

THE DANGERS OF CANT PHRASES.

From an Elder's Standpoint.

We have nothing to say against Mr. Newall, the gentleman from the United States, who is conducting numerous attended Bible classes in Toronto. We have no doubt he is a worthy and excellent man, according to his lights. We observe, according to reports of a recent address, that he has been denouncing what he calls the "Higher Criticism" as the work of Satan. What strikes one in a remark of that sort is its generality and inconsequence. The phrase, "Higher Criticism"—(who originated it?)—has the disadvantage of lack of definiteness. It has become a glittering generality, and is employed so miscellaneously as to imply anything or everything. Let us clear our minds of cant. All criticism, or exposition, is wholesome and useful, provided it be based on truth, common sense, and uttered in honesty; and whether wholesome or useful, it is at least lawful, intellectually and morally. In that case, what does it matter whether the criticism, or exposition, is Higher, Lower, or Intermediate? What does matter is whether the criticism or exposition is sound and helpful, or the opposite. Perhaps Mr. Newall is a little over-anxious; perhaps a little lacking in the sense of humor, if he thinks those who do not see with him eye to eye are therefore necessarily and intentionally doing the work of Satan. Let Mr. Newall be reassured; Christ and His salvation are not to be easily upset by critics of any altitude whatever. If Mr. Newall means that criticism should not be rash, irreverent and iconoclastic, we are with him; but if he means that no new light can be thrown on the Scriptures by the men of illumination in each generation, including our own, we must record a respectful dissent.

The religious situation in France is decidedly interesting. There is unrest among the Roman Catholics, and a steady exodus from their ranks, many going over to Protestantism. But quite as important as this is the movement for reform within the Church. At a "Congress of the Gospel" held last year with the approval of the Cardinal Archbishop of Paris, the following resolutions were adopted: "1st, That Catholics, who consider the Gospel a means of realizing every progress, even from the social and national point of view, form the habit of reading every day a portion of the New Testament to all people living in their house, children and servants included. 2nd, That every opportunity of studying the Gospel at home, at school, at catechism, at meetings, etc., be taken hold of. 3rd, That Catholics adopt the custom of giving the Gospel as a wedding and first Communion gift. 4th, That every Sunday the Gospel be read in the vernacular at every mass in every parish." In the meantime Protestants are carrying on a very active evangelistic work, which is meeting with great encouragement.

The meeting of the Ottawa W. F. M. Presbyterian, in the lecture room of St. Andrew's Church on Tuesday, was a great success. We hope to give a synopsis of the proceedings next week; as well as the principal items of business before the Ottawa Presbytery, which met the same day.

THE CRITIC'S CORNER.

The Bible and the University.

The Rev. Principal Gordon has expressed the opinion that it is a pity that more attention is not paid to the Scriptures in our Universities. That while so much time is given to the study of Greek and Roman History and Literature so many of our college students are very ignorant of the contents and meaning of those writings which we count sacred; and which, as a matter of fact, have exercised such a tremendous influence on our national and personal life. On this statement Dr. Courtice comments with approval and suggests that a beginning should be made, at once, in Toronto, Professor Hutton taking the New Testament and Dr. McCurdy the Old Testament. The newspapers point out that it is a fair subject for discussion, and it is likely that we may hear something interesting on this important question.

President Loudon is reported to have said that: "although the study of the Bible was undoubtedly a necessary study to any adequate educational course, yet the difficulties in the way were such as to make the introduction of the Bible into the general curriculum at least a matter of grave deliberation. He rather dreaded the introduction of sectional strife into university matters."

Professor Goldwin Smith expressed the same fear in his own way. At the present stage of the higher criticism it would be unwise to introduce the study of the Bible into the course of a secular and undenominational college. He would keep it to the denominational colleges. "Think," he said, "what a strife it would raise among certain sections of the community if professors of the Provincial University in teaching the history of the Bible referred to some of the doctrines of the people of Israel as being below the plane of the morality held by the veriest savages." We think it hardly likely that any thorough student of the Old Testament would handle it in the crude style suggested by Professor Goldwin Smith. But it is evident that there are difficulties in the way.

