

Spanish *artistes* and one horse disembowelled. The law prohibits the killing of the bulls, but if the animals do not receive the "happy despatch" sword thrust from the Matadors the play is not worth anything. Days beforehand the placards announce that the bulls will be slain by crack Matadors, whose names are given. When the spectacle is over a statement of the violation of the law is drawn up; then the Spaniards are ordered to leave France, which, of course, it was their intention to do, having executed their job, and to make their return voyage at the expense of the French Government is not a drawback. Next the proprietor of the arena is fined 1 fr., perhaps 3 frs. And this comedy goes on week after week in open defiance of the law. And the masses are preached up to obey the law, and the pupils at school taught to reverence it, while it is being publicly laughed at. That is a serious rift in the lute; it is a sign of civic degeneracy. The Government could easily expel the Matadors before they commenced despatching the bulls—their names always figure on the bills. The Government helps in the work of demoralization by levying a percentage on all the betting monies at race-courses. And the nation is expected to develop moral stamina all the same.

Since 1887 the highest professional authorities avow that the population is rapidly degenerating due to the extraordinary extension in the consumption of alcoholic preparations of which the "Satanic Centre" is absinthe. The Minister of Public Instruction, despite the wants of the budget to meet army and navy bills, has resolved that from October next, when the schools resume studies, Blue Ribbonism must infiltrate, but form no special study, all education imparted. When the master of the primary school deals with moral questions he must arrange to allude to the evils of drink and the virtues of ebriety; show the disasters of the drink crave. At the Normal schools the teachers in training will receive type lectures on temperance and its social virtues; when the class of physiology is at work there will be coloured anatomical diagrams—they are already prepared and foreign colleges will please note—illustrating the injury done to the body through drink. In the chemical class attention can be drawn to the adulterations—187 have been detected so far—and their poisonous effects on the nervous, the brain system. May the good work succeed, for the best qualities of the French are being destroyed by the drink plague. The present writer can recall the time—not so long ago either—when to drink a glass of the prepared absinthe—the fairy with the green eyes—inside a café, etc., would be considered "shocking;" not to do so now outside as well as inside would be regarded as prudish and puritan. Worse than all the women do not shirk the pick-me-up and give their little ones a spoonful of it to taste.

The Chinese colony in Paris, numbering 35 persons, are hostile to the Mandarins and to the Son of Heaven, and predict the Celestial Empire will almost immediately be opened up—by the European powers helping themselves to it.

Z.

### A New Commentary.\*

WHETHER Christianity is losing its hold on the thought and life of the present age is a question which people, to a large extent, will answer in accordance with their own feelings and prejudices. But one thing, at least, may be said on what we may call the Conservative side, that never in all these eighteen or nineteen centuries have the documents of Christianity been investigated with such critical care and thoroughness, and, it may be added, with such seriousness and even devoutness as in the present day. Of course there are exceptions, there are scoffers, there are the impatient critics of a superficial naturalism, who will disport themselves in the Holy of Holies as though they were making a passing survey of the Court of the Gentiles, but by the side of these—and in greater numbers and with greater weight—there are the thoughtful, the learned, the reverent, who, on the one hand, owe a supreme homage to truth, and will consent to the handing on of no tradition, unless it can be verified, and yet feel that they cannot deal with the sacred records of the Christian church as mere literary documents.

\* "The International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments." Edinburgh: T. & F. Clark. New York: Scribners. Toronto: Revell & Co. Vol I. Deuteronomy. By Dr. S. R. Driver. 1895.

We are led to these remarks specially by the appearance of the first volume of a commentary on the whole Bible which promises to meet the needs of English-speaking Christians as no previous commentary has done, or even has attempted to do—not so much, perhaps, from want of will as from want of the appliances for the purpose.

In thus expressing ourselves we have no desire to ignore the work, in many respects the great work, done by men in past ages. The brilliant Chrysostom, the learned Jerome, the mighty Augustine, the critical Theophylact, are not likely to be forgotten or neglected by any commentators or students of our own time. The Reformation has produced expositors whose work will always be held in remembrance—men like Calvin, Grotius, and Bengel. But each age has its own work to do, and none of these has done the work which is required by this age.

Those of us who can look back for forty or fifty years will easily realize how miserably English readers were provided with helps for the study of the sacred scriptures. We had Matthew Henry's Commentary, a useful book for preachers, but of no value whatever to the critical students of the scriptures. The Commentaries of Thomas Scott and Adam Clarke hardly improved their position. D'Oyly and Mant, the Anglican Commentary, was a most miserable production. And then came Albert Barnes, a useful, industrious kind of person, but very little besides.

The Germans led the way in this as in many other fields; and among the first of English commentators who made a serious attempt to furnish us with the results of their work was S. T. Bloomfield (not Bishop Blomfield, with whom he has sometimes been confounded), who really did some good work in this direction.

Perhaps we may say that it was Henry Alford, afterwards Dean of Canterbury, who first gave to English students who knew Greek a commentary which, to a large extent, did represent the critical work which had been done on the New Testament. Alford was, perhaps, overlauded at first and has been unduly depreciated in later days. We believe his commentary to be still of real value whatever may be its faults.

Alford was followed by commentators who, in one way, were less ambitious than himself, inasmuch as they took up particular books, instead of endeavouring to produce a commentary on the whole Bible, or even the whole of the New Testament. Among these the foremost were Ellicott, Lightfoot and Westcott, who have given us commentaries that can never be ignored by subsequent workers in the same field.

By this time men were beginning to see that no one man should attempt a complete work of this kind; and so it came to pass that companies were formed, under a general editor, by whom the work of a complete commentary might be carried out.

Among these was Dr. Pusey who projected a commentary on the whole Bible; but, whether through his own bad management or the failure of his coadjutors, he gave us only a commentary on the minor prophets. Then came the Speaker's Commentary, under the editorship of Canon Cooke, a work which really embraces a large amount of good work, along with a great deal which was by no means up to the learning of the day. Dr. Schaff edited a very good commentary on the New Testament, which, in parts, is of great value; and Bishop Ellicott undertook the editing of a commentary on the whole Bible, which resulted in giving us some commentaries of real value, and a good many (especially of those in the Old Testament) of no value at all.

But still we had no commentary which could be placed alongside the German works of De Wette or Meyer on the New Testament, or the "condensed critical commentary on the Old Testament." We have special commentaries of the first rank; but we have no general commentary to which a student may be directed, as giving him the results of the critical study of the whole Bible.

At last this work is to be done by a body of English and American specialists who have made their own the various subjects and authors of whom they have undertaken to treat. "The time has come," say the projectors of this scheme, "when it is practicable to combine British and American scholars in the production of a critical, comprehensive, commentary that will be abreast of modern biblical scholarship, and in a measure lead its van."

This is a high endeavour; but we believe that it will