

The Bible Student.

CONTINUING

The Bible Student and Religious Outlook.

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To err is human. To blunder might almost be said to be the peculiar property of, if **Errors and Blunders.** not the wise man, yet the man of learning—more or less. There is such a thing as pure error: a blunder is, on the other hand, essentially confusion, and he who blunders is, in the very nature of the case, "mixed." He is not like the lost horse wandering in the steppes: he is like the sleepy horse stumbling in the path. The very core of a blunder is, therefore, incongruity: and it is on this account that it ordinarily strikes us as amusing; for incongruity is the soul of humor. The incongruity may indeed pass beyond the limits of the amusing to the absurd, and may be such as to call out rather indignation than a smile; but in any case, it is the presence of mismatched elements in the phenomenon which raises it from the plane of a mere error into the dignity of a blunder. The late Mr. EDWARD A. FREEMAN, in his inimitable way, genially defines a blunder accordingly thus:—"A blunder is a work of art. An utterly stupid man, an utterly ignorant man, may

make dull mistakes and dull confusions; he cannot make a good blunder. To make a good blunder needs cleverness, and it needs knowledge—imperfect knowledge certainly, but still some knowledge, not utter ignorance." Indeed, it does not always imply ignorance at all,—sleepiness rather. The best blunders are but the nods of Homers; and a Homer is as necessary for their production as the nod.

We see the blunder in its most genial form when no ignorance is argued at all. In **Various Kinds Of Blunders.** these cases, it creates nothing in the hearer but a diverted smile, in which the perpetrator joins without embarrassment. Instances may be found in Dr. HERRICK JOHNSON'S declaration that Peter "covered before a barmaid" (Lectures on the New Testament, Etc.: The American Tract Society, 1881, p. 7), and Dr. CHARLES WADSWORTH'S explanation, in one of his printed sermons, that the Epistle to the Colossians "had been penned by two private secretaries, Tycheus and a young colored man, Onesimus." Neither writer so

speaks in ignorance. It is only a case of temporary distraction from the faultless facts in the interests of the vividness of the realization of the scene under modern conditions. It is only an instance in the art of word-painting analogous to PAUL VERONESE depicting the actors in the scenes in Christ's career, clothed in all the bravery of the Italian court-costumes of the Renaissance. The incongruity is of a totally different kind and arises out of an entirely different source, when, at the end of the article "Angels" in the so-called *Schaff-Herzog Encyclopaedia* we find cited, as an authority on the subject, the demon Asmodi (Asmodeus) himself. As Dr. EZRA ABBOT pointed out (*The Independent*, March 1, 1883), this had been ignorantly taken over from the article "Anges" in LICHTENBERGER'S *Encyclopaedie des Sciences Religieuses*, where, as the author of that article, Prof. WABNITZ, explained, it had arisen through a typographical error. What was thus little more than an error in *Lichtenberger* became a somewhat serious blunder in *Schaff-Herzog*—simply because technical knowledge was not presumable in the compositor of the one, but was presumable in the compiler of the other. It is to be feared that such a blunder as this produces in the reader, along with a smile, something like an amused irritation; he thinks such a blunder too incongruous with the expectations rightly raised by such a treatise to be altogether a laughing matter. And do we not pass beyond the laughing stage altogether, when we meet with such a sentence as this, on the first page of the English Translation of WEISS' *Life of Christ*: "Fifty days later, on the Jews' weekly holy day, the disciples of the crucified one appeared for the first time publicly in Jerusalem?" We ask with some

indignation whether a writer who does not know the Sabbath from the Pentecost,—the weekly feast from the feast of weeks,—is quite competent to render such a book. And our indignation is not allayed, when, a few pages further on (p. 18), we stumble against the blind sentence: "At a later period it was established beyond doubt, by his pupil Tatian, that the latter had himself composed a harmony of our four Gospels." It may be easy for us to draw out our pencil and correct the "was" into "is," and the "by" into "of," and so recover some meaning for the sentence. But it is easy to ask also, why was it impossible for the translator to do this?—or, rather, how was it possible for him not to do it? The incongruity here is the incongruity between undertaking and capacity: and the "blunder" falls into the lowest class,—of evidence of simple incompetency.

