

does to secure others ; and in like manner when the kingdom of heaven finds a great and capable soul, knowing its value and the glory which may accrue to it from its conversion, it puts forth mightier efforts. And that such is the case, that in those who are capable of doing greater service in the cause of the kingdom of heaven there are greater wrestlings, and resistances of a more strenuous nature, there is ample evidence. To mention no others, the conversions of those already named, St. Paul, Augustine, and Luther, are cases in point.

W. M. METCALFE.

ESAU AND JACOB.

GENESIS XXVII.

IN this Chapter the history of the Brothers is resumed and continued ; and a crisis is reached in which the transference of the Birthright must be plainly and authoritatively allowed or disallowed.

Isaac was ill and to all appearance in extremity. This may be assumed from his own words, and still more from those of Esau (ver. 41), *The days of mourning for my father are at hand* ; and from those of Rebekah, *Why should I be deprived also of you both in one day ?* (ver. 45). And his feebleness is intimated in various circumstances of the narrative. It was therefore his wish, his natural wish, to take leave of his son with the final blessing.

How his intention was frustrated we know. But grave moral questions arise ; and, viewed merely as a study of human nature, the story as we read it is perplexing. How are we to account for an obliquity of principle, or a want of confidence, discreditable to the pious peaceful home of Isaac and Rebekah ? What could make a resort to in-

trigue and personation preferred by the members of such a family to plain dealing and trustful openness? Making every allowance for the possible pressure of circumstances imperfectly known, it may be owned at once that the influence of Eastern habits, usages, maxims, is discernible here. The natives of the East have not as a rule attained to the downright honesty of the West: they have been characterized by flourishes of words without meaning; their standard of truthfulness has been lower. And it is hard for the best men to emancipate themselves from the tyranny of popular and prevalent ideas. This is no plea to excuse deception, but it accounts for it; it lessens our surprise, if it does not qualify our condemnation: moreover, as reasoners have shewn in similar cases, it indicates how such delinquency may exist without so wholly vitiating the character as it does when found among ourselves; how imposture may not be always incompatible, however inconsistent, with many germs of latent good growing side by side with it, and developing eventually into the firmness and fruit of virtue.

Especially it is to be observed that the blame of this intrigue is to be distributed. Jacob's offence is rank. But he is not the sole offender. Nay, it is questionable, more than questionable, whether he is the chief offender. He was persuaded, and the wish was father to the thought, and weakened resistance. "What he would highly, that he would holily" (as is said of Macbeth by his tempter) had he been left to himself. But his mother prompted, persuaded, commanded, took upon herself the curse of what was, or seemed, necessary to the project. And we cannot doubt that she exercised great and habitual influence over him. Further, it may also be asked, was Isaac without fault under the circumstances in persistently designating Esau for the Blessing? or was Esau candid in offering himself to receive it?

There are some weighty words of Professor Ruskin¹ which I would use to deprecate any hasty or superficial judgment :—

“ It would be well if moralists less frequently confounded the greatness of a sin with its unpardonableness. The two characters are altogether distinct. The greatness of a fault depends partly on the nature of the person against whom it is committed, partly upon the extent of the consequences. The pardonableness depends, humanly speaking, on the degree of temptation to it. It is wise to quit the care of such nice measurements.”

What the temptation was in the case of Jacob has been expressed already. Professor Blunt² has put it with its usual force and perspicuity. He says—

“ I see the Promise all Genesis through . . . Bearing this master-key in my hand I can interpret the scenes of domestic mirth, of domestic stratagem, or of domestic wickedness with which the history of Moses abounds. The Seed of the woman that was to bruise the serpent's head, however indistinctly understood (and probably it was understood very indistinctly), was the one thing longed for in the families of old ; was the Desire of all nations, as the Prophet Haggai expressly calls it ; and provided they could accomplish this desire, they (like others when urged by an overpowering motive) were often reckless of the means, and rushed upon deeds they could not defend.”

