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Contributions and Comments.

The Rich Young Ruler.

IN the interesting notes on 'What is it that saves?' in the September issue of THE EXPOSITORY TIMES, the incident of the rich young ruler is used as an illustration. Without reference to its application to the question of Mrs. Humphry Ward, but regarding it *per se*, may I respectfully submit that the exposition given is scarcely adequate, even if it does not miss the mark. The initial inadequacy

is, I think, that it minimises the young ruler himself. The statement is made that Jesus 'tells the young man most courteously that with all his honest pride in the keeping of them (*i.e.* the commandments) he has not kept the ten at all.' But surely this goes beyond the narrative. Three out of the four evangelists report the incident, but none of the accounts, I think, suggest this. On the other hand, St. Mark gives us a note respecting Jesus which would seem to militate against that

exposition. When the ruler has said, 'All these have I kept from my youth,' we read that 'Jesus, beholding him, loved him.' Nor, according to any of the narratives, does Jesus question his statement.

There is no doubt that the ruler was a very choice and earnest spirit, and that Jesus knew it. Probably he had been present at the scene of the blessing of the children, had been struck with the deep spirituality of the Teacher, and the profound law of entrance into the kingdom; and now both mind and heart were seeking higher truth and a diviner life than any he had known. His religious life had been more than a round of ceremony, his reading of the law more than burdening his memory and his conduct with trivialities of refinement. It was a life of the spirit. Therefore,—and his further inquiry, 'What lack I yet?' supports the conclusion,—he must have been surprised and disappointed with the answer he received, simply, 'Do the commandments.'

The second inadequacy is, I think, the interpretation given to the Eighth Commandment, and, by implication, to the rest. But as a matter of fact, was 'Thou shalt not steal' given 'not to protect thy property, oh, luxurious man, but to protect the property of the poor'? Does it not rather cover property to whomsoever it belongs? And again, does this commandment, in and of itself, include the exercise of generosity to 'the beggar at his palace gates'? Not unless he has obtained his riches by oppression and wrong which had involved others in beggary, in which case the remedy is not charity, but restitution. But of this we have no evidence in the narrative.

We shall be led to what is perhaps the true solution by collating the evangelical accounts. And as the same point also elucidates the crux in the narrative that immediately follows, it—the narrative—may be adduced as an illustration. We read that Jesus said to His disciples, 'It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.' 'And they were astonished exceedingly.' And certainly it was a hard saying. For it does not seem easy to explain how the mere *fact* of possession should make it difficult to enter the kingdom. It is St. Mark who gives us the key, 'But Jesus answereth again, Children, how hard it is for them that *trust in riches* to enter into the kingdom of God.' The difficulty, then, is not a matter of having riches, but of trusting in them.

So in this narrative. It is St. Matthew who gives us the key: 'Jesus said unto him, *If thou wouldest be perfect*, sell all' etc. Then, there are gradations, levels, in the religious life. For ordinary people in ordinary ways the keeping of the commandments will open to them the gates of life—if they can be content with that. 'This do and thou shalt live.' But religion is wide and high enough for the choicest and most aspiring souls, for those upon whom the apex of possible attainment exercises an irresistible attraction. Now in the spiritual as in the material world action and reaction are equal and opposite. The rebound is proportionate to the 'expulsive power outward and upward. If you would build a very high tower, the foundations must be correspondingly strong and deep. The height, fulness and wealth of a forest tree have a direct ratio to its rootage. An oak cannot be grown to maturity upon the roots of an apple tree. In one sense everything—even truth—has to be bought. Nothing is given. The heights of attainment can only be reached by sacrifice. The young ruler cannot attain and retain: the gold must be left behind. For the higher path there must ever be the great renunciation.

J. FEATHER.

Croydon.

Chaldeans.

