

THE ENGLISH BIBLE—A SUGGESTION.

We often hear complaints that in these days there is great ignorance of the Bible; and it is stated that even ministers do not know the Book as well as the men of former generations; while the young men who are coming forward as theological students and candidates for the ministry are said to be in a still worse plight. Sometimes statements are made as to the cause of this which seem to us to be wide of the mark. The immediate cause of the ignorance of a book is simply that it is not sufficiently read. A reason for this is that it is not systematically taught to young people; and that the boys and girls have to day too much reading matter thrust upon them in early life, and they do not always choose the best. However we are not now concerned with causes. Supposing the facts to be as stated what is the remedy? Can the Church do anything? A living church can do things now just as well as the church of the past. Long ago the Church established colleges and seminaries for the purpose of training young men for the ministry, and these institutions are still useful even if they are not perfect. The Presbyterian Church in its early days laid stress upon the study of the Scriptures in the original tongues; and that is as needful as ever for the thorough student who desires to become a competent expositor of the great book. It is now some time since the Presbyteries prescribed certain exercises which are still compulsory for theological students, such as the Expository Lecture, Hebrew Critical; they are old bottles but they are quite capable of holding the new wine.

If the English Bible is crowded out of the school teaching and neglected in the home something should be done; and we believe that the Church would have a perfect right to say that during the whole course of six or seven years spent in preparation for the ministry a young man shall at stated periods be examined in portions of the Bible. The kind of knowledge of the Bible that is required can only be gained by a course of quiet reading spread over a long period. At this point we may say that remarks are sometimes made about college training that are slightly unfair. The fact is that many of our young men who go out to take charge of mission fields in the summer have not yet begun their theological course; and many of them have never come into any close contact with a theological professor. The theological college can not then claim any credit for that young man's success or be fairly blamed for his defects or vagaries. It is quite a common thing for a young man to have spent two or three years discharging nearly all ministerial duties before he begins what is technically called the study of theology. The material that comes into the hands of the professors is not very plastic; many have formed fixed habits as to study, education and preparation of the sermon. This is part of the conditions under which the Church does its work in a large, growing country, where men are demanded for service before there has been time for preparation.

It is a large question, demanding discussion on many sides, but we must limit ourselves now to the one point raised. We maintain that young men who are aspiring to the Christian ministry should have large knowledge of the common version of the Bible before they begin any course of special preparation; and if they are found defective the Church should prepare a plan dealing with this one point. The scientific study of the Old Testament as a literature that covers a period of a thousand years is, we believe, of the highest importance for the preacher; but a simple knowledge of that literature as it appears in the noble dress of the English translation is necessary to us all. With the English Readers Bible, the Temple Bible, and all the other Bibles, the twentieth century should see not only an increase of Bible reading but also a more intelligent appreciation of the great truths there set forth in such varied and attractive forms.

THE SUFFICIENCY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.

The following quotation from the recent work of Dr. George Adam Smith on "Modern Criticism and the Preaching of the Old Testament," should help to sustain the confidence and quiet the fears of those who are disposed to take alarm at the work on the Old Testament of the higher critics. "We do not exaggerate if we say that the Bible of the Jews in our Lord's time was practically our Old Testament. For us its supreme sanction is that which is received from Christ Himself. It was the Bible of His education and the Bible of His ministry. He took for granted its fundamental doctrines about creation, about man and about righteousness; about God's Providence of the world and His purposes of grace through Israel. He accepted its history as the preparation for Himself, and taught His disciples to find Him in it. He used it to justify His mission and to illuminate the mystery of His Cross. He drew from it many of the examples and most of the categories of His gospel. He re-enforced the essence of its law and restored many of its ideals. But above all, He fed His own soul with its contents, and in the great crisis of His life sustained Himself upon it as upon the living and sovereign Word of God. These are the highest external proofs—if indeed we can call them external—for the abiding validity of the Old Testament in the life and doctrine of Christ's Church. What was indispensable to the Redeemer must always be indispensable to the redeemed."

Bishop Gore, whose recent appointment by King Edward, has raised something of a "rumpus" among a section of British Anglicans, recently paid the following tribute to the worth of "dissenters," so-called: "No one who knew anything of the religious life of England, for the last two centuries and more, could fail to observe that a very large part of the religious life of our country was due to the Dissenters or Nonconformists, as they had now come to be called." And yet Bishop Gore belongs to and is a leader

in a church which refuses to recognize the validity of the ordination of Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Methodists and Baptists, and forbids fraternising, except in the most constrained and distant fashion, with these very dissenters; and thus, as the Belfast Witness tersely put it, "rends the seamless coat of Christ." The mutual recognition of all who are true believers and disciples must come ere there can be a united Christendom.

Rev. C. W. Gordon of Winnipeg than whom both because of close association with the late Dr. Robertson, and of his literary ability, no one is better qualified, is engaged in preparing a book on the life and work of our veteran Home Mission Superintendent. The work is one into which the writer will throw his whole heart, and its appearance will be awaited with high expectation and interest.

Literary Notes.

The Contemporary for April contains a thoughtful article on "The Commercial Needs of the Empire," by Dr. E. J. Dillon which the politician and economist will peruse with interest. "The New Licensing Bill," lately introduced into the House of Commons by the Home Secretary, comes in for some severe criticism although the criticism is confined to one clause of the Bill that relating to the amendment of the law as to Drunkenness. "Non-Episcopal Churches," "The Economic Crisis in Germany," "Indians and the Empire," and "The Standard of Orthodoxy in the English Church" are all articles of much merit.—Leonard Scott Publishing Company, New York.

The May number of the Cosmopolitan contains several very readable papers and two or three poems of more than average merit. Canadian readers will probably first look at Cecil Rhodes, by John Brisbane Walker, fully illustrated. "Captains of Industry," also illustrated, introduces T. A. Edison, the great electrician; John Wanamaker, the merchant prince; John William MacKay, the millionaire miner; James Gordon Bennett, the successful journalist; and the much written about John Pierpont Morgan, organizer of giant trusts, and "merger" of steamship lines. The Magazine throughout is thoroughly interesting.

Oliphant Anderson and Ferrier, Edinburgh, have forwarded us an illustrated catalogue of books on China, India, Japan, etc. It is an interesting production and should be in the hands of those who are ordering books for Sunday school libraries, and of Canadian booksellers who desire to know where to find attractive, wholesome literature. A glance at the pages of this catalogue will explain what is meant by the phrase "the romance of missions." The missionary enterprise has been making history very fast, and the books that tell the story have a large human interest that appeals to all classes. The Expository Times speaking of the work done by this firm in this department of literature well says: "By their missionary literature they make known the work that foreign missions are accomplishing and thus though they go not abroad themselves they send into the foreign field both men and women. They carry us all abroad and give us a personal interest in the lands to which the gospel has been brought, as well as in the men and women who have brought it."