There is yet another conceivable reason for the deep-tive scheme adopted, which might go far in explaining the inconsistencies of the actors and rendering their attitude and course intelligible. Isaac was both purblind and, as I have said, dangerously ill. This brought matters to a crisis. Rebekah and Jacob had a great end to attain ; their whole minds were set on it ; delay was impossible, there was no time for second thoughts. As they were fully resolved, so we need not doubt that they fully believed in the rightfulness of their claim. It was of the last import-

¹ *Seven Lamps.*

² *Undesigned Coincidences, Part I.*

ance now to have it decided in their favour by Isaac ; but their regard and affection for him would prevent their taking any step, raising any debate, which could tend to agitate his feelings, while he was hovering in a precarious condition between life and death. And what affection dictated, policy would concur in. It would have been obviously impolitic to disturb or thwart his prepossessions hastily ; it might pledge him the more to them, it might hasten death. Possibly he had never given full weight to the prophecy which predestined Jacob as inheritor ; perhaps he had doubted, and left the resolution of his doubt to partiality rather than conviction ; perhaps he did not know, or, knowing, disallowed, the compact between the brothers. And, then, Rebekah acted on the principle not unfrequently, however unwisely, adopted beside a death-bed, when, for the sake of avoiding distress or apprehension, the danger of the dying man is concealed from him. Isaac's blindness suggested that the object might be gained without acrimony or annoyance, if Jacob came forward in the person of Esau ; and it might have been a probable expectation that, when the matter was irrevocably determined, the justice of it would be acquiesced in, and all scruples done away.

The history goes on to shew how Jacob having consented to Rebekah's plan, carries it out unshrinkingly ; how Isaac, after some misgiving and hesitation, is persuaded by his confident and repeated assertion. *He smells the smell of his raiment, the goodly raiment* which Rebekah had made over to Jacob to wear for the occasion. He breaks out into the rapture of prophecy. Many have thought, and there are plausible arguments to shew, that what Jacob wore was the official priestly raiment assigned as of right to the eldest born. The terms *goodly*, or *desirable, raiment*, in their original meaning and specific usage, go far to indicate as much. It is moreover expressly mentioned

that the raiment belonged to Esau; yet we observe that it was not in his keeping, nor in that of his wives, but under the charge of Rebekah, as though it were family rather than individual property, and an hereditary not a common dress, and therefore kept by her, as mother of the family, with aromatic herbs and spices to sweeten and preserve it. And thus the well-known fragrance would be to Isaac a token confirmatory of Jacob's pretensions. The words of Psalm xlv. are appropriate here; is it too much to say that they are typically associated in their reference? *Thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces* (? wardrobes). Isaac's own language is emphatic; there is what sounds like the echo of it in the Song of Solomon (iv. 11): *The smell of thy garments is like the smell of Lebanon*. The fact evidently has a significance for him; it is as it were an earnest of Divine favour; it is an encouragement to predict for his son and the line of his posterity an abundance outpouring from above, outspringing from below; a threefold gift of wealth and pre-eminence and protection crowning all. This division of the Blessing into material, personal, sacred interests corresponds generally to the presumed components of the Birthright. First, there is wealth for the double portion. Secondly, the right of pre-eminence; and what this comprised is seen in the address to Judah¹: *Thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise; thy hand shall be in the neck of thine enemies; thy father's children shall bow down before thee. The sceptre shall not depart from Judah until Shiloh come, and unto him shall the gathering of the people be*. Add to this the expository declaration:² *It is evident that our Lord sprang out of Judah*: a declaration conclusive for the interpretation of the prophecy. Further, if we look forward and observe the tenor of the words³ with which Isaac finally dismissed Jacob to go to Padan-aram, we may

¹ Genesis xlix. 8.² Hebrews vii. 14.³ Genesis xxviii. 4.

