

king of Larsa of that name, who had been driven from his throne by the Elamites. Nowhere is there any trace of such having been the case; on the contrary, Sin-idinam is once called *gal Martu* (not *Martu-ki*, as Mr. King's translation seems to suppose), 'the chief of the Amorites.' He appears to have been the governor of one of the Canaanite settlements in Babylonia. 'Martu,' by the way, is not a synonym of the Elamite district of Emudbal, as Mr. King suggests after a discarded conjecture of Tiele and Winckler, and the 'country of Martu,' or rather 'Amurrû,' denoted Syria. This fact gives interest to the inscription just published by Dr. Winckler, and numbered 66 by Mr. King, in which Khammurabi is called simply 'king of Amur[rû].' The inscription is dedicated to the Canaanitish goddess [As]ratu or Asherah, and is difficult to translate, owing, apparently, to a non-Babylonian use of the Sumerian ideographs.¹ It is accompanied by a very remarkable figure in relief, a photograph of which will be found in Tomkins' *Abraham and*

¹ In the third line a word Aduma (or Arama) occurs, which may be intended for Edom (or Aram?).

his Age, plate ii. The dedicator of the monument Ibirum-Amur[rû], 'the governor of the river . . .,' must have been of Canaanitish parentage, but even so his giving Khammurabi no other title than that of 'king of the Amorite land' is noteworthy.

From a historical point of view, the letters of Khammurabi are disappointing. Perhaps the most important reference contained in them is the notice of '240 soldiers,' 'who had deserted (*iptu[ru]*) from Assyria (not "to" as Mr. King renders it), the country of Situllum.' But their value does not lie in the new historical facts which they may bring to light. It consists rather in the light which they throw on the culture and civilization of Babylonia and Western Asia in the Abrahamic age, and on the daily life of its kings and peoples. What would not the classical scholar give for the autograph letters of Plato or Aristotle? and yet here we have preserved to us, uncontaminated by the hands of later scribes, the actual correspondence of a king against whom Abraham waged battle, and who is mentioned in the Book of Genesis.

Sermonettes on the Golden Texts.

BY THE REV. J. S. MAVER, M.A., ABERDEEN.

I.

'If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.'—JOHN viii. 36.

THERE is no question that the freedom of Christ, above all freedom, is worthy of the name. And yet, perhaps there is more said in the Bible about bonds and limitations in connexion with Christ, than about freedom. A yoke is spoken of, and a burden, and a bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. What are we to make of the seeming contradiction?

There used to be a story in the school-books about a ship-captain, who, when at home, would tell his children about the strange places he had visited, and the manners and customs of the various peoples he had been among. One night, however, he played a trick upon them, and began to tell, unknowingly to them, of their own country, —how he had lived among a people who were

fond of using a certain kind of grease along with their food, and who wore clothing taken from an animal's back, and made fire of something dug out of the ground; till, by and by, a bright little one saw through the trick, and exclaimed, 'Why, father, that is not a foreign country, it is our own land you are telling us about.'

And so, though the Bible speaks of obedience and bonds and limitations, it is possible for us to make a great discovery, and, by entering into that obedience, and under the yoke spoken of, to see things in a gloriously new light, such as might well make us exclaim, 'In the name of all that's good, this is not captivity, this is freedom in the grandest acceptation of the word.'

Suppose we take an example. Take the case of the Apostle Peter. In early days, in the happy irresponsible period of childhood, he went whither he would, he went out and in, he 'ran about the braes, and pu'd the gowans fine,' or whatever

corresponded to that in his country. As he grew up, however, he came to be girded, so far as the body was concerned. He had to mind his nets and toil on the deep. Yet the girded life meant freedom, for the most wearisome thing in life is to have nothing particular to do. 'Have one part of the day in which you are a slave, and another part in which you are a king,' is a good advice. You can't have the kingdom all the day long; at least, you can't enjoy it till you have passed through the slave period.

Still, amid all this toil, his heart was yet free, in the wilderness sense of the word. But, one day, he was told of a great preacher on the banks of the Jordan. He went to hear him, and went again and again. His heart was awakened by the Baptist, and he began to be drawn and bound. Through his brother Andrew he was, later, brought into contact with a greater Preacher still. Now, new feelings and aspirations possessed him, and his heart was captivated as never before. After the Ascension of Jesus, when the Spirit came upon him, he began to preach in the face of much opposition. He could not help himself. Nothing would have stopped him. Later still, when he would have confined the blessings of salvation to the Jews, he was led beyond that, too. He had to leave his narrow views behind. But the strange thing is that, throughout all this, St. Peter would have said that he was a free man, that he never knew what freedom was till his heart was thus bound. Even when shut up in prison he could have said—

Though in bonds,
I am not bound; for 'tis because I'm free,
Because my soul could not be captive brought
Unto a lie, that these environ me.

