

THE OLD TESTAMENT AND THE NEW SCIENCES.

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I.—ASTRONOMY.

During the past three hundred years, there has been an almost continuous criticism of the Bible and especially of the Old Testament from the standpoint of the Physical Sciences. A constant effort has been made, now from one side and now from another, to discredit its authority on the ground that it has been found to be erroneous in its teaching on these subjects, where it can be tested, and therefore has no right to the world's regard in other matters that lie beyond the range of human inquiry. This criticism has been most of all characteristic of the present century, owing to the rapid advance in physical discovery and the more extensive application of the scientific method. Every new science in turn as it came to the front has been pressed into the service of the attack, and if the Bible has survived the ordeal, it has not been indebted to the moderation of its assailants. The best minds, indeed, on the scientific side as well as on the theological, have never seen any sufficient reason for the antagonism. They have had faith in the ultimate reconciliation between the two, and with patience have waited for it. But the apparent difficulties have been sufficiently serious to cause much perplexity, and not a few have made shipwreck of their religious belief in consequence. The number of those who are troubled by these difficulties is still sufficiently great to make some discussion worth while, in the hope that it may be helpful at least to a few.

At the outset of the discussion, it may be as well frankly to say, that scientific criticism of the Bible is not only natural and inevitable in the development of thought, but within certain limits, legitimate and wholesome. We have at least no right to resent it if fairly applied. If the sacred writings will not stand any reasonable test that can be brought to bear, then