easily perceive that the variation of terms there used is not so much additional as explanatory ; and again in the Dream of the Ladder, what Isaac calls the *Blessing of Abraham* is pronounced in all its fulness : *In thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.* Thirdly, if the sacerdotal function is rightly assumed to have been an integral element in the Birthright, the final words, *Cursed be he that curseth thee, and blessed be he that blesseth thee,* may be held to involve the idea of it. At the least they indicate more than earthly possessions or eminence among men. An exemption from evil, a sealing for good, betokens Divine regard and characterizes the chosen of God. And in the course of events we remark that Levi, and his priestly tribe were so chosen, and that in the stead of and as representative of the First-born.¹ *The Levites shall be mine : Because all the Firstborn are mine. . . . Mine shall they be : I am the Lord.* There is, then, no reserve in the Blessing pronounced upon Jacob, it is complete in all its parts. What was the portion of Esau ? Hear his question, *Hast thou not reserved a blessing for me ?* Hear his agonized and thrilling entreaty : *Hast thou but one blessing, my father ? Bless me, even me also, O my father.*

In one sense, in the highest sense, in what most deeply concerned the heart and hope of man and all man's race, Isaac had but one. All that was left for him to promise was earthly prosperity and eventual freedom. And what more had Esau really looked for ? He had not opened his mind to the influence of, or the appreciation of, spiritual privileges. He obtained what he did appreciate. His blessing was proportioned to his belief. Even in this, the record is deeply significant. Some one has said, No man can enter heaven whose desires have not gone thither before him. The soul of man must be inspired by the thought of God, refined by the love of God, in order that it may enter

¹ Numbers iii. 12.

into his joy. What, under the Gospel, is represented by the Birthright? The Christian hope. Believers, as children of God in Christ, hope for an inheritance in the kingdom of their Father. But not unconditionally. They must come for it with a preparation and accord of heart and life.

I suppose no one but feels pity for Esau. He came expectant, eager, confident of right. And then, and not till then, flashed upon him the thought of what he had done, what he had despised. What he had done was past recall, what he had unthinkingly bartered away was gone. His fatal decision had been no doubt the climax of years of levity, rooted in a reckless habit, it was the growth of error to a head. It is easy to recognise evil when full grown, but remedy or recovery is then too late.

This is the point put warningly before all men in the reference of the New Testament. *Afterwards* (=after a career of self-indulgence and profaneness), *when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.* It is an emphatic and forcible warning; sometimes obscured perhaps as to its main issue by being mixed up with general questions as to repentance, which properly speaking it does not bear upon. As the author of the *Christian Year* says: the despondency here spoken of has no parallel on this side the grave. It is the case of one who comes to claim a benefit to which he has disintitiled himself, and only discovers when too late the folly of his evil choice in its consequence. It is not a safe thing to ignore the moral worth of time. Esau, with his *great and exceeding bitter cry*, as he woke up to the sense of his irrecoverable loss, sounds the note of just alarm to a thoughtless world. For there is a real and subtle danger besetting all men; perhaps inseparable from the mysterious power of Free-will: there is a natural tendency to overlook the probation to which they are subject, to waste the opportunity which is all in all.

They shut their eyes to the fleeting character, the limited term, of opportunity; they plead against it; anything is in request to excuse procrastination, without letting go the hope that all will yet be well. Yet the cautions of the Bible are constant and consistent. *When once the Master of the house is risen up and hath shut to the door . . . many will seek to enter and shall not be able. . . . He shall say, I know you not: depart.*¹ This word of caution is emphasized by the Master's own foreknowledge and authority—*I say unto you*. It gains further exemplification in the parable.² *The door was shut. Afterwards came the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord (a repetition of entreaty), open to us.* Read the period defined for repentance in the reference to the days of Noah. *They did eat, they drank, until the day that Noah entered into the ark. Also . . . in the days of Lot . . . the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire . . . and destroyed all.*³ Again, *Take heed lest . . . that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all.*⁴ A voice comes to us from the old world, *My Spirit shall not always strive with man.*⁵ The dispensation of the new world is ushered in with the reminder, *Now is the accepted time.*⁶ There is a term allowed to man for preparation and acceptance; to-day it is ours, to-morrow the bound may be overpast, and we too late.

The wide applicability of this history is forced on the attention by the elaborate contrast and the full vivid description, so much beyond the usual simplicity of Scripture. We see two blessings; two brothers; one taken, the other left: one coming under false colours, deceiving his father; one in his own person, deceiving himself: one of weak faith, one of no faith: one condemned by man's judgment, yet forgiven; the other pitied, if not praised, of

¹ Luke xiii. 25.
 Luke xxi. 34.

