THE KABBALAH.

The Bible is an occult book, and a remarkable one. About all creeds and faiths this side of Pagandom go to it for their authority. Read in the light of occult teachings, it becomes something more than the old battle ground of controversy for warring religions. Occultism alone furnishes the key to this ancient treasury of wisdom. But to turn now to another point, it may be well to call the attention of the readers of The Woman's Bible to a few quotations from MacGregor Mathers' "Kabbalah Unveiled," which has been pronounced by competent authorities the work of a master hand. This work is a translation of Knorr Von Rosenroth's "Kabbalah Denudata."

The Kabbalah—the Hebrew esoteric doctrines—is a system of teachings with which only the very learned attempt to wrestle. It is claimed to have been handed down by oral tradition from angelic sources, through Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, the Seventy Elders, to David and to Solomon. No attempt was made to commit this sacred knowledge to writing, till, in the early centuries of the Christian era (authorities differ widely as to the date) the pupils of Rabbi Simeon ben Joachi put his teachings into writing; and this in later ages became known as the "Zohar," or "Book of Splendor." Around the name of this Rabbi Simeon ben Joachi, as one scholarly writer puts it, "cluster the mystery and the poetry of the religion of the Kabbalah as a gift of the Deity to mankind." The Zohar, which is only a part of the Kabbalah, is the great store-house of the esoteric teaching of the ancient Hebrews.

Returning to the quotations referred to above, MacGregor Mathers in his preface says: "I wish particularly to direct the reader's attention to the stress laid by the Kabbalah on the feminine aspects
of the Deity, and to the shameful way in which any allusion to these has been suppressed in the ordinary translations of the Bible, also to the Kabbalistical equality of male and female."

Referring to the Sephiroth (the ten Kabbalistical attributes of God), Mr. Mathers says:

"Among these Sephiroth, jointly and severally, we find the development of the persons and the attributes of God. Of these, some are male and some are female. Now, for some reason or other, best known to themselves, the translators of the Bible have carefully crowded out of existence and smothered up every reference to the fact that the Deity is both masculine and feminine. They have translated a feminine plural by a masculine singular in the case of the word Elohim. They have, however, left an inadvertent admission of their knowledge that it was plural in Genesis iv., 26: 'And Elohim said: Let US make man.'

"Again (v., 27), how could Adam be made in the image of the Elohim, male and female, unless the Elohim were male and female also? The word Elohim is a plural formed from the feminine singular ALH, Eloh, by adding IM to the word. But inasmuch as IM is usually the termination of the masculine plural, and is here added to a feminine noun, it gives to the word Elohim the sense of a female potency united to a masculine idea, and thereby capable of producing an offspring. Now we hear much of the Father and the Son, but we hear nothing of the Mother in the ordinary religions of the day. But in the Kabbalah we find that the Ancient of Days conforms himself simultaneously into the Father and the Mother, and thus begets the Son. Now this Mother is Elohim."

The writer then goes on to show that the Holy Spirit, usually represented as masculine, is in fact feminine. The first Sephira contained the other nine, and produced them in succession. The second is Chokmah (Wisdom), and is the active and evident Father to whom the Mother is united. The third is a feminine passive potency called Binah (Understanding), and is co-equal with Chokmah. Chokmah is powerless till the number three forms the triangle.

"Thus this Sephira completes and makes evident the supernal Trinity. It is also called AMA, Mother, the great productive Moth-
er, who is eternally conjoined with the Father for the maintenance of the universe in order. Therefore is she the most evident form in whom we can know the Father, and therefore is she worthy of all honor. She is the supernal Mother, co-equal with Chokmah, and the great feminine form of God, the Elohim, in whose image man and woman were created, according to the teaching of the Kabbalah, equal before God. Woman is equal with man, not inferior to him, as it has been the persistent endeavor of so-called Christians to make her. Aima is the woman described in the Apocalypse (ch. 12)."

