

enemy. They probably thought to overwhelm me by 'back-stairs influence' at Downing Street ; and I have no doubt that it has been applied most unsparingly by the Bishops of Winchester, Capetown, &c. ; and therefore Lord Kimberley has really done a very kind as well as sagacious thing, in referring it to the Privy Council. . . I only hope that the Liberals in England will be willing to help with funds, should they be needed, as I fear they will be ; for it would utterly ruin *me* to have to bear them, and our Church Council is doing its very best, under Mr. Hughes's most active and disinterested exertions, to support the clergy."

TO THE REV. C. VOYSEY.

"BISHOPSTOWE, August 15, 1872.

- "I must write a few lines in reply to yours of June 11, for which I thank you ; and as I am pressed for time you will excuse any hurried expressions of mine, being assured, I hope, that I respect and love you very sincerely as a faithful servant of the God of Truth, according to your light, and that I am not going to renounce your friendship and fellowship because I differ from you on some points of importance.
- "And I *do* differ very strongly indeed—rather with my whole soul I object to your warfare against the name of *Christianity* and the character of *Christ*. You have no right to assume that those few passages of the Gospels, which in your eyes seem derogatory to His character, are historical, while you utterly reject those which record His miraculous actions. I am confident that you are doing harm by this kind of preaching, which what you say on the other side will never undo. You know I said as much to you long ago—perhaps not so plainly. A mail or two ago a warm supporter of yours, and frequent attendant at your services, expressed great regret at the manner in which you spoke of Christ. I feel sure that you would not do so of a deceased friend of your own whom you thoroughly revered. Take Mr. Maurice, for instance. You and I know well enough what grounds we have of complaint against him ; but we

should not think of bringing forward such defects as we *know* of, whereas you expose to view what you *suppose* to be defects in the character of Christ, but which you do not know of, but only receive on very uncertain evidence ; and you do this when to multitudes, who do not believe in the Deity of Christ, His name is most dear and precious. However well grounded may be your complaints of the cowardice of some of the Broad Churchmen, it is *impossible*—you have made it impossible—that they should ally themselves intimately with you. . . . The expressions of scorn, and even hatred, which you express for the name of Christian . . . remind me of Voltaire's famous motto, '*Écrasez l'Infâme,*' by which, however, he did *not* mean Christianity or Christ, for he wrote to D'Alembert, 'You are well aware that I speak of superstition only, for as to the Christian religion I respect and love it, like you.' Why should you attack Christianity, instead of the superstition which has well-nigh crushed Christianity? Are there not multitudes of Christians, in *my* sense of the word, whom such speeches as yours must drive poles asunder from you? when in heart, I fully believe, if they understood the real object of your life and labours, they would be drawn very closely to you—such expressions, *e.g.*, as, 'Let the Christians only agree in finding an authority which they will all recognise. . . . Until they know how to settle their own disputes, and especially disputes as to what Christianity is, how can they expect us to become Christians?' One might excuse such words, which appear to me simply nonsense, from Voltaire or Tom Paine, living a century ago, in a wretched age ; but for an intelligent English clergyman in this age! and for one who thinks that he is helping to 'preserve the Church of England!'"

The death of Bishop Gray brought back to the Bishop of Natal the memory of years of happy and kindly intercourse, which had preceded the mournful disputes of later times. It also furnished an opportunity for rectifying the mistakes of the late Metropolitan, and restoring his province to that

organic connexion with the mother Church, which his own act had severed. Eager to avail himself of the opening thus offered, the Bishop addressed himself, in a spirit of singular moderation and of high judicial impartiality, to the Archbishop of Canterbury (Dr. Tait).

TO THE ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY.

“ BISHOPSTOWE, *October 10, 1872.*

“ MY LORD ARCHBISHOP,

“ As senior Bishop of the Church of England in these parts, I feel it to be my duty to bring before your Grace certain particulars which may not be fully known in England, but which appear to me of great importance, and necessary to be brought to the notice of those in authority, who, like your Grace, may be called to take a prominent part in filling up the vacancy caused by the decease of the Bishop of Capetown. I will not expatiate on the loss sustained by South Africa through this event. But I am sure that your Grace will believe that the differences which have practically severed my connexion with our late Metropolitan for some years past have not blinded me to the eminent virtues of his character, and have only deepened the pain with which I have received the announcement of his death. I am most unwilling on every ground to ‘stretch beyond the measure of the rule’ assigned to me in my own diocese, and interfere with the diocese of Capetown. But, after mature consideration, I have come to the conclusion that I should be culpably negligent of my own duty to the Church, of which I am the senior Bishop in this province, if I did not come forward at this crisis, to do my part towards securing due protection, in the appointment of the next Bishop, for the vast amount of property belonging to that Church which lies within the diocese of Capetown.

“ In a letter addressed to Earl Kimberley on the 14th of December, 1871, in opposition to a Bill which has passed the Natal Legislature, for vesting in the Bishop of Natal and his successors certain lands in this colony, which were

originally transferred 'in trust for the English Church,' to the Bishop of Capetown and his successors under the letters patent establishing the former see of Capetown—of which letter a copy has been forwarded by my legal agents in England—Bishop Gray, it appears, wrote with reference to those lands :—'The property is now vested in me by name and in my successors in the see of Capetown. . . . The Provincial Synod has since that time appointed trustees for the holding of such property, which by Act of Parliament the see is able to divest itself of. I have transferred to trustees appointed by the Provincial Synod property to the value of full £100,000. The Bishop of Grahamstown has done the same. I am ready to transfer to the same body property held by me in Natal, if desired.'

"But your Grace will no doubt be aware that the Privy Council judgement of July 20, 1869, has ruled with respect to some portion of this very property, held formerly by Bishop Gray in Natal, under his first letters patent, as follows :—'The words quoted from the Bishop of Capetown's patent [*i.e.* the *second* patent, that of 1853] are plainly insufficient to give him any estate in the land or premises in question, or to continue any estate in him. He ceased to be trustee when he resigned. He then ceased to have any interest in it, legal or otherwise, under the grant.' This applies also to all property in Natal similarly situated. It would therefore have been impossible for him to have transferred, as he here proposes to do, such property to 'the trustees appointed by the Provincial Synod,' since he had no legal hold upon it. He had 'ceased to have any interest in it, legal or otherwise, under the grant.'

"But this decision equally affects the property similarly transferred to him under his first patent, within that part of his original diocese which forms the present dioceses of Capetown and Grahamstown; he 'ceased to have any interest in it, legal or otherwise,' under the original grants, when he resigned the office which he held under these letters patent. He was not, therefore, able to transfer to the Bishop (Cotterill) of Grahamstown that portion of this

property which lay within the diocese of Grahamstown; and he was equally unable to transfer the property belonging to the Church of England which he formerly held under similar circumstances within the present diocese of Capetown 'to the trustees appointed by the Provincial Synod'; nor, of course, could the Bishop of Grahamstown transfer to such trustees property which he never legally held. It is true that, 'by Act of the Cape Parliament,' No. 36 of 1860, the see of Capetown was able to divest itself of 'certain property *which it then held*'—'all or any of the lands or other immovable property *now vested in the Bishop of Capetown and his successors*, but situate, lying, and being within the diocese of Grahamstown.' But it could not, of course, transfer, under this Act, property vested in the *former* Bishop of Capetown, but not '*now vested*' in the Bishop of Capetown. In fact, the Act in question applies only to such lands as may have been acquired under the second patent. I do not know what these may be, but I should suppose that they form but a very small portion of the 'property to the value of full £100,000,' mentioned by Bishop Gray. I repeat, it appears to me beyond all question that none of the lands held by Bishop Gray 'under the first patent within the present dioceses of Capetown and Grahamstown' passed to him under the second patent, for the clause in that patent which may have been, perhaps, inserted to provide for this very difficulty among others—viz. 'And we are moreover pleased to order and direct that the said Bishop of Capetown under that title may take up, continue, and proceed with any act or engagement lawfully commenced, done, or entered into [by him] as Bishop of Capetown, under the letters patent heretofore granted to him as Bishop of the said see of Capetown'—is obviously invalid, since at the time when this patent was issued (December 8, 1853) the Crown had no longer power to legislate for the Cape Colony. Accordingly, the transfers of such lands, whether to the Bishop of Grahamstown or to the Provincial Synod, are altogether illegal and invalid, and must be inevitably ascertained to be so whenever the

validity of any one of them comes to be tested in a court of law.<sup>1</sup>

“ Thus it would appear that at the present moment a vast amount of property belonging to the Church of England in these two dioceses is lying now without any trustee who can act legally on behalf of the Church in respect of it. The same is, of course, true in this diocese, except that the chief portion of the lands which the Church possesses in this colony have been acquired by me, and are vested, ‘in trust for the Church of England,’ in the Bishop of Natal and his successors in that see. The Bill passed by our local Legislature, which awaits now Her Majesty’s decision, was intended to remedy this difficulty, for nothing can be done to improve permanently the property in question—*e.g.* in the way of granting leases for purposes of building, sugar-growing, coffee-planting, &c.—for want of a trustee; and rates are accumulating, year by year, upon some of them, which threaten to eat them up eventually. Should it be the case that no other ‘Bishop of Natal’ will be consecrated under Royal letters patent, yet that would not prevent a Bishop being consecrated by your Grace with Royal permission, who would be a Bishop of the Church of England, and as such capable of filling this see and being legally recognised as my successor, from an equitable point of view. But I apprehend that it is impossible that one who is not a Bishop of the Church of England can be, in any sense, held legally to be a successor either of the Bishop of Natal, or of the original or late Bishop of Capetown, or can have any equitable claim to enter upon the trusts in question.