MR. ROUSE seems to assume that the double use of the word 'English' is universal. But this is not the case. The English nation does not 'include Scotch, Irish, Welsh, Australians,' etc. During last century almost invariably literary men used the appropriate words Britons and British when they were referring to the whole Empire. A great and a growing majority in Scotland at least resent exceedingly the unwarrantable use of 'English' as our equivalent for 'British.' And in Ireland and the Colonies there is a strong feeling of the same kind. I hope that Mr. Rouse will not insist that the word 'English,' as applied to the British Empire, is of universal usage in that Empire, when he is made aware of the fact that vast numbers outside of South Britain regard such a use of the word as a breach of good manners and of gentlemanly feeling.

D. K. AUCHTERLONIE.

Craigdam, by Old Meldrum, N.B.

Alleviation.

SOMETIMES there comes a sense of cradled peace
 When the whole world is dark and life is set
 With sore perplexities ; and we forget
 All these in that sweet moment of release.

Our head seems pillowed on some arm unseen
 That stretches far beyond, and holds the key
 Of all the future's labyrinth that we
 In vain have toiled to solve from morn to e'en.

This seems no hour of time's, but something
 spared
 From dim eternity's imagined calm :
 A leaf of pity from the heavenly balm
 To which in hope earth's hopeless wounds were
 bared.

Or so the loneliest wanderer may prove,
 In the black night without one guiding gleam,
 The darkness and his weariness a dream
 Of some vague sheltering home, some tender
 love.

SARAH ROBERTSON MATHESON.

Water-Marks in the Narratives of our Lord's Transfiguration.

LIKE the editor of THE EXPOSITORY TIMES in relation to Dr. A. B. Davidson, I rarely differ from Dr. Hugh Macmillan, and have misgivings of after-
 repentance when I do so. But on reading the above ingenious and finely-toned article, certain doubts were started, which I ask to be permitted summarily to state :—

a. Is it not too dogmatic to begin with this mere *ipse dixit*—'Mount Hermon is the true spot where the wonderful event happened'? I for one, on the contrary, accept the tradition that was accepted so early as by St. Jerome (specially as he is confirmed by Origen in his citation from the 'Gospel

to the Hebrews,' of the second century, in a paragraph that indubitably refers to the Transfiguration),—that Mount Tabor was its scene. There is no such early localisation on Mount Hermon.

β. Is it not, further, too dogmatic—having assumed Mount Hermon to be the scene—to ground the localisation there that 'it is the highest mountain in Palestine.' None of the evangelists states that the Transfiguration took place on 'the highest mountain in Palestine.' The records simply run, 'bringeth them up into an *high* mountain' (Matt. xvii. 1; Mark ix. 2). Not only so, but while Mount Tabor answers to 'an high mountain'—separate and distinctive—Mount Hermon does not, being a mountain-range that throws out innumerable bastions and spurs (as the term is).

γ. Is it not equally misleading and a misreading to accentuate 'the *top* is covered with snow, that never melts in the hottest summer'? There seems here (*meo judicio*) a whole cluster of inaccuracies: (1) Nowhere is it said that the event took place on 'the *top*.' (More of this anon.) (2) It is not the case that the 'snow never melts.' I have stood on the '*top*,' and not only found oasis-like spots there, but perilous pools and rushing streams—as the mountain-side torrents evidence to even those who do not climb to the summit. But (3) it has to my mind an element of the grotesque to represent our Lord and His chosen three 'standing in the snow,' and with the 'snow all around them.' And this merely to find a 'water-mark' of realism. I must hold the whole thing to be artificial and baseless. Apply the same pseudo-realism to other scriptural mentionings of 'snow,' and the fantasticalness of this 'water-mark' will be seen.

δ. Is not the second 'water-mark' based on two inaccuracies? (1) 'No clouds rest upon Mount Tabor, for it is not sufficiently high.' As well say no 'clouds' rest on Calton Hill or Arthur's Seat, which are still less high. But I can testify that twice over in my explorations of Mount Tabor, our party was suddenly involved in a Scotch Highland-like mist, a drenching rain-cloud, or rather flock of clouds, that covered the entire mountain from summit to the bottom. (2) Surely it is to strangely miss the sublimity of the 'cloud' out of which God the Father gave His testimony to confuse it with an ordinary rain-cloud? I cannot take less out of