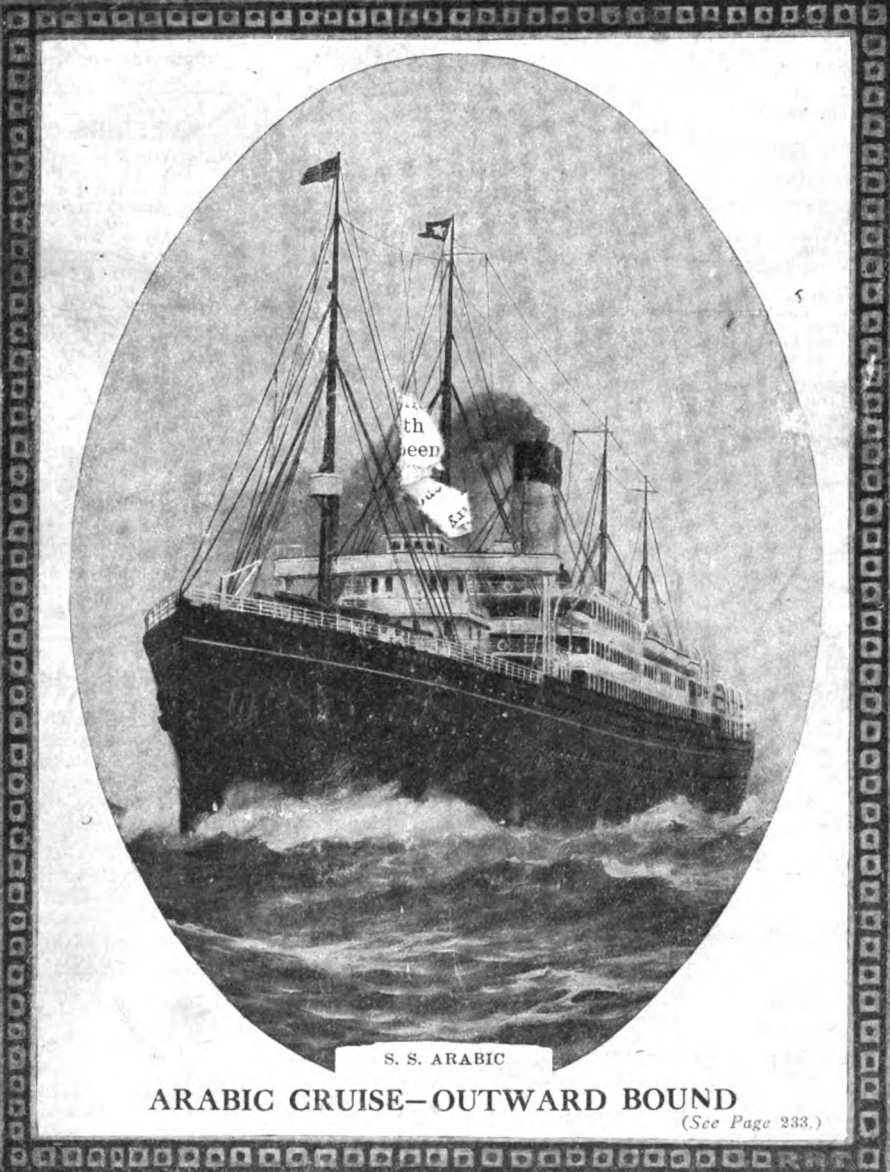


THE NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY

THE NEW YORK OBSERVER

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 1910.



THE NEW YORK OBSERVER

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 1910

Vol. LXXXVIII, No. 8

Established in 1823

Whole No. 4529

Published Weekly by The New York Observer Company at 156 Fifth Avenue, New York. President, Rev. JOHN BANCROFT DEWINS, D.D.; Secretary and Treasurer, JOHN A. OFFORD.

THE PLEADING SOUL.

By the Rev. Joseph S. Van Dyke.

Lord, my feeble, trembling soul
Pleads humbly, make me whole,
'Tis Thee I seek;
Stretch Thy kindly hand to me
And bring me close to Thee,
I am so weak.

Merit none have I with Thee.
But Thou hast thought of me,
In endless love;
Send a beam of light each day
To guide me on the way
To Thee above.

Then my quickened soul may see
What Thou wilt do for me,
Weak tho' I am;
And the life made dear to Thee
Shall henceforth be to me
A pleasing psalm.

When by grief or pain I'm tried
If Thou art by my side
To hold me up;
With my hand secure in Thine,
Inspired by love divine
I'll drink the cup.

Hightstown, N. J.

❖ ❖

The floods in Paris. II.

