

## Short Notices.

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*From Strength to Strength.* Three Sermons on Stages in a Consecrated Life. Macmillan and Co.

THIS is a book of deep and touching interest. It is an "In Memoriam" of Bishop Lightfoot by Canon Westcott. On the title-page appears no name; but a prefatory note on the following page, with the initials B. F. W. (Cambridge, January 10, 1890), runs thus:

"Probably it has never before fallen to the lot of anyone to endeavour to give expression, under the most solemn circumstances, to thoughts suggested by three great crises in the life of a friend, for death is for the Christian a crisis in life. As each occasion came I sought to say what the occasion itself told us, through him whom we loved, of the office with which he was charged, of the society which he served, of the character by which the servant of God is enabled to do his work; and in each region the description of the Christian life by the Christian Faith seemed to find a fresh fulfilment: *From strength to strength.*"

The first of these sermons was preached in Westminster Abbey, at the consecration of Professor Lightfoot, 1879; the second at the consecration of the church of St. Ignatius, Sunderland, July, 1889; and the third in Westminster Abbey on the first Sunday after Christmas, 1889. Of this third sermon, which has of course a peculiar interest, the opening passage, as referring directly to Dr. Lightfoot, runs thus:

"'They go from strength to strength. Every one of them appeareth before God in Zion.' Ten years ago, when it was my duty to commend the Bishop of Durham to the prayers of this Congregation in view of the charge which was then entrusted to him, I used the first clause of this verse to express what I knew and what I hoped—what I knew of his work as a scholar, and what I hoped for his work as a bishop; . . . I venture to use the whole verse as the fitting summary of a life completed in the Lord—a life, I say, completed in the Lord, completed according to one law, 'from strength to strength,' from the strength of faith and conflict to the strength of sight and fruition.

"What, then, you will ask me, is the secret of the life of him to whom we look this afternoon with reverent regard? It is, in a word, the secret of strength. He was strong by singleness of aim, by resolution, by judgment, by enthusiasm, by sympathy, by devotion. In old days it was strength to be with him, and for the future it will be strength to recall him."

With the personality of the great Bishop, three points are prominent in these suggestive sermons: the continuity of the Church of England, the Gospel as suited to the social wants of this age, and devotion to Christ. In illustration of this we quote a stirring passage:

"In all these ways he was strong. But the last secret of his strength, as it must be of our strength, was his devotion to a Living God, as he worked from hour to hour 'face to face with the glory of the Eternal Father shining full from the Person of Christ.' The Christ Whom he preached was neither an abstraction of theology, nor a 'Christ after the flesh,' but the Creator, Redeemer, Fulfiller, present by 'the Spirit sent in His name' in the individual soul, and in humanity, and in the universe, 'bearing all things by the word of His power' to their appointed end. He knew—and he lived, and thought, and wrote as knowing—that the Incarnation is not a fact only of one point of time, but an eternal truth through which all experience and all nature, laid bare to

"their sternest realities, can still be seen to be divine, a present message from Him 'in Whom we live and move and have our being.'

"However imperfectly the portraiture may have been sketched, yet we can all feel that it is the portraiture of a true man, of a true Churchman, of a true father in God, of one who felt that no prescription can absolve us from the duty of grappling fearlessly with new or unheeded facts and wresting a blessing from them; who felt that the confession of Christianity belongs to the ideal of a nation; who felt that our own Communion is not of to-day or yesterday, but in its essence the bequest of the Apostles, and in its form the outcome of our English character and our English history. Does it not stir, and encourage and inspire us? Does it not chasten and restrain us, and bid us learn from the past the true measure of our own controversies and trials, and feel that we, too, are living in the presence and by the power of the ascended Christ?

"There is on all sides, we know, a strange and demoralizing uneasiness, a suspicion of insincerity in the maintenance of the old faiths. We do not dare to look boldly in the dark places about us, and they become fertile in appalling phantoms. 'There is,' a shrewd observer said sadly to me, 'there is just a faint ring of uncertainty in most of the professions of belief which are made publicly.' Is it, then, nothing to hear, as it were, from the grave the voice of one whom none ever dared to accuse of incompetence or inadequate knowledge, or to suspect of holding a brief with hireling skill for a cause to which he had not committed his own soul: 'I believe from my heart that the truth which this Gospel of St. John more especially enshrines—the truth that Jesus Christ is the very Word Incarnate, the manifestation of the Father to mankind—is the one lesson which, duly apprehended, will do more than all our feeble efforts to purify and elevate human life here by imparting to it hope and light and strength, the one study which alone can fitly prepare us for a joyful immortality hereafter.'"