"This third Sephira is also sometimes called the Great Sea. To her are attributed the Divine names, ALAIM, Elohim, and IaHVeh ALHIM; and the angelic order, ARHLIM, the Thrones. She is the supernal Mother as distinguished from Malkuth, the inferior Mother, Bride and Queen. . . . In each of the three trinities or triads of the Sephiroth is a dual of opposite sexes, and a uniting intelligence which is the result. In this, the masculine and feminine potencies are regarded as the two scales of the balance, and the uniting Sephira as the beam which joins them."

In chapter viii. we read: "Chokmah is the Father, and Binah is the Mother, and therein are Chokmah (Wisdom) and Binah (Understanding), counterbalanced together in most perfect equality of Male and Female. And therefore are all things established in the equality of Male and Female; if it were not so, how could they subsist? . . . In their conformations are They found to be the perfections of all things—Father and Mother, Son and Daughter. These things have not been revealed save unto the Holy Superiors who have entered therein and departed therefrom, and have known the paths of the Most Holy God, so that they have not erred in them, either on the right hand or on the left."

In a note in regard to Chokmah and Binah the author says: "Chokmah is the second and Binah is the third of the Sephiroth. This section is a sufficient condemnation of all those who wish to make out that woman is inferior to man."

The Kabbalah also speaks of the separation of the sexes as the cause of evil, or as the author puts it in a note: "Where there is unbalanced force, there is the origin of evil." Further on it is written:
"And therefore is Aima (the Mother) known to be the consummation of all things; and She is signified to be the beginning and the end. And hence that which is not both Male and Female together is called half a body. Now, no blessing can rest upon a mutilated and defective being, but only upon a perfect place and upon a perfect being, and not at all in an incomplete being. And a semi-complete being cannot live forever, neither can it receive blessing forever."

The following is the author's comment upon the above: "This section is another all-sufficient proof of the teachings maintained throughout the Kabbalah, namely, that man and woman are from the creation co-equal and co-existent, perfectly equal, one with the other. This fact the translators of the Bible have been at great pains to conceal by carefully suppressing every reference to the feminine portion of the Deity, and by constantly translating feminine nouns by masculine. And this is the work of so-called religious men!"

A learned Jewish Rabbi, with whom the writer is acquainted, says: "Those who write on the Bible must be very careful when they come to speak of the position of woman to make a clear distinction between the Old and the New Testaments. In the Old Testament, except in the second chapter of Genesis, woman occupies a true and a dignified position in society and in the family. For example, take the position of Sarah, of the Prophetess Miriam, the sister of Moses, and Deborah the Prophetess. They all exemplify the true position of woman in the Old Testament. While Paul, the Apostle of the Gentiles, and the chief writer in the New Testament, condemned woman to silence in the Church and to strict obedience to her husband, making her thereby inferior to the man, the Old Testament gave free scope to the development of the Holy Spirit in woman. To intensify this teaching upon the position of woman, we find even the voice of the Deity telling Abraham: 'Whatever Sarah tells thee, thou shalt hearken unto her voice,' showing that woman in her own home was the guiding power." In regard to another point this Rabbi says: "The learned Jewish Rabbis of modern times do not take the rib story literally. And this may be said of many of the olden times."
The Kabbalah and its learned expositors may be said to be "the throbbing heart" of the Jewish religion, as was graphically said of the mystic teachings of another occult fraternity. And in view of the Kabbalah's antiquity, and the fact that it is the fountain head of the body of the Old Testament teachings, these quotations as to the real Kabbalistic teachings in regard to woman, or to the feminine aspects of the Deity, are of first-class importance in such a book as "The Woman's Bible." In Kabbalistic teachings "there is one Trinity which comprises all the Sephiroth, and it consists of the crown, the king and the queen. . . . It is the Trinity which created the world, or, in Kabbalistic language, the universe was born from the union of the crowned king and queen."

The rib story is veiled in the mystic language of symbolism. According to occult teachings, there was a time before man was differentiated into sexes—that is, when he was androgynous. Then the time came, millions of years ago, when the differentiation into sexes took place. And to this the rib story refers. There has been much ignorance and confusion in regard to the real nature of woman, indicating that she is possessed of a mystic nature and a power which will gradually be developed and better understood as the world becomes more enlightened. Woman has been branded as the author of evil in the world; and at the same time she has been exalted to the position of mother of the Saviour of the world. These two positions are as conflicting as the general ideas which have prevailed in regard to woman—the great enigma of the world.