“ I would venture also to submit to your Grace that the Provincial Synod of the ‘Church of the Province of South Africa,’ as at present constituted, cannot be a fitting body to nominate trustees for the management of property belonging to the Church of England :—

“ (1) Because that Synod has expressly excluded the Bishop,

<sup>1</sup> See the letter to Mr. Domville of September 10, 1867 above (p. 182).

clergy, and laity of the diocese of Natal from all share in its deliberations.

- “(2) Because it is provided in Article I. of the constitutions of the ‘Church of the Province of South Africa’ that in the interpretation of the standards and formularies, the Church of this province be not held to be bound by decisions in questions of faith and doctrine, or in questions of discipline relating to faith and doctrine, other than those of its own ecclesiastical tribunals, or of such other tribunal as may be accepted by the Provincial Synod as a tribunal of appeal; and consequently decisions of such tribunals may be in force in this Church at variance with those which regulate the Church of England, while by Canon 17, Rule 15, it is provided that ‘any person against whom judgement has been given, who shall refuse to obey the sentence of any tribunal of this Church, shall be, if not sentenced to suspension or deprivation, *ipso facto* suspended; and if sentenced to suspension or deprivation, *ipso facto* excommunicate.’
- “(3) Because the Synod, by Canon 14, Rule 11, ‘forbids any clergyman to celebrate holy matrimony between persons the divorced husband or wife of either of whom is still alive,’ thus making it criminal for the clergy of the ‘Church of the Province of South Africa’ to do what would be perfectly lawful for a clergyman of the Church of England.
- “On the above grounds it appears to me certain that the courts of law would not recognize such a body as this as a fitting representative of the Church of England in these parts. Nor could a law be passed taking such lands from the Church of England, and vesting them in the ‘Church of the Province of South Africa’ with its present code of laws, without doing a grievous wrong to those clergy and laity in the dioceses of Capetown and Grahamstown who desire to remain attached members of the Church of England, and to enjoy the blessing of her liberties and her laws; so that, for instance, no clergyman shall be deprived except for any lawful cause—that is, ‘for such cause as, having regard to any differences which may arise from the

circumstances of the colony, would authorise the deprivation of a clergyman by his Bishop in England' (Privy Council in the Long judgement).

"These are the facts which I wished to set before your Grace. It is impossible for me to conjecture what course may be taken, under the circumstances, by the clergy and laity of the diocese of Capetown. They may perhaps elect a Bishop under the rules of the 'Church of the Province of South Africa,' and such Bishop may be consecrated, as Bishops Webb and Merriman were, as Bishops of that Church, and not as Bishops of the Church of England. In that case, I apprehend, serious difficulties would arise, if the authority of such a Bishop were at any time disputed in the law courts, when exercised in respect of any of the properties belonging to the Church of England; as, in fact, the authority of Bishop Merriman, though he is personally regarded with high respect, is at this moment, I believe, contested, on principle, before the Supreme Court at Capetown, by certain lay members of the Church of England in respect of the Church at Queenstown in the diocese of Grahamstown.

"Moreover, the above rules (Preliminary Resolutions, No. 1) define the said 'province' as consisting of 'the dioceses of Capetown, of Grahamstown, of Maritzburg [embracing the diocese of Natal], of St. Helena, and of the Orange Free State, which were originally comprehended in one diocese of Capetown, and has been constituted an ecclesiastical province, of which Capetown is the Metropolitan see, such constitution having been determined for them in accordance with the decision of authorities of the English Church, through the intention or effect of acts of the Crown under which the said diocese was subdivided.' Such language, it would seem, can only be understood of the diocese of Natal as legally existing by virtue of the Queen's letters patent, and in accordance with this in Article XXIV. of the Constitution express mention is made of 'the diocese of Maritzburg or Natal' being one of the dioceses of the said province.



“Now in Canon 2, Rule 2, it is provided that, ‘whenever the Metropolitan see is vacant, the Bishop who by consecration is senior among the Bishops of the province, shall execute all functions appertaining to the office of the Metropolitan until the see be again canonically filled, and during the vacancy the other Bishops of the province shall render to the said Bishop such obedience as they are bound to give to the Metropolitan.’ Under these rules, I imagine that the senior Bishop of the province would be held in a court of law to be at the present time the Bishop of Natal; and that any proceedings in which any other Bishop of the province during the vacancy of the see of Capetown may undertake to ‘execute functions appertaining to the office of the Metropolitan,’—*e.g.* ‘to summon a Provincial Synod and preside at it,’ ‘to confirm with his comprovincials the election of a Bishop of the province’ (Canon 2)—would be pronounced in a court of law invalid, according to the laws to which the members of that Church have voluntarily submitted themselves. I need hardly say that I have no desire whatever under existing circumstances to intrude myself into the affairs of Churchmen at Capetown. I merely wish to call attention to the facts of the case, as they appear to me to stand at present, and especially to the necessity which under these rules exists that in every case of the election of a Bishop there must be a confirmation by the Bishops of the province, including the Metropolitan (Canon 3) or his *proper* representative.

“It is possible that these difficulties may be felt by Churchmen at Capetown, and that the rules of the ‘Provincial Synod’ may be set aside, and direct application made by the clergy and laity of the bereaved diocese to the authorities in England, to appoint and consecrate a new Bishop for them with the permission of the Crown, who in that case, being a Bishop of the Church of England, might I presume, be regarded in a court of law as successor in effect to the late Bishop of the see of Capetown; and being appointed by the heads of the Church in England might not need the confirmation prescribed by the rules aforesaid,

though even then some provision would have to be made by law for the proper tenure and discharge of the trusts now lying in abeyance in the dioceses of Capetown and Grahams-town, or in that of Natal, for which our local Legislature has sought to provide; and such Bishop would, of course, be bound to act according to the laws of the Church of England, and not according to those of the 'Church of the Province of South Africa,' wherever these latter differ from the former.

"Should such be the course which, under Divine Providence, affairs may take, and assuming that the Metropolitan see would no longer be sustained by Royal letters patent I should gladly recognise for myself the Metropolitan office of such a Bishop, in accordance with the provisions of my own letters patent, supposing, of course, that he will adhere to the system of the Church of England as paramount to any rules of the 'Church of the Provinces of South Africa.' And I should heartily rejoice, if under his auspices those rules should be purged of such provisions as conflict with the laws of the Church of England, in which case I venture to believe that they would be accepted cordially by the clergy and laity of this diocese, and the Constitution be re-established which was 'determined for these dioceses in accordance with the decision of authorities of the English Church, through the intention or effect of acts of the Crown.'

"I have the honour to be, my Lord Archbishop, your Grace's very faithful and most obedient servant,

"J. W. NATAL."

TO W. H. DOMVILLE, ESQ.

"BISHOPSTOWE, *October 12, 1872.*

... "I have heard this morning from Port Elizabeth, and I fancy that they are all at sea at Capetown, and don't know what to do. And I am informed, on what is thought to be good authority, that Canon Ogilvie has been sent to St. Helena, ostensibly to summon Bishop Welby (who is an infirm, nervous old gentleman, quite unfit for rough work)—

but really to prevent his coming—to undertake the office of Acting-Metropolitan, for fear that in that case I should assert my right. It would be the oddest thing if the ‘Church of the Province of south Africa’ has so contrived its rules that I am really the ‘Senior Bishop of the Province’ against my own will as well as theirs, and they cannot even amend their arrangements without my summoning a Synod and presiding. I hope that Baroness Coutts will be firm about not letting her money go to support a Bishop of a Church which formally repudiates the authority of the Privy Council in matters affecting the Church. . . . Our colony is to have a system of railways, and an Eastern line of steamers, *viâ* Zanzibar, both immediately; so that I hope there are signs of progress; and indeed our exports for the last nine months, published to-day, have exceeded last year’s for the same time by £105,672.”

TO THE REV. C. VOYSEY.

“BISHOPSTOWE, December 10, 1872.

- “Many thanks for yours of October 5, which has just reached me. But, to prevent mistakes, I must say that it is no part of *my* ‘argument,’ as you seem to assume, that you should consider how many good friends you will lose within and without the Church by anything you say or do. You must know very well, I should think, by this time, that I am the last person in the world to make use of such an argument, and yet your letter dwells upon this point throughout.
- “What I said with reference to this was merely in reply to your own lugubrious cry, ‘*Væ victis,*’ as if, merely because you were beaten down, men like Stanley and others—and I was not sure that you did not feel half disposed to reckon among them myself—shrank back from supporting you. I thought that you had no right to say this—and I knew that you had no such right to say it in my own case—and therefore I tried to explain to you that the course which you thought it necessary to take, in most unnecessarily dragging the very name of Christ and Christianity into the mire, must inevitably drive

from you men who would otherwise have wished to stand by you publicly. Of course, I know very well that I shall probably do the same for myself by speaking of the Chronicler as *intentionally dishonest*, instead of trying to plaster over his lies with some specious explanation. But he is a fraudulent writer, and wrote with a dishonest purpose—the proof is plain and overwhelming, and I shall not shrink from saying so, whatever friends I may lose by so doing. But you cannot say this of the character of Christ, nor of any sayings or doings which you can show to be His ; and all the arguments used for the purpose by Francis Newman (whom I greatly admire and love), as well as yourself, seem to me futile and frivolous. Your reasonings (as it seems to me) will not *prove* to anyone that He is not God, and they will offend many who do not now hold that belief, and who would not even undertake to maintain His perfection as man, yet (as I said in my last) would be disgusted if you set about trying to tear their own dead fathers' and brothers' character to pieces, and point out their faults ; and are equally pained when you do this, and on such utterly insufficient grounds, in the case of Jesus Christ.

