

**STORIES FROM THE  
LIPS OF  
THE TEACHER**

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Stories from the Lips of the Teacher by Octavius Brooks Frothingham

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RETOLD BY A DISCIPLE.

*Octavius Brockes Frothingham*



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## P R E F A C E .

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HOUGH this little volume is offered to children, the writer of it wishes to say a few words to those who are not children, to explain his purpose in offering it. He has long been persuaded that the parables of the New Testament were waiting to be presented in a new form to modern readers, and especially to young readers;—partly because long intimacy with them has impaired their vividness, rubbed off the bloom of their poetic beauty, and even rendered the mind insensible to the delicacy of their truth; partly because the use that has been made of them for doctrinal instruction has weakened very much their value as stories suggesting spiritual thoughts to the imagination, and has even perverted them from their original aim by associating them with theological opinions;



and more particularly because the more prosaic mind of the West finds a difficulty in supplying the details which are necessary to the completeness of the stories themselves.

The parables were spoken by an Oriental to Orientals, and were understood immediately, even in the brief form in which they were uttered. They were so imbued with the spirit of the people to whom they were addressed, so native to the soil, so fragrant with the aroma of the ground, so bright with the Eastern sunshine, so breezy with the Eastern air, — they were so full of local allusions, they reflected so clearly the manners and customs of the country and the period, that no amplification was necessary. The reciter could leave his auditors to fill up the empty spaces in the little narrative. A few words were sufficient to present a landscape, which we can picture to ourselves only by a diligent study of guide-books; to recall a scene which fancy alone can paint for us, and which fancy can do scarcely more than sketch; to suggest a familiar usage, which we become acquainted with through the medium of the antiquarian; to describe an event, for which

we must refer with much misgiving to the uncertain chronicle or tradition. The short tale of two or three sentences was long and full to those whose fancy could furnish instantly all that the speaker omitted, and could put in the requisite light, shade, and color on the spot. But all this advantage of time, place, knowledge, genius, is lost for us. They who have the information necessary to make the parables speak, commonly lack the fancy, and they who have the fancy, commonly lack the information.

It has been the object of the writer of this little book to supply, so far as he could, these grave but inevitable deficiencies; to make the parables of Jesus suggest to our minds, in some degree, what they suggested to the minds of their first hearers; to put in, if he may say so, the Eastern climate, the sunshine, the atmosphere, the scenery; to revive the associations with places and people, and to connect them with the circumstances that gave them birth. To this end he has allowed himself necessarily a good deal of liberty in his treatment of the material before him. He has woven into the stories descriptions of the coun-

try, sketches of popular habits and observances, details of out-door and in-door life in Judæa; he has drawn on his own fancy for connecting links and incidental details; he has thrown in passages of dialogue and of soliloquy; he has amplified hints; he has endeavored to give here and there something of dramatic movement to the narrative, as one naturally would do were he telling the stories himself to a company of children. In a word, he has attempted to do for the Westerns what the Orientals did for themselves. That he has fully succeeded in this undertaking, he is not presumptuous enough to think. He will meet with all the success he looks for, if he shall render in any degree more attractive these most beautiful and deep apologues of the Master, or shall help any to see more distinctly the form of truth under the garb of beauty; he will meet with more success than he looks for, if he shall accomplish anything towards making the New Testament a more living book to the young people of his day.

O. B. FROTHINGHAM

NEW YORK, October, 1863.