

imagination, tottering steps of thought there are, even at the worst; and, in most cases, it is all our own fault that they are tardy or torpid.You can teach a man to draw a straight line, and to cut one; to strike a curved line, and to carve it; and to copy and carve any number of lines or forms, with admirable speed and perfect precision; and you find his work perfect of its kind; but if you ask him to think about any of those forms, to consider if he cannot find any better in his own head, he stops; his execution becomes hesitating; he thinks, and then to one he thinks wrong; ten to one he makes a mistake in the first touch he gives to his work, as a thinking being. But you have made a man of him for all that. He was only a machine before—an animated tool."

One would like to go on quoting from Ruskin more of these words of wisdom, which each one of us—since to so great an extent each man's mind and body are his own workman—may apply in greater or lesser degree to himself. But we have not space. We shall, however, be satisfied if we have so stimulated anyone's curiosity as to induce him to read Ruskin, especially the 6th chapter of the 2nd vol. of "Stones of Venice," in which he has embodied his creed. "Modern Painters," the writing of which occupied him during twenty years, he considered his masterpiece, yet to us this work may be of less value, debarred as we are from acquaintance, at first hand, with his hero, J. M. W. Turner. Nevertheless, "Modern Painters" will well repay the reading. Other volumes are: "Seven Lamps of Architecture," "Unto This Last," "The Two Paths," "Crown of Wild Olives," "Munera Pulveris," "Sesame and Lilies," "Time and Tide by Weare and Tyne," and "Præterita."

As for the life of Ruskin, we have little to do with that, since, in his work, we have Ruskin the man. Suffice it to say that he was born of Scottish parents in London, Feb. 8th, 1819, that he travelled much with his father, who was a wealthy wine merchant, and in those travels developed that keenness of observation and love for beautiful things which became such an instrument in his later life. He was educated at Oxford, where he held for some time the Slade Professorship of Fine Arts. In his reading, Carlyle was his hero, as was Turner in art. On his unhappy marriage the lime-light has already, perhaps, been too vividly thrown. Ruskin died in 1900, at Brantwood, his beautiful estate, on Coniston Water, in Lancashire. He was buried at Coniston, and a monument was erected in Westminster Abbey as a tribute of honor to this, the last great leader of thought of the early Victorian era.

One cannot close without suggesting that a study of Ruskin at this time, when the fight against class privileges in Great Britain has resulted in so sweeping an overthrow of the Conservative Government, might be especially opportune. Ruskin, notwithstanding the fierce opposition which he encountered, was yet seer enough, as remarked by an English writer, to foreshadow much of England's twentieth-century legislation. In an aristocratic era, he was essentially democratic. May not the recent appointment of John Burns—the first laboring man who was ever granted a seat in the English Cabinet—be but a further index to the fact that, as regards social ethics, Ruskin lived ahead of his time?

Dr. William Osler recently recited a quaint old cure for gout: "First, pick a handkerchief from the pocket of a spinster who never wished to wed; second, wash the handkerchief in an honest miller's pond; third, dry it on the hedge of a person who never was covetous; fourth, send it to the shop of a physician who never killed a patient; fifth, mark it with a lawyer's ink who never cheated a client, and, sixth, apply it hot to the gout tormented part. A speedy cure must follow."

News of the Day.

Canadian.

Mr. A. H. U. Colquhoun, of the Toronto News staff, has been appointed Deputy-Minister of Education for Ontario.

The New Minister of Marine and Fisheries.—Hon. Louis Phillippe Brodeur, who was sworn in as Minister of Marine and Fisheries at Ottawa on Feb. 6th, has long been looked upon as one of the most eminent Liberals in the Province of Quebec, especially during his term of office as Minister of Inland Revenue. He was born at Belœil, Quebec, in 1862, and was educated at St. Hyacinthe College and Laval University, from which he was graduated with the degree of LL. B. Subsequently he entered the legal profession, and early in his career became identified with political life. He was speaker of the House of Commons from 1901 to 1904. Besides being an excellent speaker—either in French or English—he has a ready pen, and was at one time on the editorial staff of *Le Soir*. Mr. Brodeur has represented the constituency of Rouville in Parliament since 1891, but is now being pressed to run as candidate for Maisonneuve, the constituency represented by the late Mr. Prefontaine. Maisonneuve is the largest constituency in Canada, having a population of 80,000, of whom 25,600 are voters.

British and Foreign.

A revolutionist movement is said to be brewing in Persia.

Japan has decided to increase the tonnage of her navy to 400,000.

The Earl of Aberdeen was enthusiastically welcomed in Dublin on his recent state entry as Lord-Lieut. of Ireland.

The first passenger train has successfully passed through the Simplon Tunnel in the Alps. The tunnel, it will be remembered, is 12½ miles long, and its construction cost over 100 lives and 4,000,000 pounds in money.

The conference at Algieras has come to its first grave issue—the question of control of police in Morocco. France wants control of the semi-military police, while Germany objects on the ground that France would thus become virtually the master of Morocco's political future.

A Curious Situation.—In the new Liberal Ministry there is but one Irishman, James Bryce. The Irish Nationalists could not be represented, because they are pledged not to accept any office under the Crown, but to sit with the opposition members until Home Rule is granted. Hence, Mr. Redmond and his followers find themselves in the curious situation of sitting with the Tories under the present Government, whereas they sat with the Liberals during the Balfour regime. Nevertheless, although Ireland is so insignificantly represented in the Cabinet, the Irish have many friends there, among them Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman himself, John Morley, Herbert Gladstone, John Burns and the Earl of Aberdeen; and although absolute Home Rule may not be granted under the present Government, many reforms of deep moment to Ireland may be looked for in the not far distant future.