We heartily recommend this strong and stimulating little work.

*Christian Theism.* A brief and popular survey of the evidence upon which it rests; and the objections urged against it considered and refuted. By the Rev. C. A. Row, M.A., Oxon. Hodder and Stoughton.

THIS work is written for busy people, to furnish them with a reply to the difficulties which beset faith in the being of God. The reader is told not to expect to find in it discussions of high points of philosophy or science. The author has "appealed throughout it to principles of common sense."

In an early part of the work the author discourses on "the nature of the evidence on which the being of God rests," and affirms that it is not what is termed *demonstrative* or *direct*; but rather that "which is denoted by the term, moral circumstantial cumulative, etc." To convey his meaning the author instances the nature of circumstantial evidence in the case of murder, the various lines of which oftentimes converge with such force against the accused as to leave no doubt in the mind of the jury of his guilt, even though no eye had seen the murderer commit the crime. "This, however," he very justly states, "is a very imperfect representation of the force of the evidence which the adjustments, adaptations, and correlations of the universe furnish to the existence of an intelligent Creator."

In his chapter on Agnosticism, he refers to the two-fold objection: (1) "That it is impossible for the finite to comprehend the infinite;" and (2) that the idea of God "as Infinite, that He is the

Absolute Being, and that He is the First Cause of the Universe . . . involve a number of contradictions," etc. And then he adds the following weighty words: "Respecting these positions, I observe that none are more ready than Christian Theists to admit that our knowledge of God, though real as far as it goes, is not perfect knowledge, and that there are realities in His being which transcend the powers of our finite intellects to grasp. This, however, is a difficulty which is by no means peculiar to Theism, but is one which extends over the entire range of human knowledge, every department of which runs up into some ultimate, the real nature of which man's finite intellect is unable to fathom. If, therefore, the objection that because our knowledge of God is partial, or because it runs up into problems the solution of which transcends the powers of our finite understandings, is valid against Christian Theism, it is equally so against every kind of knowledge which we imagine that we possess. The reasonings in question, therefore, if carried out to their legitimate consequences, would involve us in universal scepticism."

The chapters which follow are all closely reasoned out, but our space does not permit us to do justice to them. In his argument from adaptation, Mr. Row refers to the human eye, and quoting from a posthumous work of Dr. Carpenter he alludes to a statement of Professor Helmholtz. "Now it is not too much to say that if an optician wanted to sell me an instrument which had all these defects, I should think myself justified in blaming his carelessness in the strongest terms, and in giving him back his instrument;" and then adds Dr. Carpenter's remark that "I have seldom met with a case so unfair as the citation of this statement, without any of the qualifications which it subsequently receives," which are as follows: "It was my object," says the Professor, "to make my reader understand that it was not any mechanical perfection of the organs of our senses which secures for us such wonderfully true and exact impressions of the outer world. The perfection of the eye is practical, not absolute, *i.e.*, adaptation to the wants of the organism; the defects of the eye as an optical instrument being all so counteracted that the inexactness of the image which results from their presence very little exceeds, under ordinary conditions of illumination, the limits which are set to the delicacy of sensation by the dimensions of the retinal cones." We have quoted this passage because some of our readers may have met with the first statement of the Professor, and not seen the latter one.

In conclusion, we will only add that it has been a real pleasure to read this able defence of Christian Theism in which the subject has been treated with singular ability, clearness and candour.



## THE MONTH.

THE trial of the Bishop of Lincoln has been at length concluded. Judgment will not be delivered, it is said, until after Easter.

The Rev. B. F. Westcott, D.D., D.C.L., Regius Professor of Divinity, Cambridge, and Canon of Westminster, is appointed Bishop of Durham; a master in New Testament studies and a justly revered teacher.

The Report of the Special Commissioners has been received by the House of Commons, an amendment by Mr. Gladstone being rejected by a majority of 71.