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I.—LITERARY.

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THE TESTING SYSTEM FOR MINISTERIAL STUDENTS IN THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF IRELAND.

The testing system for ministerial students in the Southern Presbyterian Church is far from giving universal satisfaction. No proposed changes have met with a favorable reception at the hands of the majority of our rulers. But all parties are ready to admit that practically the examining of our candidates is very often most imperfect and unsatisfactory. Laxity is the common characteristic of most of the examinations conducted by the Presbyteries, while incompetence on the part of the examiners is not unheard of.

We are not concerned here to inquire whether the trouble springs from the requirements of the Book, or from the nature of the personnel of the Presbyteries—whether the standard set up in our Constitution is too high, or the material of our Presbyteries too low. We merely affirm as an acknowledged fact that there is dissatisfaction with the system by which we test the students' qualifications for the work of the ministry.

This being so, it may be fairly assumed that an account of the testing system in application in a sister church of noble repute will be received with interest. We do not think of advocating the adoption of the Irish scheme by our own church. We hope simply to stir up the minds of our brethren, by giving them a new plan to think on, to the bettering, in a way which shall seem good to them, our testing system.

## V.—CRITICISMS AND REVIEWS.

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THE RALSTONS. *By F. Marion Crawford.* Author of "A Roman Singer," "Pietro Ghisleri," "Katherine Lauderdale," etc. 2 vols. 12 mo. New York: Macmillan & Co. 1895.

This novel has received high praise. In some respects the work is worthy of praise. The characters are, generally, clearly and vividly drawn. The story is very interesting, once the somewhat tedious introduction has been gotten through. It is skilfully and picturesquely written. But when critics speak of it as "full of the ripest and wisest reflections upon men and women," we must qualify the statement by saying, "Upon some very godless men and women, rather." Nor can we believe that in all respects it gives the historic picture which the Living Church asserts. That publication declares that while *The Ralstons* "is a love story, it is much more," that "it is an accurate picture of certain circles of New York society to-day," and that "in the analyses of character, Mr. Crawford has done nothing better than this book gives us." We even believe that Katherine Ralston, with her clear head, good, hard sense, and essentially upright character and such religion as the author gives her on pages 125 to 133, of vol. ii., is a psychological impossibility. No vaguer and more fantastic scheme of religion than is outlined there could come into the unregulated mind of the veriest dreamer. Yet this is the religion of a girl of common, hard, plain, Scotch sense. Such connexions are not found in real life and should not be made by the novelist—certainly not by the novelist who aims at realism which this one seems to do.

Could we suppose this a true picture of certain circles of New York society, the work would have a great historical interest. But while this claim has been made, as we have seen, by certain reviewers, we doubt its justice for other reasons than that already given. In particular, we do not believe that any such circle, regarded from a religious point of view, can be found in New York city. It is easy enough to find the counterpart of Mr. Alexander Lauderdale. He is a very common character in real ecclesiastical life. So is his wife. So are many of the other characters. But it takes a novelist who can get beyond the trammels of the actual to bring together such a crowd of personages as appear on the pages of Mr. Crawford's book now before us.

Mr. Crawford, it is well known, makes war upon the novelist's straining after a moral. He does so habitually, and does so in this book. On p. 385, vol. ii., he says of *The Ralstons*, "Moral, there is none, nor purpose save to please; and if any one be pleased, the writer has his reward." This is a low conception of the novelist's work. He is a sort of creator. His creatures, like other men and women, will have their influence in the world if they please. The book will exert a power for good or evil in pro-

portion as it is read. The novelist should have a much higher purpose than to please. His work should make for righteousness. It should strike hard blows at sin. It should give the reader nobler aspirations. It should make him ashamed of all his groveling aims. Cicero taught that virtue was necessary in order to a man's becoming a true orator. The same is true of the novelist. The artist with such a conception of his art as Mr. Crawford's, can never be a Michael, Angelo, or a Raphael. Art can never fulfill its highest ideals save as guided by religious greatness. There are no affections so great as the religious. The novelist who aims simply to please is playing on the surface of things. He ought to be, if consistent, an Epicurean or a Pessimist. He may be either or both. And either is superficial. To be plain, we regard Mr. Crawford's conception of the novelist's work as unworthy in two respects: He has an insufficient sense of an author's responsibility for the moral influence of his work; and his belief that the novelist should aim simply to please will keep him forever in the lower ranks of artists. An imperfect ideal will not allow him to rise to the heights.

Mr. Crawford shows his sense of irresponsibility for the moral effect of his teaching by the perfect babel of theological babble through which he carries the reader. It is a babble without one redeeming voice. Even his own reflections, where they can be clearly referred to him, are confused and discordant. This may be "realism," but it is not high art. It is not manly manhood either that speaks in such wise. We say nothing of its unchristian character.

Notwithstanding its defects and Mr. Crawford's aim to please, the work has an interest to the psychologist. Chapter xxvii., in vol. ii., contains some striking and suggestive remarks concerning intuition—intellectual intuition—and motive.

We cannot repress the regret that our author has such a conception of his mission. With an adequately exalted conception of the novelist's responsibility, with the aim to instruct and build up the moral character of the reader, Mr. Crawford would be forced to invest at least some of his characters with a worth and dignity to which they are, as matters, are strangers to. This would by virtue of reaction lift the author till he might take a very high rank among great novelists.

THOS. C. JOHNSON.

Orlando, March 28th, 1896.

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A WINDOW IN THRUMS. *By J. M. Barrie.* Author of "The Little Minister," "When a Man's Single," "Auld Light Idyles," "My Lady Nicotine," etc. Pp. 285. 12 mo. Philadelphia: Henry Altemus. 1894.

This is one of the sweetest of Barrie's books. It is a collection of stories loosely connected by their more or less close relation to Jess McQumpha. Jess is the wife of a weaver in Thrums. She has been greatly afflicted by rheumatism—confined to her room for twenty years, but she has also been greatly blessed. Her good man, Hendry, is about the simplest, purest, truest-hearted man in Thrums. God has given her three