From Our Own Correspondent.

UNDER dates of Jan. 30, 31, and Feb. 4, other letters have come from the same correspondent who gave in these columns last week some incidents of the floods in Paris. They continue the tale as follows: "You will read in the papers and see photographs of the flood, but nothing can give an idea of the real calamity. It is, in its way, as bad as the San Francisco earthquake, only there was less loss of life and it came more slowly.

"It will take much longer to mend than it took our western people, though, for here it is an old city and we only know a part of the ruin. Worse will come as the waters recede and the old foundations give way. To-day, already the water having sunk one foot, we hear of caving in at different places of the roads. A lady who called just now says her chauffeur this morning suddenly saw the automobile in front of him begin to topple and waver, and he backed his machine away just as the ground subsided and swallowed up the other motor car, chauffeur and all. They vanished entirely among a crumbling mass of debris. This is apt to occur at any of the spots in Paris where the water has filled the underground tunnels and now begins to recede.

"Of course, the great amusement of the inhabitants just now consists in going and looking at the destruction. The most dangerous spots are black with humanity, peering and craning 'to see.' Every bridge not guarded by police or soldiers becomes in ten minutes a massed crowd of people hanging over the surging flood. Once in a while someone falls in and is drowned. In the Rue de Lille the water is ten feet deep. One of Fred's engineers lives there with his wife and four children. They are afraid to move out for fear of being drowned if they slip getting from ladder to boat. I cannot begin to tell the stories of woe. There are over two thousand homeless people to-day in Paris. We are working as hard as we can to clothe and feed them. I have seen a woman to-day who spent

all day yesterday washing little babies. A lady offered her hotel for young mothers and babies to come to, on the one condition that they were all washed before they came in. She provided clothes for them after the bath. So this friend of mine, with several others, got up a bath place, and heated it and bathed all the babies and redressed them in the new clothes, and then sent them in Red Cross automobiles to the lady's private house, where they will have food and bed and luxury until a home is ready for them again.

"The rich suffer, too. All business is at a standstill. No one dares to go about much where they can, and where they cannot usually happens to be just the place they want to be. I had my experience going to the Bon Marche on Thursday, and now that street is ten feet in water and the overflow began while I was in it! The St. Germain Quarter is like a city of the dead; gaping windows and silent houses, row on row of them; the street lights still burn just as they were when the flood rose and cut off all approach. At dusk they seem like the lights burning at a solemn funeral; the dark water and the awful stillness below, and the rows of light shining through the haze. In the gay part of Paris, near Maxim's and the Cafe de Paris, the Hotel Crillon and the Hotel Ritz is the same atmosphere of disaster. No gay music plays, but the weird sound of an underground rush of water or the mechanical thump of some pump at work is heard instead. Desolation, like Sodom and Gomorrah, is the effect and the fact. Worldly goods to the amount of thousands and thousands are destroyed; there is now no possible estimate to be made, but the French people put it in the hundreds of millions. I saw people with the tears rolling down their cheeks turn from looking at the scenes of ruin. This city is so beautiful, and so much of it will be ruined by this calamity.

"Mrs. M— and I had a talk to-day after church. She believes God has sent this to bring the people to their senses. They are without religion or morality, and she says when people get like that God always does warn them of His power, and try and to help them to save themselves. Certainly it has called out all that is best in many of them, for the common men are working like heroes, and they do not seem to know the word fear or fatigue. Boat loads of bread and water bottles, and all kinds of foodstuff are rowed about on the water-filled streets. The prisoners in their homes come to windows and take in the food. There are not nearly enough boats or men, either, but they work hours and never complain. We have been studying to-night the map of the last flood, in 1806, and it was at its worst in exactly the same quarters of Paris as it has affected this time. This shows how dangerous it was to put in all the underground railways at the level they did. They have just served as a conduit for the water, to convey it faster into the city. At one spot the top step of the staircase leading down to the underground is covered with water; a cord is stretched across the step and its terrible fifteen feet of water below, and a placard reads, 'No one can descend; it is forbidden!' That is the French of it. As if anyone would try to go down stairs through fifteen feet of a solid well! We would have put up 'Danger,' and let them find out it was true. I suppose that all is in the New York papers also, as Rodman Wanamaker seems to be sending regular news over for a paper and using a special cable to New York.

"To-day, the 31st, we have a heavy mist over our city. Everyone is happy as the water goes steadily down, and even the poor houseless people are singing in the streets to earn pennies. Two Apaches were lynched yesterday by boatmen, who found them stealing from deserted houses. One of the huge Bowling Green vans was seen yesterday being drawn by horses over their knees in water, to a house in an inundated street; where an enterprising American had decided to leave

Present-Day Life as Live Preachers See It

RELIGION MADE DIFFICULT BY OUR ANIMAL ORIGIN.

