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Pulpit Criticism.

WITH

ANSWERS TO OBJECTIONS TO THE BIBLE,

A WEEKLY SHEET,

BY DAVID EDWARDS.

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“OUR BIBLE CLASS,” CHESTNUT STREET.

SECOND NOTICE.

“Grace, 'tis a charming sound,” we have understood ; and so it would appear to be, in the ears of certain wranglers (probably not *senior* wranglers) who appear to think more of the *name*, than of the *nature* of grace, hence their puerile threat in relation to the naming of the meeting above-described. If however the members of this class think proper to forego *the name* of Grace, there is no room for doubt as to their possession of its *nature* ; if they drop the husk, they are not likely to drop the kernel.

The meeting of the above-named class was commenced by the singing of hymns and prayer ; the prayer being brief and extempore, was probably more likely to be *felt*, than are the “vain repetitions,” with which many of those assembled have long been familiar ; the portion of Scripture selected for the instruction of the class, was that with which myriads in all parts of the globe would be occupied on that day, as it was that which formed the lesson of the international series ; it may be permissible to observe, with regard to that series of lessons, that although the *aim* of the compilers may be regarded as unexceptionable, the circumstance of their being compiled by representatives of the various non-Romish sects necessitates their being characterized by the traditional darkness which not a few Christians believe to be inherent in those sects ; such however is the nature of the Bible, that the mere endeavour to derive benefit from the study of it, is sure to meet with a measure of realization ; “Our Bible Class” has doubtless had many a proof of this, and the occasion on which the writer was present at their meeting was not likely to be an exception ; the portion of Scripture which was read by the Superintendent, and by the class, in alternate verses, extended from Acts vii. 54, to viii. 4 inclusively. Prior to commenting on what transpired in the class, we will take occasion to observe that there are

tens of thousands in every part of the globe who unhesitatingly trace a change in their whole aim and career to some portion of Scripture ; there will probably be not a few who read these lines who will know, from their own experience, or from that of others, that this is the case ; it is but recently that an intelligent *soldier*, of the Salvation Army told the writer of the passage which "fell into good ground," in his own case, and which reached him in the streets of Chicago ; seeing that this is undeniably the case, it is obviously the policy of Satan (the adversary) by means of all forms of Ecclesiasticism, *so far as practicable*, to obscure this "great power of God ;" it is therefore to be expected that, in whatsoever measure this "hammer" of the Almighty is lifted into prominence, ecclesiasticism will "gnash its teeth," for it always has hated the Bible and always will hate it, as a certain person is *reputed* (somewhat questionably we should say) to hate holy water.

Mr. W. H. Howland, the Superintendent of "Our Bible Class," touched slightly on that part of Stephen's speech which preceded the portion appointed for "the lesson ;" he observed that the circumstance of Stephen speaking disparagingly of the temple, and saying that "the Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands," tended to irritate the Jews ; and the fact of his enforcing his argument, by quoting the prophet Isaiah, would necessarily increase its pungency.

With regard to the opening verses of the lesson, Mr. Howland observed that the more true any denunciation of an unworthy person is, the more such a denunciation stings ; persons do not gnash their teeth at lies, but (we may add) will bolt them whole, provided they be sufficiently unctuous ; the example of Stephen and of Paul (Acts xiii. 10), teaches us that there may be circumstances which demand words of scathing censure ; but such words are sure to be more or less resented ; when required on the one hand, and resented on the other, Mr. H. observed that the Christian course is, like Stephen, *to look upward*, and that *believing* will result in *receiving* needed help ; he also commented on the circumstance of the crown of martyrdom having been forecast (so to speak) by the meaning of the name Stephen, *i.e.* a crown.

The same "lesson" furnishes another example of the fulness of meaning expressed by Biblical names of various kinds ; Saul (the destroyer) subsequently to his conversion, becomes Paul (the worker). Stephen looked up *steadfastly* ; it is the *unwavering upward gaze* which is rewarded by the realization of that which the bodily eye cannot see : this was illustrated by reference to the death-bed of the Rev. Mr. Tilley, of St. James', shortly before his departure, the Superintendent told us that he exclaimed—"I see the great white throne." The interesting fact of "the Son of man" being described by Stephen, as *standing* (to receive him) in contrast with the *sitting position* assigned to the Lord (Heb. i. 3), was not overlooked on this occasion, nor was that of Jesus being described by the proto-martyr (and by him as the only disciple who so speaks of him) as Son of Man ; the practical consequence of the Lord being the Son of God no less than the Son of man, encourages believers to rely on such a declaration as,—"All power is given to me in heaven and in earth ;" and enables them to apprehend that the apparent realities around them are unreal, and that the invisible things are alone real, "for the things which are seen are

temporal ; but the things which are not seen are eternal ; for we walk by faith, not by sight." Mr. Howland illustrated the foregoing line of teaching by narrating the dream of a lady who imagined that, when at the bottom of a well, she saw a star ; while she kept her eye on the star, she appeared to approach nearer to it, but whenever she looked downwards, she found herself receding from it ; Mr. H. explained that the bitterness of the Jews, in regard to Stephen's declaration that he " saw Jesus standing at the right hand of God," was traceable to their conviction that they had effectually put an end to him ; he added moreover that the outcry they raised, and their " stopping their ears " left the facts of the case unaffected by them ; they could cast Stephen out of the city and stone him, but the only effect of it was that they produced an additional witness to the facts ; a witness whose character so far resembled that of his Divine Master, that the only way in which he recognized his murderers was expressed in words corresponding to those uttered on the cross—" Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." The record that " when he had said this, he fell asleep " has always (until recent years) been considered to teach what death is to the body of a Christian, and it was so regarded by the teacher on this occasion.