“ I think it is quite possible to deny what you have said about Christianity. I feel confident that if you will take a number of true Christians of various denominations, however they may fight about their different dogmas, they will agree in saying that, after all, the essence of Christianity consists in a life like the life of Christ, and that these dogmas are of primary importance, because essential (as they suppose) to the support of that life.”

TO C. J. BUNYON, ESQ.

“ BISHOPSTOWE, *February 17, 1873.*

. . . “ I do not know what my enemies would say if they knew that the Archbishop writes to me ‘ My dear Lord Bishop ’ ; and that this form of address is not accidental, but intended, is shown by the fact that the first of the two letters (both written by the secretary and signed by the

Archbishop) began originally with the cold formality 'My Lord,' and the 'Lord' has been written over, evidently by the Archbishop's direction, so that it stands, 'My dear Lord Bishop,' like the other. I hope that I may regard it as a sign of some reviving cordiality on the part of the Archbishop; and it is not impossible that he may have seen that my Part VI. is a work of which the Church of England need not be ashamed."

TO THE SAME.

"BISHOPSTOWE, June 24, 1873.

. . . "By this mail I requested the editor to forward you a copy of the *Natal Colonist* with an abstract of the report in the *Cape Argus* of the doings for the election of a Metropolitan at the Cape. I hope you will take the trouble to read it, as it will show you, more than anything I can say, how completely Bishop Gray's whole South African system has gone to the ground, now that his powerful personal influence is removed. It appears that he was even afraid of his own creations, and instead of making over the £65,000, which he had amassed by his visits to England, to the trustees appointed by the Provincial Synod, in accordance with his own rules, he, by his will, has placed it in the hands of Archdeacon Badnall, charging him in a codicil not to make it over to any Bishop who had not first subscribed the rules of the Church of the Province of South Africa. Besides this £65,000 there was £12,000 more, which Badnall claimed as the private property of the late Bishop, but which the registrar asserts to be a reserve of Church Funds. Bishop Gray kept but one account at the bank, and one cheque-book for both private and Church property; his private property is under £9,000, and Mrs. Gray's £45,000,—so that between the two it is no wonder that they were strong in 'worldly influence.' . . . I have seen letters from laymen at the Cape (not partisans of mine in any sense) which show that the laity are determined to shake off altogether the yoke of

the 'Church of the Province of South Africa, and return to the 'Church of England,' whatever the South African Bishops may do. . . .

"The Tabular Report which the S.P.G. has prefixed to its account of the 'Diocese of Maritzburg' in the last Report (1872) is . . . . simply ludicrous to a Natalian : Mr. Barker with 1,600 square miles, Dr. Callaway with 3,000, &c., when they just live at their own comfortable houses. . . . So Barker has 18,822 people under his charge, Fearne 12,500, Walton 5,500,—that is, they swell the *appearance* of their work by including all the thousands of natives within ten or twelve miles, though *they never do a single thing for their improvement*, devoting their time wholly to the few white people who come to their services,—lies, but they go down in England, like many others."

TO MRS. MERRIFIELD.

"BISHOPSTOWE, August 12, 1873.

. . . "I was delighted to get your note of June 3, and to find by it that both yourself and my dear old friend Mr. Merrifield are well. . . . I am afraid that such innumerable falsehoods have been propagated by the Jesuitical party who are opposed to me in theological matters, that even my friends in England hardly imagine how strong my position is here, and how many and influential are my friends and supporters in this colony. The whole strength of the colony, I mean among Church-going people, is on my side, and I am on very pleasant terms with leading Dissenters of all classes. I mention this because you speak of 'party feeling' being 'still high in Natal,' and I have continually indications in letters from English friends that they have a very mistaken view of the real state of affairs here, and I may say in South Africa generally. I expect that the proceedings at Capetown, where the structure raised by Bishop Gray with so much industry, for so many years, has been deliberately overthrown at the recent election of a Metropolitan, may have opened people's eyes a little in England.

But the amount of downright lying which is practised in support of the 'orthodox' party is astonishing, and it is almost impossible to counteract it. For instance, our last Governor, Mr. Musgrave, was a warm friend of mine, theologically as well as socially, and our present is so socially,—at least he says so,—though he is a Presbyterian, and does not accept my theology. But when each of these was welcomed on his arrival at Durban at a great public banquet, the Bishop of Natal was (next to the Governor) the most warmly received guest, and had to return thanks for the 'Bishop of Natal and clergy of all denominations.'

TO TH. SHEPSTONE, ESQ.

"August 28, 1873.

. . . "I was glad to get yesterday your letter of the 22nd, and to find that you were all well, and that you do not appear to anticipate any *serious* difficulty with Cetshwayo. Still I shall be anxious till we get your next news from the camp. However, before this reaches you I trust your work will have been successfully accomplished, and you will be on your way back. . . .

"I wonder what you will think of Sir B. Pine's new slave law. It is the first time we have had full-grown women—wives, and mothers with babes—put out in this way. And I should like to see the white people who will *fulfil* the undertaking to teach the apprentices 'reading and writing, and the elements of Christianity,' and to keep their lodgings separate from our natives."

TO C. J. BUNYON, ESQ.

"BISHOPSTOWE, November 7, 1873.

. . . "What do you mean by saying 'The present difficulties of belief are enormous; but the difficulties of unbelief are still greater?' *Belief* in what? *Unbelief* in what? I have often heard that saying used as a mere clap-trap, just like Gladstone's (copied from Burke, I think) that 'the liberty of the clergy means the slavery of the laity.' I grant the

difficulties of *unbelief* in a personal God—Creator of all things, all-wise, and all-good, the Father of spirits, the Father of men—must be for most minds, certainly for mine, insuperable ; as also the difficulties of *unbelief* in a future state and a righteous judgement for the deeds done in the body. But the difficulty of *belief* in the traditionary system is the very fact that it makes a belief in such a Being *impossible* to mere intelligent, reasoning men. Who can in these days believe in the stories of the Creation, the Fall, or the Deluge ; or in that of the Jordan, running in full flooded stream, rising up into a heap higher and higher, without flowing over the lands on each bank, while the Israelites crossed over on dry ground ? Why do not intelligent men—laymen, clergy, and Bishops—admit the absurdity of teaching any longer such old wives' fables, or rather the sinfulness of teaching such 'lies in the name of the Lord,' whatever else they may hesitate to admit ?”



## CHAPTER V.

### “THE SPEAKER’S COMMENTARY.”

1871-74.

It is well known that the work familiarly styled the *Speaker’s Commentary* was virtually the rejoinder to a formal challenge. In the Bishop of Natal’s words,

“it would be an affectation to pretend to be ignorant that the idea of this *Commentary* was first suggested by the disturbance that was caused by the appearance of the first three parts,”

of his *Critical Examination of the Pentateuch*. The policy of ridicule had, for some reason or other, been laid aside for that of a professed dialectical refutation. When those volumes first appeared, Archbishop Longley and Bishop Wilberforce seem to have thought that weapons drawn from the armoury of contempt and disgust would suffice to demolish them. They therefore sneered at the Bishop’s criticisms as “rash and feeble speculations;” they set aside his arguments as puerile and trite, and banned them as being in all essential points “only the repetition of old and often-answered cavils.” Such a mass of childish nonsense and folly would, it might be thought, deserve no notice; but, in spite of this, the waning of this happy confidence, and the growth of an alarm which threatened to become panic, led the Speaker of the House of Commons, as we are told, to suggest the idea of a *Commentary*, in which

"the chief points and difficulties, which not a single writer only, but others, whether in England or on the Continent, have raised or felt, should be examined and receive such solutions as our present knowledge and learning may enable us to give them."

If this announcement implies at bottom the infallibility of the writers, or, at least, the notion that all difficulties may be solved, it was certainly generous to offer solutions, not only of difficulties which had been raised, but even of those which had been only felt, by critics. If this remark seem flippant, the flippancy must be laid to the charge of those who could announce the *New Bible Commentary* as

"one in which every educated man may find an explanation of difficulties which his own mind may suggest, as well as of any new objections raised against a particular book or passage"

of the Bible. Here then we are bidden to find a repertory of answers to all possible objections, past, present, or future, which may be brought against any statements in some seventy or eighty books; and, if the work is to meet any or all difficulties which the mind of any educated man may suggest, it must itself suggest a thousand difficulties to those minds whose activity may have been exercised in other regions of thought, while over and beyond all is the astonishing assumption that all these difficulties may be met and explained, and, in short, that they are not difficulties at all. This is in truth to go in the teeth of human experience. It is perhaps conceivable that a wholly new state of things may at any moment be ushered in; but we have no warrant for expecting it, and therefore the sentences which announce the *Speaker's Commentary* have, at the very outset, a false and hollow ring.

It would be not merely an idle but an unworthy task, were we now to attempt to do more than ascertain whether on any one subject of any importance this *Commentary* vindicates the

historical trustworthiness of the Pentateuch against the criticisms of the Bishop of Natal or of anyone else. The Bishop felt himself called upon to examine and reply to it from beginning to end. With infinite patience and unruffled serenity he set himself to a work which he felt that he could not, if he would, evade ; and which, in his belief, his countrymen had a right to expect at his hands. For those who come after the Bishop, the situation is changed ; and if, on any two or three points, the charges of partiality, misrepresentation, evasion, or falsehood can be brought home to the commentators, their work may be cast aside as no adequate solution of difficulties, as no ingenuous contribution towards the discovery or the promotion of truth.