By the Rev. Charles H. Parkhurst, D.D.

Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the sons of God.—I John III:1.

DWELLING upon the corrupt side of man's nature is always depressing. If too constantly emphasized, its effect is to produce that same kind of disheartenment and then indifference, as is experienced by the schoolboy when continually reminded of his mental blunders and of his tardy acquisition of knowledge. His ignorance is a fact and he must be made appreciative of it, but will not be stimulated to mental attainment by being relentlessly pursued by that fact. In a certain class in the high school the teacher put all the bright members in one division and the dull ones in another. The situation in which the latter were placed was a chronic reminder to them of their mental imperviousness, and ignorance became a fixed habit with them.

Sin is something the same thing in the heart that ignorance is in the mind. It is there. It is a fact and cannot be blinked at. Disowning it does not displace it. Calling it by some other name does not relieve it. It is so substantial a fact that in one place the prime purpose of Christ's coming into the world is declared to have been to take away the sins of the world. It is there, I say, and last Sabbath we devoted ourselves to that fact as any pulpit will sometimes do if animated by a desire to present religious truth in its completeness; and as Jesus Himself did, who dealt with the matter of sin frankly and never made it tolerable by any process of metaphysical refinement, nor by the use of any ameliorating terms that should disguise sin's inmost quality and intent.

And yet the corrupt ingredients of men's nature were not a theme upon which it was His evident pleasure to dwell. The estimate in which He held man seemed quite to incline Him another way. He appeared more impressed by man's worth than by his unworth. He would not have put Himself to the inconveniences and pains of His life had He not considered that those He came to relieve and to save were worth having it done for them. The Great God Himself testified to man's incalculable preciousness by the plans He formed and the arrangements He instituted for the recovery of man to his pristine estate.

When Christ dealt with the unhappy woman at Jacob's well He passed swiftly and with a divine delicacy over her fault as though there were something in the situation that appealed more earnestly to His regard; something in her that challenged His profounder interest. It was as though He felt that what there was in her of questionable kind was rather an incident of her nature—we might say an accident of her nature—than anything essential to it, or necessarily involved in it. Which is not to say that He regarded it as if trifling significance and a thing to be thought of other than seriously, but that his attitude toward it was that of a physician toward his patient, who looks upon sickness as an interloper that has no business to be there; that the true destiny of the body is to be well; that disease is only an in-

cident, and that the incidental should be gotten rid of by the respectful and confident cultivation of so much of his patient's physical being as the incidental has not succeeded in invading.

And so in our Lord's dealing with the enquirer at the well. He dropped her fault as quickly as He could, and entered gently and firmly, but confidently, into what composed the real woman, into the essential realities of her nature, into her



REV. CHARLES H. PARKHURST, D.D.,
Pastor of the Madison Square Church.

discouraged possibilities, into those appetites of her being that gave her an uneasy longing for something, she did not know what; and so He invited her to look up instead of down: to forget the earthly entanglements of her life and to draw her into companionship also with so much of her own soul as was superior, and as had not been at all corrupted by earthly taint.

And so as one more reason added to those which in previous Sabbaths we have been considering, why man's progress in the knowledge of God and things that are eternal and that are forever fine, is so tardy a one, I want this morning to subjoin this, our failure, from whatever cause induced, to realize or even to believe in man's natural magnificence as a man, and our failure therefore so to live in and be at home in the superior ranges of our being as to be in the line of progress toward regions that will still be always beyond. The tree growing in midforest has its roots in the soil and never abandons its earthly connections; in fact, wins some of its increase in the ground, but it is not a "creeper" but a tree, and year by year moves up and feeds itself upon the fresher air and the clearer sunlight into which by its very ascent it becomes more and more freely admitted.

Our first experience on entering life is a very flat experience, very animal; nothing but animal. We begin where the dog begins. In a way it is a bad start, although under the circumstances it is the only start that is open to us to

make. We have to suppose that, all things considered, it was the best way of initiating us into human existence, otherwise some other method would have been divinely adopted in its stead. It is well for us, though, to appreciate the difficulties and perils involved in entering into life in that way, even though not doubting but what, all in all, that way was the best way. And the difficulty and peril which that method of ingress into the world draws after it is this, that the animal and the material becomes the basis from which we calculate, the standard from which we reckon. And that which can only be seen and tasted and handled continues for so many months, and even years, to be the only thing, or almost the only thing, that comes within reach of our experience, that what is only animal and material becomes not only our basis of estimate, but a very thoroughly established basis, very firmly placed and immovable.

