

phonic works, church and other music. His contributions to *The Open Court* were chiefly in the form of martial songs, the last of which ("God for Us," dedicated to the Grand Army of the Republic) we published in the November number of *The Open Court*, 1917.

BOOK REVIEWS AND NOTES.

THE SHORTER BIBLE: THE NEW TESTAMENT. Translated and arranged by *Charles Foster Kent*, with the collaboration of *Charles Cutler Torrey*, *Henry A. Sherman*, *Frederick Harris*, *Ethel Cutler*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1918. Pp. xix, 305. Price \$1.00 net.

Two of the collaborators whose names appear on the title-page being prominent members of the Y. M. C. A. and Y. W. C. A. respectively, perhaps we are not mistaken in calling this new translation of the New Testament "the Y. M. C. A. Gospel." Internal evidence points in the same direction, for, while in the past any reinterpretation of the Bible ordinarily resulted merely in the founding of a new denomination or a new sect jealously guarding its distinctness, it has been the constant and conscious effort of the Y. M. C. A. movement, especially as it developed during the war, to create a common ground on which *all* Christians should find it possible to meet. This "getting together" spirit is manifested in the volume before us the aim of which is, as stated in the Preface, "to single out and set in logical and as far as possible in chronological order those parts of the Bible which are of vital interest and practical value for the present age."

This pragmatic intention called for an elimination of all passages that only repeat better or fuller accounts of the same events or teachings elsewhere. Consequently there appears but one single record of the life of Jesus, made up of bits and fragments taken almost exclusively from the three Synoptic Gospels; the Gospel of John, as the latest writing, is given separately at the end of the book. The second part is headed "The Teachings of Jesus," regrouping the didactic passages chiefly of the Synoptists under titles intended to point out their "social, religious, and economic" significance. Acts are given fairly complete, as are the Epistles, from which, however, the Second and Third Epistles of John and the Epistle of Jude are omitted. Revelation has lost eleven of its twenty-two chapters, the rest is condensed. The time-honored chapter and verse divisions are of course discarded throughout the book.

All told, we have about two thirds of the Scriptural text—"the true heart of the Bible," in the words of the Preface. Needless to say that an expression like this, innocent though it may look, really involves quite a new doctrine, and, from the standpoint of many a denomination, a decidedly heretical one, for it evidently ignores any belief in divine inspiration. Yet nobody who *still* calls himself or herself a Christian is liable to take serious offense, which goes to show to what pass matters have come with our ancient creed.

How much, then, does really still stand, and what does it represent? In view of pending legislation the miracle at the wedding in Cana (John ii. 1-11) apparently does not belong to the "true heart" of the Scriptures. Nor do the two little apocalypses in Mark and in Matthew. Matthew xxiv which contains the prophecy of the second coming of Christ within the generation then alive is skipped without a trace being left; Mark xiii is given, but to the exclusion

of verses 14-29, corresponding to the omitted passages in Matthew, so that the words "Verily I say unto you, that this generation shall not pass, till all these things be done" are made to refer merely to the prediction of the fall of Jerusalem and the individual hardships ahead of the listeners. One may entertain a few doubts whether such treatment of Holy Writ is after all permissible, especially since the editors claim, in the Preface, that by syncopated versions such as here characterized "the main idea of the *original writer*" is suggested (the italics are ours), so as "to put the reader at once in touch with his point of view." We are afraid we are not being put in touch with the Evangelist's point of view at all but rather with that of the editors, and we would have absolutely no objection to this if they would openly say so. For, as we understood it from the beginning (see quotation above), we are here not dealing with an attempt to reconstruct the thought of the days when the Gospels were being written, but with a new presentation of the Gospel to the "present age." In a book like this we are not concerned with the history of Christianity but with Christianity itself, the Christianity of our own day, which we have as much right to create and proclaim as the Apostles had to create theirs, for after all neither they nor any nation or generation attempting to be Christian has ever done anything but try to find its own equation for that Great Unknown, Jesus of Nazareth. It follows that the intention of the editors (Preface) to "present the thought of the Biblical writers so plainly that commentaries will be unnecessary" can not possibly be carried into effect. Either they will represent the thought of the Biblical writers and then commentaries will be as necessary now as ever; or commentaries will indeed be superfluous, but then the editors will not represent the thought of the Biblical writers, nor even so much their own (at least they cannot be sure of actually transmitting it), but that of their readers. And that is what this book should represent—but in that case any pseudo-historic pretense on the part of the editors was, to say the least, uncalled for.

We are grateful to Mr. Kent for his masterly translation in "simple, dignified, modern English" indeed! The divorce of the Gospel from the quaint language of King James's version will certainly assist readers much in discerning between what in the ancient records is really directly applicable in our own society and what has passed beyond our conception. The "service" value of the New Testament is thus decidedly and considerably enhanced.

The book comes in convenient pocket size, in a neat and durable binding. An edition of the Old Testament prepared on the same principles is promised.