

Talks about Books.

MESSRS. DRYSDALE & CO. are the contributors of Bible Studies by Henry Ward Beecher, a good looking octavo of 440 pages, published by Fords, Howard, and Hulbert of New York. The title page indicates that the book contains Bible readings in the Early Books of the Old Testament, with familiar comment, given in 1878-9. John R. Howard edits the studies from stenographic notes taken by T. J. Ellinwood. It is pleasant to find Beecher, though dead, yet speaking through these discourses with all his wonted vigour. The Studies exhibit all the excellence and some of the defects of the great preacher's style. They are offhand and critical, but they are also reverent. He merges Abram's two acts of cowardice before Pharaoh and Abimelech into one, and does the same with our Lord's two visits to Nazareth, and His two purifications of the temple, which I very much question his right to do. This criticism is superficial; yet the Bible student is no doubt on solid ground when he points out the gradualness of the old world's progress in religion, and absolves God from its glaring inconsistency with later revelation. Perhaps he minimizes too much the Divine element in ancient Bible story, and at times makes too much of what he calls its "rude places," but his estimate of its character is always just, even magnanimous, and in his eyes

the Book is unique, the one Book in all the world. He shows that the Israelite was often under the impression that he was faithfully serving God, when his acts were such as God abhors; nevertheless this does not lead him to depreciate Old Testament teaching, for, like a soldier preacher whom he quotes, "he found that he could preach best by drawing the foresight of the New Testament through the hindsight of the Old." His remark on God's expostulation with Joshua, "Wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face?" is good. "A great many men seem to think that God likes them if they wallow; but God does not like to see a man behave himself unseemly any more than we do." This reminds me of Rudyard Kipling:

"And oftentimes cometh the wise Lord God,
Master of every trade,
And tells them tales of the Seventh Day, of
Edens newly made;
And they rise to their feet as He passes by,
gentlemen unafraid."

Even if it be before a schoolmaster, the manly boy will stand up and take his punishment bravely; but God is no schoolmaster. In the study on Jephthah, Mr. Beecher said "They slew him (the Ephramite) because he could not say *Shibboleth*; and that kind of slaying has been going on ever since. When, in the ordinances, men cannot say *Shibboleth*, but say *Sibboleth*, they are slain with the sword of the church." I cannot homologate all that is in the vol-