

ARTICLE VIII.

SEMITIC AND ORIENTAL NOTES.

EDUCATION AMONG THE SEMITES.

THE enormous educational influence of the Jews through their scriptures and the Bible has been quite universally recognized, and proper praise has been bestowed upon them for their value in the development of mankind. But, so far as now known, little has been attempted in the way of a systematic inquiry into the educational habits and ideas among the Semites generally, though the most casual examination of the subject will show a very large amount of suggestive material for such a study. This is of course very largely due to the fact that there is now so much Assyrian material which throws light upon the question from the general racial standpoint, as distinguished from the narrow national point of view of the literature of the Hebrews alone.

One is struck, at the outset, with the extensive range of subjects which the first glance reveals. The variety of studies is almost as great as that which most modern nations offer as the themes of inquiry among the literary portion of the population. We have, for example, first of all, extensive historical writings, with definite historical problems recognized, and more or less successfully expounded. Then we have a large body of theological literature, with set themes of discussion, and a position to declare. There is, too, a very large body of material which might fairly stand for the science of geography. Still another large section for law and jurisprudence. Added hereto, there are almost numberless tablets of astronomical allusions and astrological speculations. On the side of æsthetic culture and development we have sculpture and architecture, with plans and projections for extensive building plans; a very large and not inferior body of ideas upon the subject of mechanics; and these all in connection with a well-regulated and catalogued library, which was apparently designed for actual practical use, and that for a very large number of persons.

To be sure, these studies could be by no means regarded as scientific efforts. Nevertheless they point to an educational outlook which is singular, when we recall that it was highly developed at least two thousand years before the Christian era. The large body of priests and scribes, added to the nobles and the higher classes generally, must have had, as a background for all their intellectual efforts, a people among whom some of the arts and not a little general knowledge had made con-

siderable progress. Indeed, from what we know of the causes that were tried at law, and the effect of the decisions upon the people, they must have had a decided educational power.

When we come to the Phœnicians, we see the mechanical impulses of the Semites very strongly developed. Here we have a nation building ships and scouring the seas, and also with strong colonizing tendency, and with the mechanical skill and appliances for erecting enormous structures, and excelling in the finer arts of commercial production and exchange. The industrial arts must have been cultivated very considerably, weaving, and fancy dyeing, and the preparation of articles for exchange and the foreign markets with which they had intercourse and carried on trade.

Indeed, the ruling authority was probably an oligarchy of merchants who had acquired great wealth and political power. And the great activity along these lines led to the expansion of ship-building and the related activities, the building of harbors, and the cultivation of the appliances of invention for the better prosecution of commerce. Artists, skilled workmen, manufacturing tradesmen and producers, with their mechanical energy and skill, were in all probability very widely diffused among the people. Indeed, we have the evidence of some of the bilingual inscriptions that there were guilds, somewhat after the order of the mediæval guilds, whose members were elected and called "fellows" of the orders.

But of all the Semitic nations which had the educational activities highly developed, the Jews and Arabians stand first. The former, from the times of the schools of the prophets, which were, according to rabbinical tradition, often assemblies of from one hundred to four hundred students, to the days of the synagogues, were very active in the work of education. Music, poetry, and law, civil as well as religious, were a large part of the instruction. The synagogue was matured during the captivity; but, long before that period, there were organized activities for the spread of knowledge. These efforts were naturally confined chiefly to the higher classes; but the democratic nature of the Hebrew theocracy had its proper influence, and soon led to the general inculcation of knowledge among all the people, where the nature of the case made it at all possible.

The priesthood, being civil in authority and function as well as religious, necessarily had an education on that side as well as in the ritual and ceremonial of the Temple. This of course led to the larger problems of public morality and political relations. Thus we have the prophets, emphasizing the neglect of the priests in this regard, by themselves raising the questions of unequal taxation, the relation of the nobility to the common people, the rights and welfare of the agricultural classes, and the like. This gave the Hebrews a political education which has not been equaled among any people in the world.

The domestic arts and occupations were not less earnestly studied and inculcated of which we have also very clear evidence. And the effect, upon the habits of the people by this influence was very marked and decisive in many a time of trial and need. The fact is that on the practical side, law, government, social relations, economy, and literature, were quite extensively taught and mastered. Later on, language study became more common as the Jews became convinced of the wisdom of such study, as well as forced to the necessity by mingling with other peoples. The same is true of the study of philosophy; while dialectics was soon recognized as of great practical worth in imparting as well as receiving instruction. A single fact in connection with the education of the Jews must be forever remembered. By the terms of their religious exclusiveness, the Jew was the peer of every one of his race. Hence the ideas became soon in the strictest sense, enforced by the religious bond, popular, because the interests were the interests, not of a man, but of a people. One singular fact further deserves to be noted, namely, that medicine and therapeutics were among the last to receive attention, though of course the law, with its enormous ritual, and its numerous hygienic instructions and observances, was a powerful force. But of organized medical study there is little or no trace, due very largely, probably, to the abundance of supernatural forces at the command of the priesthood, and the conception of the nearness of Jehovah and the immediateness of his interventions. But this seems to be alone among the practical sciences which did not receive very thorough attention in some form or other.

