

RECENT DISCOVERY OF EARLY TEXTS OF THE GOSPELS.

Two ladies, Mrs. Lewis and her sister, Mrs. Gibson, both conversant with Oriental languages, and speaking Arabian and modern Greek fluently, went last year to Mount Sinai, after being thoroughly instructed by Professor Harris in the photographing of handwritings. Although the convent had often been searched for written treasures since Tischendorf's great discovery there—and even by Professor Harris himself only three years ago—the present discovery remained hidden from former investigators. It is a palimpsest manuscript. When Mrs. Lewis first saw it, it was in a dreadful condition, all the leaves sticking together, and being full of dirt. She separated the leaves from one another with the steam from her tea kettle, and photographed the whole text—from three to four hundred pages. It turned out to be a Syrian text of all the four Gospels, closely related to the one known to theologians as Cureton's "Remains of a Very Ancient Recension of the Four Gospels in Syriac," and among all preserved testimonies contains the oldest authenticated texts of the Gospels. Only fragments of the Syrian text have hitherto been known, these being in a single manuscript in the British Museum, and in two leaves of it which came to Berlin. Now, all the four Gospels in this text are nearly complete. Professor Harris himself, on hearing of the discovery, set off for Mount Sinai, and for forty days he and the two ladies sat in the convent deciphering the palimpsest leaves.

The following letter from Professor J. Rendel Harris, which was published in the *British Weekly* recently, gives further information respecting this important discovery:

"DEAR MR. EDITOR: You asked me, when I was leaving England nearly three months since, to let you have reports of any interesting or important matters in connection with my second visit to Mount Sinai; and it occurs to me that one of the first things that are proper to be done on a return from the desert to civilization is to comply with your very reasonable request and send a message to you, and through you to the readers of the *British Weekly*. We have been in the desert just two months, forty days of which time (it is a canonical number for retirement in the desert) have been spent in the Convent of St. Catharine, on Mount Sinai. We had at first planned a thirty days' retreat, but the work upon which our party was engaged was so important that a prolongation of our stay became imperative, and if it had not been for academic duties most of us would have remained even longer. The fact is that Mount Sinai doesn't often offer such attractions to scholars as it has done this winter, when every facility for study was offered, and when a monumental discovery had been made and only needed to be followed up. This discovery consists in the bringing to light of a very early palimpsest copy of the Old Syriac Gospels, hitherto only known to us in the fragmentary form which critics speak of as the Cureton Gospels. Cureton, however, after whom this early version of the Gospels is named, only found, among the treasures which were brought to the British Museum from the Nitrian desert, scattered leaves of the translation in question. The Sinai palimpsest presents us with almost a complete text of this priceless early rendering of the Gospels. The actual discovery of this MS. was announced by me in the *Academy* and the *Athenaeum* some months since, at the request of the finder, Mrs. Lewis, of Cambridge, who visited the Convent of St. Catharine last winter. Mrs. Lewis and others who were interested in her discovery

wished me to make the announcement for them, but I am sadly afraid that, although carefully worded to avoid misunderstanding, some persons have jumped to the conclusion that I had made the initial discovery myself. This is not the case; the credit of unearthing the lost treasure belongs to Mrs. Lewis, who found the MS. in a deplorable condition, with the leaves stuck together, and in very bad preservation. She separated the compacted leaves by the steam of a tea

kettle, and, finding the underwriting of the palimpsest to be a very early text of the Syriac Gospels, she heroically photographed the whole of the MS., and brought the negatives back to Cambridge for decipherment, where her suspicions were confirmed by the reading of portions of the text by Mr. Bensly and Mr. Burkett, who pronounced it to be closely related to the Cure-



MRS. A. S. LEWIS, WHO DISCOVERED THE SYRIAC TEXT OF THE GOSPELS.

tonian version. You can imagine, my dear friend, the work this has made for us. I fancy that Mount Sinai has never before seen three Syriac scholars working at once within its walls, and, which is the droll side of the situation, from a monastic point of view, working under the presidency of a lady. We have had a busy time at the lost text whose traces appear under the more modern writing. From the first rays of the morning sun to the latest light of the evening, hardly a moment has passed when one or other of us has not been busy deciphering the 'Lewis Gospels of Mount Sinai;' but the labor has been well spent, and the results will be of the highest importance."—*Pall Mall Budget*.

