

THE PRESBYTERIAN

APRIL.

YALE LECTURES ON PREACHING.

BY HENRY WARD BEECHER.

The following are a few extracts from a course of Lectures delivered before the students of Yale Theological College, New Haven, by Henry Ward Beecher, and specially reported for the CHRISTIAN UNION. If it is in small type, we commend this article to our readers. They will find enough of truth and soberness, originality, and real genius in these utterances of the greatest of modern preachers to repay a careful perusal. Speaking of the Bible, we find the following in reference to

ITS ADAPTEDNESS TO COMMON LIFE.

Then I find another thing, namely, that it is a book which is pitched to the key of common life, and not to an artificial key. Many a man wishes that the Bible had not been, in some respects, just what it is. Many people wish that the Bible produced more sudden and startling sensation, or that it had certain tremendous strokes in it, which should overwhelm the minds of men, or fascinate their imaginations. Many persons want the Bible to act on men as Sinai acted on the common people who were at its base; and if it had acted on them thus, they would have been affected about as the Israelites were, who, hearing the voice of the thunder and worshipping God one day, danced around a calf the next.

Now, I find in going through the Bible, scarcely a single element which when it was written was not familiar to the minds of the common people. In other words, it took its keynote from those great qualities which are common to humanity, and addressed itself to them. In every age and in all nations, men are very much alike; the great underlying element of humanity is the same in all race-stocks. Men are said to have sprung from five primitive stocks. I believe that the revered Agassiz and others have thought that the race proceeded from twenty different stocks. I do not know about that; but of this I am sure, that if they did start from twenty different stocks, they all had the same mould; because it is beyond all conception or belief, it is out of the question, that there should have been five, or ten, or fifteen, or twenty variations of nature; that there should have been numerous differentiations resulting in man, and that

these differentiations should have produced men so exactly alike; that the basilar faculties, and the perceptive faculties, and the reflective faculties should have been so identical in all the race that one man could understand another, and that men of different stocks could reason with each other. Such a thing would be an impossibility.

What I say is, that in the one comprehensive race, in all the minor races included in it, there are certain underlying particulars which are the same; and the word of God addresses itself to them. To be sure, we have in it some philosophical language, but what was philosophy in those days of the world when the Bible was constructed? Solomon, it is true, had some time (aside from his domestic care,) in which to philosophize: but compare the philosophy of President Porter with the proverbs of Solomon. Compare Cousin's writings, compare Sir Willam Hamilton's writings, compare the writings of any modern master of philosophy with the philosophy of the olden time. Then, philosophy was a collection of proverbs. It was the wisdom of the people reduced to its narrowest, simplest, and most striking form; so that nowhere in the Old Testament is there a large generic view of the moral government of God over this world. There is nowhere in the early writings of the Bible any systematic teaching in respect to human nature.

In our day men wonder at Bishop Butler's writings, and speak of him as the originator, in his time, of new schools, which, as it were, sprang from his loins. I do not undertake to say that he taught the presence of that same divine creative genius in the natural world which is pointed out all the way through the Bible, and in harmony with which the Bible itself is constructed; but although he did not say expressly what he thought, beyond a question he did think that the Bible was the highest and the sublimest part of the natural world, and that it was natural, not in the sense in which we speak of nature as degraded, but in the sense that it belonged to that unitary work in which things physical, things social, things intellectual, and things moral are intersphering and moving together. Without a doubt it was his belief that the creation of God's Word is part and parcel of the whole advancement which is taking place in mankind.

The Bible, therefore, is a book for men, and for men that are low down in the scale—for to this day nine-tenths of the inhabitants of the globe are but children, or are less intelligent than children among us. So that the great work of the Bible in the world is begun, but