

THE EDITOR'S COMMENTS.

DEADLY CROSSINGS.

There is little merit in the sagacity which locks the stable door after the horse is stolen, or in adopting good resolutions only after serious if not fatal injury has been done to the cause or conscience which needed them. Yet the NEWS takes tardy occasion to call attention to the death traps existing on several streets of this city crossed by railways in reaching different parts of their yards, and only regrets that the warning should have been deferred until another horror had come to shock the feelings of the community.

That in the fatality referred to, the railway employees exercised all reasonable care, and that the verdict may be, "purely accidental and without blame," does but emphasize the proposition that where such an accident can possibly occur without blame to the parties concerned, some plan of prevention radically better than anything now in use must be immediately employed. Such a verdict will simply increase public alarm, and render imperative a compliance with the public demand for better protection. Where common negligence can be held accountable for an accident and those who are guilty of it can be punished, the condition of public safety is not nearly so much imperilled as where people are maimed and mangled without anybody's being to blame. Without reflecting in any way, therefore, upon the men who were handling the cars which killed Mr. Burton at the crossing last night—for from all accounts they were neglecting no precaution nor no part of their stipulated duty when the accident occurred—we express here and now the demand that these crossings henceforth be guarded or enclosed in such a way as to make a recurrence of that horror impossible.

It has been due no less to the speed and intelligence of occupants of vehicles than to the extreme caution of the railway employes that the list of deaths at crossings is so small. Both the great roads in this city are daily carrying a risk and responsibility, of which the municipal fathers should insist on relieving them. Both have to cross busy and important streets in their yard switching, at some of which during certain hours they have flagmen and at others not. The two main approaches to this city from the villages and the growing country to the west of us are North Temple and Third South streets, on each of which a bridge spans the Jordan. These two streets in the neighborhood of the railway depots are fairly monopolized by a network of tracks, and engines and cars are crossing and recrossing them every few minutes. These two important arteries of the city's commercial life should be the first to receive notice and protection. Not only should there be flagmen constantly on duty, but there should also be gates completely shutting in the tracks when switching is in progress or a train is approaching, and then speedily reopening to permit ordinary traffic to go on

as usual. The two next streets to receive similar protection should be South Temple and Second South; then probably East Temple at Eighth South, and so on until every possible safeguard has been provided. We insist that no time be lost in attending to this matter. If the railways feel as they should do, they will be glad to do their part at once; if they are at all reluctant about it, the City Council will not escape censure if it fails to bring proper persuasion to bear upon them without another week's delay.

ANCIENT SYRIAC BIBLE.

Occasionally, scholars are excited over the discovery of some ancient manuscript of unusual interest. Particularly is this the case when some Biblical record is found, which supposedly antedates any of the existing manuscripts, because in the ever raging contest with rationalism, orthodox theology fears the result of the bringing to light of new readings that possibly may disturb doctrinal foundations, should their genuineness be established. Since the beginning of this year rumors have been abroad of the discovery in a monastery on Mount Sinai, of a parchment containing the Gospels in the Syriac language, and the opinion is now expressed that the text is probably identical with the original one, of which, it is supposed, our four Gospels are only a translation.

An account of the discovery of the precious manuscript is given in the New York World. Two English ladies, Mrs. Lewis and Mrs. Gibson, resolved to visit the historical Mount Sinai. After an eventful journey they arrived at the monastery of St. Catherine, where Tischendorf in 1859 found his valuable codex. It is well known that this monastery is a treasure house of early literature, and Mrs. Lewis, who had armed herself with a camera and letters of introduction from the Greek archbishop, obtained permission to take pictures of the ancient writings there preserved.

Concerning the library in the monastery and the work of copying manuscripts by means of the kodak, Mrs. Lewis says:

We worked for seven hours in the library, beginning at 9 a.m. The manuscripts were very much scattered, some Greek ones being in the show library and the Arabic partly there and partly in a little room halfway up a dark stair.

The Syriac ones and those supposed to be the most ancient are partly in this little room and partly in a dark closet approached through a room almost as dark. There they repose in two closed boxes and cannot be seen without a lighted candle.

Galekton gave us every facility for photographing. He spent hours holding books open for us, or deciphering pages of the Septuagint. The fact that the English should be so anxious for a correct version of the sacred writings as to have sheets of paper printed on purpose for scholars to collate them with all the extant manuscripts filled the monks with a profound respect.

We had photographed 110 pages of the Syriac Codex, book 16, the same in which

Mr. Rendel Harris found the Apology of Aristides. We had also taken the whole of a Syriac palimpsest of 358 pages, into which no eyes but our own had for centuries looked. Its leaves were most carefully glued together, and the least force used to separate them made them crumble. Some half-dozen of them we held over the steam of a kettle.

The writing beneath is red, partly Syriac and partly Greek. The upper writing of this palimpsest bears its own date, A. D. 698. It is all the lives of women saints. The under writing must be some centuries earlier. It is Syriac Gospels, and something in Greek, not yet deciphered. A Palestinian Aramaic MS., of which we photographed four pages, is the second example of its kind known to exist—that in the Vatican library having been hitherto considered unique.

Some time after the ladies' return to England, some of the photographs were inspected by Mr. Burkitt, and he pronounced them to be a copy of the Cureton Syriac. Learned scholars at once became interested, and a second party was formed to go to Mount Sinai, and through the good offices of the ecclesiastical authorities, they were enabled to copy the precious document.

Rev. Camden N. Cobern, of Ann Arbor, Mich., speaking of the manuscript, says no one can tell exactly when it was written. It is variously estimated from 350 to 500 A. D. But the age of the manuscript does not settle the age of the text.

A Syriac version of the Gospels did not exist later than the middle of the second century, and probably much earlier, and the very greatest Greek and Syriac scholars are agreed that our MS. is either that primitive Syriac Gospel with some slight modifications or else it is a child, a legitimate successor of that earliest and most important version, which even if it could not be traced back any further than 150 A. D., would yet date within fifty years of the death of John, i. e., as near to the crucifixion as we are to George Washington and the revolutionary war.

Further than this, the professor continues, long before the Gospels were written, the Gospel was spoken; that was the method of teaching in those days, and there cannot be a shadow of doubt that the burden of the first teachers of Christianity—the Gospel which they preached before the Gospel was written—was the accounts of the acts and words of Jesus.

He concludes that if this Sinai manuscript is not the earliest version of the New Testament, it is at least a descendant of it, and is valuable because it is written in the very land and in the very language in which our Lord and the Apostles talked.

From the accounts so far published it does not appear perfectly clear why the discovery of this manuscript in Syriac should cause any more stir than if it had been in Greek and equally ancient. Several Syriac versions are already known to scholars. The Peshito is supposed to have been made by translators sent by the Apostle Jude and Abgarus, king of Edessa, to Palestine. This contains all the canonical books of the Old Testament, and all of the New, except 2 Pet.; 2 and 3 John; Jude and the Revelation. The text differs from all the chief families of manuscripts and both tradition and internal evidence go to prove that it belongs to the first century. In