Foremost in the ranks of these commentators stood Bishop Harold Browne, whose counsel and sympathy Dr. Colenso had at one time thought of asking, and in whose name he rejoiced to see a guarantee of the sincerity and candour with which his treatise on the Book of Genesis would be undertaken. Such was his assurance, arising, we may suppose, from his own singular generosity and forbearance. To others it might seem that Bishop Browne's method of dealing with matters of fact<sup>1</sup> was ominous of anything but impartiality and veracity in the execution of his new task.

A few instances only shall therefore be here adduced as specimens of answers which he put forth as adequately meeting the arguments of the Bishop of Natal. At the outset Bishop Browne stated that the

“ sacred narrative itself contains assertions ”

of the Mosaic authorship of the whole Pentateuch. The whole Pentateuch is on trial. The whole history contained in it is said to be full of inconsistencies, contradictions, and impossibilities. Bishop Browne has himself been compelled to say

<sup>1</sup> See Vol. I. Chapter IX.

that of the numbers of the Israelites and of their army he can make nothing<sup>1</sup>; and yet for the genuineness of this book he can appeal to the book itself. In the singular controversy which led to the publication of Cardinal Newman's *Apologia pro Vita sua*, Dr. Newman represents Mr. Kingsley as saying, "If you are quite sure you did not say it, I'll take your word for it," and himself as replying, "My word! I am dumb; somehow I thought it was my *word* which happened to be on trial."

It is precisely thus with the Pentateuch; but Bishop Browne had no difficulty and felt no qualms in appealing to its word in its own behalf. But if these five books—or as we might almost say these ten or dozen books—had bristled with such assertions, these assertions, until the character of the narrative had been vindicated as genuine and trustworthy history, would be absolutely worthless. But when we come to examine them, these statements are dispersed like morning mist. Bishop Browne adduces Exodus xvii. 14, "Write this for a memorial in the book." But how are we to know, what grounds have we for saying, that this book was the Pentateuch?

"Why may it not have been a book of notes—one of the ancient records from which, as some suppose, the Pentateuch was in part composed by later writers?"

The few passages cited from Deuteronomy refer only to that book, and are only parts of the fiction which ascribed this later book to Moses.<sup>2</sup>

Having thus "proved" from the Pentateuch that Moses wrote the Pentateuch, Bishop Browne next asserts

"that the concurrent testimony of subsequent times proves that Moses did write the books now known by his name."

<sup>1</sup> See Vol. I. Chapter IX.

<sup>2</sup> *New Bible Commentary Examined*, Part I. p. 45.

This assertion has been answered already; and it may be dismissed with Bishop Colenso's summary retort

"that there is not a single reference to Moses as a *lawgiver* throughout the two Books of Samuel, and none in the Books of Judges and Kings before the finding of the book in Josiah's time,"

except some four or five sentences

"which may be shown to be plainly due to the Deuteronomist—as also that Moses is not even named by Isaiah or any other prophet before the Captivity, except in Jeremiah xv. 1, where he is ranked with Samuel; and Micah vi. 4, where he is classed, but as a *leader* only, with Aaron and Miriam."<sup>1</sup>

By way of evidence in detail, Bishop Browne has no hesitation in adducing 2 Kings iv. 1, where a widow complains to Elisha that her creditor has come to take her two sons to be bondsmen, and where therefore there must be a reference to Leviticus xxv. 39, which orders that no Israelite shall be made a bond-servant. But if Elisha knew of this prohibition why did he not

"denounce the wickedness of the creditor, instead of working a miracle to pay the debt?"<sup>2</sup>

Even thus the reference would be only to the injunction, not to Moses as the legislator. The finding of the Book of the Law in the Temple is necessarily Bishop Browne's great dilemma. We have seen how Bishop Lord A. Hervey fared in this dangerous pass.<sup>3</sup> Bishop Browne will have it that the book so found is the Pentateuch. The preservation of the autograph manuscript of Moses, for seven or eight centuries, presents, he thinks, no difficulty in the dry climate of Palestine. But, if so, it had shared all the wanderings and

<sup>1</sup> *New Bible Commentary Examined*, Part I. p. 8.

<sup>2</sup> *Ib.* p. 24.

<sup>3</sup> See Vol. I. p. 669, *et seq.*

dangers of the ark, and must have been brought with the ark to Jerusalem. How is it that we are not told that it was so brought? When it was so brought, why did not Solomon read it? Why did not his priests read it? Why did not he or they teach out of it? Why did not Solomon copy it with his own hand, as he was bound to do if he had any regard for the solemn injunction in Deuteronomy xvii. 18-20? Why did not his successors copy it after him? When was the Pentateuch lost? Bishop Browne thinks that it was hidden away in the reign of Manasseh—

“very likely built into a wall by the priests to keep it from the hand”

of that idolatrous king, who not only did not care to copy the Law as the precept in Deuteronomy bound him to do, but had a special desire to destroy this Mosaic autograph. But where were all the other copies? If Bishop Browne be right, and if the Pentateuch was not lost till the time of Manasseh, then there must have been at least nine or ten copies made by the kings who are said emphatically to have done right in the sight of the Lord, and who therefore would not treat with defiance the solemn command of the Hebrew lawgiver, who spoke with the authority of God Himself. Where were all these copies? Were they not kept in the royal archives? Did the chief officers and priests know nothing of their existence? But according to Bishop Browne the Pentateuch was not lost. All the other copies might have disappeared; and must have disappeared with an ease which would show that very little thought was bestowed upon them. But this one autograph copy of Moses was regarded with different feelings. This copy was carefully hidden “away in a wall by *the priests*,” who of course knew quite well what they were about. But had these priests no memories? Had they no sooner built it into the wall than they, every one, clean forgot

that they had done so? The plea that they might have been frightened out of their senses by a depraved and idolatrous Sovereign will not serve. The Chronicler, to whom Bishop Browne gives implicit credit as an honest and veracious historian, says that Manasseh bitterly repented his sin during his captivity at Babylon, and lived to re-fortify Jerusalem. Surely, to a penitent king, the re-inforcement of the Law would come before the restoration of the city walls, or the setting of captains in the fenced towns of Judah. Surely Manasseh would then have besought the priests to search for the Pentateuch, of which in his earlier years he must at least have heard; and surely the search which he must have instituted, would have been rewarded with the recovery of at least two or three of the copies of the Law made by his predecessors. Again, if Manasseh repented, it is incredible that the priests should fail to reveal joyfully the place where they had hidden the Mosaic autograph. If they revealed it, it is quite certain that the short reign of Amon, lasting only for two years,

“would not have sufficed to blot out all knowledge or memory of it; and yet, when it was found in the eighteenth year of Josiah, king, priests, and people are all aghast at the discovery of a book of which they had never heard.”

During all those years had Hilkiah, the high priest, never told the young king a word about the ancient scroll of the Law, which had so mysteriously disappeared? Had he himself nothing to do with the building it into the wall? Did it never occur to him to tell the docile and obedient boy that it was his duty, and should have been his delight, to make with his own hands a copy of the Law book which had thus vanished out of sight? These are questions which may suggest themselves to the mind of any educated man, and will suggest themselves to the mind of any educated man who will think; and it is simply sickening to find them utterly ignored by

Bishop Browne, who tells us that, when the book was found by Hilkiah,

"all the most important witnesses were satisfied that it was the *Temple copy* of the Law."

But where were all the ten or twelve royal copies which should have been preserved, and some of which must have been preserved, from the time of Saul and David? The *Speaker's Commentary* started with the profession of dealing honestly, straightforwardly, and manfully, with all the difficulties connected with the Old Testament; and in the course of a few pages we find ourselves immeshed in a tangled coil of assumptions, misrepresentations, evasions, and falsehoods. A ludicrous aspect is imparted to this lamentable immorality by the assertion that the testimony of the Samaritan Pentateuch may *perhaps* be carried back to the reign of Manasseh. Bishop Browne is indeed only contingently committed to this statement. He would be glad to believe it if he could; but the inference would follow that, with Hilkiah and Jeremiah by his side, Josiah reigned for seventeen years without a copy of the Pentateuch, while the idolatrous Samaritans possessed it. Was it impossible for Hilkiah to send scribes, who should take a copy of it in Samaria?

We have been compelled already to express a doubt as to Bishop Hervey's belief in his own assertions.<sup>1</sup> We are driven to the same conclusion with regard to Bishop Browne. The law of jealousy, like all other laws, is said to come from Jehovah Himself; but by the admission of writers in the *Speaker's Commentary*

"it was adopted by Moses from existing and probably very ancient and widespread superstitions."<sup>2</sup>

The descent of the priesthood by birth, the distinction

<sup>1</sup> See Vol. I. p. 672.

<sup>2</sup> See Vol. I. p. 697.



of clean and unclean meats, the purifications of the priests and Levites, the ceremony of the scapegoat, the Urim and Thummim of the high priest, are all described as Divine ordinances, originating with Jehovah; but Bishop Browne adduces them all as proof that

“the Mosaic laws and institutions of worship are penetrated throughout by knowledge of Egyptian customs,”

and as evidence of an intimate acquaintance with the customs of Egypt in him who wrote the Pentateuch and *delivered* the Mosaic Law. Well may Bishop Colenso add that

“such a statement takes away one’s breath.”

Most “orthodox” persons have been in the habit of supposing that all these institutions were founded in Israel by express Divine revelation to Moses—that Jehovah delivered the Mosaic Law; and it is amazing to find that, in so doing, the Divine legislator merely copied the practices which were already in vogue in connexion with the Egyptian idolatries.<sup>1</sup>

So much for Bishop Browne’s Introduction. When he turned to the actual commentary on Genesis, the Bishop of Natal found in almost every page quotations seemingly unverified and certainly misapprehended. Bishop Browne, he says,

“has just caught up whatever seemed to suit his purpose for the moment, without troubling himself to make any ‘painful inquiry’ to ascertain the real value of the argument. And in the interests of truth I protest against such pretended criticism. He does not even care to temper the mortar which he daubs upon the wall to hide its cracks.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *New Bible Commentary Examined*, Part I. p. 37.

