

souls; naturalism, which would make it irrelevant, is dying. Through the fields of philosophy a fresh wind of spiritual freedom and enterprise has been recently blowing. Science has lost her crass note of gnostic self-sufficiency. Literature is 'seeking after a sign.' Poetry is wistfully sweeping the horizons of faith. The world is tired of negations, and is sick of the east wind of doubt. There is thus a clearer field for our sowing and reaping than for a long time past. If we rise to the occasion, there is a great opportunity of unknown possibility for preachers who have a full, glad, satisfying message, and who know how to deliver it. Truly, there is much on the surface of life just now to discourage us, especially since the devastating world-war; our churches are cold, our congregations meagre, the great world sweeps past our doors in apparent oblivion of our existence. Nevertheless, I hear 'the sound of abundance of rain.'

Oh Wind,

If winter comes, can spring be far behind?

Are our young preachers ready for the coming opportunity? Their sufficiency is of God, and

not of themselves. Let not their academic training be a substitute for that inalienable self-training of mind and heart and spirit for their high calling without which all will be in vain. Remember that old Greek myth—how Prometheus could kindle no sacred flame on earth till he snatched it from heaven; he must needs climb where the gods were before he could light the fire which has never gone out on human hearths. He indeed stole the fire from an unwilling Olympus. We are in a better way. Our Prometheus came forth from the Father of lights; 'God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.' And we are His messengers commissioned to carry the gospel light to every creature, and to kindle the responsive flame in human hearts the wide world over. Let us pray that we be worthy torch-bearers of the gospel. Torch-bearers?—nay, may our *lives* be the torches we carry, incandescent with the truth we proclaim, and the love we would share; so may we burn to the glory of God and the redemption of men till we burn out, and, dying, pass it on to a new race of preachers, who shall in turn pass it on to other ages.

Joshua and the Miracle of the Sun.

BY THE REVEREND GEORGE P. WALLACE, B.D., WARRINGTON.

ON reading the account of the battle of Gibeon as described in our version of the Old Testament (Jos 10¹⁻¹⁴) two points challenge attention by their peculiarity. The first of these is the mention of the moon in Joshua's prayer; the other is the extraordinary rendering of the Hebrew by 'and lasted not to go down about a whole day' (v.¹³). According to the view of the incident generally held, Joshua, anxious lest the day should be too short for the complete destruction of the enemy, prayed that the sun, already in the height of heaven, should not proceed to its setting as in the ordinary course, but should stand still. This prayer was answered, the sun remaining where it was for the space of a day. We can understand Joshua's prayer, wrung out of a passionate desire to complete the great work. It has often been our fate to desire the same thing and to wish that the sun would stay his course and prolong his blessed

ministry so that some pressing piece of work might be completed. But it is certain that on such occasions no thought of the moon was in our minds. Why should Joshua in the height of day think of the moon? Or of what assistance could the moon be to him? Further, to turn to the second point, why should the translators, even of the Revised Version, have rendered נָסָה by 'go down'? Few verbs in Hebrew maintain so consistently their simple root idea. נָסָה is always 'come.' Occasionally it may be rendered 'go.' But on all such occasions it is because the writer is regarding the action from the other end. The going from here is the coming yonder. And the other end is always mentioned, as in such expressions as, 'Whither shall I go,' 'to go to one's fathers,' which could be almost as well rendered, 'Whither shall I come,' 'to come to one's fathers.' In writing to arrange visits to friends at a distance

we have sometimes been uncertain whether to use the word 'go' or the word 'come.' We may equally well say, 'I shall go to-morrow' or 'I shall come to-morrow.' And it is only in such a connexion that the idea of going is ever associated with *נָסַח*. It is quite impossible to use this word of the going down of the sun. One is forced to conclude that this phrase is quite out of keeping with the situation depicted in the story as commonly conceived and that it has simply been wrenched away from its true meaning in order to make it fit in.

Arrested by these two points, we are compelled to ask ourselves whether we have conceived the circumstances aright. We suggest here that they have been misunderstood, that what happened was something different from the familiar story. These difficulties disappear, and at the same time we are delivered from the burden of an inconceivable miracle, if we accept such an account of the events of that day as the following, which in some other points is truer to the Hebrew account than the common version.

By their defection and falling away to the invading force of Israel, the Gibeonites had brought upon themselves the combined hostility of the South Canaanite alliance. This sort of thing must be stopped. Gibeon must suffer *pour encourager les autres* who might be hesitating. A combined attack was made upon the traitorous city. The Gibeonites in desperation sent to Joshua for help. Joshua was at the time at Gilgal, about twenty miles to the east. It is probable that his army was unequal to the combined strength of the alliance. In any case a surprise attack would be sound military tactics. He resolved upon a night march, probably not leaving till after dark lest news should reach the enemy. He would get into position before dawn and use that commonest of military devices, an attack with the earliest light. As the march proceeded, the fatal possibilities, if he should not arrive in time, pressed upon the mind of the commander. Another danger threatened his plan. The moon was in her third quarter and her brilliant light might betray his approach just as really as the sun. And so the prayer was wrung from his anxiety that the morning might be cloudy or misty and so the darkness of night be prolonged. This happened. In the morning heavy clouds shadowed the sky, the forerunners, no doubt, of the storm of rain and

hail which later in the day proved so fatal to the Canaanites. Joshua's surprise was completely successful, and the enemy fled, probably without making almost any resistance, as is the habit of Eastern armies when surprised.

