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I.—LITERARY.

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.

And that is the way we feel in following Mr. Crockett from the "Men of the Moss Hogs" to "Cleg Kelly."

Cleg is a very adventurous street Arab. Most of his companions are worse than himself; and we are much in their company, for Cleg naturally was so himself. Of the better people we are shown often, I imagine, we are shown only the worse side.

Now and again, we are given idyllic pictures, glimpses of peasant heroes, heroic as any men of any blood ever were and Christian in their heroism. Such we have in Muckle Alick of Sandyknowes. We might go far without finding another picture of love between husband and wife more finely and sweetly drawn than that of Alick for Mirren and Mirren for Alick. We would that the author had lingered longer about Sandyknowes with its great soft-hearted giant and its sweet, brave, loving Mirren. But for the most part we are kept among people whose company does us no good.

The book, however, like many of Dickens' works, seems to have been written with another purpose than to simply get money. It is a sort of philippic against certain forms of Christian effort in behalf of the denizens of the slums of our cities. Cleg hated the tract women who walked through his streets, her skirts raised high, her nose in the air, lecturing the people on the right hand and left, for their filth and worthlessness, and evidently, whether orally or not, thanking God that they were not as the poor publicans and sinners about them.

We hope the book will do good in this direction, but we fear it will also do some harm. No man may keep quiet simply because of undiscriminating readers, but it does behove him to be very careful lest he put into their hands a two-edged sword.

In interest and sprightliness, "Cleg Kelly" is at least equal to the average of Dickens' novels.

THOS. C. JOHNSON.

EZEKIEL OF BETHLEHEM; OR FROM BETHLEHEM TO CALVARY. *By Fanny Atricks Shugert.* 12 mo. pages 281. Price \$1.00. Richmond, Va.: Presbyterian Committee of Publication.

This is a book that may be wisely placed on the shelves of our Sabbath School libraries. It is not a work of art. One often feels that the authoress could easily have done better in plan and style. Many will dispute the correctness of the chronological placing of several incidents in the life of Christ. Some incidents seem lifted clear out of their historical place. Others are jammed together without warrant. Comments are sometimes made by the authoress which give no light to say the least. E. g. on p. 176, she says that the Jewish court, or Sanhedrim, had been abolished in the time of our Lord, while she should have said merely that it had been stripped of some of its prerogatives. She gives a faith and spiritual discernment to her heroes much superior to that in the possession of the Apostolic body. This is improbable historically, and hence offends good taste in such a book.

But the book is very good nevertheless. It holds one's interest to the end. One feels that he is being brought into contact with our Lord. It should lead to a perusal of the Gospel. We commend it to parents and Sunday Schools as quite useful and worthy.

August 26th, '96:

THOS. C. JOHNSON.

THE PRINCESS ALINE. By *Richard Harding Davis*, author of "The West from a Car Window," "Our English Cousins," "The Rulers of the Mediterranean," "Gallegher," "Van Bibber and others," &c. Illustrated by C. D. Gibson. New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1895.

This is a charming story for an idle half hour of rest. It is sparklingly written. It is simple, straightforward, piquant; full of love and full of incipient and travel. Its hero is an improbable but lovable man of the world—led by whims but amiable, intelligent, kindly, companionable. Its heroine is a beautiful and sprightly American girl, of sweet character from a worldly point of view. The Princess Aline is kept at a respectful distance as behooves princesses.

In some of these latter assertions is alleged by implication the greatest defect of the book. The author has no high moral purpose. Cicero believed that only a good man could be a real orator. Only a Christian painter can reach the highest perfection. Another may have the most exquisite mechanical skill, but he will fail of the right expression. He can not put the soul into eyes and face and bearing because it is not in him. *Ex nihilo nihil fit*. The same is true of the novelist. No novelist can do a perfect piece of work unless he is a Christian and unless he carries positive Christianity with him as he produces his work. We know nothing of Mr. Richard Harding Davis's religion. But in this story he sets forth his characters as if they were out of relation, at least so far as consciousness went to God. God does not seem to be in all Mr. Davis's thought as he writes. He writes for the respectable worldling.

We should have literature as restful with this finer coloring and tone in it, something which will appeal not merely to the natural but to all that is best in the spiritual man.

IN DEFIANCE OF THE KING, A Romance of the American Revolution. By *Chauncey C. Hotchkiss*. New York: D. Appleton & Company, 1895.

This is a thrilling war story; as full of adventures as an egg of meat. It is the work of a good story-teller. Its occasional pictures of historical characters are well sketched. Its pictures of local conditions of the times vivid and historically true. Its references to historic events generally correct. But the author makes no effort to teach history. His purpose is to tell a story. Nor does he forget that purpose.

It is full of war, fire, and blood; but on the side of all the author's approved characters the war is open, and the blood that spilt in open