

**TUESDAY, MARCH 10, 1914.**

**THE DAILY TELEGRAPH,**

**DR. C. D. GINSBURG.**

**EMINENT HEBREW SCHOLAR.**

A Hebraist and Biblical scholar of European reputation has been removed by the death of Dr. Christian David Ginsburg, LL.D., J.P.

Dr. Ginsburg who completed his 83rd year on Christmas Day last, was a native of Warsaw, and was educated at the Rabbinic College in that city, but when 15 years old he adopted the Christian faith. Nevertheless, he owed much to that early Rabbinical training, for his after-life was devoted to the study of the Hebrew Bible, and by that study he made the Biblical scholars of the world his debtors.

While still a young man Dr. Ginsburg came to England, and was for a while connected with the Liverpool branch of the Society for Promoting Christianity among the Jews; but as time went on he devoted himself more and more to his literary work. His commentaries on "Ecclesiastes" and the "Song of Songs," in 1857, heralded the advent of a new Hebraist. And to those followed "The Karaites" (1862), "The Essenes" (1864), "The Kabbalah" (1865), and "Massoreth-Ha-Massoreth" (1867) which was destined to be the culminating work of his career; and in the same year a translation of Jacob ben Chayim's introduction to his great edition of the Hebrew Bible of 1524-5.

**"MASSORAH"**

' These publications, to which a long list might be added, prepared Dr. Ginsburg for his masterpiece, the "Massorah." "What is the 'Massorah'?" Dr. Ginsburg was once asked. He replied:

"The Massorah consists of marginal notes on the spelling and other orthographical features of every word and passage of the Hebrew Bible. The Hebrew scribes in ancient times were very anxious to preserve the Bible in its textual integrity, so they took note of every possible feature presented by the text, and embodied their researches in separate treatises. The word 'Massorah' signifies tradition, these Scriptural studies being 'handed down' from age to age by the Scriptural experts. Their object was to establish a standard and infallible text of the Sacred Writings. The only text of the Hebrew Bible that has come down to us is the Massoretic text. All other texts—and there must have been others—have disappeared."

by one man. So highly did Mr. Gladstone value it that he obtained a public grant towards the publication of the "Massorah."

### BIBLE AND CLASSICS.

Was it worth the effort? Here is a story of Dr. Ginsburg's in answer to that question:

"I remember one occasion when two very eminent men of letters said to me after we had dined together, 'Now, Ginsburg, why waste your time on Biblical research? Why not take up the Greek and Latin instead of the Hebrew classics? You will find them a more satisfactory study in every way.' And I said to them, 'Let us make a bargain. If you will show me a single passage in the Greek or Roman classics, or, indeed, in any Oriental classics whatever, which can beat the Twenty-third or the Hundred and Thirty-ninth Psalm, I promise you to leave the Bible alone and turn to Sophocles and Aeschylus.' This was agreed, and they were honest enough to confess, after a while, that they had not found such a passage. Since then they chaffed no more, and I went on with my Massorah."

This research became the absorbing object of Dr. Ginsburg's life. While at Liverpool he came up to London three times a week to delve into the Hebrew treasures of the British Museum. Under the great dome silently he worked when a young man; there you met him the middle-aged scholar, the friend of Panizzi, Winter Jones, Sir E. Maunde Thompson; and there you might meet him an octogenarian in congenial converse with Dr. Kenyon.

### COLLECTOR OF BIBLES.

Dr. Ginsburg loved "the incomparable book." He had an unequalled gathering for a private collector, of rare Bibles and biblical manuscripts. Over sixty years ago a Liverpool bookseller offered him £7,000 for his collection. It will be recalled that Dr. Ginsburg was one of the original members appointed by Convocation to revise the Old Testament. He was proud of that revision, because, as he used to say, the revisers made no unnecessary changes. Wherever possible they retained the language to which the people were accustomed. The revisers of the New Testament acted, he said, too much in the spirit of the schoolmaster, and made unnecessary alterations that prejudiced the entire

These Massoretic texts were very numerous; not a single manuscript of the Bible contained them all; and Dr. Ginsburg spent thirty years of his life in searching for them. There was hardly a library in the world of any note that he did not explore. In vaults of the Escorial and in the chambers of the Holy Inquisition he found rare and unknown MSS. The result of this enormous labour was huge folio volumes appearing in 1880, 1883, and 1885, forming probably the largest addition to Old Testament sources ever made

work. In addition to the books we have enumerated it must be added that Dr. Ginsburg contributed to Kitto's "Biblical Encyclopædia," to Smith's "Dictionary of the Bible," and to the "Encyclopædia Britannica," and to many serial publications. His keen eye saw through the fraud of the so-called Shapira MSS. Since 1908 there have been published parts of a new edition of the Hebrew Bible, described as Massoreto-Critical—with the light of these researches thrown upon it—the volumes issued comprising the Pentateuch, the Books of Samuel and Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, the minor Prophets, and the Psalms.

Two friendships Dr. Ginsburg valued most highly. First came that of Mr. Gladstone. "Gladstone and I," he said once, "studied many things together. We both, at one time, were engaged in collecting pamphlets relating to the pre-Reformation controversy, and ransacked the second-hand booksellers together. He was a simple-minded man, and one of the most devout Churchmen I have ever met. I often stayed with him at Hawarden, and used to accompany him occasionally to the early morning service, sharing his pew. Never shall I forget the fervency of his devotion."

The other friend was Tennyson, who, he remarked, was "simple-minded as a child. I lent him the historical books he required for the composition of 'Queen Mary.' When it was finished he kept me up late one night, and read it to me. I never had the heart to read it again, because I knew it could not convey the same meaning to me as the poet's own rendering had imparted to it on that memorable night."

Dr. Ginsburg was one of the original members and for some time librarian of the National Liberal Club. He was twice married; first, in 1858, to Miss Margaret Ryley Crofield, of Aigburth, Liverpool, who died in 1867; and, secondly, to Miss Emilie Hansburg, of Penshurst, Kent. He had one son and four daughters.