We have all got our chains—chains that cramp and degrade, or chains that mean freedom and honour. What a binding thing love is! Jacob's life was bound up in the lad's life, but it would have been no freedom to him to be delivered from all anxiety about Benjamin. Conscience is a terribly binding thing, but, by yielding obedience to it, we too, with the Psalmist, may be able to say, 'Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage.' And when Jesus comes with the loveliest bond of all, and says, 'For My sake,' it will be found to be, not a hampering fetter, but an ornament of grace, and Christ's captivity will be rejoiced in as freedom indeed.

II.

'He answered and said, Whether He be a sinner or no, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see.'—JOHN ix. 25.

WHAT a full and lively chapter this is! All about a blind man who received his sight. He comes first before us sitting by the wayside, and suggests to the disciples a theme for discussion with Jesus as to the origin of his blindness. Christ rebukes them, saying, as it were, What benefit will the discussion be to the man? Is there anything, rather, that can be done for him? Jesus was always practical. More important than discussing the origin of evil, is the consideration what can be done to diminish the evil that is in the world. 'Master,' said a herd-boy to the farmer, 'the cows are in the cornfield, and I can't make out how they got in. The gate is shut, and there's no gap in the hedge.' 'Never mind how they got in,' was the reply; 'you get them out as fast as you can, and then you may consider at your leisure as to how they got in.' The blind man's sight was restored by Jesus, and that was far more to him than the most learned debate as to how his blindness came about. Then this miracle brings him into conflict with the Pharisees. When they can make nothing of him, they excommunicate him. Jesus heard of his being driven out of the Church, and, instead of separating him from Christ, that brings him and Jesus together a second time, and ultimately he receives a deeper blessing, the blessing of spiritual sight as well.

Here we have to do with the grand answer he gave the Pharisees. He stood on a fact in his own experience, and nothing could shake him. A difficult character to tackle. He was not an agnostic. He did not know much, but there was one thing as to which he was clear enough. A poor, unlettered man, probably, not fit on most points to cope with the Pharisees. 'I cannot argue with you,' he might say; 'if I entered into an argument with you, the likelihood is you could easily put me in a corner. But there is just one thing I would ask you to explain. Explain me. I was blind and now I see.' He was on very substantial ground when he stood on that, and nothing of unsettling tendency could touch him.

And herein lies the secret of real Christianity. Is there anything Christ has done for us that we are sure of? Has He given us strength against a

temptation? Has He helped us to bear a trial? Has He opened our eyes to a new view of life? That will make Him more real to us than the most logical of creeds. Not that the creed is needless. Not that theology has not its place. We have no sympathy with the man who said that he hated theology and botany, but he loved religion and flowers. He who loves flowers will be thankful for all the botany he can acquire; and, as botany helps the study of flowers, so will theology help religion. Still, there are times when botany would be entirely out of place. You remember the man whom Wordsworth scarifies, who would 'peep and botanize upon his mother's grave.' Bring your flowers there, if you will, but not your botany. And so there are times in life, the hours of suffering, of fighting, of facing death, the most solemn and critical times of life, when we do not want to be troubled with theological points; we want religion at its simplest, we want Christ a present Help in time of need. A well-known theological professor was very fond of the following lines, and was overheard repeating them on the day of his death—

When I am to die, receive me, I'll cry,
For Jesus hath loved me, I cannot tell why;
But this I do find, we two are so joined,
That He won't be in glory and leave me behind.

Observe further, that just because there was one thing this man, whose sight was restored, knew, there were many things he was ready to believe. When Jesus found him the second time, He said, 'Dost thou believe on the Son of God?' 'Who is He, Lord, that I might believe on Him?' was the reply. He was ready to accept anything now on the word of Jesus. And so with us; we shall be ready to believe much when there is one thing we know.

III.

'I am the Good Shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.'—JOHN X. II.

