

THE EDITOR'S COMMENTS.

DIFFICULTIES IN SACRED WRIT.

In all inspired writings, the careful student meets with difficulties of interpretation which often seem insurmountable. Believers are sometimes harassed by objections founded on them, while non-believers offer them as an excuse for rejecting the Divine word. They are met with in the various parts of the Bible as well as on the sacred pages of the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants, although to a much smaller extent in the latter volumes than in the Old and New Testaments. The subject is of much importance and demands the attention especially of missionaries and others who are engaged as instructors of young and old in religious matters.

In the case of the Bible many difficulties arise from the fact that the correct reading of some texts is at present perhaps impossible to ascertain; others depend on our ignorance of the meaning of words and phrases, once perfectly well understood but now more or less obscure; or on mistakes of transcribers in matters pertaining to chronology, geography or history; and sometimes there is apparent contradiction between the precepts and truths revealed. In the case of the teachings given through the Prophet Joseph few of these difficulties exist, because they were transmitted in modern language and under circumstances still within the memory of living witnesses, furnishing the most infallible interpretation. The Doctrine and Covenants contains the truth in language just as plain to the present generation as did the writings of the Apostles of our Lord to the people to whom they addressed themselves. Still, in all those sacred books the inquirer often finds himself under the necessity of humbly seeking for Divine wisdom, in order that he may not err when trying to understand that which he reads.

It is not admitted, however, that the difficulties found in sacred writ justify doubts or a rejection of religion. All inspired writings are given for the instruction of mankind. But instruction supposes ignorance on the part of the pupil, to be overcome only through diligent study. And as the fact is pretty well established that the difficulties mostly relied on by skeptics are those which may easily be traced to that ignorance which they refuse to have enlightened instead of to the sacred word, doubt on that account is as irrational as it would be on the part of a student of geometry, who should reject the instructions of his teachers, because he finds the problems and theorems of the science at first surpassing his comprehension. The same remark applies to any subject of study. Theology, whether theoretical or practical, opens up its treasures to those who seek them. Difficulties there must be, or there would be nothing to master. Through labor alone

mysteries are solved, truths are comprehended and their proper connection discovered; the path, at first dark and beset with hindrances, becomes bathed in the light of Divine intelligence, and in it mortal man is led on until he beholds the glory of the very throne of God.

Faith is the first principle of the Gospel. But if revelation presented no difficulties; if every doctrine, every precept, every statement were demonstrated beforehand and narrowed down to the comprehension of man in the condition the Gospel finds him, faith would be excluded, and religious progress made impossible, since it is only through faith that knowledge is obtained—a proposition self-evident to any one who will consider the subject. It is a general arrangement in nature, that valuable truths—like the precious metals—are obtained through labor. Theology is no exception to this rule, nor is it possible to conceive how it could be.

But while all this is admitted, the fact remains, as has already been remarked, that every objection to revelation can be met satisfactorily. Some may be of such a nature as to admit of no conceivable solution in the stage of intelligence to which mankind has now reached. They remain to be illuminated by the rays of revelations still future. Others are easily solved although seemingly great stumbling blocks.

One illustration may be allowed. The reader of the Gospel of John is told (John xxi: 25) that our Lord performed so many things that if all were written "the world itself could not contain the books that should be written." This evidently refers to His brief life on earth, and many skeptics have therefore taken occasion to question the reliability of an author with ideas apparently so erroneous of the magnitude of the universe. The true meaning of this verse depends, however, on the interpretation of the words "contain" and "world." As to the first of these, in the same Gospel, chap. VIII: 37, our Lord says His enemies were seeking to kill Him, "because my word has no place in you." In the original, the word translated in one passage "contain" and in the other "has place" is the same and means exactly the same thing. What the evangelist, therefore, meant to say was, that if everything relating to the life of our Lord were written, the world—that is those not His followers—would not give the Gospel a place; they would reject it all as the Jews did with Christ, His word having no place in them. It would, in other words, be a moral impossibility, not a material or physical one, for the world to "contain" the minute incidents of the life of the Savior. There is thus no difficulty in the statement referred to, and the supposed objection is met by a correct understanding of the Greek word translated "contain."

As a universal rule, it is safe to place implicit reliance on the word of God, even when it at first seems obscure. When all errors due to human agencies

are excepted, the revealed word remains, the rock on which to build for time and all eternity.

ABOUT THE INDIANS.

In his official report, a synopsis of which has appeared in our telegraph columns, the secretary of the interior, Hoke Smith, makes some sensible suggestions as to the management of the Indians with reference to their education and the disposal of their lands. Those who are acquainted with the Indian situation, and who desire that the aborigines shall receive just and humane treatment, will recognize in the secretary's recommendations an eminently practical view of the issues presented, and the outlining of a policy which would do credit to a nation whose government is based on advanced principles of human freedom and enlightenment. The whole report, so far as its reference to the Indian question is concerned, breathes a spirit of fairness that should receive hearty national response in being reduced to practice, inculcating as it does the principle that the wards of the nation have rights which the government is in honor bound to respect and maintain.

Regarding the education of the Indians and their development toward civilization, the secretary has recognized the fact that there is a deficiency in the present school system, as applied to the native races, which should be supplied in the near future. While the manner of training the young Indian might be suitable to other children under some circumstances, it is far from being adapted to the immediate wants of a people who have made comparatively slow strides in the path of civilization. Schools are all right in their places in theoretical training, but the condition of the Indian today is that he needs most of all an object lesson, repeated and added to day after day, which will enable him to adapt himself to those industrial pursuits that will make him self-supporting. The schools he needs are those which partake of the kindergarten method, developing into industrial or manual training schools rather than into the theoretical field. In these the rudimental branches should be taught; but before the civilization of the Indian can be made a success he must learn to comprehend the benefits accruing to his own labor, and the methods by which that labor is to be performed. Hence the force of the secretary's assertion that when the Indian is destined to follow city life it will be time to educate him in city manners, but so long as he must remain on reservations and pursue the avocations connected with agriculture, his training should be directed to qualifying him therefor.

Another suggestion, and one that will receive no support from land sharks and speculators, is that which says the land of an Indian reservation is the property of the particular Indians residing thereon, and that in allotting lands in severalty and providing an excess to be thrown open to settlement by the white man, the government is pursuing an improper policy. But notwithstanding the cry that will be raised against this proposition, its