To what extent does the Biblical narrative support this view, which differs so widely from the common view, of what happened? The first part of the account (vv. 7-11) presents no difficulty. In anything, it supports it, because it tells that the Israelite army made their march by night and fell upon the enemy suddenly (v. 9).

After the bare historical account there comes the quotation from the poetical book of Jasher which describes the miracle. In the English Version it stands thus: Joshua prayed, 'Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou, Moon, in the valley of Aijalon. And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed, until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies.' Even as it stands, this account is entirely consistent with the story suggested, while the reference to the moon now becomes extremely pertinent. If the moon appeared to be standing over Aijalon as the sun began to shine full upon Gibeon, that is, if the moon was to the west of the sun, then it was in its third quarter, and, as we have seen, became an extremely important factor in Joshua's plans. But an examination of the language strengthens still further the proposed account. The word rendered 'stand still,' addressed to the sun is *דָּמָה*, which means 'be silent' (cf. 'dumb'). Obviously the command, 'Be silent,' addressed to the sun would more naturally suggest 'refrain from shining; keep dark' than 'continue shining.' The word never means 'stand,' though it sometimes means 'cease' (as Ps 35¹⁵). So again, 'and the sun stood still' read, 'and the sun was silent.' 'And the moon stayed.' Here we have the usual word 'stood' (*עָמַד*). But this word sometimes bears the meaning 'to cease' (Jon 1¹⁶, Gn 29³⁵). And, although in this case it is generally followed by the mention of the action which comes to an end, it can be used without it (2 K 4⁶). This might be more probable in poetry than in prose. On account of an unusual order of the words, it has been suggested that *עָמַד* (also) should be read in place of *עָמַד*. But the unusual order may be due to the poetical form. 'And the sun stood (*עָמַד*) in the midst of heaven.' This might again be rendered 'ceased'

but, as the sun had not begun to shine and therefore could not cease, it would be preferable to give the word its usual meaning. 'And the sun stood, or stayed (where it was, or as it was), in the midst of heaven, and hasted not to come as a perfect (or faultless, or normal) day.' We

have already seen how impossible is the A.V. rendering.

The whole Biblical narrative thus supports a rendering which converts the incident from an unacceptable legend to a very natural and probable story.

Entre Nous.

NEW POETRY.

George Mallam.

In *A Cycle of Sonnets, and Other Verse* (Blackwell; 2s. net), by Mr. George Mallam, the 'other verse' is good, but the sonnets are better. Of the twenty sonnets in the cycle let us quote the last:

PROOF.

Where all is flux of what can we be sure?
We cannot know, save by experiment,
Which oft experienced, to that fact is lent
The Seal of Truth for ever to endure.
Love given or withheld—oh, this we know
As surely true as science-boasted truth.
No sense confirms it; but the bitter ruth
Or radiant joy can never but be so.
That which the spirit takes in faith, it proves
By long experiment is ill or good;
And on the eternal values we must stake
Our character, which grows to what it loves.
Thus proving, in the providence of God,
What Love and Truth by His goodwill can
make.

David McEwen Osborne.

In *The Happy Hills, and Other Poems* (Bryce), Mr. David McEwen Osborne shows himself an easy versifier and something more. He takes his task lightly, but once or twice shows that he can finish a poem perfectly. This is perhaps not the most favourable but a fair example of his manner:

ANY CANTANKEROUS SCOT.

'Let me not to the marriage of true minds
Admit impediment.'

Oh, let me to the marriage of true minds
Declare impediment, and concord spurn;
For love and all the soft delights she finds
Are nought beside high words and ears that burn.
Oh, let me rather, lord of challenge hurled,
While other men like Rizzio touch the lute
Within the arras'd chambers of the world,
Engender and perpetuate dispute;
Expire the breath of life in wordy wars;
Seek Truth and slay and flay her and disjoint;
And 'neath the silent and ironic stars,
Argue the point, and subdivide the point,
And on each subdivision argue still,
Confounding black with white and good with ill.

J. C. Stewart.

Mr. Stewart's *Various Quills* (Stockwell; 4s. net) is a volume of 'Verses and Translations.' And both the verses and the translations are scholarly as well as poetical. Of the verses take this:

BENE VIXIT QUI BENE LATUIT.

I will lead a new life, and quiet shall be Lord
of it,

The rare life for living, the sober life to see,
Every gaudy, garish thing of earth shall be
abhorred of it,

The wreaths and the roaring, the prize and
the fee.

I will be an eremite, but cloistered in some
city's heart,

In it but not of it, near yet far away:
Spurning all its corporate joy, but keeping ever
Pity's heart,

The soft heart for sorrow, and tears for every
day.