WE are all familiar enough with the ideas connected with shepherd-life as it is pictured amongst ourselves. The poetry of our country dwells much upon it, especially up to about the beginning of this century. It was described as the ideal of a simple natural life. It was associated with the piping times of peace. The shepherds were regarded as happy swains, living a

free, healthy life in communion with nature. There was little or nothing said, however, as to their relationship to the sheep. No tender and kindly thoughts centred round that. The sheep were driven this way and that, and by the help of dogs, wonderfully intelligent in executing their master's commands, but, like him, entirely regardless of the feelings of the flock.

In Eastern ideas, however, there was a close and intimate connexion between the shepherd and his sheep. A leading idea, in connexion with shepherd life there, was the shepherd's care for, and interest in, his flock, and their trustful following of him. And so, in the twenty-third Psalm, we have that idea set forth, as it were, from a sheep's point of view; the Psalmist speaking of God as his Shepherd, and of what God does for him in the way of leading and feeding and heeding him. And in the New Testament we have Jesus applying to Himself the name, and speaking from the shepherd's point of view in His relationship to those who hear His voice and follow Him.

Of all the illustrations Jesus uses to set forth what He is to men, this is the one on which He dwells at considerable length. 'But if Jesus said, on one occasion, regarding His people, 'How much better than a sheep,' still more might His people say regarding Himself, 'How much better than a shepherd.' No earthly relationship can but very partially represent His loving sacrifice for them, His guiding care of them, and His rich provision for them.

Jesus calls Himself the Good Shepherd as distinguished from the hireling. And a chief distinction between the two is that the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. It was very few shepherds, no doubt, that actually did that, but they were ready to do it, if need were,—ready to face the wolf in defence of their flock, or the storm in search for them. In this respect, Jesus seeks to prove His love, in that He actually gave His life on their behalf.

And, surely, to do that implies, now that He has risen again and entered the world whence He came, that His interest in their welfare will be, if that were possible, greater than ever. For it is a law of our nature that, if we make a sacrifice for any person, or any object, our interest in that person or object is thereby increased. We might think that it would rather

be just the other way, and that those for whom something was done would be the ones who would remember, with never-failing gratitude, their benefactor. But there is a wonderful lack of gratitude in the world in that respect. Do you want to have an increased affection for a brother? The best way is, not to get that brother to do something for you, but for you to do something for him. Do you want to take a deeper interest in some good cause? It will be better done, not by any benefit which the cause does for you, but by some sacrifice made by you on behalf of the cause.

I have seen a boy rescue a dog that was being persecuted by other boys in the street, and take it home. There was no beauty about the animal, it was a miserable cur, but, though his parents wished to get it out of the house, the boy desired to adopt it as a pet, and, after much pleading, his desire was granted. Why was he so interested in it? Just because he had done something for it. He had rescued it, and thereby it laid hold of his heart as it would not otherwise have done.

And so, with reverence it might be said that if anything were needed to confirm and make lasting the love of Christ for humanity, it is the greatness of the sacrifice He has made on their behalf. Christians, at the best, may be far short of what they should be in gratitude to their Saviour, but that Saviour, we may be sure, could never possibly fail in tender regard for those on whose behalf He has travailed in soul, and endured even unto death.

IV.

'My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.'—JOHN x. 27.

HERE we have a continuation of the same subject, the relationship between Jesus and His people, and the connexion between shepherd and sheep is still the illustration used.

'My sheep hear My voice.' It is universally the case in an Eastern flock that they recognize the shepherd's voice. That is sufficient to draw them from the fold in the morning, and to bring them towards him on the plains or the hillside during the day. Foolish though they may be, they make no mistake in that. They will not be deceived by any imitation of the voice. Let a

stranger attempt to call them in the same way, and he will only lead the sheep to lift their heads in alarm, and move a little nearer to their real leader. How do they know? It would be hard to say. It is not the result of cleverness on their part, it is a sort of instinct. They are simple creatures, but you can't mislead them in that respect.

