

different literary taste, presenting history in all its forms, from the archæology of Genesis, or the constitutional history of the following books, to the ecclesiastical digests of Chronicles.

It is impossible here to name all the departments of Biblical literature. A nation's whole philosophy—in that picturesque dress which has given to Hebrew philosophy its name of "Wisdom"—may be read in the books of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, and the Apocryphal books of Ecclesiasticus and Wisdom of Solomon; read in their proper order, they display the whole development of that philosophy, from the brief, disjointed observations that make up Proverbs, to the first troubled attempt to read the meaning of life in Ecclesiastes, and the recovered serenity when, in the Book of Wisdom, a wider survey of life harmonizes analysis and faith. The literature of oratory is splendidly represented in Deuteronomy; and no collection of speeches in secular literature has the interest which is given to the orations of Moses by the dramatic setting of the book, which presents the pathetic situation of Moses at Pisgah, until pathos becomes triumph and rhetoric gives place to song. Philosophy and oratory belong to all literatures; but the Bible has all to itself the department of prophecy. This gathers into one distinct literary form sermons and political speeches; burdens on hostile peoples that suggest the satires of secular literature; the mystic poetry of visions; dramatic dialogues like Micah's controversy before the mountains, or Jeremiah's intercession in a season of drought; while all ordinary literary forms are transcended when Joel and Isaiah present advancing judgment in a spiritual drama that has all space for its stage and all time for the period of its action.

In intrinsic worth, then, the Old Testament is second to none of the world's great literatures. Moreover, it has, in common with the literature of Greece and Rome, been the main factor in the development of our modern prose and poetry. For the English-speaking people, no liberal education will be complete in which Classical and Biblical literatures do not stand side by side.



Did the Millerites Have Ascension Robes?

By Jane Marsh Parker

Miss Wilkins, in her Millerite story, "A New England Prophet," published in the September "Harper," gives what the majority of her readers will accept, because coming from her, as a true realistic picture of the fanaticism in New England, a glimpse of what has been called the great spiritual cyclone of the century. To those who have personal reminiscences of "the tenth day of the seventh month" excitement of 1844, the story is one of peculiar interest.

The many admirers of Miss Wilkins's most excellent work in the past have always prized its marked characteristic of historical truthfulness, its clear-cut artistic photography. The least betrayal of a lapse on her part in a contrary direction will be noted with regret; such a lapse is her misrepresentation of Millerism as seen in the "New England Prophet," the result evidently of a misconception of the movement drawn from the popular estimate of it—from accepted traditions which cannot be verified. The story seems to deepen many erroneous impressions of a movement which, disastrous as it was, did much to clarify the theological atmosphere. Had Miss Wilkins lived fifty years ago, had she been a child in a home where great charts with their grotesque portraiture of apocalyptic beasts, Nebuchadnezzar's image, and many zoölogical eccentricities and mathematical demonstrations were conspicuous upon the walls, and where the coming of the Lord on "the tenth day of the seventh month" was talked about in a matter-of-fact, positive way, she would have made her story other than it is in several particulars, and the ascension robe, if woven in, would not have been indorsed as a fact, as it certainly is. She would remember

how bitterly she suffered as a child when jeered at by her schoolmates for having such a garment, how they used to importune her for a look at it, and how many of them actually believed, because their parents told them so, that the Millerites went up to the graveyard at night in their robes, and that she had been with them. With all that in her remembrance, Miss Wilkins would never have woven an ascension robe into a story, as if all that her playmates accused her of in those dreadful days had been really true, after all.

