

An Expositor.

A GOOD genius, a capacious understanding, a fruition of the rich cordials of the gospel, an eminent growth in grace, a large measure of happiness or the possession of the supreme good, a competent knowledge of the original languages in which the Scriptures were written, a firm intrepidity of mind, which shall neither court the favour nor fear the censure of the Christian world, a most ardent love to souls, and a fervent zeal to promote the glory of Christ in the world—these qualities appear to me to be essential to a good expositor of Scripture.—JOHN COLLETT RYLAND.

Friendship.

WE must have been struck with the brilliancy of our own conversation and the profundity of our own thoughts, when we shared them with one with whom we were in sympathy at the time. The brilliancy was not ours; it was the reflex action which was the result of the communion. That is why the effect of different people upon us is different, one

making us creep into our shell and making us unable almost to utter a word; another through some strange magnetism enlarging the bounds of our whole being and drawing the best out of us. The true insight after all is love. It clarifies the intellect, and opens the eyes to much that was obscure.—HUGH BLACK.

'If you love me, tell me so.'

THERE is a pretty story told concerning the late Dr. Dale. He was travelling, I think, in the Colonies. Speaking on one occasion of the relation of a pastor to his congregation, and pleading for a freer reciprocity of feeling between them, he said that he often felt inclined to say to his own people, 'If you love me, tell me so.' The little speech reached England sooner than did the speaker, and when some months later the Doctor entered the hall in Birmingham in which a 'welcome home' had been arranged for him, almost the first object that met his eyes was a large scroll across one end of the building, 'We love you, and we tell you so.'—GEORGE JACKSON.

Archaeological Commentary on Genesis.

BY THE REV. A. H. SAYCE, LL.D., PROFESSOR OF ASSYRIOLOGY, OXFORD.

XXIII. 2. Note that Abraham was not in Hebron when Sarah died there, and that it is no longer called Mamre, as it was when Abraham was still Abram (xiii. 18), but Kiriath-arba. The name has been interpreted 'the city of four (gods),' like the Assyrian Arba'il or Arbela; but according to Josh. xiv. 15 and xv. 13, Arba' was a 'great man,' 'the father of Anak.' The whole chapter reads as if it were a translation into Hebrew from a Babylonian cuneiform document, the phrases and style being those of Babylonian texts and the Tel el-Amarna tablets.

6. 'Mighty prince,' see note on ver. 20.

10, 11. That a legal transaction should be performed 'in the presence of the sons of my people' is in exact accordance with the Babylonian practice of the period, as may be seen from two Babylonian cases of disputed title to property, dated in the reign of Khammurabi, which have been published by Mr. Pinches. In one of them the dispute was about a plantation bought by Nahid-Martu from Ilu-bani, the adopted son of Sin-magir, which was claimed by a certain Sin-muballidh. The name of Nahid-Martu, 'glorious is the Amorite god,' shows that he was of Syrian origin, and accordingly Ilu-bani, after obtaining 'the king's warrant,' and going 'to the judges,' was taken by them along

with Nahid-Martu to 'the gate of the goddess of the Amorite land, and the judges of the goddess of the Amorite land.' There he declared that he had been truly adopted by Sin-magir. Next he and Sin-muballidh were taken to another gate, and there, in the presence of the assembled people, he made the same statement, confirming it by an oath. In the second case, two men enter into partnership with one another by going with a 'judge' to the temple of the sun-god, and there ratifying the deed. This was effected by the judge pronouncing certain words before the two parties and the assembled people, to which the people returned answer.

16. 'Current money with the merchant' means internationally current, not in Canaan only, but throughout Western Asia, like the manehs and shekels of Babylonia. In one of the Tel el-Amarna tablets, a Babylonian king agrees with the Pharaoh that duties shall be levied upon gold, silver, oil, clothing, and other objects, when they enter Egyptian territory, and, if necessary, shall be exacted by force. Babylonian merchants, it would seem, made their way as far as the Nile; and Burna-buryas, another Babylonian king, complains in a letter that some of them who had come to Canaan with Ahitob were there ill-treated and robbed by Shem-hadad, the son of Balumme (Balaam), and others from

Akku or Acre, and he accordingly demands the punishment of the offenders on pain of breaking off friendly relations with Egypt.

