

well illuminated. Such discussions are of the highest value in an educational point of view. Very little tendency to controversy was observable; those who participated in the conference sought not to confute the views of others, but simply and clearly to express their own. An assembly of clear-headed Christians, of all the different persuasions, from which the polemical demon is exorcised, and in which each one temperately endeavors to set forth the truth as it appears to him, must be a great school in which to study the doctrine and the discipline of the church.

But the gains of knowledge, great as they must be, are less than the gains of charity. It was a wonderful advantage to the Episcopal communion in this country and in England when the Congress of that church was organized which brought Ritualists, and High Churchmen, and Low Churchmen, and Broad Churchmen all together on one platform, and called on every man to speak his inmost thought. The bonds of fellowship in that church have been visibly strengthened by this Congress; the danger of division is greatly lessened; all parties have come to regard each other not only with tolerance, but with respect and affection. It is to be hoped that the same result will be achieved through the Congress of Churches for the scattered and discordant sects. When "Father" Grafton, of Boston, one of the most thorough-going Ritualists in the country, comes upon its platform and frankly recognizes the clergymen of other names round about him not only as Christian men, but also as Christian ministers, those who listen open not only their eyes, but their hearts; and when he goes on to say that worship, in his understanding of it, includes sacrifice, and then to explain what he means by sacrifice, and what relation this sacrifice offered by the worshiper bears to the greater sacrifice on Calvary, a kindlier feeling toward him and those who stand with him at once finds expression. The listeners may not at all agree with his view, but they can see that it is much less preposterous than they had supposed, and that the man who utters it is not only a sincere and manly man, but has something to say for himself. When Dr. James Freeman Clarke sets forth his views of the historical Christ as the true center of theology, and when the Rev. Chauncey Giles, of the New Church, expresses his mind on the same subject, and when President Chase, of Haverford College, unfolds the doctrine of the Friends respecting worship, the assent may not be universal, but the courteous attention and the sympathetic friendliness are. Through the cultivation of this generous spirit, and the comparison of views on subjects that have hitherto been tabooed in Christian assemblies, the meetings of the Congress of Churches promise to prepare the way for a great increase of practical unity among Christians.

For this, it must be remembered, is the thing to be accomplished. The sentiment of fellowship needs to be cultivated, but sentiment without practice is dead, being alone. The Congress of Churches is not called on to devise plans of coöperation, but the men who take part in its discussions and mingle in its assemblies ought to go home and heal some of the unseemly and wasteful divisions existing in their neighborhoods. No difficulty will be found in devising ways of coöperation if there is only a disposition to coöperate.

It is pleasant to hear what seems like an echo of this Congress — that a Conference of Christians in Berkshire County, Massachusetts, where this Congress originated, has just taken in hand one of the little towns where four churches occupy a field barely large enough for one, with an urgent call for their consolidation. There are a thousand little towns in this country where the same conditions exist, and where the same remedy needs to be applied. Nothing is needed for the cure of the evil but a tincture of charity and a modicum of common sense.

The Revised Version of the Old Testament.

THE long, difficult, uncompensated labor of the Revisers is brought to an end. Be the final verdict what it may in regard to the merits of the Revision, it will stand as one of the principal literary achievements of the present generation, and an important index of the state of scholarship in this period. The Old Testament company have had at once an easier and a more serious task than the New Testament Revisers had before them. A translator must, first of all, get hold of the book which he intends to render into another tongue. He must settle the text which he will follow. This, in the case of the New Testament, was the most delicate and responsible part of the work of the Revisers. The advantages for textual criticism and the necessity for it forced on them this preliminary labor. On the whole, their most valuable service, as regards the amendment of the old version, lies just here, in the improvement of the text. Yet here is a matter where there is room for endless divergence of opinion as to particular points, and here is the place where the most fierce onslaught has been made upon them. In this attack, the old dread of admitting any uncertainty in the original text of the sacred volume, and a real, though it be an unavowed, disposition, both groundless and superstitious, to stand by the "received text," as far as it is in any way possible, underlie the angry crusade against this feature of the New Testament Revision. Yet nothing has done so much to shake confidence in it and to lessen for the time its currency and popularity. The Old Testament companies have followed the mediæval "Masoretic" text, as they have no ancient manuscripts to consult. In a few instances only have they been driven to a modified reading. They escape thus the onset of a swarm of unfriendly critics, which would no doubt have arisen had they undertaken to correct the Hebrew. They have, however, occasionally referred in the margin to the Septuagint and other ancient translations. It is worthy of notice that the American company on this subject are even more conservative than their English brethren, and would have blotted out this class of marginal references. While the Revisers have secured immunity from attack by this cautious policy, they have lessened the value of their work as it will be estimated by scholars and by coming generations. There ought to be, and there will be, a great deal done in the textual criticism of the Old Testament. The further study of the Septuagint and the rectification of its text, and the study of later ancient versions which are founded on manuscripts of the original that long ago perished, will in time yield valuable fruit. Whether the condi-

tion of these inquiries now is such as to justify the extreme prudence and reserve of the Revisers as regards the text, is a question on which there will be a difference of opinion. The first thing to be done is to dispossess the mind of the notion that the original text of the Scriptures is to be ascertained in any other way than by the means applicable to all other ancient writings. As long as a vague idea of a miraculous preservation of it, or an unreasoning timidity which debars scrutiny, is allowed to have an influence, the truth will not be reached.