² Matthew xxv. 10.
³ Genesis vi. 3.

⁴ Luke xvii. 26.
 2 Cor. vi. 2.

men, but rejected. We are perhaps tempted to ask St. Paul's question, *Is there unrighteousness with God?* No; but there is more than meets the eye. Men see conduct; God sees hearts, and the real balance of good and evil. It may be lamentable that tares mingle with the wheat; it is worse when the soil bears no wheat at all.

Here is the true measure of man compared with man. What constituted the difference between these Brothers? Not station or class (as in the great opposites Lazarus and Dives); not knowledge or the want of it; not the endless diversities which make human judgment as to comparative merit in one's fellow-creatures impossible. The difference lay in no externals, but in the personal will and choice. With home and prospects and spring of life the same, each was free to shape his individual course. As we follow them out to the eventual crisis, we see that it is not Isaac that determines it, but God. The partial bias of the patriarch was overruled against his consent, without his consciousness. The disposal of the Blessing was the predestination of God, and we are to recognize in it, as we may infer Isaac did recognize in it, his judgment. Whatever may be our prepossessions as to the personal desert of Esau and Jacob respectively, we may at least, if we extend our view to mankind at large, read in this record a clear note of the essential distinction between *those who serve God and those who serve him not.*

J. E. YONGE.

NOTE ON MATTHEW XVI. 18.

In approaching the exegesis of this verse, I can only re-echo the words of Alford, "To me it is equally difficult, nay impossible, to deny all reference in ἐπὶ ταύτῃ τῇ πέτρᾳ to the preceding πέτρος." This seems to be involved in any "plain straightforward" reading of the passage. If the πέτρᾳ be not in some way resumptive of the πέτρος, I can discern no intelligible connexion in the sentence.

If the second clause of the sentence stood alone, then indeed we should be more than justified by the analogy of our Lord's form of speech in John ii. 19, in admitting a reference on our Lord's part to Himself in the words, ἐπὶ ταύτῃ τῇ πέτρᾳ οἰκοδομήσω μου τὴν ἐκκλησίαν. But in what sense such a statement, so understood, could be consecutive to the preceding σὺ εἶ Πέτρος, I must confess, with all deference to the views of those more learned than myself, that I am unable to discover. It is hard to suppose the σὺ εἶ Πέτρος introduced only for the sake of a play upon the name which is positively misleading.

I am myself no Syriac scholar, but I believe that in the Syriac version the same word is repeated, so that there is not the same contrast as in the Greek between the πέτρος and the πέτρα. Nay, there is an implied identity; and this fact ought surely to carry some weight in the attempt to interpret the verse.

But admitting the distinction between πέτρα, the living rock, and πέτρος, the fragment, I would suggest what seems to me a possible interpretation.

We may assume, in that case, that the πέτρος implies a πέτρα of which it is a sample, and with which it may be, to that extent, identified. We are all familiar with the expression, "a chip of the old block." The quality of the chip bespeaks a block of like quality. The chip is a pattern or sample of the block. In the same way the evidently durable πέτρος calls up the image of a πέτρα of like quality, as that which would afford an unrivalled foundation upon which to build. Thus when our Lord to his first utterance, "I say also unto thee that thou art *petros*," adds the words, "and upon this *petra* I will build my Church," it is like the farmer taking up the sample, and declaring, "With this corn will I sow my field," or the woman viewing the pattern, and saying, "Of this stuff will I have a dress."

"*This corn*," says the farmer, holding it in his hand, though may be not that handful, and certainly not that handful only, will be sown. "*This stuff*," says the woman, meaning stuff like this, the piece from which this pattern was taken. In like manner may we assume our Lord to mean, after the reference to Peter, that upon rock of this quality He would build his Church. I think we may take it to be implied that upon a πέτρα of some sort the building must be reared: a πέτρα of some sort must be sought for a foundation. The quality of a particular πέτρος at this point takes the Saviour's attention. "A πέτρα of like quality to this

πέτρος is that which I shall choose on which to build my Church," is his instantly-declared decision.

