesus, restore my health, lest I shamefully beg food."

Is it possible that these two passages may have formed part of one incident recorded in the Gospel according to the Hebrews? If we might imagine that the mason used his restored hand for work on the sabbath, under circumstances which left it uncertain whether he was building for charity or for hire, the speech of Jesus as recorded in Codex Bezae would become intelligible. This view seems to be taken by Dr. Abbott in his *Philochristus*, where an imaginary framework is given to this and other incidents from canonical and uncanonical Gospels, seen through which they at once become natural and life-like. We may be allowed in passing to say that this work, though in form a romance, is really a commentary on the Gospels and the Gospel history of very great excellence. With this aspect of it we are not here concerned; but many important fragments of lost Gospels will be found in *Philochristus* fitted into probable places and natural connection by the light touch of genius.

We may now pass in brief review some of the fragments; and, first, those which only probably or possibly belong to the Gospel according to the Hebrews. A saying very frequently quoted by early Christian writers, and referred by most of them to Christ, is this: "Be approved money changers," or "bankers," if, as Mr. Nicholson thinks, that trans-

began to be spoken against as the possession of a sect of doubtful orthodoxy, and in the end disappeared when the Nazarenes themselves had ceased to exist.

An attempt was made to rescue the Gospel according to the Hebrews from this fate, and to place it beside the sacred books of Christians, by the great Biblical scholar Jerome, who for his pains was accused of trying to pass off upon the public a fifth Gospel. It is well known that, towards the end of the fourth century, Jerome undertook and accomplished the work of reducing to order the confused and corrupted manuscripts of the New Testament, especially those known as the Old Latin Versions; and one result of his labours was the Vulgate. He was a good Hebrew scholar, and took peculiar interest in the Gospel preserved by the Nazarenes. Early tradition affirmed that Matthew wrote his Gospel in Hebrew; that is to say, in Aramaic; and for a long time this Gospel according to the Hebrews was held by many to be Matthew's original work. To this view Jerome inclined, and he took the trouble to go to Beroëa, where the Nazarenes were numerous, to examine and copy the manuscript in their possession, and to translate it both into Greek and into Latin. His translations have unhappily been lost, like the original itself; but his opinion of its value is shewn by the trouble he took in the matter.

Those who know what weight to attach to the judgment of Jerome, will perceive the importance of a work which he translated for the general use of Christians. Much additional testimony might be added from Origen and others, but we fear we have already held our readers too long from the main subject. We

must, however, trespass upon their patience for yet a short time before we can give samples of so much as remains of the Gospel according to the Hebrews, since it is necessary first to say something of the sources from whence our information is derived.

The existing fragments are to be divided into two classes. The first consists of those certainly or probably taken from the Nazarene version of this lost Gospel, which are found in the writings of Jerome and certain other Fathers : and four fragments are written in the margin of a manuscript of the New Testament belonging to the ninth century. There is no reason to doubt that these faithfully correspond with the genuine ancient text. But we have also a number of citations which were taken from a different version of this same Gospel ; that, namely, in use among the Ebionites, a heretical sect which had branched off from the Nazarenes. This Ebionite Gospel may have been in Greek ; or at least some copies of it seem to have been written in that language. The heretical Ebionites rejected the doctrine of the Incarnation, and are said to have cut out from the beginning of the Gospel those parts which made against their views, and to have corrupted other passages. Hilgenfeld treats the Ebionite as distinct from the Nazarene Gospel, and even places the "Gospel according to Peter" between the two in point of time ; that is, later than the latter and earlier than the former. It is to be remembered, however, that our knowledge of the Ebionite edition of the Gospel comes from Epiphanius, who was reckless in assertion, careless of verification, and violently prejudiced against heretics. Mr. Nicholson treats the Ebionite Gospel as in the main the same as that of the

Nazarenes, although there is "good reason to charge the Ebionites with altering and interpolating;" and this must be remembered in dealing with the fragments themselves.

But besides these we have in various authorities quotations from an unnamed source, many of which are assigned with more or less probability to the Gospel according to the Hebrews. With one of these, on account of its interest and of its connection with an undoubted fragment of the lost Gospel, we will begin.

In an early and important manuscript of the New Testament, the Codex Bezae, the following passage is inserted immediately after Luke vi. 4:

"On the same day, seeing one working on the sabbath, he saith to him: Man, if thou knowest what thou doest, thou art blessed: but if thou knowest not, thou art cursed, and a transgressor of the law."