THE NEW BALTIMORE POST OFFICE.

The imposing structure shown in the illustration is on the square bounded by Fayette, Lexington, Calvert



THE NEW POST OFFICE AND COURT HOUSE, BALTIMORE.

and North Streets. It is built of marble and is 152 feet in front and 234 feet deep. It affords ample room for the post office business of the principal city of Maryland, and the third story is used for the United States courts. The cost of the building was \$2,075,000, of which \$553,000 was expended for the site.

THERE are eighty miles of tunnels in Great Britain, their total cost exceeding £6,500,000.

The Water Supply of Galveston.

One of the most remarkable systems of water supply in the world is to be found in this city. About a mile north of the city is a valley a thousand feet wide, which surveyors determined to be the location of an underground stream, though the valley itself was dry and under cultivation.

It was suggested that wells might tap this stream and give the city a pure supply of water. The city engineer, a young man from the East, suggested that, in lieu of a reservoir, the hidden stream be dammed, when there would at all times be an inexhaustible supply. He was derided, but, firm in the belief that his theory was right, he obtained an appropriation for an experimental well.

Sinking a large one in the center of the valley, he struck living water at the depth of 30 feet, coming in such quantities that a powerful steam pump could not lower it to any perceptible degree. An appropriation enabled him to carry out his plans, which resulted in obtaining an unlimited quantity of pure water.

Sinking five wells, 200 feet apart, he covered the entire width of the stream. He next tunneled from well to well, making a six-foot excavation the entire distance across the stream. This was enlarged so as to be 6 feet high and 8 feet wide. Then on the lower side he built a substantial stone dam 6 feet high, its foundation being below the bed of the submerged stream, which was clearly defined. The water collected so fast that the central section had to be left until the two wings were completed. When this was done work was begun on the central unfinished portion, two powerful steam pumps being required day and night to keep down the water so that the workmen could complete the structure.

Soundings showed that before the connections were made with the mains leading into the city the tunnel was filled with water, and a current flowing over the dam was observed at all five of the wells. The mains were filled as soon as the pumps could be set at work, and although no limit has ever been placed upon the use of the water, the supply has never at any time been lowered below the top of the dam. In rainy weather and in dry weather the volume of water has remained the same. It is free from all vegetable or mineral impurities and is cool and sweet.

What was considered by many as a doubtful experiment has proved a complete success. This supply is without parallel in the history of water works, unless it be at Chattanooga, Tenn., where the supply is obtained from an underground river flowing in Nickajack Cave beneath Lookout Mountain.

There engineering skill drove a tunnel into the side of the mountain until the river was tapped at the point where it dropped over the rocks, forming an immense underground waterfall. That water is as pure and sweet as that at Galveston, but there is not the quantity, nor can it be stored for emergencies as can the water at the latter point.—*Water and Gas Review*.

The Bering Sea Controversy.

The *Christian at Work*, in a few words, explains the whole matter:

"The pivotal question before the Court of Arbitration now sitting at Paris for settling the Bering Sea controversy between this country and England will be, What rights did Russia cede to the United States with Alaska? A recent report made by a Russian commission becomes in this relation important. In that report it is claimed that Russia has territorial jurisdiction to the distance of thirty miles only from the islands in Bering Sea which she still retains. This would seem to imply that Russia's claim of juris-

isdiction over the islands ceded to us extended also only to a distance of thirty miles. If that be the limit of our rights, then pelagic sealing is clearly no trespass if it occurs no nearer than thirty miles. But however the matter may be decided, even if England has the right to fish within thirty miles of the coast, there should be no difficulty in negotiating a fair treaty with England for the protection of the seals, in which both countries are interested."