<sup>2</sup> *Ib.* p. 85. Bishop Browne’s comments on the narrative of the Temptation are wonderful. They deal with a subject of supreme importance; but it is one which can be spoken of in detail only in an Appendix. See Appendix D.

Of the Noachian deluge little more needs to be said than that Bishop Browne, taking no notice whatever of the objections urged to an impossible tale, introduces some new touches of the grotesque by gravely referring to Peter Jansen's boat, built in 1609 on the same proportions as the Ark, though smaller—viz. 120 × 20 × 12 feet—and to the

"curious calculation by which John Temperarius ascertained that the Ark would have afforded abundant room for all the animals then known, and food for their voyage."

"Is it possible," asks Bishop Colenso, "that such solemn nonsense could be penned in this age by a Bishop of the Church of England for a *Commentary* intended to make the latest information accessible to a man of ordinary culture?"

Such a tub would of course

"hold more than an ordinary vessel of the same tonnage properly shaped."

Its floating powers amidst eddies swirling like those of Niagara are another matter. But it is nothing less than disgusting to be obliged to ask whether Temperarius calculated also

"in what state the *carrion* would be—taken on board for a twelvemonth's supply of vultures, &c.—at the end of a day or two? . . . How was this huge '*Great Eastern*' drained and its nests cleaned day by day?"

What, again, is meant by "room for all the animals then *known*"?

The numbers known to Noah and his sons may have been as few as those which are known by experience to the inhabitants of Cumberland; and at this rate all those which had not the good luck to be known to the patriarch would have been left to be extinguished. The narrative speaks not of things known, but of things living. Well may the Bishop say that

"here we have this *Commentary*, set on foot by the Speaker of the House of Commons, . . . bringing the English Church

into contempt throughout the world by these ineptitudes. There is something very solemn and impressive in the grand old myth, with the Ark and its . . . inhabitants floating alone upon the waste of waters over a dead and buried world. It is only such writers as these, with their attempts to justify and render credible the details of the story, who make the whole ridiculous."<sup>1</sup>

Even the burlesque exploits of Samson, when told in the old language, are not subjects for mere contempt and laughter, although they become such when the infatuation of traditionalists renders an analysis of their conditions necessary. But neither the courtesies of scholarship nor Christian charity require us to waste time over Bishop Browne's desperate attempts to give light to the Ark by converting the solitary window-hole into a window-course glazed with

"some transparent substance," which "may easily have been known to the antediluvians."

The provision for light leaves us then without air, for the door, "which," Bishop Browne tells us,

"could not have been secured by pitch or bitumen by Noah, was by some providential or supernatural agency secured and made water-tight."

With Bishop Browne the *Deus ex machina* is always forthcoming when wanted to deal with matters on which even his apparatus of unbounded hypothesis can throw no light. It seems a hard task to drive tigers, lions, bears, into a dark box ; but

"under the pressure of great danger, or great suffering, the wildest animals will, at times, become perfectly tame and tractable."

Will they so remain for two or three years, for the embarkation of all existing species could scarcely be got through in an

<sup>1</sup> *New Bible Commentary Examined*, Part I. p. 102.

afternoon? But the resources of conjecture are not yet exhausted.

"Most likely Noah and his family would choose pairs of very young animals, just old enough to feed themselves, as being the most tractable,"

or it may be for a thousand other reasons which may be hatched in the brains of an advocate. No doubt, it was the easiest thing in the world for Noah to get at litters of lions and leopards, with broods of birds, and make a leisurely choice among them; and no doubt, it is also possible to go through the wearisome catalogue of hypotheses, guesses, prevarications, evasions, and deliberate mystifications, which are included in the weapons of the arsenal of traditionalism. The stomach of the Israelites loathed the light food of the heaven-sent manna; but the husks which Bishop Browne scatters lavishly around him furnish food not much more nutritious. From the beginning to the end of his contributions, it is the same. The office of the hierophant is not always a respectable one, and the position which Bishop Browne has chosen to assume is not more dignified than that of the relic-keeper who exhibited the sword that Balaam wished for, when he could not show it as the one with which he had smitten the ass. In one place there may be an affectation of learning; in another an affectation of ignorance, and this ignorance is affected<sup>1</sup> just where, as in the narrative of Eve's temptation, it may involve a fatal danger.

"Put thy hand under my thigh," is said to be an action as to the signification of which

"nothing is known with certainty."

We are accordingly favoured with a long string of conjectures.

"Aben Ezra supposes that it was a form of oath prevalent in patriarchal times, but only taken by inferiors, &c."

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix D.

“Nevertheless,” adds Bishop Colenso, “the form of adjuration’ is perfectly well understood by scholars,”

as Bishop Browne might have satisfied, and probably had satisfied, himself by referring to the *Dictionary of the Bible* (ii. p. 588, 2). It is something to adduce the sanction of Buffon, that the alleged *longevity* of the patriarchs is not impossible; but there seems to be some method in his silence as to the *gigantic size* of the first men, of which many ancient traditions speak. The men who fought and fell with Cassius at Philippi were the contemporaries of Virgil; but Virgil anticipates the astonishment with which the ploughmen of a later age will gaze on their gigantic bones.

“Supposing, however, that physiology should ultimately decide that the extreme longevity of the Patriarchs was not possible without continued miracle, we should only be driven to the principle already conceded, that numbers and dates in genealogical tables are liable in the course of transcription to become obscure and exaggerated.”

The principle here said to be conceded is rather a principle assumed. In any case it will not carry him far. He would fall back on it, if he could, in dealing with the 600,000 warriors who crossed the Red Sea; but that attempt he has to give up as hopeless, since two independent tribal numerations are made to yield the same totals.<sup>1</sup> The result causes Bishop Browne, it would seem, no anxiety.

Of the commentary on Exodus, the Bishop found himself obliged to say that, like the contribution of Bishop Browne, it was

“a laboured attempt throughout to maintain the foregone conclusions of traditionary theologians with scarcely a sign of desire to weigh seriously the arguments of the most distinguished modern critics, and hardly even a notion of some of their most important conclusions.”

<sup>1</sup> See Vol. I. p. 421.

To this verdict the Bishop makes one exception, and this relates to the Decalogue. On this subject Mr. Clark says:—

"It has been generally assumed that the whole of one or other of these copies was written on the Tables. . . . If either copy, as a whole, represents what was written on the Tables, it is obvious that the other cannot do so."

Mr. Clark then falls back on the conjecture of Ewald that the original Commandments were all in the terse form in which the first, sixth, seventh, eighth, and ninth now appear. The admission may seem slight. It really removes the key-stone from the arch of the traditional theories of the genuineness and authority of the Pentateuch. It is an admission

"that *neither* version of the Ten Commandments, as they appear in the Bible, gives the genuine ten words uttered by the Almighty on Sinai, although in Exodus xx. we read 'God spake *all* these words,' and in Deuteronomy v. 'These words Jehovah spake . . . and he added no more, and he wrote them on two tables of stone and delivered them unto me.' And it further supposes, that in the Second, Third, Fourth, Fifth, and Tenth Commandments, large interpolations must subsequently have been made apparently by Moses 'when the books were written, which were thus added to the words really spoken by Jehovah unto all the assembly in the mount.' . . . Yet even now, the abridged Fourth Commandment, though consisting only of a few words, differs in Exodus and Deuteronomy; being in the one, 'Remember the Sabbath day to sanctify it,' and in the other, 'Keep the Sabbath day to sanctify it.' But this variation, says the *Commentary*, 'may perhaps be ascribed to *copyists*,' who could not even copy correctly these few most sacred words supposed to have been uttered by Jehovah Himself on Sinai."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *New Bible Commentary Examined*, Part II, p. 69.

Still, this is beyond doubt a

“straightforward recognition of one indisputable result of the *Critical Examination of the Pentateuch*,”

and beyond doubt also, it strikes at the root of the whole Pentateuch story as an historical narrative.

“If the Ten Commandments in the Pentateuch are not genuine and historically true, what is? Doubtless, before such an admission can have been allowed to be published in this *Commentary*, the Committee appointed to advise with the editor . . . will have been consulted. But I venture to think that it is far more dangerous, far more fatal to the cultivation of an intelligent and reverent faith in the Bible, to assert that Moses wrote the Decalogue, but wrote twice over, each time in different words, what he knew to be untrue, than to say that the Decalogue . . . is in each of its forms the work of the Deuteronomist in a far later age.”

With this exception (and this is distinctly a concession, not an answer or a refutation) the commentary on the Book of Exodus, the first part by Canon Cook, the latter by Mr. Clark, exhibits much the same characteristics with the treatise of Bishop Browne on Genesis. For the evidence of the genuineness of the Pentateuch, Bishop Browne appealed to the Pentateuch; for the principal arguments for the Mosaic authorship of Exodus, Mr. Cook appealed to Bishop Browne, and the value of these arguments we have just tested. In Mr. Cook's eyes the proof is clinched by the fact that,

“to posterity, to the Israelites of his own time, Moses was simply the greatest of men.”