17. The description of the field must have been taken from a document, drawn up in language similar to that of Babylonian contracts for the sale or lease of property, and it is therefore noticeable that the name of Mamre once more appears in it.

18, 19. The relation of the Hittites to the Amorites of Mamre resembles that of the northern Hittites of Kadesh on the Orontes, which was in the land of the Amorites, or of the Hittites and Amorites to one another at Jerusalem in 'the land of Canaan' (Ezek. xvi. 3). For the Hittites of Hebron, see note on x. 15.

20. We possess a large number of Babylonian contract-tablets belonging to the age of the Khammurabi dynasty and earlier, most of which are in Sumerian. Their resemblance to the form of contract presupposed by the narrative in Genesis will be seen from a translation of one or two of them: (1) A contract from Sippara older than the Khammurabi dynasty: 'Six (?) acres (*padâni*) of a field in the district of Kharamakin, bordering the property of Gitmalum and Lama-il (Lemuel), Purya, the son of Mutanum, has arranged the price with Alum-lalum, the son of Abum-il (Abiel); the full price in silver he has weighed. The oaths have been sworn (*literally*, one has uttered the words) before Nabi-ilisu,' and other witnesses whose names are given in full. (2) A case of disputed title which was brought before the judges: 'Thirty-three acres of a field in the district of the Amorites, the allotment of Ibni-Hadad the merchant: Arad-Sin (Eri-Aku in Sumerian), the son of Edirum, in the presence of the judges, has communed as follows: This piece of house-property, together with the house my father did not dispose of (?), but Ibku-Anunit and Istar- . . . , the sons of Samas-nazir, have given it for silver to Ibni-Hadad the merchant. Iddatum and Bazitum, the sons of Ibni-Hadad the merchant, they summoned before the judges, and they declared by oath that by lawful sale the allotment of Edirum and Sin-nadin-sû was handed over to Samas-nazir and Ibku-Anunit, and given to them for silver, (consisting of) twenty-two acres of field in the middle of thirty acres of another field, and eleven acres of woodland in the district of the Amorites, one end of the field being bounded by . . . and the other end by the river Buli (?). The fence of

the field is broken down. It is settled, and thus they (the judges) said to Arad-Sin, the son of Edirum: At the ascent to Sippara the field is situated (?), and by lawful sale the allotment of Samas-nazir and Ibku-Anunit is handed over; Arad-Sin, the son of Edirum, shall . . . and shall further take the field. Before Aku-mansun the judge, before Sin-ismeani the judge, before Ibku-Anunit the judge, before Ibku-ili-su the judge.' Then follows the date in the reign of Ammi-zaduga. (3) (The translation of the following contract is that of Mr. Pinches):—'One acre of field-land beside the plantation of Ibni-Sin the gardener, and beside the field of Ura-Utu (the chief), (its) end the field-land of the sons of Sin-azu, and its end the field-land of Utuki-semi, the inheritance of Utuki-idinnam, son of Nannar-me-gis. With Utuki-idinnam, son of Nannar-me-gis, Zili-Innanna, son of Ili-lakh, and Abil-ili his brother have priced it; $1\frac{2}{3}$ shekels of silver they have weighed as its complete price. For future days, for time to come, they shall not dispute, they shall not withdraw. They have invoked the spirit of the king.' Then come the names of the witnesses, and the date in the reign of Khammurabi.

The words for 'silver' and 'weighing' in the sense of 'paying' are the same in Hebrew and Babylonian, as is also the word for 'shekel,' which is derived from *shâqal*, 'to weigh,' and was borrowed from Babylonian by the languages of the West. The gift of the land had to be made 'in the presence' of witnesses both at Hebron and in Babylonia, the description of the land and its boundaries, which takes us back to Babylonian law and land-surveying, was similar in both cases, and the Hebrew word *yâqâm*, from *qâm*, 'to rise up,' which is rendered 'made sure' in the A.V., corresponds with the Babylonian *illâ*, from *elû*, 'to go up,' which has the technical signification of being 'settled' or 'made sure.' In the cuneiform contract-tablets of Kappadokia, reference is frequently made to the *garum* or 'stranger,' Heb. *gêr* (ver. 4), who was able to acquire landed property just as Abraham was at Hebron. The Tel el-Amarna correspondents of the Pharaoh begin their letters by saying that they 'prostrate themselves' at his feet, and some of them use the word *istakkhin*, to 'bow,' which is related to the Heb. *yishtakhu* (vers. 7, 12). The Tel el-Amarna correspondents from Canaan further throw light on the expression in ver. 6, 'a prince who is Elohim,' or