A thought in part parallel to that here presented is to be found in Isaiah li. 1, 2: "Look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged. Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you." Here "Abraham your father" is spoken of to the Jewish people as "the rock whence ye are hewn." Passing on to New Testament times, we learn from the teaching of our Lord and his apostles, that it is no longer those who merely trace their lineal descent from Abraham, but those who are partakers of the same faith, that are to be reckoned as his true children. He is "the father of the faithful" to whatever race belonging. Abraham the man of faith is as the quarry. It is a like faith that will bespeak stones taken from that quarry. It is by their faith that their solidarity with Abraham is to be discerned.

Now the two passages are so far similar that in both there is implied *πέτροι* and a *πέτρα*. They are dissimilar in this—that in the one case the *πέτρα* is quarried to furnish *πέτροι* for a building; in the other case the *πέτρα* in its entirety furnishes the foundation on which the building is to be reared.

The different use of the figure in each case is governed by the fact, that in one case attention is concentrated on the single individuality of Abraham, "I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him"; while in the other case, though Peter is singled out, it is not with any view that his position is to be as unique as that of Abraham—he is but one *πέτρος*; and it is the totality of such *πέτροι*, *coalescing in thought into the one πέτρα*, that will furnish a sure foundation for the Church that Christ will build.

In the one case the thought proceeds from the *πέτρα* to the *πέτροι*; in the other case from the *πέτροι* to the *πέτρα*; but the idea of the *πέτρα* is in both cases the same—the totality of "them that have obtained like precious faith" with Abraham and Peter (2 Pet. i. 1).

F. G. CHOLMONDELEY.

BRIEF NOTICES.

THE LIFE OF FREDERICK DENISON MAURICE, CHIEFLY TOLD IN HIS OWN LETTERS, *Edited by his Son, Frederick Maurice* (London: Macmillans). Biography hardly falls within our scope. Nor has this "Life" been sent to us for review. But it may be permitted to

one who gratefully remembers the years in which he learned more from Maurice than from most men, to say, that, rich as the last decade or two have been in valuable biographies, this surpasses them all; and that, noble and commanding as have been the characters revealed to us in these admirable works, yet, in his judgment, no thinker more noble and penetrating, no saint more pure and humble and loving, than the scholar and divine so clearly and faithfully reflected here, has served and enriched his generation. It is not unlikely that in the Christian annals he, who was once everywhere spoken against, may yet stand forth as the foremost teacher of his time, with the deepest insight, the most beautiful spirit.

Nor can it be alien to the function of this Magazine to remark that, in the "Life and Letters" now given to the world, the secret of one of the greatest of Biblical expositors is so transparently displayed, that even the wayfarer, with his hasty and often unsympathetic glances, may apprehend it, if he will. Ever since Maurice commanded any measure of public attention, there has been an outcry against the mistiness or obscurity of his utterances. Many intelligent and well-disposed persons even, who were, or who thought they were, very willing to learn whatever he could teach them, have professed themselves quite unable to grasp his meaning, to gain any clear and definite conception of his beliefs and aims. And, no doubt, to those who had neither habituated themselves to his manner of thinking, nor passed through certain stages of thought and spiritual experience which his writings presuppose, it must have been difficult to follow the workings of a mind so rarely gifted, so profoundly meditative and rich in experience. But in this "Life" there are many letters of his in which his views and convictions are so clearly and simply expressed, that this outcry must either cease or recoil on the heads of those who raise or repeat it. Nay, there is *one* letter—it will be found on pages 154-7 of Volume I.—addressed to his mother, which, if only it be read with common attention, will give such an insight into the very heart of his position as will bring his teaching within the reach of any man who cares to master it. Let any of our readers try the experiment; and if it fails with them, then we will confess that, to them at least, it is not given to know what one of the wisest and holiest of Christian teachers meant.