This is certainly a striking addition to the text. It can scarcely have belonged to the original Luke; but has rather the appearance of an insertion, taken from an independent narrative. It is easy to imagine that it may have formed part of an authentic record; for the idea conveyed seems to be profound, not alien to the teaching of Christ, and similar to Paul's distinction between observances done or omitted "to the Lord," or through carelessness and indifference. But here we want the context; since much depends upon the work on which the man was engaged. The performance of ordinary business on the sabbath would not be likely to receive commendation from Christ; and if this is intended, the passage cannot be considered genuine. Now the parallel to Luke vi. 6-11

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lation is more exact. This is, of course, an exhortation to test doctrine as dealers in money ring, bite, and assay the coins which pass through their hands.

“He who is near me is near the fire; he who is far from me is far from the kingdom.”

Origen has read this “somewhere, as if from the mouth of the Saviour,” and wishes he could find out whether it is genuine. The saying is at any rate remarkable, and may perhaps be sufficiently explained by the following beautiful fragment :

“Ye shall be as lambs among wolves. Peter answered Him and said : If then the wolves rend the lambs in pieces? Jesus said to Peter : Let not the lambs, after they are dead, fear the wolves. And you, fear not them who kill you, and can do nothing to you. But fear him who, after killing you, has authority over soul and body to cast into the Gehenna of fire.”

The Gospel according to the Hebrews contained, as we know from Papias, the story of the woman taken in adultery, which is now generally admitted to be an interpolation where it stands in our fourth Gospel. We cannot say whether the text as we have it corresponds with that of the lost Gospel, but it may be remarked that Codex Bezae is the oldest manuscript in which that narrative is found, and we have seen reason to think that Codex Bezae may have incorporated in the text another passage from the Gospel according to the Hebrews. The conclusion is not unreasonable that both were introduced from this source.

Passing now to the fragments which are quoted from the Gospel according to the Hebrews by name, we will first notice those of historical interest. They are

too long to give entire, and we will confine ourselves to their most striking peculiarities and contrasts with the canonical text.

The preface to the Gospel is Ebionite, and is of no especial importance, except perhaps for fixing the date, for which purpose it shall be reserved for the present, with two or three other passages. We then come to the account of the Baptism, of which there are several fragments. The first is Ebionite; and alters John's locusts into oil-cake. The reason for this corruption of the text was that the Ebionites were strict vegetarians, and could not endure that the Baptist should eat anything which had been alive. For the same reason, it is said, they altered the words of Christ into these :

"Have I desired with desire to eat this flesh, the passover, with you?" thus changing the earnest wish into a question expressive of dislike and even of loathing. In the Nazarene, that is, the uncorrupted version of the lost Gospel, an interesting dialogue is given between the Lord and his mother, in which she urges baptism for repentance at the hands of John; and He replies :

"In what have I sinned, that I should go and be baptized by him? unless perhaps this very thing which I have said is ignorance."

If we could suppose this passage to be genuine, the reasons for dropping it out of the later orthodox tradition would be obvious enough. Then follows an Ebionite account of the great light which shone round the place, reminding us of Justin's fire in the waters of Jordan, and the descent of "the whole fountain of the Holy Spirit" in the Nazarene Gospel.

The Nazarene had also the question of "Simon, his

disciple," as to the forgiveness of sins ; and this reason for the answer :

" For in the prophets also, after they were anointed with the Holy Spirit, mention of sin was found."

It will be observed that the " young man " of the Gospel narrative has become two rich men in the following narrative, which presents other interesting variations.

" The other of the rich men said to Him : ' Master, what good thing shall I do and live ? ' He said to him : ' Man, keep the law and the prophets. ' He answered Him : ' I have kept them. ' He said to him : ' Go, sell all that thou hast and distribute to the poor ; and come, follow me. ' But the rich man began to scratch his head, and it pleased him not. And the Lord said to him : ' How sayest thou—I have kept the law and the prophets—when it is written in the law, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself ; and lo, many, thy brothers, sons of Abraham, are clad in filth, dying of hunger ; and thy house is full of many goods ; and nothing at all goes out from it to them. ' And He turned and said to Simon his disciple, seated by Him : ' Simon, son of John, it is easier for a camel to enter through the eye of a needle than a rich man into the kingdom of the heavens. ' "

Instead of the rending of the veil of the Temple, it is the " lintel of the Temple of immense size," which was broken in two. Lastly, an appearance of the risen Lord to James the Just is described, James having vowed that he would not eat bread until he had seen Jesus alive again.

There is an evangelic ring about most of these fragments, wholly different from the fictitious productions

of later times, which, if it does not quite justify the opinion of Jerome, yet goes some way towards establishing for this lost Gospel an affinity with the works of the canonical four.

“And be ye never joyful save when ye have looked in love upon your brother” is a saying that might well have been uttered by Christ.

“He that hath marvelled shall reign, and he that hath reigned shall rest” may at first seem rather strange and forced; yet so probably would some of the sayings in our received Gospels, if they were new to us, and stood alone, without the support of the accustomed context. But the more we think of it, the more clearly we shall see that roused attention implies wonder; fixed attention, power; while power, rightly used, ends in rest; and we shall perhaps conclude that this saying is inferior in depth and beauty to few of the recorded words even of Christ.