The Bible is, of course, studied in Theological colleges as a necessary part of the minister's education; and we believe that in colleges that are alive and abreast of the age, such study is as fruitful and stimulating as ever. The Bible is the subject of exposition from the pulpits of our land every Sunday. It is also read and studied in some manner in the Sunday School. The reading of it in our Public and High Schools does not, we are afraid, exercise a very powerful influence. It is possible also that owing to the competition of the Sunday School Library with its light literature, that the Bible is not read as patiently and lovingly by the young people as was formerly the case. We must admit that many of our most conscientious young people read the Bible as a task or a sacred duty. Sometime ago I made a suggestion on the line of what the Church should demand in this matter from the young men who have the ministry in view. I may return to that; but now it is a question of the University as distinct from the Church or the Theological Seminary.

As a matter of fact, in this country, any kind of literature or philosophy has to face the fierce struggle for existence in the University curriculum. Prof. Goldwin Smith has other fears besides those mentioned above. He informed the reporter of the Toronto News that "he feared the wild scramble for a bread and butter education

was influencing too largely the ideals of college men." The great Book tells us that man cannot live by bread alone; and never did that truth need to be more clearly set forth and firmly emphasised. If we saw that truth more clearly the discussion of this question of the higher study of the Bible would be seen in a larger light.

What can the Universities do for us in this matter? Much will depend upon the spirit in which this discussion is carried on. It calls for a union of the scientific method with Christian culture. We may perhaps distinguish between the present state of the higher criticism and the present state of public opinion about it. The University must lead and follow public opinion. The man who treats Biblical literature in a University ought to be able to use the broad results of scientific research which have been secured by centuries of patient toil. We ought not to expect the University to do work which can just as well be done in the home or in the most elementary school; everything done in a University should aim at the highest standard and be done in a living spirit. The Old Testament, especially because it is a varied literature spreading its origin over a thousand years and linked to a still more distant past, needs to be handled according to a real historical method, and when so handled can be made available for the intelligent student under the basis of the English Translation. The history and literature can be set forth according to its place in human life, without entering deeply into technical theological discussion. This calls for learning, skill, reverence and sympathy; but we are justified in expecting these qualities in any man who undertakes to deal with any literature from the university point of view. Space does not allow me to say more now, but I will return to the charge next week.

VERAX.

The March number of Harper's Bazar opens with a bright article by Marion Foster Washburne, on The Day When Everything is Wrong, amusingly illustrated by Miss Cory, who also illustrated a dear little story by Juliet Wilbor Tompkins. Sara Jeanette Duncan writes of the "Home Life of Lady Curzon"; and Lilian Bell in her Talks to Spinsters deals with the subject, "Making the Best of it." Several pages are devoted to the Early Spring Fashions. Harper and Brothers, New York.

The membership of the evangelical free churches in England, taken together, is, 1,982,801. The Wesleyans lead with 573,899; The Primitive Methodists, Calvinistic Methodists, United Methodist Free churches, Methodist, New Connexion and Bible Christians, aggregate 497,104; Baptists 357,066; Congregationalists 414,218; Presbyterians 78,024; Society of Friends 17,115; seven smaller bodies 37,398. The Anglican church is stated to have a membership of 2,004,493, only 21,692 more than the evangelical free churches.

The February number of the Fortnightly Review opens with an article on Lord Kitchener and the Indian Army. Then follows The Education Bill for London: a Forecast, by Cloudesley Breton. The question of our food supply in time of war appears to be a live one, for this magazine too contains an article on the subject. A most interesting article is that by Fiona Macleod on The Four Winds of Eibirr. We are able to mention only a few of the excellent features of this number. Leonard Scott Publication Company, New York.