SERMONS PREACHED AT IBROX, by *Joseph Leckie, D.D.* (Glasgow: Maclehose & Sons). A new—new to us at least—and original

preacher has appeared. There is a strange impress of power on these discourses, rudely constructed as some of them are when considered—as every great sermon put into print should be considered—as works of art. Occasionally their very roughness of construction and expression becomes an element of their power, and seems to betray a mind so occupied in thought, so quick with fervour, as to disdain the mere niceties of form and style. Probably, however, these literary defects arise from the fact that Dr. Leckie speaks, and does not write, his sermons, but has to gather them up from the imperfect notes taken by members of his congregation: for, with a certain indifference to literary form, his discourses combine a frequent beauty and finish of expression of the rarest kind.

Two “vital signs” disclose themselves even to the cursory reader of these sermons. The first, that Dr. Leckie shews his power and originality as a thinker not simply when he takes an out of the way topic, when he is dealing with unworn and striking texts. In dealing with these, indeed, admirable as his treatment of them is on the whole, he sometimes forces meanings from, or on, his texts which they will very hardly bear, as, for example, in that on *Plants and Corner Stones*. It is when he is at his simplest that he is at his best, when he moves along the beaten way that he moves most vigorously, when he is dealing with familiar words and familiar difficulties that he is most striking and impressive. Thus, in his sermon on Matthew xi. 25, 26, *Why God reveals to Babes*, he gives a better exposition of that difficult passage than we have met in any commentary, and a more satisfactory solution of the standing problem, How it comes to pass that God should disclose Himself to the childlike, and hide Himself from the learned and the wise—a solution which instantly commends itself at once to the judgment and to the heart. The second sign is, that he is familiar with the spirit of the time, and seeks to meet its needs and doubts with an earnest sincerity. He makes one aware that he has himself known these doubts and conquered them, felt these needs and found a full supply for them in the Gospel of Christ; that he is but translating into general terms his individual experience of the power of the truth as it is in Jesus to satisfy all the wants and cravings of the soul. And this we take to be the supreme sign, or note, of the true preacher, of the man who is called of God to teach and comfort his brethren.

AN OLD TESTAMENT COMMENTARY FOR ENGLISH READERS, Vols. IV. and V., *Edited by Bishop Ellicott* (London: Cassells). We regret to report that this Commentary does not grow upon us as it proceeds. There is much fairly good work in it indeed, much also which is poor and indifferent, and a little which is very good; but nothing which is at all likely to supersede other and older commentaries. In our judgment, even the Speaker's Commentary stands considerably higher on the scale. We leave our readers to discover what is poor and indifferent in these volumes for themselves. Among the fairly good—which, however, might easily have been better, since better work is to be found in well-known commentaries—we may reckon Mr. Aglen's work on *The Psalms*, and that of Dr. Reynolds, Professor Whitehouse, Mr. Jennings, and Mr. Lowe, on *The Minor Prophets*. The best is that of Dean Plumptre on *Isaiah* and *Jeremiah*, though even he is evidently hampered for want of space. Both these expositions, however, are very helpful; and though Mr. Cheyne's work on *Isaiah* must still be placed high above that of any of our English scholars, yet, as a popular exposition, that of the Dean of Wells is likely to take and keep the first place. Of Dr. G. Salmon's work on *Ecclesiastes* it is difficult to know what to say, without seeming to fail in modesty and respect. His high rank, both as scholar and thinker, is universally admitted. And in this little commentary he shows his usual erudition, patience, and fairness in stating the many problems which the treatise of *the Preacher* suggests; but he neither solves, nor professes to solve, them. Such evenly balanced work is eminently suited to scholars, but is surely out of place in *popular* exposition. What the general reader wants is not a balancing of opposite difficulties till he seems to have lost everything save his balance, but such clear guidance and leading as can only be given by one who has reached decided views of the questions in hand, and is prepared to state them in a definite form, with whatever deference to those who hold opposite opinions.

On the whole, then, we cannot say that this Commentary fulfils the promise of its Preface. While, in parts, it is quite worth consulting by those who have many books at command, we cannot honestly recommend it to those who can afford but few commentaries, or only one.