Let us return to the more simply amusing class of blunders,—the blunders of the napping scholars as we may call them,—and enjoy a few samples from the domain of secular learning. Any child might be trusted, one would think, to know what the word "end-long" means: or if he chanced not to do so, any dictionary would enlighten him. But Mrs. HAWES, in her *Chaucer for Schools*, cannot pass the word without learned comment, when it occurs in the account of the duel between Palamon and Arcite: "He priked endelonge the large place." This is what she makes of it: "*Endlong*. A feat used for display. By spurring a horse on one side, and at the same time holding him tight with a severe bit, he is made to curvet, or advance endlong in short bounds. The horse of Arcite, tired and excited, was not up

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to the effort and Arcite was exhausted." Here is another even more delightful instance, from a very learned French writer on *Les Polynésiens*, Dr. A. LESSON. "However this may be," he says, "the indigenes, in order to manifest their intertribal distinctions, have adopted differing sentences or devises: SHORTLAND, TAYLOR and THOMPSON give to these devises, the name of 'mottos.' It is probable that this is not the right word; for 'moto' in Maori signifies only 'to box,' 'to strike with the fist.' It is our opinion that the indigenous expression is 'motu,' which means 'divided,' 'separation,' 'division,' 'distinctive sign.' Each tribe now has its 'motu.'" It never dawns on his learned mind that "motto" is an English word; and one imagines that Dr. LESSON is capable of finding a Maori etymology for any combination of letters supplied him. Here is an even more delicious example—this time (lest we should seem not to admit the Germans into the great triad of nations) taken from that excessively learned publication, WÖLFFLIN'S *Archiv für lateinische Lexicographie* (1886, III. 213). A. OTTO is writing on "The Gods in Latin Proverbs," and remarks: "We read of Apollo in AMBROSE'S *de ben. patr.*, 12, 59: 'As the good husbandman said, "I have planted, Apollo watered,"—where, without doubt, Apollo is identified with the Sun-God who pours down the rain and sunshine upon the fields.'" Dear old book-worm! Has he never had time to read his New Testament!

We have not accumulated these instances idly, or for their own sake. We have desired to take the edge off of the shame with which

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we are afflicted when we face the blunders committed by accredited Christian teachers, when they stray beyond their tether and essay to be learned beyond their bounds. We hope we have shown that other than Christian teachers can be ludicrously absurd in their verbal criticisms. We confess with aversion of face, however, that none seem to be able to be quite as ludicrously absurd as Christian teachers. We would not for the world exhibit to the outside world our whole collection of choice gems of Christian pseudo-learning. But we purpose to set down two examples here to point our moral, and, we trust, also, to adorn our tale. And in doing so we shall be perfectly frank, and give names and sources and all. The fullness of the lesson depends on these things. And the entire truth is always due, when such things are mentioned at all. Our first example, then, purports to be from the pen of the Rev. Dr. JOHN VAUGHAN LEWIS, though we clipped it, some years ago, from the column of *The Sunday School Times*, which it heads: "Worth Repeating." If so, we may be well justified in repeating it. Here it is: "Three Marys, and three 'loves.' The Greek has three words, where we have one, to express the idea of 'love:' *Eros*, *Philia*, *Agape*. The first had become so degraded among the Gentiles, that it is never employed once in the New Testament, but St. Paul invented another, *Charitas*, to complete the triad, which now reads (*Eros* being discarded) *Philia*, *Agape*, *Charitas*; all clean words and expressing worthy emotions. Mary Magdalene's was an impassioned love, not rebuked of Christ in the days of his flesh; but which might not 'touch' his risen person (*Philia*). "Mary Cleopas' was a sympathetic love that caught its best inspiration from her sister,

the blessed Virgin (*Agape*). "St. Mary's, the virgin mother, was a spiritual love, originally from above (*Charitas*)."

For elaborated absurdity, it may seem that this is scarcely to be surpassed. That it may be equalled, however, our next example will show. It is from the pen of no less esteemed a teacher than the Rev. G. CAMPBELL MORGAN, and appears in no less valuable a journal than Mr. MOODY'S *Record of Christian Work* (February, 1900, p. 97). It reads as follows:

"There is deep significance in the name by which God here declares Himself, JEHOVAH. It is a combination of three Hebrew words, which may be translated into an English form thus: Yehi, 'He will be;' Hove, 'being,' and Hahyah, 'He was.' A combination is made from the three words by taking the first syllable of the first, YEHI, the middle syllable of the second, hOVE, and the last syllable of the third, hahyAH, so that we have the name, YEHOVAH. The whole name means, 'He that will be. He that is. He that was.' Thus the very name brings man into the presence of the Supreme, the Eternal, the Self-existent God. Who is because He is—a great and perpetual mystery to the finite mind of man, and for the most part beyond all human analysis. If your mind reaches out to the limitless stretches of future generations, God says, 'I am He that will be.' If you think of the present moment with all its marvelous manifestations of life and order and mystery and revelation, God says, 'I am He that is.' If you carry your mind as far back as you can into the infinite spaces of the past, God says, 'I am He that was.'"