There is, however, one strange fragment which comes to us from the purest source, and must therefore be accepted as authentic. It is quoted by Origen from the Gospel according to the Hebrews, “where,” he writes, “the Saviour Himself says:”

“Just now my mother the Holy Spirit took me by one of my hairs, and bore me to the great mountain Tabor;” and Jerome also gives it as assigned to Jesus by the same Gospel.

No doubt it is always hazardous to condemn a sentence which has been torn from a lost context; and for its defence as it stands we may refer to Mr. Nicholson's book. We must admit, however, that this passage points very strongly to a later date; and when we take into account the limited number of fragments that

remain, we must consider the possibility that more passages similar to this were to be found in the entire Gospel. Mr. Nicholson, like Baur and others, is in favour of a very early date; and even believes that the Gospel according to the Hebrews may have been written, as tradition records, by Matthew himself. His hypothesis, as he states it, is "that Matthew wrote at different times the canonical Gospel and the Gospel according to the Hebrews, or at least that large part of the latter which was parallel to the former." Of this hypothesis we need only say here that it is modestly put forward, and fortified by illustrations which are valuable in any case. But the existence of such a passage as that last quoted makes, we must think, against his view. In a note to the article "Gospels" in the ninth edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, vol. x., other indications of the later date of the lost Gospel are enumerated; among which are the constantly recurring use of "the Lord" where the earlier canonical writings would have simply "Jesus;" the softening of moral difficulties; the increase of the miraculous element; and the epithet "the Just" added to James. Some of the objections do not appear to us to be of great force, yet there is something in them all. It may perhaps be added that in the preface to the lost Gospel the first place is given to John, which would have been impossible, at least in the times of the Synoptic Gospels. Yet on the most moderate view the great antiquity of the Gospel according to the Hebrews cannot be denied. Hilgenfeld¹ calls it without doubt the most ancient of all the books relating to the New Testament outside the received canon; and if we were

¹ *Novum Testamentum extra Canonem Receptum.*

to venture on a guess, we should be inclined to place it in order of date after our first three and before the fourth Gospel. But, apart from such speculations, it will now, we may hope, be evident that in this Gospel we have lost a very early embodiment of apostolic traditions, which may not improbably have contained genuine words and narratives of Christ unrecorded in the received Gospels. If the Gospel according to the Hebrews grew up amid such a community as we have described, secluded and mildly fanatical, some chaff would be naturally mingled with the wheat; but that grains of true wheat were there the fragments that remain to us testify.

Perhaps some readers may care to turn to the books we have cited, and study the remnants of the Gospel according to the Hebrews, and of other lost or apocryphal Gospels, for themselves. Others, who lack time or inclination for this task, may yet be induced to interest themselves in the recovery of such manuscripts as may still be lying in some Eastern monasteries—in Asia, Egypt, or Abyssinia—forgotten in a corner, or destined at some undetermined period to light a fire and boil a kettle for the monks. Some copies of the translations made by Jerome of the Gospel according to the Hebrews may very possibly yet exist; and we need scarcely point out how important such a discovery would be. It is indeed strange that a people so devoted to the Bible as ourselves should take so little interest in the recovery of Biblical manuscripts that few know how one of the most important was found and saved little more than twenty years ago. If a proper search were made much might be added to the stock of Biblical scholars, and thus indirectly to the

aid and benefit of all readers of the Bible ; much, too, that might be far more important even than an entire copy of the Gospel according to the Hebrews.

M. W. MOGGRIDGE.

THE CONVERSION OF SARAH.

GENESIS XVIII. I-15 ; HEBREWS XI. II.

ABRAHAM is so great a personage, his figure bulks so large and towers so high in our imagination, that his wife is well-nigh lost in the shadow he casts ; and we make little effort to conceive what manner of woman she was, or to enter into her spiritual experience, even if we give her credit for spiritual experiences distinctly her own. And yet Sarah deserves, and will repay, an attentive regard. She was no unworthy mate of one of the greatest of men. If not a perfect woman, she was nevertheless "a woman nobly planned, to warn, to comfort," yes, and "to command." Her very name means "Princess;" and the omen of her name, of the change in it, was abundantly verified. She proved herself to be of a right royal strain, not simply by her splendid personal beauty, nor simply by the air of native authority with which she ruled her household ; but also by her magnanimity, her fidelity, and by the faith in virtue of which St. Peter calls her "the mother of all believers." She had her faults, no doubt, the defects of her qualities. She was jealous, exacting, imperious—as other women and princesses are said to have been. And if we reckon it among her virtues—and this fact is much insisted on in the Sacred Record—that she could laugh—laugh