We can illustrate this point, which is a serious one, by the experience of a man familiar only with the English language who travels in Europe or Asia, where the language which is spoken bears little or no resemblance to his own vernacular. He neither speaks nor thinks in the style of speech that he hears all about him, nor understands it. To him everything that is not English is queer, almost absurd, and considered as language nearly as unreal and irrational as the lowing of cattle or the chattering of magpies.

To him, naturally enough, language means the English language. He was born in the atmosphere of English and nurtured in that atmosphere. It was English that he heard before he knew what it meant, and it was English, and only English, that he listened to as he gradually grew into an understanding of what it meant. That language became thus to him a real thing, and, so far as language is concerned, the only real thing. That is an example of the effect that is produced upon a man by the experience that lies at the beginning of his life—an example of the almost irresistible sovereignty which that experience continues to exercise over him even after he has passed a long way beyond his life's first years.

If from the very beginning he had had around him those who spoke not only English but also some language other than that, say French or German, then upon traveling in those countries he would encounter nothing that would be to him a disturbing novelty. His own thoughts and verbal expressions would slip easily along the linguistic groove that those modes of speech afforded him.

Now, this illustration we have drawn out to some length because it pictures before us with a good deal of distinctiveness a principle which tells pretty seriously against us in all the matter of breaking loose from the thralldom imposed by the merely animal and sensuous experience of our first years. The baby's cradle is just as far from the sky and just as close to the ground as a dog's kennel is. Whatever the baby's possibil-

*For a sketch of Dr. Parkhurst, see The Observer of February 3.

ities, viewed purely with regard to its actualities, the baby is the dog's brother, and for a while, and, in cases for a pretty long while, lives in a dog's world and leads a dog's life.

Now, you hardly need to have pointed out to you what the effect of that is and is certain to be. To estimate things, life, people, our own selves, from a material and sensuous standpoint becomes a deeply rooted tendency; a tendency that it is terribly difficult to displace and replace, because it was the tendency that was in us first. It has preempted the ground, and possession is nine points of the law. Once become thoroughly established in the habit of measuring things with an earthly tape-line and it costs a great strain to adopt another in its stead, or even to suppose that there is anything that an earthly tape-line will not suffice to measure.

A very easily understood illustration of the workings of that principle is afforded by the difficulty that people for a long time had and still have in thinking of the earth as going around the sun instead of the sun going around the earth. We were born not at the sun but here on the ground, and naturally therefore refer everything to the ground. The world commenced by thinking of things in that way, making the earth the center of everything, the basis of all calculation in regard to everything else that might be in the sky; and as that was its first way of looking at things, and the way that was held to for a good many thousand years, when Copernicus, Kepler and Galileo removed their apparatus from this little orb of ours and set it down in the sun, there was wrought a revolution in scientific and religious thought that convulsed the entire thinking world, and we still say that the sun rises and goes down. You see from such an example as that just how difficult it is to break loose from the restraint of a tendency that is already in us, strongly entrenched in us, and that commenced and continued to be an impulse in us from the moment of our birth.

Beginning in life then at what was practically an animal level made for us a start that was a very bad and embarrassing one. It was the one through which we entered life, for it was the only one provided for us. It was, we suppose, the best that was available, but it was bad. To this very moment, both in you and me, it tells with unfortunate and embarrassing effect. To us, even though many years removed from our cradle, the real things are things that we can put our hands on and feel of, so that as soon as our thoughts and affections begin to reach out toward what is not matter, cannot be weighed or told off in inches and figures, mind begins to become tremulous and to bristle out in interrogation points. We are like a little child that for the first time steps outside the front gate, looks up and down the street for one bewildered moment and then runs back into the house crying for its mother. So that when for a little time we have been pressing our view a bit of a way beyond the frontier of everyday vision we retreat from the excursion with a sense of recovery, and on resuming our contact with sensuous material have much of the feeling that we are back home again.

Now, if you have followed me in this—and I believe that you have—you realize perhaps with a new distinctness the difficulty we have to contend with. We are not responsible for the difficulty, but only for the way that we deal with it.

The thorough animalism of what is fundamentally our constitution creates in us a prejudice against anything other than that. It is very difficult to get away from our cradle, if only you will let that expression be understood figuratively. We were born at the ground, and climbing into the air produces in us the impression of getting away from home. A stone released in mid-heaven falls to the earth, and there is an analogous kind of gravity that hinders our spiritual ascent from the ground and that tends all the time to pull us back to it if ever we make a little ascent from it.