The notable service which the Arabs have rendered to civilization and general culture is too well known to need recounting here; though that was chiefly post-Christian in its development, and it would be difficult to estimate just how much of its inspiration was due to Christian influence and guidance. Nevertheless, it is in direct logical sequence to the earlier Semitic history, as regards educational ideas and tradition, and cannot be considered otherwise than as very considerably the outcome of Semitic trial and discipline.

ISRAEL AMONG THE NATIONS.

UNDER the above title, M. Anatole Leroy-Beaulieu has recently published a most interesting and fruitful study of the "Jews and Antisemitism."¹ The author makes a very exhaustive review of the physical and social status of the Jew the world over at this time, and in the course of the discussion reveals and brings into his argument a large number of instructive facts. One sentence in the introduction will be especially interesting and suggestive to Americans: "This expression [i. e. Judaizing] is often used in Europe to indicate the growing ascendancy

¹ New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons. 1895.

of material interests and the encroachments of the mercantile spirit. I do not think that the Jew can be held responsible for this tendency and I shall attempt to show this in my forthcoming work: *Le Regne de l'Argent. What the Antisemites call the 'Judaizing' of society might, as I have taken the liberty of asserting, be more correctly called the 'Americanizing' of morals.*" The italics are our own.

The author announces himself a Christian and a Frenchman, and then proceeds to give his thorough and exhaustive statement of his theory of the rise, origin, and reasons for the continuance of the antisemitic feeling which is at present raging so persistently in some portions of Europe. His arraignment of the Russian government for its treatment of its Jewish subjects is especially severe and just. One is dazed to find it in cold type, though it is not new, that England did not fully emancipate the Jews until 1849 and 1858, Denmark in 1849, Austria in 1867, Germany in 1869 and 1871, Italy in 1860 and 1870, Switzerland in 1869 and 1874, and Bulgaria in 1878 and 1879. Russia and Roumania and Spain and Portugal have not yet risen to this plane of humanity, in spite of the fact that we are in sight of the twentieth century.

Russia has between three and five millions of these unfortunate subjects. Germany and Austria have about two millions together, of which the German Empire has about six hundred thousand, about two-thirds of whom are in Prussia. The rest are variously distributed, the United States having about half a million. Never has Israel been more widely dispersed, yet never before has her distinctive alienation and separateness from the rest of the world been more clearly marked or excited such intense antipathy and adverse activity.

This dispersion of the Jews has brought to light the fact that climatic conditions cannot exterminate the race, and that conditions of privation and hardship which would very soon end the existence of almost any other people have not had this effect upon the sons of Jacob, and the probability is that they will continue to endure as long as any one else does, provided they are not removed by force.

The prejudice against the Jew, our author states, arises from several different causes; the first being religious, and this in time becoming racial, and then national, and so continually adding force and venom until the desire for Jew-baiting has penetrated even into the German universities and the higher classes of European society. But in this the Germans are not alone; Frenchmen and Englishmen have the same feelings toward him.

Physiologically the Jews are a most interesting study, as our author well shows; though there is some reason to fear that he has made use of all kinds of material, some of which, like the United States Census Reports of 1890, are notoriously untrustworthy and useless for scientific purposes. He shows the strength and power of the family bond, and the relation to the welfare of the race of the fact that families are reared in.

the early young manhood and womanhood of the parents. Longevity for this and other reasons is greater among the Jews, being in our own country in the ratio of fifty-seven to forty-one. All of which tends to make the Jew multiply more quickly than his Christian neighbor, and has an important bearing upon the relative morality of the Jews and Gentiles also.

How impressive these facts have become at this late date is seen in an article, by Dr. H. Behrend, in the *Nineteenth Century* for September, 1889, wherein the writer makes a request upon the English Government to make certain requirements of butchers, in accordance with the Jewish code. Most certain it is that, as M. Leroy Beaulieu remarks, "Judaism has made religion the handmaid of hygiene, and has utilized piety for the preservation of health." Christian preachers and public teachers generally might, with great profit to themselves and their clients, familiarize themselves with these facts as given in the Old Testament, even with all the light of the science of this century. We may yet see the curious spectacle of the civilized world turning to the Bible for a new reason, namely, to maintain its physical life, and the relief from the admitted ravages of the social evil, which is devastating and corrupting almost every civilized nation, may yet be seen to lie in the re-adoption of the essential principles of the Mosaic code for the regulation of family and social life. Certain it is that, at present, there seems to be nothing to stop the sweep of immorality in this particular form. Perhaps the author would regard this evil also as a part of the process of "Americanizing" morals.

Psychologically the Jew of to-day is uninteresting, except where he attracts attention by his genius, which is always to be treated as a matter by itself. At all events the wonderful manifestations which make the Old Testament such a mine of psychological phenomena, illustrating almost every phase of modern physiological psychology, and affording numberless illustrations for which as yet no adequate explanation has been discovered, do not seem to be present in the modern Jew, probably because he has lost the finer traits of intellect and feeling by the barbaric yearning for material wealth which the experience of centuries has created within him. Mentally he presents no attractiveness, being for the most part sordid and puerile.

These and a large number of other facts form the body and discussion of a very useful and timely book. If the antisemitic question is a question deeper than racial or national lines, as this writer maintains, and antisemitic activity is merely a form of a universal *Kultur kampf*, it may well engage the attention of thinkers everywhere. Certainly now, we must be impressed, not merely with the scandal of our century in their persecution, but also with their wonderful endurance under the pressure.

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