The Old Testament Revisers have done an excellent service of a negative kind. In the first place, they have been able to *unload* Archbishop Usher's chronology, which has been connected with the editions of King James's version. Usher was a great scholar, and did a noble service in his day. His chronology, however, in important parts of it, was always a subject of more or less controversy. In the existing state of historical studies it is a burden and an encumbrance in our English Bibles. At best, it is of the nature of comment, and comment is out of place in a translation. In the second place, the Revisers have delivered us from the headings of the chapters. These uninspired and sometimes unintelligent assertions respecting the contents of the chapters are in their nature mere commentary, and it is high time that they were shoveled out of the way. The Protestant habit of inveighing against notes and glosses in the Roman Catholic versions, has been an example of the ease with which we condemn sins of which, in another form, we are guilty ourselves. Our editions of the English Bible have assumed to tell their readers what the prophets and apostles taught, including not a little which they did not teach.

With this improvement we may associate the gain derived from the grouping of the text into paragraphs. Here a minor ingredient of interpretation must sometimes come in, but here it is inevitable. The effect of the mechanical chipping of the Scriptures into little fragments called "verses" is in a large measure neutralized. The printing of poetry in a metrical form is another change of which a benefit in interpretation cannot fail to be one consequence.

With respect to language and style, the main objection which has been made to the Revised New Testament is that it has admitted trivial emendations, and in too many instances made a greater loss in spirit and force than it made a gain in minute accuracy. A certain petty and pedantic quality has been imputed, not wholly without foundation, to a considerable number of its alterations. The New Testament Revisers have a right to at least a partial defense against the prevalent criticism. The first thing to be said in behalf of them is that the authors of the old version allowed themselves more license than anybody allows at present to translators of ancient or modern writings. They wrote at a time when there was a great relish for sonorous English; and this we have in a noble abundance in King James's version. In not a few cases, the reflection cast on the Revisers is really a reflection on the original writers of the Scriptures, although it is not so intended. Not to mince the matter, there is more fine writing in King James's version than in the Greek of the Evangelists and Apostles; and the preference of King James to the Revisers is in some

cases a preference of King James to the original authors. Then it must be remembered that what is called *rhythm* is frequently the mere mode of reciting a passage which has been acquired by a long habit of modulating the voice in its frequent repetition. The *rhythmical* utterance of a verse from King James's translation often fails in just emphasis and felicity of pause, if the sense, and not the sound, is to be chiefly regarded. However, it is undeniable that the revision of the New Testament has a fault of the nature referred to, although it has been exaggerated by critics who prefer eloquence to truth and fidelity in the transference of thought from one language to another. The Old Testament companies, made wary by the outcry raised against their New Testament colleagues, who had first to bear the brunt of criticism, have adhered more closely to time-honored phraseology, and, generally speaking, have not aimed to be accurate overmuch. The English company have not been willing to part with "bolled," although not one man in five thousand knows what it means, and they express a pathetic reluctance at giving up "ear" for "plough." They almost imply that the provincial use of a word in some district of England is a sufficient reason for retaining it, and apparently do not reflect that their entire island contains only a fraction of the English-speaking nations who, it is to be hoped, will continue to read the Bible.

Perhaps the most notable change in the vocabulary of the English translation is the retention of "sheol"—the old Hebrew translation of the under-world, the abode of the departed, the realm of shadows—in the room of the word "hell," which once was understood, but is now, owing to a change of significance, become misleading. The English company, however, persisted in retaining "pit" or "grave" in some of the passages where it occurs, and contented themselves with printing the original "sheol" in the margin. The rule of translating an original word by an identical English term is without any good foundation, and efforts to follow such a rule are one main cause of the blemish in the New Testament Revision of which we have spoken above. It is a cramping, slavish canon that nobody would think of adopting, or of trying to adopt, in rendering a book from Greek or Latin, French or German, if it were not a sacred scripture. But in respect to "sheol," there was no need of departing from the custom of keeping this term, and there is a disadvantage. It is found requisite to warn the reader in the margin that it does not mean "a place of burial," and yet the warning is not clearly uttered. The use of "sheol" in the Revision will be useful in putting the readers of the Old Testament upon a right track in the study of it. The gradual unfolding of doctrine, the progressive revelation of spiritual truth, is what all Christians at the present day have special need to understand if they would comprehend their religion or defend it against assault.