The moral we have in mind in exhibiting these "blunders" is assur-

edly too obvious to require enforcement.

The Moral.

They are "blunders"—and hence they amuse. But they are such elaborate "blunders" that they necessarily have some further effect than merely to amuse. Is there not a hint of an entirely different quality present here from that which caused a happy smile to rise on our faces when we read of Dr. HERRICK JOHNSON'S "barmaid," and Dr. CHARLES WADSWORTH'S "young colored man?" Will any one contend that such extracts are altogether pleasant reading? We shall not say to say it now, but we think we can trust every reader of these extracts to say to his own heart a word in favor of sound Christian scholarship. Of course this phrase is grossly inadequate. It does not require much "sound scholarship" to know that the New Testament was not written in Latin, or to know that the pronunciation "Jehovah" was not aboriginal. That is the reason why these elaborated discussions are so entertaining as "blunders." But it is enough for our moral that we insist here on the need of sound scholarship in the expounders to us of Greek and Hebrew terms.

In the enforcement of this moral, let us turn the tables on our readers.

Our Own Liability to Blunder.

You are incapable of supposing "*Charitas*" a Greek word? Granted. But does that carry you very far? Are you sure you have a sound knowledge of the synonymy of the Greek words for "love?" Of course you have read TRENCH. And you can turn up the references given in THAYER-GRIMM, and it is eminently desirable to do so. But are you sure you have had the last word, even then, on this problem? Of course you know the origin of the form "Je-

hovah." Do you? Its *historical* origin is so much a matter of merely curious interest that it may not be improper to doubt whether most of us have ever seriously attended to it. Our reference books in general use—even the latest and best of them—tell us after all very little about it. Dr. DAVIS' admirable *Bible Dictionary* informs us that Jehovah is "the European pronunciation" of the tetragram. Dr. DAVIDSON in Hastings' *Bible Dictionary* informs us that "it is not older in date than the time of the Reformation (1520)." Are none of our readers surprised by these facts? Let DILLMANN then tell us briefly the whole story: "That 'Jehovah' is no form at all, and rests only on misunderstanding of the *Qerè perpetuum* of the Massorites, who read it sometimes 'Adonai' and sometimes 'Elohim,' is well enough known: no Jew ever read 'Jehovah' and, indeed, no Christian for the first fifteen hundred years of our era; GALATIN, the Italian confessor of Leo X, first ventured on 'Jehovah' and the pronunciation spread rapidly in the 16th century, although LUTHER, in his version at least, still retains 'Lord' for it" (*Altest. Theologie*, p. 215). That is DILLMANN'S account; and we set it down here for what it is worth. We observe only in passing that Jehovah was already an English word in 1530 and appears in TYNDALE'S *Pentateuch* of that year (Ex. vi. 3, xvii. 15). The Wyckliffite versions (according to FORSHALL and MADDEN) read Adonay (Adonai) at Ex. vi. 3, to which the explanation was added: "That is tetragrammaton, that signifieth Goddis being nakedly, without consideration to creatures." Are our readers sure that there is not yet something to learn on even so minor a point as the history of the form "Jehovah"—that we may not all "blunder" over it. B. B. W.

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We do not ordinarily expect to find sentiment in book notices; and yet, occasionally, it "Idle Tears." obtrudes itself even there. Such was the case in a recent review of Dr. William Henry Green's valuable and timely work: "General Introduction to the Old Testament." The writer of the notice, just as he was concluding, permitted the following sentence to escape from his pen: "A pathetic feature of the work is, that in appealing to authorities in support of his views, Prof. Green is obliged to call a roll of the dead." The implications in this sentence are sufficiently obvious. The writer of it, himself too well informed to share in what he is pleased to regard as Dr. Green's antiquated conceptions, still finds his sensibilities stirred by the isolation that surrounded that venerable scholar, whom he pictures in his imagination as having been left behind by the advancing tide of modern thought—as "one alive among the dead." The sentence looked at as sentiment, only lacks a certain ring of genuineness to make it, if not less superfluous, at least generous. Looked at as irony, it is, perhaps, not the less admirable for being wholly harmless. Indeed, we can imagine the sage of Princeton, studying this sentence with all the piquant curiosity with which he might have examined a sharp pointed, highly polished dart, hurled at him by one wholly confident that it would reach its mark, and make its mark, because wholly unconscious that he himself was looking at that mark through a powerfully refracting medium. While this fine sentence will doubtless fulfill its mission in the case of thoughtless readers, no one can be more fully aware than its discriminating author,