But, as we have seen, the subsequent history and the pre-Captivity prophets know practically nothing about him; and his character as drawn in the original story is due simply to

"the imagination of the writer, just as we have at least two Abrahams in Genesis—one dignified, brave, and noble-minded, the other timorous, cowardly, and contemptible."<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Cook is indeed put to hard shifts in every part of his task. The peninsula of Sinai is spoken of in the Pentateuch as "a waste howling wilderness," with fiery serpents, scorpions, and drought; but Mr. Cook struggles hard to make out that its fertility was greater and its streams more numerous and abundant than they are now, quite forgetting that, even though he had demonstrated its power of sustaining then a good-sized caravan for a few weeks or months, this would not establish the practicability of three or four millions of people living there for forty years. It is worse than idle, it is ludicrous, to go off into disquisitions on the possibility or the likelihood that Moses wrote the Pentateuch, until the general credibility of the narrative has been established beyond reach of debate. This narrative has been hopelessly discredited; and the truth of its alleged incidents must be clearly exhibited before arguments for its genuineness can be entitled even to consideration.

It is not, indeed, easy to know what Mr. Cook himself believes.

"Not only the names of many of the materials and implements," but "the furniture and accessories of the tabernacle, the dress and ornaments of the priests, are," he tells us, "shown to have been Egyptian."

On the other hand, Mr. Clark shows us that

"it should always be kept in view that such resemblances to foreign patterns are extremely superficial."

If we give credit to the narrative, as both profess to do, the theory of any connexion is excluded.

<sup>1</sup> *New Bible Commentary Examined*, Part II, p. 8. See Vol. I. p. 598.



“The Book of Exodus represents them as specially revealed by Jehovah Himself to Moses, who was to be careful to make them after the pattern which was shown them in the Mount. ‘According to all that I show thee, the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it.’<sup>1</sup> How can it be believed,” the Bishop asks, “that the Divine wisdom would have revealed to Moses a whole series of ‘patterns,’ in order merely to *remind* him of objects with which he was already familiar as used in the idolatrous worship of Egypt, and to help him to repeat and perpetuate them ?”<sup>2</sup>

Some years had now passed since the so-called trial of the Bishop of Natal at Capetown ; but the glaring absurdity of the special pleading then employed by the accusing clergy did not deter Mr. Cook from hinting (he no longer asserts) that the Mosaic authorship of Exodus is affirmed in the New Testament, and that the fact should be borne in mind by readers of the Pentateuch. There is, indeed, one reference to the “book of Moses” ; but if the reference had been to the Book of Ruth, or the book of Job, or the Book of Judges, would that, the Bishop asks, prove that the book in question was written by Ruth, or Job, or the Judges ?<sup>3</sup> Nor, again, did the pitiable difficulties in which Bishop Browne had involved himself hinder Mr. Cook from interpreting the story of the burning bush as showing only that the *full import* of the name Jehovah had not before been revealed. The story might be true, or it might be false ; but it declares that the name had not been revealed or known at all. Mr. Cook, at least, was bound to believe it. When it is said that by the name Jehovah Elohim was not known to the Patriarchs, it is putting a non-natural sense on the words to make them mean only that He had not been made fully known. This might be pardonable, if we were dealing only with the words of Moses, and also if we

<sup>1</sup> *New Bible Commentary Examined*, Part II. p. 23.

<sup>2</sup> *Ib.* p. 24.

<sup>3</sup> *Ib.* p. 32.

admitted candidly that we started without either theories or prejudice ; but there is something inexpressibly shocking when one who speaks as a rigid traditionalist puts such non-natural meanings on words which are said to come directly from Jehovah Himself. The impartial critic puts no such forced interpretations ; but the fact that in one chapter of Exodus the name Jehovah is said to be revealed for the first time, while yet it is found in familiar use in the Book of Genesis, at once impels him to analyse the books in order to see whether the materials furnish evidence of composite authorship. Such evidence being found, all difficulty vanishes, without any need of the evasions and prevarications to which traditionalists seem to submit themselves as among the unavoidable trials of life. But it is something worse than an evasion, when we find Mr. Cook, confronted by the 600,000 warriors of the Exodus, insisting that the total number of the Israelites should be calculated, not from the men above twenty years old, but from the males above twelve or fourteen, and would therefore amount to somewhat more than two millions, "not an excessive population for Goshen." Possibly ; but would it not be excessive for a sojourn of forty years in a waste, howling wilderness ? But here, too, Mr. Cook bids defiance to the book whose authority he is seeking to impose on others, and which says distinctly that the number of males "above twenty," "all that were able to go forth to war in Israel," was 603,550.

In his analysis the Bishop had laid stress on the unlikelihood that the Israelites would have left Egypt with weapons enough to arm more than half a million of warriors. Mr. Cook ventured to treat the objection as unreasonable. He could see no indication of their having been disarmed ; and, "as occupying a frontier district frequently assailed by the nomads of the desert, they would, of necessity, be accustomed to the use of arms." But it is unreasonable, the Bishop rejoins,

to suppose that when Pharaoh "hoped to subdue their spirit," and "made their lives bitter with hard bondage," and ordered all their male children to be drowned, lest they might at any time join the invaders and fight against Egypt, he yet allowed them to be armed—nay, to get accustomed to the use of arms.<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Cook could even say that

"the promptitude with which so vast a multitude was marshalled and led forth justifies admiration, but is *not marvellous*, nor without parallels in ancient and modern history."

In proof of this astounding proposition, he refers the reader to his Introduction: but his Introduction mentions no such parallels; and, indeed, they were not to be found, for not only in this instance was a population of nearly three millions to be moved, but it was moved with some millions of cattle in some four or five hours in the middle of the night. The armament of Xerxes is said to have been some days in crossing the bridge over the Hellespont, although they were not escaping from enemies, and although everything was made as easy for them as was then possible. The Bishop was, indeed, wonderfully lenient to a great offender when he merely expressed surprise that Mr. Cook could so write

"with the details of the Franco-Prussian war fresh in his memory, and full knowledge of the difficulties attending the movement even of a disciplined army of two or three hundred thousand full-grown men, without women and children."<sup>2</sup>

The movements of 1870 strained to the uttermost the powers and resources of two great empires, aided by all modern appliances for transport and commissariat by high-ways and railroads. Moses, according to the story, had to move nearly ten times the number of the French army or of

<sup>1</sup> *New Bible Commentary Examined*, Part II. p. 51.

<sup>2</sup> *Ib.*

the German army ; and of these numbers some two-thirds consisted of women, children, and old men, hurrying away from a vigilant enemy under cover of night, with some millions of cattle !

But although Mr. Cook saw no difficulty in a task before which the might of England would sink powerless, he seems to have been staggered by the story of the passage of the Red Sea. He, therefore, betakes himself to explaining it away. When the tale speaks of the waters being a wall, this only means that a broad expanse of shallow water *served* as a wall, the Israelites being on one side, the Egyptians on the other. It is enough to say that no words could be more distinct than those of the narrative, and that these words flatly contradict Mr. Cook's explanation. Mr. Clark, in his portion of the *Commentary*, is, on the whole, more guarded in his language, and more careful in choosing his position ; but he could not, of course, keep clear of pitfalls when the whole ground was riddled with them. Thus of the settlement of Palestine he says :—

“ It has been too absolutely taken for granted that it was the Divine will that the inhabitants of Canaan should be utterly exterminated.”

It *was* the Divine will, if we put any faith in the narrative. Mr. Clark was bound to do so ; and before him lay the words of Deuteronomy, the *alleged utterance of Jehovah* Himself : “ Of the cities of these people, which the Lord thy God doth give thee for thine inheritance, thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth.” There the command is. If Mr. Clark regards it as blasphemy (and it is blasphemy of the most horrible kind) to ascribe such commands to God, then he has really abandoned the camp of the traditionalists, and should put away the grave-clothes of their system. Certainly he should not affect the ignorance by which Bishop Browne thought to slur over

perplexing points, as he does when dealing with the precept ordering the destruction of the Asheras.

“While Astarte,” he says, “was the name of the goddess, the Asherah was a symbol of her, probably in some one of her characters, wrought in some conventional form.”

It is intolerable to have plain things thus mystified. The Bishop of Natal simply remarks that it was a cone or phallos set up beside the altar of the sun-god Jahve,

“such as is even now very commonly found, in some modified form, in villages in India.”

It is, in short, the May-pole which is now disappearing from English village greens, and the stauros which was once general in our churchyards.<sup>1</sup>

But if here he affects a convenient ignorance, he displays a real and very strange ignorance elsewhere. On taking up the Book of Leviticus, he affirms that its Mosaic authorship is conceded even by those who most dispute the Mosaic origin of the other books. The consensus is really on the other side ; and Mr. Clark himself thinks it

“by no means unlikely that [in Leviticus] there are insertions of a later date, which were written, or sanctioned, by the prophets and holy men who, after the Captivity, arranged and edited the Scriptures of the Old Testament”—

a tremendous admission, Bishop Colenso remarks, for it asserts

“that the prophets and holy men may have actually inserted passages *which they themselves had written*, as being portions of the original revelation made by Jehovah to Moses.