So, to recognize the voice of Jesus is not a gift acquired by sharpness or cleverness, it is not something that can be taught in any school. The simplest people in the way of ordinary education may yet have an unflinching confidence, so far as this is concerned. But is it a real voice? you may say. Well, that all depends on what you call a real voice. Jesus, for example, at the very time He said these words, was heard by those around, but that was not hearing His voice in the sense He meant. You know that people, who have no ear for music, cannot be stirred by it as a musician can. But it would seem that great musicians, even in the mere reading of a musical score, can hear and enjoy the melody and harmony that it implies. Their exquisite sense of musical appreciation enables them to hear, as it were, through the eye. And so, to the heart that is tuneful, even the reading of Scripture may be what a musical score is to a capable musician. And in days of darkness, and moments of temptation, and times when the right way seems doubtful, as the poet speaks of 'that inward eye, which is the bliss of solitude,' so the heart attuned can turn the attention of the inward ear towards Him Whom it has learned to know and trust, and hearken for the guiding Voice, saying: 'Be not afraid'; 'Be of good cheer'; 'This is the way, walk ye in it.'

'I know them,' Jesus goes on to say. If the sheep know the voice of the shepherd, the shepherd knows them in a still more intimate and complete way. Nothing would appear so difficult to a stranger as to be able to distinguish each member of a flock of sheep. They look all so much alike. But the shepherd makes no mistakes. A missionary tells of a Lebanon shepherd who said to him that, even if blindfolded, he could tell in a moment if a sheep was his or not, simply by putting his hands on its face.

To us Christ's perfect and complete knowledge of every member in His great fold is incompre-

hensible. Such knowledge is too high for us. We know how difficult it is to get acquainted with a few. The teacher in a school needs time to know all his pupils. The pastor of a congregation has difficulty in avoiding mistakes, especially at first when all are strange to him. And some in a congregation are very unreasonable in their expectations.

'Ho, sailor of the sea!
How's my boy—my boy?'
'What's your boy's name, good wife,
And in what good ship sailed he?'
'You come back from the sea
And not know my John?'
I might as well have asked some landsman
Yonder down in the town.'

That good mother did not realize the wideness of the sea, and how that there was many and many a ship and ship's crew upon its bosom.

But God's thoughts are not as our thoughts. It is far beyond our little minds to comprehend the Saviour's knowledge. Some day in the here-after we may understand better, but here it is simply for us to take Him at His own word, and to believe that all are known and dear to Him, and that the way of none is hid from the Lord.

Lastly, Jesus says, 'They follow Me.' And that implies not only that they follow trustfully, but that He leads considerately. As a shepherd would lead his flock with some pasture land ultimately in view, even though for a time, it might have to be, through barren places, so will Christ lead those who follow Him, always to something worth reaching at last. Many a step may have to be taken on trust, and the way may be long and difficult, but the end will repay. No one ever yet regretted following Christ as Guide.

At the Literary Table.

THE BOOKS OF THE MONTH.

BIBLE READINGS FROM THE PENTATEUCH.
BY T. W. PEILE, M.R.A.C. (*Benrose*. 8vo. 6s. net.)

THIS volume is part of a large undertaking. How large, Mr. Peile gives us some idea by paging straight on. This is the third volume of the series, and it includes pages 715 to 1398. But it is not so great as it is large. For to be great one has to be oneself, and Mr. Peile does not care for that. He quotes so freely from Edersheim, that we wonder if Edersheim had not written whether Mr. Peile would have been an author. And yet Edersheim is only one of those whom he so liberally admires and immortalizes. He does not care to see his own writing. He quotes and uses marks of quotation, and calls himself editor not author.

And yet he shows his own hand in the kind of quotation he makes, and especially in the historical or higher criticism he offers us, which is his own entirely. His attitude is that of the extreme right, placing Canon Cheyne, for example, on the extreme left. For whereas Cheyne does not now believe that any of the Psalms were

composed before the Captivity, Mr. Peile believes that many of them were sung during the wilderness wanderings, and that one of them, Psalm cxxx., was discovered 'amongst the private documents of Moses after his death.' This is found in one of the Appendixes, which are, perhaps, the most interesting things in the book. In another we have a remarkable chapter of etymologies, in which the affinity of the word *God* is traced through the Hindostanee *Khoda* to the Hebrew *Q'dosh*, holy, unspotted. Canon Cheyne would not agree with that either.

ERAS OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH. THE POST-APOSTOLIC AGE. BY LUCIUS WATERMAN, D.D. (*T. & T. Clark*. Crown 8vo, pp. xviii, 505. 6s.)

The place which the 'Eras' have taken is a high one. Some previous volumes have been masterpieces, all have attained success. But it is doubtful if the present volume will lift them any higher. Its learning is competent enough, but it has two faults. One is that its style is too familiar, the other is that its manner is too