This interesting narrative was treated not only in its relation to Christians, but in its aspect toward those who at the present day " stop their ears " against Christian testimony, and declaim against the truth ; such persons were warned that the plea of ignorance will not avail when, by-and-bye, they appear before " the judgment-seat of Christ." In commenting on the *grace* which led Stephen to pray for his murderers, Mr. H. referred to Matt. v. 44, as enjoining such a course ; as this is one of the portions which the revisers have seriously mutilated, we will give the verse, as it appears in Murdock's translation of the Peshito-Syriac version, a version traceable to the latter part of the first, or to the commencement of the second century, and therefore older by two or three centuries than those Greek manuscripts, according to which, the revisers have contributed to mutilate the authorized version ; the Syriac, being a kindred dialect to that in which the Lord spoke, is necessarily on that account also, infinitely more valuable than any Greek manuscript. Matt. v. 44 (according to the Peshito-Syriac), " But I say to you : love your enemies ; and bless him that curseth you ; and do good to him that hateth you ; and pray for them that lead you in bonds, and that persecute you."

By way of practical encouragement, Mr. H. observed that there is nothing (on God's part) to hinder believers of the present age being filled with the Holy Spirit, any more than there was in the days of Stephen, and he adduced the case of John Brantford, as illustrative of this fulness, in an age not so remote from the present, but that most readers are more or less familiar with the facts of the history : " John Bradford in Newgate is to be burned next morning in Smithfield "—John swings himself on the bed-post in very glee and delight, for to-morrow will be his *wedding-day*, and he says to another—" Fine shining we shall make to-morrow, when the flame will be kindled," and he smiles, laughs, and enjoys the very thought that he is about to bear the blood-red cross of martyrdom. Was this delusion, or is the secret of it this—that he enjoys that " peace of God which passeth all understanding ? " The meeting was suitably closed with the rhythmical supplication :—

“Nearer, my God, to Thee,
Nearer to Thee!
E'en though it be a cross
That raiseth me;
Still all my song shall be—
Nearer, my God, to Thee!
Nearer to Thee!”

Before leaving the little church, we learned that this fertile “Bible Class” had fostered a “Prayer Union for the Holy Spirit,”* and a day-school under its own roof for waifs, a home for the aged and indigent of both sexes, it appears, is likely to arise out of the same instrumentality.

* It will be permissible to point out, in reference to this prayer, that the teaching of the Apostle Paul (subsequently to the Pentecost) is—as addressed to believers—“Be ye FILLED with the Spirit.” Eph. v. 18.

SUPERSEDED CLERGY.

Now that the laity are doing the real work of the Church, it is probable that those enterprising gentlemen whose vocation is to deal in cassocks, college-caps, surplices, and stoles, may hire some of these rev. gentlemen to do duty as dummies in their shop-windows; we cannot doubt that a few yards of lawn, when exhibited in the form of sleeves, and a black satin gown, over-topped by a scarlet hood, and all worn by that relic of past ages, styled a Bishop—when exhibited in King Street, would prove a powerful attraction to the multitudes who have never seen such a phenomenon. Madame Tussaud is not likely long to delay placing a curiosity of the kind, by the side of “Good Queen Bess,” and a lady (unknown in the school books of Canada) usually styled “Bloody Mary;” would anyone “be surprised” to see such a personage in “the chamber of horrors” of that celebrated collection of wax figures?

USEFUL HINT.

A well-to-do Ithaca merchant, on being solicited for a subscription to the fund of the new Congregational Church, took the book and wrote in it:—“I, _____, promise to give 10 per cent. of all moneys received by me from members of said church and society, for merchandize, until said church is completed.”

Sermons to the heathen—Sermons of *Wild*.

With a specimen copy of “THE CRITIC”—a sixteen paged journal—in course of preparation, and the work of organizing “The Critic Publishing Company,” at the same time, the Editor finds himself obliged to request the indulgence of the subscribers to his present journals, in regard to the suspension of their publication, until he is in a position to embody them in “THE CRITIC,” and at the same time provide his subscribers with far more literary pabulum than he originally undertook to furnish. The Editor has decided to introduce an article from the pen of Prof. Goldwin Smith, in each issue of “THE CRITIC.”

*I don't re-
member seeing
any Mrs. Pich.
Edwards' house
home in 1883
& think.*