There is one word which we have to add in relation to the fair treatment of the Revised Version as a whole. It is not enough to be dissatisfied with a rendering. Unless the critic is prepared to suggest a better one, or feels authorized to affirm that a better one could be found, he is bound to keep silent. Where is there a writer, ancient or modern, who can

be *satisfactorily* presented in another language than his own, if by *satisfaction* we mean the pleasure which a *perfect* equivalent affords a reader of critical taste? It will often happen that a particular rendering raises a misgiving, if it do not stir up a feeling akin to disgust, when the reader, on making the attempt to provide a substitute, has to give up the endeavor. The New Testament Revisers have a special claim to this kind of consideration, for they labor under another disadvantage greater than any of those we have enumerated, in comparison with the Old Testament company. The writings of the New Testament, especially the Epistles, are vastly more difficult to translate than the Hebrew Scriptures. The Old Testament company had no such obstacles to wrestle with as encountered the Revisers in the Epistles of Paul. If the Old Testament company are censured less, it is because their task was easier and because they have made hardly any attempt to improve the text. In truth, however, both groups of revisers are entitled to honor and gratitude for the measure of success which they have attained.

The fact that the Bible is a sacred book is attended by one incidental disadvantage. To a considerable extent, at least at the present day, it is taken out of literature. That is to say, the poems, the histories, etc., which compose it are massed in one volume instead of being separately published, and for this reason are less read by a numerous class who are not sufficiently alive

to their distinctively religious value. The book of Job is about the only one of the Scriptures which is ever published by itself in a form to attract literary readers. Whatever tends to freshen the pages of the Bible, to remind people that it is a composite collection, and not a single treatise, and that a treatise all in prose, is a benefit. The New Revision, it is possible to see, is not without an effect of this kind.

The revision of the early Protestant versions of the Bible in different countries, and the wide-spread interest felt in the work among all classes, are among the many signs that the Scriptures are not losing their hold upon the minds of men. The study of comparative religion does not operate to weaken, it rather tends to increase, the influence and authority of the Christian Bible. Let any one attempt to read the Koran, and he will rise from the effort with a profounder sense of the depth of power that belongs to the writings of the Prophets and Apostles. Editions of heathen scriptures and excerpts from heathen sages which have been sometimes put forth as rivals of the Bible bring no very large profit to editors or publishers. The Bible remains a well-spring of spiritual life. The conviction is not likely to be dislodged that within its hallowed pages life and immortality are in truth brought to light. The progress of culture and civilization in the lapse of ages does not lessen the worth of the treasure which they contain.

OPEN LETTERS.

What shall be Done with Our Ex-Presidents?

THIS question, which, though little discussed, has not a little exercised the minds of reflecting people in the United States of late years, was brought into special prominence at the last session of Congress by the introduction and passage of a bill extending special relief to ex-President Grant; though in this particular case it was, of course, the former military services and position of the general that enabled Congress to act effectively.

There are many who deem the present custom with regard to our ex-Presidents the most democratic—using the word in its general, and not in its partisan sense—and therefore the most fitting method. The President, they say, is taken from among the people to act as their chief servant for a brief period—the expiration of which he resumes his place in the popular ranks, as he should. There are, indeed, some who do not believe in anything that will tend to further exalt or *personalize* the Presidential office, preferring as they do to foster a tendency towards the abolition of the Presidency, or its conversion into something like the Swiss executive system.

But of the various suggestions having to do with the institution as it is, the one printed below seems to us of especial practical suggestiveness and value. It is from the pen of one who always speaks upon public questions with authority, but whose name we suppress from a desire that his recommendation should be considered and judged, as such a question always should be, entirely upon its merits.—EDITOR OF THE CENTURY.

We have now (June 15, 1885) three ex-Presidents. Since the retirement of President Washington in 1797 we have never been without one or more. We never had more than four except for a single year, in 1861–62, when we had five. The average number for the eighty-eight years since Washington became our first ex-President has been less than two and one-half per annum. But in the whole expanse of the United States there is no class of citizens so difficult to classify, none whose position is in so many respects awkward and embarrassing. But yesterday a king; to-day “none so poor to do him reverence,”—at once the most conspicuous and one of the most powerless private citizens of the Republic. Though representing not only the eminence of character which called him to the chief magistracy, but the accumulated distinction which the discharge of its duties for one or more terms necessarily begets, he is relegated to the comparative obscurity of private life, unsupported by a single expression of the nation's gratitude or the slightest official recognition of the loss the public service sustains in parting with his unique experience and trained familiarity with public affairs. He takes with him into retirement no official rank, no title, not even a ribbon, nor a perquisite unless it be the franking privilege, to distinguish him from the obscurest and least deserving of his countrymen. More unfortunate even than a good household servant, he cannot command a certificate from his last place. Neither has he the privileges and exemptions which attach to political obscurity. Like an *aërolite*, the height from which he has descended makes him an object of perpetual and costly curiosity. If a man of moderate means, as most of our Presidents