Theological odium has laid its hand heavily upon her. "This odium," as a Rev. D. D. once said to the writer, "is a thing with more horns, more thorns, more quills and more snarls than almost any other sort of thing you have ever heard of. It has kindled as many fires of martyrdom; it has slippoosed as many ropes for the necks of well-meaning men; it has built as many racks for the dislocation of human bones; it has forged as many thumbscrews; it has built as many dungeons; it has ostracised as many scholars and philosophers; it has set itself against light and pushed as hard to make the earth revolve the other way on its axis, as any other force of mischief of whatever name or kind."
And that is the fearful thing with which woman has had to contend. When she is free from it we may be assured that the dawn of a new day is not far off. And among the indications pointing that way is the fact that the Bible itself has been "under treatment" for some time. What is known as the "Higher Criticism" has done much to clear away the clouds of superstition which have enveloped it.

One of the latest works on this line is "The Polychrome Bible"—the word meaning the different colors in which the texts, the notes, the dates, the translations, etc., are printed for the sake of simplifying matters. Prof. Paul Haupt, of Johns Hopkins University, is at the head of this great work, ably assisted by a large corps of the best Biblical scholars in the world. It is not to be a revision of the accepted version, but a new translation in modern English. The translation is not to be literal except in the highest sense of the word, viz., "to render the sense of the original as faithfully as possible." There are to be explanatory notes, historical and archæological illustrations of the text, paraphrases of difficult passages, etc. In short, everything possible is to be done to simplify and to make plain this ancient book. The contributors have instructions not to hesitate to state what they consider to be the truth, but with as little offence to the general reader as possible. This work has been pronounced the greatest literary undertaking of the century—a work which will prepare the way for the coming generation to give an entirely new consideration to the religious problem. It was begun in 1890, and will probably not be completed before 1900.

Another important work, small in actual size but big with significance, has just been issued in England under the title of "The Bible and the Child." It is not, as its name might imply, a book for children, but it is for the purpose of "showing the right way of presenting the Bible to the young in the light of the Higher Criticism." Its eight contributors are headed by Canon F. W. Farrar, of England, and includes a number of noted English divines. An English writer outside of the orthodox pale says: "It is one of the most extraordinary books published in the English language. It is small; but it is just the turning-scale to the side of common sense in matters religious. The Church has at last taken a step in the right direction.
We cannot expect it to set off at a gallop; but it is fairly ambling along on its comfortable palfrey."

The advance is all along the line; and we need not fear any retrograde movement to the past. Canon Farrar says that the manner in which the Higher Criticism has progressed "is exactly analogous to the way in which the truths of astronomy and of geology have triumphed over universal opposition. They were once anathematized as 'Infidel;' they are now accepted as axiomatic." When an official of the Church of England of the high standing of Canon Farrar comes out so boldly in the interest of free thought and free criticism on lines hitherto held to be too sacred for human reason to cross, it is one of the "signs of the times," and a most hopeful one of the future.

And now that we are coming to understand the Bible better than to worship it as an idol, it will gradually be lifted from the shadows and the superstitions of an age when, as a fetish, it was exalted above reason, and placed where a spiritually enlightened people can see it in its true light—a book in which many a bright jewel has been buried under some rubbish, perhaps, as well as under many symbolisms and mystic language—a book which is not above the application of reason and of common sense. And with these new lights on the Bible, it is gratifying to know at the same time that the stately Hebrew Kabbalah, hoary with antiquity, and the fountain source of the Old Testament, places woman on a perfect equality in the Godhead. For better authority than that one can hardly ask.

We are nearing the close of a remarkable century, the last half of which, and especially the last quarter, has been crowded with discoveries, some of them startling in their approximation to the inner, or occult world—a world in which woman has potent sway. The close of this century has long been pointed to by scholars, by writers and by Prophets, within the Church and out of it, as the close of the old dispensation and the opening of the new one. And in view of the rapid steps which we are taking in these latter years, we can almost feel the breath of the new cycle fan our cheeks as we watch the deepening hues of the breaking dawn.  

F. E. B.