“On our view,” the Bishop adds, “these prophets and holy

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix D. The temptation of Eve.

men have only gone a step further, and have inserted the whole of Leviticus."<sup>1</sup>

These insertions would necessarily mislead their contemporaries, as they have misled Mr. Clark. The ordinances for the various kinds of offerings point to a time of settled habitation in Canaan ; but Mr. Clark perplexes himself with the doves and pigeon-houses which were needed in the waste, howling wilderness of Sinai. These birds would, as we have seen, be offered at the rate of some 90,000 annually.<sup>2</sup>

"What favour was it," the Bishop asks, "to a poor man, to be allowed to bring this offering in the *wilderness*, instead of a quadruped?"

when no sustenance was to be found for either. With no greater success, Mr. Clark attempts to grapple with the difficulties involved in the assembling of hundreds of thousands before the door of a tabernacle a few feet broad, and in the description of the hare as a ruminating animal. He allows that the animal does not ruminate ; but he insists that the word denotes simply the moving of the hare's jaws, which gives to it the appearance of ruminating. On this the Bishop trenchantly remarks :—

"Mr. Clark says this, when he knows very well that there is not a shadow of doubt upon the question,—that the Hebrew phrase means distinctly, 'bringing up the *gerah*,' and has not the slightest reference to moving the jaws."<sup>3</sup>

But this method of special pleading brings with it often a moral mischief. The ordinances about leprosy are highly revolting. Mr. Clark tries to palliate them by speaking of what he calls "the fact," that the leper

"was for the most part in no need of those attentions, which relieve and solace ordinary invalids ;"

<sup>1</sup> *New Bible Commentary Examined*, Part III. p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> See Vol. I. pp. 516, 517.

<sup>3</sup> *New Bible Commentary Examined*, Part III. p. 23.

and therefore

“that he might have found his burden greater and more galling in the common intercourse of life than in the position marked out for him by the Law.”

The Bishop is indeed justified in doubting

“if any considerable number of lepers will be found to appreciate the advantages which (according to Mr. Clark) they enjoy, in being banished from all converse with their kind, and secluded from those attentions ‘which relieve and solace ordinary invalids.’”

A writer speaking of the treatment of lepers in India dwells on

“the cruelties perpetrated on those labouring under, or suspected of having, this terrible disease,”

as affording

“a striking example of the evils resulting from error—the erroneous belief usually entertained that leprosy is contagious. Even if there should be cases pointing to the conclusion that leprosy may be propagated by contact, the disease would still be not infectious; and if it were proved to be both contagious and infectious, this would not touch the question of humanity or inhumanity in the treatment of the patient. The alarm thus created has too frequently mastered all regard to humanity.”

Having cited this passage, the Bishop adds:—

“This last remark is strikingly evidenced in the commands of Leviticus xiii. 45, 46. And who can say how much of the inhumanity which for so many centuries has prevailed in the treatment of lepers is due to the superstitious belief in the Divine infallibility of those Mosaic laws? Yet Mr. Clark has done his best to foster this superstition, even to the extent of suggesting, in order to maintain the wisdom of their provisions, that lepers had better be left uncared for since ‘intercourse’ with their fellow-men would only

aggravate their burden, while these kind 'attentions' would not be needed."<sup>1</sup>

In its general method of dealing with points in debate, the commentary on Numbers rises little, if at all, above the level of the commentaries on the preceding books. There are the same groundless assertions that the resources of the Sinaitic peninsula

"were in ancient times vastly greater than they now are,"

and that the language of Deuteronomy respecting the hardships then undergone

"belongs more particularly to the latest marches in the fortieth year, rather than to the whole period of the wanderings."

The writer forgets that the period of forty years has been shown to be unhistorical, and that the fact must be proved before it can be adduced as evidence. He further *forgets* that the Deuteronomist speaks of them as having during these forty years no change of shoes or clothing, and no supplies of bread or wine, "through all that great and terrible wilderness."<sup>2</sup> He further holds that a miraculous supply of water was one of God's frequent blessings to them, while, being familiar with artificial irrigation, they were well able to husband and turn to account all available supplies of water, whether ordinary or extraordinary. What may be meant by a miraculous supply it is impossible to determine; but the narrative certainly says nothing about the frequency of such a supply, while it does say that the wilderness had "no water."

"It is a strange notion," the Bishop remarks, "that the Israelites would have been able to turn to account, amidst the crags and ravines of the wilderness, the Egyptian method of artificial irrigation, adapted to an overflow of the Nile in a perfectly flat country."

<sup>1</sup> *New Bible Commentary Examined*, Part II. p. 28.

<sup>2</sup> *Ib.* Part IV. p. 57.



From efforts to get rid of difficulties in reference to the sojourn in the desert, we pass to like efforts in reference to the episode of the ass in the story of Balaam. Whatever happened, we are told, was

“apparently perceived by him alone amongst human witnesses.”

This is a venturesome inference from a narrative which is simply silent on this point. Certainly we are not told that the marvel attracted the attention of his servants, or of the envoys of Balak, or that it excited the smallest feelings of dismay or astonishment in Balaam himself. That it should have failed to do so is to the commentator scarcely conceivable; but it is one of the common characteristics of narratives of prodigies that the wonders related either attract no attention, or make no impression, or are almost immediately forgotten. The conclusion therefore is that

“the cries of the ass were significant to Balaam’s mind only.”

The contention of the commentator here is the same as that of Mr. Maurice, of whose method something has been said already,<sup>1</sup> and we are told plainly that

“the opinion that the ass actually uttered with the mouth articulate words of human speech (though still defended by Wordsworth, &c.) . . . seems irreconcilable with Balaam’s behaviour.”

This plea will not serve unless it be frankly acknowledged that a New Testament writer may commit a blunder; in other words, may be downright wrong. The author of the Second Epistle of St. Peter says emphatically that the ass spoke with the articulate speech of man.<sup>2</sup> But whence came the story? Balaam went to the camp of Balak; and with

<sup>1</sup> See Vol. I. p. 430.

<sup>2</sup> ἐν ἀνθρώπου φωνῇ φθεγγόμενον, 2 Peter ii. 16.

the Israelites he had no relations until he fell into their hands and was "slain by the sword among those that were slain by them" (Joshua xiii. 22); that is, in open fight or in massacre following the fight. But the commentator thinks that he has found a loophole for escape in the supposition that Balaam was taken prisoner and kept for a time before he was executed. The assertion goes in the teeth of the narrative; but, granting it to be true, what likelihood is there that in the agony of those last hours he should inform his captors of the episode of the ass, and, moreover, leave in their hands a copy of his prophecies? The whole notion is ludicrous; and vast mischief has been done by piecing together fragments from independent and unconnected narratives, and then drawing inferences from them. The charge brought against him of seducing the Israelites to the worship of Baal-peor comes from the later legislator of the post-exilic age. It is thus, as the Bishop points out,

"built upon a false foundation, and is purely imaginary;"<sup>1</sup>

and not less imaginary therefore is the portrait drawn by Bishop Butler in his sermon on the "Character of Balaam." Mr. Espin has further the astonishing assurance to justify the slaughter of the Midianitish people, although in the Balaam story he has contradicted point-blank the author of the Second Epistle of St. Peter. It was not, he says, a general licence to slay at pleasure. It was a direct commission.

"They had no discretion to kill or to spare, they were bidden to exterminate without mercy, and brought back to their task when they showed signs of flinching from it."

The absurdities and impossibilities of this disgusting story we have already had occasion to notice.<sup>2</sup> With great calmness the Bishop here remarks that

<sup>1</sup> *New Bible Commentary Examined*, Part IV. p. 57.

<sup>2</sup> See Vol. I. pp. 519, 520.

“happily the knowledge that this chapter belongs to the later legislation relieves us from all necessity of inventing a mass of special pleading . . . . to justify this atrocious story (transcending infinitely in horror that of the well at Cawnpore), as an act of Divine ‘retribution.’”<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Espin’s comments on the Book of Deuteronomy were subjected by the Bishop to a scrutiny far more patient and close than they can well be thought to deserve. They may here be dismissed briefly; but the reader who will take the trouble to go through them will probably reach the Bishop’s conclusion that Mr. Espin’s commentary

“from beginning to end is merely a laboured attempt to build up traditionary notions, with scarcely a single noteworthy recognition of the results which have followed from the close examination of the Pentateuch in modern times by the most distinguished scholars of Europe.”<sup>2</sup>

His statements are seldom frank or ingenuous, and point often to very hasty and insufficient thought. Thus he is obliged to confess that there is

“a remarkable similarity of general style and treatment between Deuteronomy and Jeremiah,”

and this likeness he explains by ascribing to Jeremiah a close study of Deuteronomy.

“The priest of Anathoth,” he urges, “would have made the Law his study from his childhood, and his modes of thought and expression would naturally be greatly influenced by the Law. Of all parts of the Pentateuch, Deuteronomy in the calamitous days of Jeremiah comes home to the prophet’s mind with most frequency and force.”

But of what could Mr. Espin be thinking when he penned these words? He here asserts that the whole of the Penta-

<sup>1</sup> *New Bible Commentary Examined*, Part IV. p. 80.

<sup>2</sup> *Ib.* Part V. p. 6.

teuch, as it is now before us, was also before Jeremiah ; that from his earliest years he was a devout and earnest student of all the five books, but that he was attracted most of all by the Book of Deuteronomy. But that which was accessible to himself would be accessible to Hilkiâh, to Huldah, to the king to his counsellors, to the people generally. They might honour the books or disregard them, but, unless they were insane, they could not express ignorance of their existence. We are told, however, that the Book of the Law was discovered in the Temple—a book of which the high priest who found it, and the king in whose ears its words were read, had no knowledge whatever—a book so impressive and so powerful as to awaken the deepest feelings of dismay, penitence, and shame—a book, in short, utterly different from any with which they had been previously acquainted. What was this book ? It could not be any one of the five books of the Pentateuch, because with all the five Jeremiah had, according to Mr. Espin, been familiar from the days of his childhood onwards ; but, if it was not the Pentateuch nor any part of it, has the book found by Hilkiâh, and by him sent to the young king, been so lost that not a trace of it remains ? If it was not the Pentateuch, if it was not Deuteronomy, then it was a book distinct from these. What then has become of it ? Whatever it was, it was a book, which, Mr. Espin assures us, was

“brought again to the knowledge of the king and people, after having been banished from public sight and use for nearly sixty years, during the two preceding reigns.”