The movement needed something to give it a picturesque air, and until the camp-meetings began in the woods, the ascension robe was about all that it had in the way of picturesqueness; and that was loaned by the scoffers. To know the fanaticism as it really was, one must read the original literature of the movement—the leading organs of the sect (which in this country numbered over fifty thousand), its many books, and the tracts sown broadcast over the land. It is a most creditable literature, all in all, making due allowance for its iron-clad, unmitigated literalism. We must remember, in reading it, that anything akin to a spiritual interpretation was looked upon with distrust fifty years ago. Verily, did not Universalism and Unitarianism and Swedenborgianism come from the spiritual interpretation? Had Miss Wilkins read much of their publications she would have been surprised, no doubt, at discovering the fair Biblical learning of the leaders of the movement—that they and their followers were not, in the main, illiterate and superstitious—far from it. In turning over the files of the weekly and daily papers published by the Millerites she would have found many allusions to ascension robes. She might have read Father Miller's call for one, asking that one be produced for his inspection, and the reports of those who failed in discovering such a garment. These fanatics were not ashamed of their unpopular and much-reviled faith. If they had provided ascension robes against the last day, they would not have denied that same. But the ascension robe existed only in the brain of the scoffer, and the newspapers made the most of it whenever they could, despite all the protests the Millerites made against the charge of having such garments. Possibly, and probably, the believers would have supplied themselves with ascension robes—that is, some would have had them—only that the first suggestion came from those who jeered at the believers, making them to see how ridiculous ascension robes would appear, notwithstanding their apparent harmony with the general trend of the movement. The only article of the kind that a well-known preacher of the doctrines succeeded in tracking down, after a long and disheartening chase, turned out to be his own—his long night-shirt which his neighbors had seen on the family clothes-line. The writer of this remembers very well hearing as a little child Father Miller (William Miller, not Joseph, as Miss Wilkins has it) talking at her father's table about the ascension robes, and how he wished that, if any of the brethren or sisters ever had been so foolish as to make one, they could be made to see what disgrace they were bringing upon "the cause." In his constant journeying through the country, Father Miller had tried in vain to find some one who really knew of any one who had an ascension robe.

Father Heims, of the diocese of Dakota, the most venerable of the clergy of the Episcopal Church, highly honored and revered by priesthood and laity, was once the chief evangelist—next to Father Miller—of the doctrine of the speedy coming in 1843-1844. His reminiscences of the movement are surely deserving of attention, his word beyond question; and Father Heims (Joshua V. Heims, of the old "Midnight Cry") has about given up trying to dispel the ascension robe delusion, though it still makes him indignant to hear one spoken of as a historical fact, to find it woven in a false light into the song and story of standard authors, and calculated to strengthen an erroneous impression.

If the Millerites had ever arrayed themselves in ascension robes, it would have been when that company of believers went out from Philadelphia some five miles, October 9, 1844, "over the Schuylkill along the Darby

road," and, pitching their tents in an open field, gave themselves to prayer and praise while they awaited the sounding of the last trumpet. There were some highly bred ladies among them—enthusiasts in the faith—and it was whispered at the time that a spirit of exclusiveness had dictated the withdrawal of the little company from the multitude of believers who assembled for months each day preceding the 24th and 25th in the public hall of the city; that even in such a democratic event as an ascension into the heavens it was the wish of certain old-family Philadelphians not to "go up" with the common crowd. Be that as it may, the records of the episode are extant—reliable records they are, too—and there is nothing to prove that ascension robes were worn upon the occasion. We know that when their expectation dwindled at last to dreary ebb—when the sun rose up as usual, not only on the 26th of October, but on the 27th and the 28th—the little band finally went back to the city they had left, as they believed, forever, but not until they had found in their well-worn Bibles full and satisfactory explanation of why the vision tarried, and why they must wait a while longer. They had no ascension robes to hide from the scoffers; of that we are quite sure.

"I gave up long ago," said a New Churchman recently, when this subject of ascension robes was under discussion, "trying to uproot the prevalent belief that Sweden-

borgians, as they call us, always put plates on the table at their family feasts for such of their number as are dead. There is no use in denying it, absurd as it is. The world likes to believe that we do, and believe it will."

And so the writer of this expects to find in the collection of some of our Historical Societies at no distant day an ascension robe, the gift of some one who has written upon the card affixed that it was worn upon the day upon which William Miller said the world would come to an end. When one or two of those "flowing white garments" are upon exhibition, verification of their having been an indispensable part of the poor Millerite's outfit will be unnecessary. Nor would it be strange if some who know the truth of the matter should, at the sight of the rare relic, yield to weakness of conviction, begin actually to doubt their own memory, and consent to accept the ascension robe as a fact—at least not to contradict any longer those who say that the Millerites all had them, even they themselves. Hear dear Dr. Holmes's *finale* to his "Latter-Day Warnings"—another nail holding fast for popular recognition the scoffers' fabrication of an ascension robe. Until the dawn of the millennium, says he,

... let Cumming blaze away,
And Miller's saints blow up the globe;
But when you see that blessed day,
Then order your ascension robe.

Selected Short Stories

IV.—The Courting of Sister Wisby

By Sarah Orne Jewett

Miss Sarah Orne Jewett, whose "Courting of Sister Wisby" forms the fourth in our series of selected stories, has lived so quiet and uneventful a life that, so far as regards personal biographical detail, there is little that needs to be said. Her father, Theodore Herman Jewett, was a physician of great ability, and for many years filled a professorship in the medical department of Bowdoin College; he also contributed largely to the medical literature of the country. Miss Jewett was born in South Berwick, Me., on September 3, 1849. Readers of her stories do not need to be told that she has spent a great part of her life in typical New England country places, yet it is equally true that she has traveled extensively both at home and abroad. The greater part of her literary work has been given to the public through the medium of the "Atlantic Monthly," though other magazines have published occasional stories from her pen. Many will recall particularly a charming idyllic sketch, printed about a year ago in the "Century," which tells of the day's outing of an old farmer and his little daughters. In simplicity and faithfulness to nature Miss Jewett has never done anything that surpasses this graceful picture of homely and sweet-tempered character. Her first book, "Deephaven," was printed in 1877; "Old Friends and New" in 1879; "Country Byways" in 1881; "The Mate of the Twilight," etc., in 1883; "The Country Doctor" in 1884; "Marsh Island" in 1885; "The White Heron," etc., in 1886; "Tales of New England" in 1890; "A Native of Winby," etc., in 1893. This list includes the principal part, but not all, of Miss Jewett's literary production. A comparison between Miss Jewett and Miss Wilkins is almost inevitable, as both write so intimately and so vividly of old-time New England life and character. In power of story-invention, of intensity of purpose and directness of style, Miss Wilkins has, perhaps,



Sarah Orne Jewett

no equal among living American writers. On the other hand, Miss Jewett's stories are often rather sketches than tales, have rarely a definite plot, and are quiet rather than passionate in tone. But in her delicacy of perception, in her recognition of the tender as well as the hard side of New England character, and in her pervading sympathy with nature and with humanity, Miss Jewett is as truly unexcelled. "The Courting of Sister Wisby" is taken from the volume entitled "Tales of New England," and is printed by special permission of and by arrangement with the author (by whom the book is copyrighted) and the publishers, Messrs. Houghton, Mifflin & Co.

ALL the morning there had been an increasing temptation to take an outdoor holiday, and early in the afternoon the temptation outgrew my power of resistance. A far-away pasture on the long southwestern slope of a high hill was persistently present to my mind, yet there seemed to be no particular reason why I should think of it. I was not sure that I wanted anything from the pasture, and there was no sign, except the temptation, that the pasture wanted anything of me. But I was on the farther side of as many as three fences before I stopped to think again where I was going, and why.

There is no use in trying to tell another person about that afternoon unless he distinctly remembers weather exactly like it. No number of details concerning an Arctic ice-

blockade will give a single shiver to a child of the tropics. This was one of those perfect New England days in late summer, when the spirit of autumn takes a first stealthy flight, like a spy, through the ripening country-side, and, with feigned sympathy for those who droop with August heat, puts her cool cloak of bracing air about leaf and flower and human shoulders. Every living thing grows suddenly cheerful and strong; it is only when you catch sight of a horror-stricken little maple in swampy soil—a little maple that has second-sight and foreknowledge of coming disaster to her race—only then does a distrust of autumn's friendliness dim your joyful satisfaction.

In midwinter there is always a day when one has the first foretaste of spring; in late August there is a morning when the air is for the first time autumn-like. Perhaps it