Can We be Sure of God?

Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on Him, If ye continue in My Word, then are ye My disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.—St. John viii. 31, 32.

"They must upward still and onward, Who would keep abreast of Truth."

"What is truth?" said Pilate, and that is the question men are everywhere asking to-day. Someone has declared that the symbol of this age is an interrogation point. It is not enough to tell intelligent men and women that the Bible says so-and-so, for the Bible itself is on trial; it is being tested and minutely examined, weighed in the balances by learned scholars—will it stand the ordeal? Shall we join the ranks of those who say that God's Word is above man's criticism? Are we afraid that it will not come out of the furnace as gold tried in the fire, but will be destroyed as chaff that is burnt with fire? Let us venture to look this burning question of the present day squarely in the face, it will surely force itself on our attention before long. Anything that is true will bear the closest scrutiny; in fact, it courts inquiry, and the more light that can be brought to bear on it the better. Anything that is not true will surely be exposed sooner or later—the sooner the better. Let us never fear to bring our faith to the light; if we shrink from the light, then it is very plain that we have little faith in the truth of the faith we profess. It is well that we should know the "certainty" of those things wherein we have been instructed. In these days, it is not enough to say, "The Bible must be true, because my mother taught me to believe in it." A child naturally accepts his mother's statements confidently, but a man must have stronger grounds for his faith than that. It is folly to shut one's eyes to the results of modern Biblical research, to say obstinately, "I will not listen to a word the higher critics are saying, I will hold the opinions I have always held, without examining them at all." That was the plan adopted by Saul of Tarsus, when he zealously and conscientiously tried to crush out what he considered to be a heresy, without taking any trouble to examine its claims. Though he acted conscientiously, his position was a very narrow and mistaken one.

Now, I don't profess to believe in the higher criticism, but neither do I venture to condemn a movement which has enlisted on its side so many good and learned men. Let them find out all they can about the Bible, and the world will be enriched by their hard study and patient researches. But let us not fear that the ark of God can be shaken. "The Scripture cannot be broken," says our Lord, and it has already endured many dangers and weathered many storms. Gamaliel's advice is, I think, very sensible: "Refrain from these men, and let them alone; for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought; but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God."

We say that the Bible is the "inspired Word of God," but do we all mean the same thing by that statement? One man says: "I believe that the Bible is an infallible Book, and that every word in it is absolutely true." One might think that the 60 or more books which we find bound together for our convenience had dropped down from heaven, ready printed for our benefit in the English language. But, as a matter of fact, we have more than one English version—I have two at my elbow now, with a third version of the Psalms. These differ considerably, and they have been translated from old MSS. which differ even more. If we can only believe that the Bible is the inspired Word of God by accepting the literal inspiration of each word, then which of these many versions are we to believe word for word?

Is our faith in the inspired record of the Creation any less strong because the rocks, which do not lie, have proved beyond the shadow of a doubt that the world was not created in six of our short days? If we could go back to that belief, how cramped and poor it would be, as compared with the grand sweep of God's great Days. So also we may accept the deep, spiritual reality of the story of the Fall, without feeling quite sure that Eve talked to a literal serpent or picked fruit off a literal tree. In fact, it comes home to us with far more force, if accepted spiritually, for we know the sad consequences of listening to the Old Serpent's subtle temptations, and plucking the forbidden fruit from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. We, too, can understand that the punishment for sin is banishment from a happy Garden of Eden, a garden of innocent pleasure from which sin shuts us out.

If not from our own experience, at least we have the overwhelming testimony of a great multitude, which no man can number, that the Bible has proved itself, and is continually proving itself, the "Word of God." This it does, not by historical research—though that is valuable in its place—but by its marvellous power of striking home to the hearts of sinful men. No criticism can dull the edge of God's Word, for it is, in every age, "quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." Anyone who denies this must deny the personal experience of innumerable witnesses, and measure his bare word against theirs. He must also try to prove a negative. Just because he may not have felt the power of that Sword of the Spirit, that is no proof whatever that others have not felt it. The Bible has inspired untold millions to live noble and beautiful lives, and to hold up to the world grand and lofty ideals. How do we know that such things are true, that love is nobler than selfishness, courage than cowardice, kindness than cruelty? Surely we can all recognize soul-beauty without having to be told that it is beautiful. It is folly to argue with a man born blind about a beautiful sight, and if a man's spirit cannot instinctively recognize the beauty of courage, love or purity, then it is only wasting time to try and prove it to him. We do not need miraculous proof that the Scriptures, which testify of Christ from Genesis to Revelation, hold up before eager, hungry humanity the one ideal Life the world has ever seen. Throw all the light possible on that one Figure, hanging between earth and heaven with arms outstretched for love's dear sake, and still no flaw can be found in Him. Still we struggle upward after Him—to whom else can we go for the words of eternal life? We must try to reach the best we see. No criticism of the Bible can shake the confidence of one who "knows" Whom he has believed. Outside proofs may fail when the hours of trial comes; they are so far away in the past, and we must have a "present help" in the time of trouble, a present help that never fails a soul that hangeth upon God. He has never left Himself without a witness, not only an outward witness, but the absolute certainty of a soul that hears for itself the Voice of God. Over and over again St. Paul speaks of this inner witness, "the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts." We have still much to learn about the Bible and about God, we must "upward still and onward," if we want to keep abreast of Truth; for truth is not like a dead language, it is glowing with life—life which is shown by growth—and it has a new message for each generation and for each individual soul. God has yet many things to reveal to His listening disciples, who are continually learning more and more of His beautiful secrets. Each one receives from the King a token of favor, a "white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth