

Contributors and Correspondents

OUR OWN CHURCH.

"MODERN BIBLE CRITICISM."

No. III.

DEAR EDITOR.—The Rev. John Gray, the esteemed minister of Orlissa, deserves the thanks of the Church at large for his examination and able refutation of the opinions of Professor Smith of Aberdeen.

It is very much to be regretted that opinions, such as those held by Dr. Smith and other ministers in Scotland should find any sympathy among Presbyterian ministers in this country; but disguise it as we may, these opinions are making head-way, and no doubt when they are held and taught in Scotland a corresponding number in this country will be influenced by them.

Our much loved Presbyterianism is spreading rapidly in this country, it is in every way adapted to the growing intelligence and culture of the age. It is liberal without being latitudinarian, simple yet profound, adapted alike to the tastes and capacities of all. But I know it is now asked by some within the pale of the Presbyterian Church: "Are we to be bound down to the 'creeds' and 'forms' which were moulded and fashioned two centuries ago? Are we never to be freed from this incubus of 'creeds and confessions' which haunts as a nightmare, but to move on with these galling fetters which are hindering the onward march of our Church at present?"

Now Mr. Editor, I think these are questions which in my mind will sooner or later force themselves on the attention of the church, and to which she must give an emphatic answer.

It may be that some polemical warrior will enter the arena of controversy, and convince his brethren that for centuries our Church has been holding only partial truth, and that some portions of what she holds and teaches is not truth at all.

Now even if some members should have the courage and ability to do this; it could hardly be expected that a church can alter her "standards" to suit the changing opinions of a few men who may arise from time to time, and who no doubt are actuated by the best motives.

Better I should say even at the risk of creating another denomination (although there are quite enough already), that those dissatisfied few would form a church, or join a church where they could with more freedom ventilate their opinions, which no doubt are honestly held, and arrived at after much anxious thought; but this is no reason why they should be received and adopted by a large church which with some degree of pride has always regarded itself as the very bulwark of orthodoxy.

But should a conflict arise, and should these questions be forced on the Church, I have no doubt that when the hour comes, with the hour will come the men, with sufficient courage and ability, who will throw themselves into the breach and do valiantly.

It is gratifying to note, as recorded in the PRESBYTERIAN from time to time, the increase in the number of new churches, which will add much to our respectability, should it do nothing more.

A pure worship and true devotion may ascend from the plainest building, or from no building at all, still I think it is no credit to a congregation to worship in a dilapidated house, with rickety pews, and a tattered Bible in the pulpit. We ornament our dwelling houses, our counting houses, our charitable institutions, and even our public or common schools, and why not beautify with the best artistic skill our churches, which "with their stony fingers pointing the way to heaven," will go down to posterity as monuments of our zeal and liberality. In this connection, I may mention the two new churches which are being erected or projected in Toronto at present—one bordering on completion is for the congregation of the Central Church, and the other is for the old St. Andrew's congregation; which congregations have shown a pluck and spirit worthy of emulation by larger and wealthier congregations.

It is evident that it is becoming more difficult every year to sustain churches in the front in Toronto, and as is the custom in older and larger cities when families move towards the outskirts of the cities, either for convenience or health, they expect as a matter of course that the churches will follow them.

The prospects of Presbyterianism were never so bright. There are a large number of young men devoting themselves to the office of the ministry; congregations are being multiplied with wonderful rapidity; the Home Mission field is being quickly taken possession of; the "Macedonian cry" is being rung, and rung again in every land, and people of every colour and every clime are receiving the Gospel at their lips. It is surely something to know that a church around which our strongest affections are entwined is doing so much to bring about the day of which the Psalmist speaks, when he says:

"He shall build his grace and truth, To Israel's house hath been; And the salvation of our God, All on is of the earth have seen."

ORIENTAL OCCUPATIONS.—THE BUILDER.

BY H. V. JOHN DUNBAR, DUNBARTON.

It is a dogma deemed by many to be far beyond dispute, that our first parents were simply savages, and this they stoutly assert is man's natural, normal state. Such an assumption, however, has no foundation in fact, and is at the best but a fragment of the fancy, a freak of the imagination. Man we read, was made in the image of God, and we believe, in knowledge, righteousness and holiness, implying not only purity of nature, but rectitude in character and intelligence in action. Placed as he was in the garden of Eden "to dress it and to keep it," implied, not only a knowledge of the products of the earth as well as how to produce them, but also skill to manufacture and employ his implements of husbandry, and are we not warranted to suppose that Adam gave appropriate names to plants as we are certain that he did so to animals. Further, we read that God made man, only a "little lower than the angels," and conferred on him universal dominion, requiring in him wisdom to plan and power to execute, ill in keeping with the savage state. Besides all this, how soon do we meet in the sacred record the very striking and significant statement, that Cain "builded a city," a fact, brief though it be, which indubitably shows that houses were earlier than tents, the city preceded the camp, and they settled before the nomadic mode of life, and it is not till the fifth generation from Cain that mention is made of tents, and that "Jabel was the father of such as dwell in tents," a significant fact which shows that man had existed thirteen centuries ere the nomadic life began. Thus while the first born man builded a city, the tent comes later by more than a thousand years. While there are those then on the one hand who stoutly affirm that our first progenitors were ignorant savages under the idea that the arts of civilization are ever progressively acquired, there are those on the other, who as confidently assert, that taught directly by God, they were possessed of all knowledge of which the human mind is capable. Both, however, are in error, and while far from attempting to determine the nature or extent of their knowledge, yet this much is certain, they had all that was needful as moral and intelligent creatures for the production of their highest happiness, and the promotion of the honour and glory of God, a condition certainly very far removed from that of the uncultured savage.

As in most of the oriental occupations we can only learn of the art by the issue, of the process by the performance, so here we can learn but little of the builder but by the building. Of the first city we have not the remotest record either in regard to the builders, the buildings, or the materials of which they were composed. Such being the case we must not be carried away by the word "city," to form very extravagant ideas either of the extent of the city called Ench, or the grandeur of its architecture, for doubtless it presented very many and manifest evidences of primeval rusticity. It is evident, however, that the art of building was very early understood. The skill requisite to build the ark must have been great indeed, and the attempt to erect the tower of Babel could not have been made by a people who had only a more rudimentary knowledge of the art of architecture, while the massive structures of ancient Egypt remain to this day as marvellous monuments of architectural symmetry and philosophical skill. The earlier and ruder houses were evidently built of clay, mixed it may be with straw, hence we very early read of "houses of clay," and these while in so far comfortable yet when built of improperly prepared material often fell crashing before the hurricane, and crushing the dwellers to death. Thieves, too, dug through them and stole. Often rents also were made in the walls by the dry hot weather, into which noxious reptiles often crept and concealed themselves, hence to this the prophet Amos alludes when he speaks of one in a house who "leaned his hand on the wall and a serpent bit him." A. the land of promise was not in general, what might be called a wooded country very few houses were built wholly of wood. While the earlier and poorer houses were built of brick or stone, and while the Israelites long ere they entered Egypt had made no small progress in the art of building, and their sojourn there would tend much to increase it, yet on entering the land of promise they would occupy the houses of the dispossessed inhabitants, so that for a time at least no new buildings would be required, and when they were, they would be built after the style of those in the land. The houses of the Canaanites seem to have been of ordinary size, for no large and conspicuous building either of palace or temple is once mentioned in the conquest. Their city walls, too, either in their structure or their strength had comparatively little to withstand, and until the time of David and Solomon we read of no magnificent buildings, and those were erected by

the aid and may we not suppose, in part at least by the art of the Phoenicians. The rebuilding of the temple too, was by foreign assistance and when we come down to the period of the Herodian dynasty we see evidences of the Grecian in their architecture.

In attempting to give an idea of the houses of ancient Palestine we can at this date only do so with any kind of certainty or satisfaction by describing as best we can the forms of those existing houses in the East which have been least effected by modern innovations. The ordinary house is of a square or quadrangular form, and built so as to enclose an area or open court proportional to the size of the house. The front presents little else than a dead wall to the street, broken only by a door at the one corner, over which is usually a latticed window, and it may be one or two, high up in the wall. The domestic privacy in which the Orientals live would render our plan of front-house exposure very repulsive to them. This outer door leads into a square room of moderate size, called the porch, in which are seats for the accommodation of strangers, since few except friends or invited guests are permitted to go further. From this porch a door leads into the inner court, and this door is so placed that no one can see into the court from the street when the street door is open. This court is the "guest chamber" of Luke, and is furnished with carpets, mats, and seats of different kinds, while an awning of some suitable material is stretched over the whole area. Around this court, on its four sides are large windows, and handsome doors open into it from all the rooms of the house, ensuring a privacy such as our houses do not present. As there are no doors between the rooms, a person in going from one room to another must always come out into the court and enter by the door which opens from the room into the court. If the house is of two stories the doors of the upper chambers in the same way open out upon a balcony which passes round the court, and is guarded by a balustrade or lattice work in front to prevent accident. From the porch already mentioned, a stairway leads to the upper story, where such exists, and thence up and on to the roof. Strange as it may seem to us, the roof is employed as one of the most important parts of an eastern house. The roof unlike ours is flat or nearly so, and is covered with a kind of composite formed of various substances such as earth, ashes, gravel, etc., well compacted together and which, hardened by exposure to the weather forms a clean, smooth and very agreeable floor or terrace, and according to Divine appointment it was surrounded by a "battlement" lest any one should accidentally fall over. There we read that the females dry their clothes and set out their pot flowers; there too, the farmer sows his wheat for the mill and dries his figs and raisins secure from animals and thieves. The roof was always much used as a place of agreeable retirement; there people walked in the evening enjoying the cool breeze, and in summer they often slept there under the canopy of heaven. On such a roof Rahab hid the spies among the flax. Samuel talked with Saul, David walked at eventide, and Peter went up to the house top to pray. From such a position too, the friends of the man sick of the palsy "uncovered the roof," or rather drew aside the awning and let him down into the midst of the court before Jesus, where He and the multitude were assembled. It is worthy of our notice and still more of our imitation that the Jews in building a house, dedicated it, when finished and ready to be occupied, to God. The event was celebrated with joy, and the divine blessing and protection implored alike on the house and its occupants. How striking the contrast between this, and many of the unseemly "house-heatings" of more modern times.

(To be continued.)

In a Borrowed Livery.

A story, aimed at those clergy of the High-church persuasion who make their dress a part of their religion, is told as follows in a letter from London:

The other day the Roman Catholic Bishop of Nottingham, being in London, walked in the cool of the evening, in Kensington Gardens, in company with a friend of his, an officer in the army. They met a priest—to all appearance a Roman priest—who had a woman on his arm, who had her hand in his, and who was making fast and furious love to her. The face of the Bishop flushed red; he passed on; but he instantly turned back, and overtaking the priest, begged permission to speak to him.

"May I ask, sir," said he, "if you are a priest?"  
"Yes," was the reply.  
"A Catholic priest?"  
"Yes."  
"And may I ask under the jurisdiction of what bishop are you?"  
"Before I answer that question," said the priest, "I should like to know to whom I am talking?"  
"I am the Bishop of Nottingham," said he.  
"But we have no such bishop in the English Church," replied the priest.  
"O!" exclaimed the Bishop, "then you belong to the English Church; I am delighted to hear it, and I beg your pardon with all my life; but I do wish that you would not walk about in our uniform."

MISSIONARY NOTES.

Dr. SPILLER, who has been a missionary in China thirty years, says it seems very strange to enter places now which were formerly inaccessible to foreigners; to meet friendly salutations where they were formerly stoned and cursed, etc. . . . Now many of the Chinese are coming back from Christian lands telling painful stories of personal wrongs.

Dr. SCHMIDT writes from Cairo to the N. Y. Evangelist that: "Presbyterianism is the only form of Protestantism which has taken root among the natives of Egypt. It is the Evangelical pioneer church. But there are a few English and German churches in Alexandria and Cairo, for the foreign population in these large cities. There is also an admirable educational work of a missionary character, going on under the care of Miss M. L. Whately, the daughter of the celebrated Archbishop of Dublin. She has been devoting the last fifteen years to this noble and self-denying work. Her school is near the railroad station, and numbers at present 150 girls and 250 boys, divided into half a dozen classes. They are taught elementary studies in Arabic. Some learn also English, French and Italian. The Scriptures are read and explained. And it seems Mohammedan parents do not object to it. Miss Whately told me, however, that some of her pupils would dare to profess Christianity and submit to baptism, which would at once provoke persecution."

LETTERS from Turkey to the Missionary Herald state that in Eastern Turkey the condition of affairs is still uncertain, but thus far there has been but little interruption of missionary labors. At Ialas, in the Cæsarea field, Western Turkey, a new bell has been hung in the church, against a most determined opposition. Every time an attempt was made to put the bell in position a mob gathered, declaring that it should not be done. An appeal was made to the government at Constantinople, which was induced to order the pasha to protect the Christians in the hanging of their bell. Mr. Farnsworth reports that the Protestant communities in the Cæsarea field "show good evidence of substantial progress." The sale of books for the year has amounted to 25,000 piastres. The five churches have had eighty-nine accessions, by far the largest number ever received in one year in this field. The average attendance upon worship has been 2,785, an increase of 808. There are four pastors, three licensed preachers, and forty-two teachers. The Sunday-schools have 2,015 scholars, a gain of 275. The contributions were 25,680 piastres.

FURTHER intelligence has been received from the Nyanza Mission party of the Church Missionary Society. Lieut. Smith has written a letter, dated December 2nd, at a place about a hundred miles south of the Victoria Nyanza. The expedition was taking a more northerly route than that of previous travellers, and was leaving Unyamwe (Kazeh) on the left. The health of the party continued good. "Authentic intelligence of an eye-witness" had reached Lieutenant Smith, "confirming the report that Colonel Gordon had two steamers on the lake," and that King Mtesa had received the letter sent to him by the Church Missionary Society, and was desirous of receiving teachers. Lieutenant Smith also says: "Mirambo, that ubiquitous man, was within four days of us at Mukondoko, and sent most friendly messages in reply to the letter I wrote him asking him to do what he could for the London Missionary Society. He is fighting some one, but will not interfere with any white man. There is a Frenchman with him who resided some time at Mpwapwa, and letters written in English are translated by him to Mirambo." It was expected that the party would reach the lake by January.

WHAT an interest has been awakened in the Christian world by the extraordinary triumphs of Christianity in Madagascar? No annual of Christ's kingdom on earth are brighter and more cheering than those that record the wonderful work of grace on that island! Even during the thirty years of cruel persecution under the persecuting, blood-thirsty queen, the work went on marvelously, and during her reign the little company of Christians had greatly increased. Since that time, principally through the agency of the London Missionary Society, the success of the Gospel has been marvellous. The Rev. Charles F. Moss, one of the missionaries of the above society, in writing to The Christian (London) says: "The staff of its (society's) missionaries has been constantly increasing its sphere of operations, and now not less than a thousand congregations, and some five or six hundred schools are looking to them, and the brethren of the Free-De's Foreign Mission, who work with them, for teaching, guidance and help. Looking fairly and dispassionately at the actual results of missionary labor in Madagascar during the past fourteen years—the large, well organized, and flourishing churches, the decorous and well-conducted worship, with style of preaching and a service of song—the texts and hymns of Philip Phillips, and the Gospel hymns of Bliss and Stankey are principally used—that would do credit to many of the churches at Home; the almost total cessation of labor on the Sabbath; the Pastor's Training College, and the Normal School for Teachers; the hundreds of well-ordered schools with their thousands of intelligent scholars; the large and constantly increasing issues from our mission presses of good and useful books, eagerly read by many thousands of people—looking calmly at all this, it may be questioned whether another such fourteen years of divine benediction upon a similar area of Christian missionary efforts has been witnessed since the days of the apostles."

"God chose the Gospel to be the grand means of turning men from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. He ordained it to be the sword of His Spirit that should slay our corruptions; the rod of His strength that should rule in our hearts, and the mighty instrument of His power in effecting our salvation."

"How Old Art Thou?"

Count not the days that have idly flown, The years that were so vainly spent; Nor speak of the time that is past in vain, When they split about before the throne To account for the talents lent.

