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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.

value in his efforts to increase the interest of his people in the evangelization of the world.

Incidentally, the book should make him ashamed of his present piety and consecration. It will give him a glimpse of the proper method and spirit of prayer. It gives a most vigorous blow to the purely selfish and unchristian prayer put up from so many lips in Christendom.

Though it is an old book, we know of no other which has displaced it of right. If you have not got it, get it if you have to "sell a coat to do it."

Having commended it so heartily, it is proper to say that it has some blemishes—e. g. unreserved praise of women's doings in Missionary Conferences. These, however, the men of our church can easily spot.

THOS. C. JOHNSON.

Hampden-Sidney, Va.

CLERG KELLY: ARAB OF THE CITY. His Progress and Adventures. *By S. R. Crockett.* Author of the Lilac Sunbonnet, Bog Myrtle and Peat. New York: D. Appleton & Co. 1896.

"The Men of the Moss Hags," by Mr. Crockett, led irresistibly to a comparison of the author with Sir Walter Scott. This was owing both to the subject matter and to the style of the book. We would not be understood to intimate that Mr. Crockett wrote "The Men of the Moss Hags" in the stately style of Sir Walter Scott. Our age is apt to regard the "Great Wizzard" as bordering on the stilted. Nobody would be tempted to say the same of "The Men of the Moss Hags." Still there is an elevation and dignity about the manner of it as well as about the matter that makes its writer compare favorably with the author of "Old Mortality."

No other manner would suit the chief characters in Mr. Crockett's great historical novel. They were people of true gentility, viz: Of that gentility which springs of high character and devotion Christian principles. The selection of such characters naturally called forth a style from a man of Mr. Crockett's talents which puts him alongside of the very prince of older novelists. For they are the princely characters of Sir Walter Scott's novels that explain his uniformly dignified and noble style. He never seemed to care to write of scullions, kitchen maids, and the "rag tag and bobtailed," except incidentally, unless indeed they were people of real worth. In this respect Scott stands in glaring contrast with Charles Dickens, who deals so much with trash. Hence, also, Dickens' style.

Of course, Dickens' style is good. It is wonderfully good for the purpose. It suits Fagin and the Artful Dodger, and Dick Swiveller, and his friends. It suits Barkis, and Barnaby Rudge, and Mr. Micawber. It suits all his characters. But everybody feels that in going from Scott to Dickens, he goes from the *Salon* of the gentle to the one room of the unwashed; goes from the house to the kitchen; goes from parlor, music hall and library to the kitchen with its pots and frying pans, and generally into a very ill-kept, dirty kitchen, too.

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.