But the narrative assures us not less positively, and far more solemnly, that the book was wholly unknown to them all. Has the book been lost, or did it ever exist ? Does Mr. Espin think that the story of its discovery is from beginning to end a lie ? If so, this is a strange outcome indeed of traditional notions and criticism. But is there any dark meaning

latent under his phrase that the book had been *banished from public sight and use*? We have already gone over an ocean of absurdities and impossibilities connected with this fatal rock of traditional belief. We have dealt with guesses that it had been hidden away by priests, built into a hole in the wall to save the manuscript from the destructive hands of the frenzied idolater Manasseh. But according to the Chronicler, whom Mr. Espin is bound to believe, we have also seen that Manasseh came back from his exile a sincere and humble penitent; and it is monstrous to suppose that the priests, who hid it in the wall, should not have hastened then to bring it out again, unless indeed they had forgotten all about it, and forgotten also all about the other royal manuscripts of the Law, which must have been lying about somewhere, unless they had all been wilfully destroyed. Only for sixty years, according to Mr. Espin, had these books been "banished from public sight and use." Why, Hilkiyah himself had probably lived through the whole of this time, and if he was seventy years old at the time of the discovery, he must have remembered perfectly well the fact of its disappearance. Why was he absolutely silent about it? How was it that no one else had the faintest remembrance of such a book having disappeared? But Mr. Espin's words involve a dark suggestion that the book had never been lost, and that, in the modern phrase of the so-called literary world, it had only been withdrawn from general circulation, while in private it was the subject of the constant study of the faithful. It is useless to say more. Anything more monstrous and shameful it would be scarcely possible to imagine. The unknown book turns out to be a well-known book: the book which was said to have been lost, turns out not to have been lost at all. The whole thing was a mere pretence; and all the actors in the drama were conscious of the cheat. We have dwelt long on this strange incident and on the "explanations" offered in

reference to it ; but on a subject so momentous scarcely any examination could be thought too long, and on this point, more perhaps than all others, it was necessary to vindicate the Bishop's conclusion. The vindication is complete. The book found was the Book of Deuteronomy ; and the author of that book was Jeremiah.

With regard to the Decalogue, Mr. Espin makes the same important admission with Mr. Clark ; and this admission, as the Bishop rightly insisted, involved logically the abandonment of the whole historical position. But this frank acceptance of logical consequences is not a common characteristic ; and it is found only in small measure in Mr. Espin, who at once goes on to speak of the Ten Words as being uttered with a great voice to the assembly, from the awful summit of the mount itself, whilst the other precepts were communicated to the people through the agency of Moses.<sup>1</sup> But what is Mr. Espin's position ? and what is the meaning of all his language on the subject ? By voice we mean articulate utterance conveying a definite understood meaning to all who hear it. Were the sounds heard from the great mount articulate utterances in Hebrew ? It is really useless to fall back upon thunderings and lightnings. It is not denied that the glare and din of lightning and thunder may convey to those who see and hear the sense of an overwhelming majesty and force, but will it awaken the sense of a moral force ? And if the sounds are not articulate, how can the idea of distinct obligations be awakened in the mind ? In this case, we are told, ten words or precepts were given. How was the impression of each distinct precept conveyed ? If we were to hear ten distinct peals of thunder, how, on the supposition that each peal was intended to impart a special meaning, are we to distinguish between them ? In the Theban story the thunder is the voice of the Sphinx ; but her utterances are

<sup>1</sup> *New Bible Commentary Examined*, Part V p. 53.

enigmas or riddles which ordinary mortals cannot comprehend. One being alone can solve them ; and to him alone are intelligible the sounds which are mere noises to others. If Mr. Espin will make Moses another Œdipus, we begin to catch his meaning ; but, as far as regards the people, it becomes difficult to see how the delivery of the Ten Words differs from the mode by which any other precepts are conveyed to them. All, without exception, become impressions made on the heart and spirit of the lawgiver. But both the versions of the Decalogue come from the Deuteronomist ; and the Deuteronomist lived in the time of Josiah, hundreds and hundreds of years after the reputed age of the wanderings in the desert. The psychological inquiry becomes, therefore, in this case, superfluous.

The writers in the *Speaker's Commentary* seldom lose an opportunity of urging the differences of opinion amongst anti-traditional critics as a reason for rejecting all their conclusions in a mass. The differences among themselves are not always insignificant. Mr. Espin contends that in the wilderness the Israelites were placed

“ where the ordinary means of providing for their bodily life and safety were insufficient, and where their own exertions could have availed but little,”

and they had been preserved by the special providence of God. On the other hand, Mr. Cook and Mr. Clark speak of their physical condition as more than tolerable, with a vegetation more luxuriant and streams vastly more copious than any now found in the Sinaitic peninsula, with no lack of pasture for their flocks and herds, and as aided further by an important traffic with the trading caravans that traversed the wilderness. The narrative, to be sure, tells us nothing of all this ; but that is of no moment. The question concerns not the difference between the present and past conditions of the

desert region, but the difference between Mr. Espin and his brother commentators. If the circumstances of the Israelites were such as Mr. Cook and Mr. Clark have described, then certainly Mr. Espin's assertion that they lacked "the ordinary means of earthly sustenance" falls utterly to the ground ; and therefore, by their own argument, we are justified in setting aside as worthless all that they may say on any subject.

Mr. Espin has the courage to tell us that neither of the two versions of the Decalogue is correct. He has not the courage to treat with equal freedom the laws relating to the execution of an incorrigible son. He not only accepts as fact the existence of a Mosaic precept enjoining that such a son, denounced by the elders, should be stoned to death, but assures us emphatically that the formal accusation of parents against a child was to be received, without inquiry, as being its own proof.<sup>1</sup> But what if the accusation were false? Under these conditions, a father, wishing to be rid of his child, had nothing to do but to charge him with obstinacy. The supposition is not less ridiculous than monstrous. The fictitious nature of the law is proved by the fact that it is applicable only to sons. The parents cannot thus rid themselves of obstinate and dissolute daughters. But in truth these precepts, like the story of the expedition against the Midianites, are symbolical. They belong to the age not of the Exodus, but of King Josiah ; and they express the burning indignation of Jeremiah against the foul and murderous idolatry with which Jerusalem and the Temple itself were defiled. By such precepts and narratives he sought to show what punishments these iniquities and abominations deserved.<sup>2</sup> On the historical difficulties to which these ideal injunctions give rise he did not, and he could not, bestow a thought.

<sup>1</sup> *New Bible Commentary Examined*, Part V. p. 101.

<sup>2</sup> *Ib.* Part VI. p. 18.



Mr. Espin's anxieties can scarcely be said to have been much greater than those of the Deuteronomist. So long as difficulties can be dealt with separately, he is content; and if one objection be removed it does not occur to him that nothing is gained so long as its removal only makes room for another. The Book of the Law, he tells us, was to be laid up in the Holy of Holies, close by the ark, and probably in a chest; and there, in fact, it is said to have been found. This may account for the production of this one copy; but Mr. Espin forgets that the Law enjoined with equal strictness that a copy should be made by every king,<sup>1</sup> and therefore that the disappearance of all these copies (with the many other difficulties involved in the disappearance) has to be accounted for. Lastly, when he comes to the closing scenes of the life of Moses, he cannot even allow the story to speak for itself. The sight afforded to him from the mountain-top "was no doubt supernatural," but was yet a real, not an imaginary, view, obtained

"through an extraordinary enhancement of the dying law-giver's powers of vision."

The story neither says nor implies this, and the Bishop asks:—

"If a miracle was needed, why was Moses ordered to climb to the summit of Mount Nebo at all? The same power which enabled him to see—not merely places afar off, but—places that must have been hidden from his sight by intervening mountains and the earth's spherical form, might have enabled him to see the same without making the painful ascent from the plains of Moab to the top of Pisgah."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The solemn command thus given, Deuteronomy xvii. 18-20, has been referred to more than once. It cannot be referred to too often. Each king is to make his own autograph copy, that "he may learn to keep all the words of this law and these statutes to do them."

<sup>2</sup> *New Bible Commentary Examined*, Part V. p. 131.

We have seen that, according to Bishop Browne, the ascent was scarcely needed, as Moses, by repeated explorations, had made himself generally familiar with the appearances and the resources of the promised land.<sup>1</sup>

In his comments on the Book of Joshua, Mr. Espin starts with some words of censure against a certain class of critics who, as he says,

"all assume, either expressly and confessedly, or by implication, that miracles are always and everywhere to be rejected."

Such critics must be very foolish if they do not first define what the things are which are to be thus rejected ; and Mr. Espin has certainly not defined these things for them. It cannot be that in their judgement all things are to be rejected which do not come within the bounds of our present experience, for in that case Cicero might have rejected as miraculous, and therefore impossible, the notion of steam-engines, or balloons, or the electric telegraph. But, whatever miracles may be, there is certainly no doubt that we have no right to introduce them into narratives from which they are absent, or to multiply them because the one mentioned seems to make the other necessary. We have no right to speak of the sight of Moses from Pisgah as anything but that which the story represents it to have been : we have no right to say that, because Moses once brought forth water from the stony rock which he smote, therefore he did so a hundred times. If we do so, we transport ourselves at once into the world of the *Arabian Nights*. But it is beyond all things necessary to impress upon traditional critics that such language betrays often a complete *ignoratio elenchi*. It may be even a mere shift to divert the question to a false issue. When the genuineness and the historical character of a book are assailed

<sup>1</sup> See Vol. I. pp. 425, 426.