But number the hours redeemed from sin, The moments employed for heaven; Oh! sow and sow thy days have been, Thy life, a fullsome and worthless scene, For a nobler purpose given.

Will the shade go back on thy dial-plate? Will thy sun stand still on his way? Not hasten on; and thy spirit's fate Rest on the point of life's little day; Then live while 'tis called to-day.

Life's waiting hours, like the yab's page, As they lesson, do value life: Oh! sow thee and live, nor deem man's age Stands on the length of his pilgrimage, But in day, that truly wise.

—Christian Lyrics.

Children Never Live Long.

When they are not carried away in little coffins and laid forever in the silent grave, they become transformed so rapidly that we lose them in another way. The athletic young soldier or collegian, the graceful heroine of the ball-room, may make proud the parental heart, but can they quite console it for the eternal loss of the little beings who plagued and onlived the early years of marriage? A father may sometimes feel a legitimate and reasonable melancholy as he contemplates the most promising of little daughters, full of vivacity and health. How long will the dear child remain to him? She will be altered in six months; in six years she will be succeeded by a totally different creature—a creature new in flesh and blood and bone, thinking other thoughts and speaking other language. There is a sadness even in that change, which is increase and progression, for the glory of noonday has destroyed the sweet dewiness of the dewy Aurora, and the wealth of summer has obliterated the freshness of the spring.—Philip G. Hamerton.

Random Readings.

Most men employ their first years so as to make their last miserable.

A MAN'S trials cannot be sufferable if he lives to talk about them.

Of all mistakes, the greatest is to live and think life of no consequence.

The two most engaging powers of an author are to make new things familiar and familiar things new.—Thackeray.

FAILURE after long perseverance is much grander than never to have a striving good enough to be called a failure.—George Eliot.

We would often have reason to be ashamed of our most brilliant actions if the world could see the motives from which they spring.

"WHEN the power of the Gospel is experienced in the heart, the obstinate become docile; the self-willed submissive; the careless thoughtful, and the dissolute holy."

THE Cross of Christ is the key of paradise; the weak man's staff; the convert's convoy; the upright man's perfection; the soul and body's health; the prevention of all evil, and the procurer of all good.—Quarles.

"I have never been able," says Macaulay, "to discover that a man is at all the worse for being attacked. One foolish line of his own does him more harm than the ablest pamphlets written against him by other people."

THERE is no other form of the true God to us to-day but this, the Redeemer and Saviour. It is this that is seen in sacrifice, prophecy, and the cross. This is the "Light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world."—Rev. Dr. Crosby.

"THE Word of God is quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing ever to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and interests of the heart."

He will do the most work and do it best who is happy and cheerful. There is nothing like a singing heart for devoted, earnest service. But it ought to be cheerfulness which has come through pain, for then there is an appreciation of all sides of humanity and of all the wants of the world.

"By the Gospel the seeds of divine grace are sown in the naturally corrupt soil of the human heart, which, under the influence of the Holy Ghost, spring up and produce those spirits of righteousness which are, by Jesus Christ, to the praise and glory of God."

A LITTLE folly, a very small deviation from religious consistency, will go further to undo his influence (the minister's) than a much greater thing would in the case of an ordinary man. For this speak is to him as the "dead fly" to those exquisite perfumes of the East, which were so admirable for their delicacy as for their fragrance, and therefore not less liable to pollution by the least accident, than worthy to be preserved from contamination by the greatest care.

The imagination can hardly convince the heights of greatness and glory to which mankind would be raised, if all their thoughts and energies were to be animated with a living purpose. But as in a forest of oaks, among the millions of acorns that fall every autumn there may, perhaps, be one in a million that will grow on into a tree; somewhat in like manner fares it with the thoughts and feelings of man.—Julius Hare.

If you will show me a Bible Christian living on the Word of God, I will show you a joyful man. He is mounting up all the time. He has got new truths that lift him up over every obstacle, and he mounts over difficulties higher and higher, like a man I once heard of who had a bag of gas fastened on either side, and if he just touched the ground with his foot, over a wall or a hedge he would go; and so these truths make us so light that we bound over every obstacle.—D. L. Moody.