'gods.' They address the Pharaoh as 'gods,' the common salutation being 'the king, my lord, my gods, my sun-god.' The last epithet, sun-god, is Egyptian; the other, 'gods,' must be Canaanite. Cp. Ex. xxii. 28 and Ps. lxxxii. 1.

XXIV. 3. In the later Babylonian inscriptions, we read of 'the gods of heaven and earth.' The 'god of heaven' was Anu, the 'god of earth' Bel of Nipur, or the goddess Damkina. Phœnician religion also knew of a Baal-samaim, or 'lord of heaven.'

10. Aram-naharaim, or 'Aram of the Two Rivers,' Euphrates and Tigris. Ebed-tob, the king of Jerusalem, in the Tel el-Amarna correspondence, calls it Nakhrima, with the Canaanite or Hebrew plural termination; but elsewhere, as in the Egyptian Naharina, we have the Aramaic plural ending. In the Mosaic age Aram-naharaim was included in the kingdom of Mitanni, so called from the city of Mitanni on the eastern bank of the Euphrates,

between Kharran and Carchemish. The language of Mitanni was unlike any other with which we are acquainted, and but little of it has as yet been deciphered. Its speakers probably came from the north, from Armenia and the Caucasus. As the power of Mitanni extended westward of the Euphrates, Naharina in the Egyptian inscriptions sometimes embraces the district between that river and the Orontes, as well as Mesopotamia. The land of Nahri or Nairi, 'the rivers,' mentioned in the Assyrian texts, had nothing to do with Aram-naharaim. In the twelfth century B.C. it denoted the country at the sources of the Euphrates and Tigris, from the ninth century downwards the country east of it between Lake Van and the Assyrian frontier.

29. There was a Babylonian god named Laban. When Nabonidos restored Ê-Khulkhul, the temple of the moon-god at Kharran, he says that he began the work 'through the art of Laban, the god of foundations and brickwork' (*libnat*).

Sermonettes on the Golden Texts.

BY THE REV. R. C. FORD, M.A., GRIMSBY.

Assurance of Sonship.

'This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased.'—
MATT. iii. 17.

MATTHEW'S Gospel relates these words as though they were spoken to the Baptist, or to the multitude. Mark and Luke speak as though they were addressed to Jesus. 'Thou art My beloved Son: in Thee I am well pleased.' John says that the Baptist 'beheld the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven: and it abode upon Him.' It is therefore evident that the experience through which Jesus passed at His baptism was known to the Baptist. But the feature of main importance in this incident is not what the Baptist perceived, but what Jesus experienced. As He came up from the water He stood praying, with His eyes fixed on the heavens, which were opened to His gaze. The mysteries and treasures of the abodes of light were revealed to Him. Then, from that region of dazzling light, some of the brightness detached itself, and, descending, not in cloven

tongues, but in the form of a living dove, rested quivering upon the head of Jesus. At the same time the voice of God resounded in His ears and heart, telling Him that He was the Being most tenderly beloved of God. In their own measure all who are brothers and sisters of Jesus are also children of God. Something of this assurance of sonship, which was given to Jesus, is also given to His humblest follower.

I. THIS ASSURANCE WAS REACHED THROUGH MEDITATION ON GOD'S WORD.—God's voice was the echo of God's Word recorded in Old Testament Scriptures. Jesus from a child was a lover of the Scriptures. All the great ones in God's kingdom show their greatness in this, and none so much as Jesus. The Baptist caught the spirit of his work by dwelling on the great deeds of Elijah, and the more indignant passages in the prophets. Jesus nourished His youthful life on the more *gracious* words of Holy Writ, and when John had said, 'Repent,' Jesus said, 'Believe.' John thinks of the storm and deluge of judgment,