The tendency to gravitate downward that we are just now speaking of is not sin. It is simply the assertion in us of the sheer materialism that makes out so large a part of our nature as God created it. We will treat as sin that which is sin, but we will not, for the purpose of seeming to be intensely orthodox, call that sin which is of God's own making, even if we do avail of it as an excuse for sin.

So there is our situation and there is our problem. As seen on previous Sabbaths, we have in us a certain impulse heavenward and Godward, but the material world gets in a good deal of work before we are far enough along in our years for the spiritual world to make much appeal to us, and, although the stone in mid-air does, as an actual fact, tend a little to gravitate toward the sun, yet the earth is nearer, and when the stone drops it drops to the ground. Things do not drop up.

If, then, we are to make progress toward that higher, less material and more spiritual state for which we never quite cease to feel we were designed, some steps of a very decided character will require to be taken. And the steps that we are going just now to contemplate will not be in the nature of repentance. Repentance goes along with sin, and we are not talking about sin to-day. Possibly (though not probably) there is no sin that you are conscious of needing to repent of; but even if that is the case, you may still realize, and quite likely do, that while you may occasionally look toward the sky, you are personally as close to the ground as ever, God no better known and religion as far removed as on the day of your birth from being a vital, sustaining and comforting experience of the things which eye hath not seen nor ear heard.

And here we can get another guiding hint from that big volume that was edited and published long before the Book of Genesis was issued, that volume that was divinely indited and whose legible pages lie all widely open in the world about us. I mean the breaking of the vegetable germ from the tough shell in which it is so closely encased, as we are encased in the stubborn husk of our material nature. A kernel of grain, a nut fallen from the walnut tree, is a very hard and helpless thing. Even assuming that there is within it something of different quality and texture from that of the shell itself, yet in its general aspect there is nothing propitious; and in looking at an acorn, for instance, a person who had no knowledge of the properties of vegetable life would consider it, would be obliged to consider it, as simply preposterous that there could be anything within it that could crack its way out into the open air, and, still less, anything that, having in this way released itself from confinement, could climb into the air tens and scores of feet. One, after a little experience, becomes

accustomed to placing but little emphasis on the outward aspect of things.

The bit of life that is so snugly immured within the shell, as we are immured in our animal nature, is not to be blamed for the difficult start that it has had given to it. It might perhaps have been placed out in the open, with nothing for it to crush its way through on its way to becoming a tree; we cannot say. So far there is nothing to repent of; there is no vegetable iniquity involved in being so placed as to have to fight its way out and up. That is only a part of the divine arrangement; is in beautiful keeping with the general construction of things. And yet that germ, that speck of interior life, is so constituted and is so related to certain existing influences in nature that when it and the shell which so tenaciously imprisons it are suitably placed something will quietly and pretty easily, apparently, commence bestirring itself on the inside there, and, without there having been much in the way of crowding or pushing, the shell will considerably give way to what is transpiring within, and the germ, although so tender, will emerge without showing any sign of having been bruised in the course of its exit.

This little parable would hardly seem to need much in the way of explanation. Of course that acorn, however full of vital possibility, would never have come to anything if it had been kept in a cold and dry place. People plant corn where they expect the sun is going to shine and where it is sometimes going to rain. What is inside of the shell somehow has a feeling for moisture; somehow has nerves that detect the embrace around it of warm soil; somehow has an eye that is made wakeful when a ray of sunshine moves toward it through the overlying soil and the enveloping shell. It is all very mysterious and delicately beautiful, but it succeeds if the acorn is placed right.

You see what this means. It would be very foolish to put a grain of wheat in a field of sand in which there was no moisture and in which there were perhaps the remains of last winter's frost, and then because the seed did not come up conclude that vegetable life is a myth and autumn harvests the product of an undisciplined imagination.

My friend, you to whom religion is a theory only and not an experience and God an idea and not a friend, where are you placed, in dry soil or in moist soil, in the sunshine or in the shadow; where are you keeping your soul? When you enter such a place as this and you see evidences that some around you are impressed with the sweet solemnity of the occasion do you try to bring your own spirit close to the touch of the influences that seem hovering about us? When you approach near to those who appear to have come under a pressure from above that brings strength and comfort and new vision do you seek to let the warmth of such a one's experience enter into your interior life in the way in which the sunbeam knocks at the door of the seed-grain? Do you place your own heart so near to the approach of God's Word that that Word has opportunity to start the very tiniest echo in your inward sanctuary? Do you ever kneel before the Great Unknown till it is so absolutely quiet within you that the "still small voice" is able to make itself heard by you and felt by you? Do you walk with your face to the ground or with an eye that is uplifted?