

BRIEF NOTICES.

AN astonishing and most happy change has taken place even during the brief space which has elapsed since *THE EXPOSITOR* came into existence, for which all intelligent readers of the Bible may well be grateful. In the brief "Notes on Commentaries" which appeared in this Magazine only five years ago, I had to lament that of many Scriptures, and those not the least important, it was impossible to find any exposition which could be honestly recommended to the English reader; nor were there then many signs that the want would be soon and worthily supplied. But now commentaries are appearing so rapidly and in such abundance that it is almost impossible to keep pace with them; and though some of them are of little value, and some are evidently issued by mere tradesmen who seek to turn the newly awakened interest in the study of the Bible to their own account, yet many of them are of a very high value, while a few are quite invaluable. The whole ground is not yet covered indeed; first rate commentaries on most of the historical books of the Old Testament and on the Minor Prophets are still lacking; but, with these and a few other exceptions, he must be hard to satisfy who would not be content with such aids to the study of Scripture as are now at our command. Cassell's New Testament, the Cambridge Bible for Schools, the Popular Commentary on the New Testament edited by Dr. Schaff, the additions made and still making to the Speaker's Commentary; these, with such masterly studies of separate books as Godet on St. Luke and St. John, Cheyne on Isaiah, Beet on Romans, have gone far toward filling up the gaps in our Biblical library.

And now I have to introduce to the readers of this Magazine a new candidate for public favour in *THE PULPIT COMMENTARY* (London: Kegan Paul and Co.), which, whatever objections may be taken to its general form and design, has already provided us with some expositions of no little worth. As yet I have only received four out of the six bulky volumes of this series, which have, I believe, already appeared; but these volumes are so bulky, and contain so much, that I cannot regret that, for the present at least, I have not been called to read any more of them.

It is quite impossible, in the limits of a brief notice, to review and characterize these ponderous volumes as they deserve. But I

may say at once that the expositions contained in them, especially considering that they are meant for popular use, maintain a very high level. From the strictly orthodox point of view, I doubt, for instance, whether any better commentary on the Book of Genesis has been written than that of Mr. Whitelaw, or has been written in a better spirit. The Dean of Canterbury's commentary on 1 Samuel is, as those who know him and his course of study would expect, quite the best help to the reading of that attractive book to be found in English literature. The commentary on Joshua by Mr. Lias is as scholarly, and painstaking, and effective as his contributions to the Cambridge Bible for Schools, which have been characterized in these pages more than once. Lord Hervey's commentary on Judges is hardly, I think, up to the mark of its companion volumes; on this Scripture Dr. Paulus Cassel's exposition given in Lange's "Bibelwerk" (Clarks: Edinburgh) still remains the best available for the English student. But in the same volume there is a brief exposition of the Book of Ruth, by Dr. James Morison, which is, to my mind, the gem of the whole collection. If a few phrases—*anachronisms*—could be struck out, mainly from the Introduction, the work would be as nearly perfect as one could hope to meet. It grates on one's taste to hear Naomi spoken of as an "*esteemed* and beloved mother-in-law," or Ruth as an "*interesting* and pensive-looking young woman," or as "*the elegant* and diligent gleaner"; and one a little wonders how so accomplished a master of our English tongue could have permitted some of these epithets to pass. But, these slight blemishes apart, his work calls for nothing but admiration and gratitude.

The homiletical inferences, given in a separate section under the heading "*Homiletics*," and drawn for the most part by the authors of the commentaries, are always unobjectionable and often very happy. But the "*homilies*" appended in great profusion to every brief fragment of the exposition seem to me an entire and lamentable mistake, although they constitute the *differentia* of this Commentary, and although no doubt they have done much to promote its sale, which I hear is very large and rapid. Some of these "*homilies*" are written by very capable men, and they often evince no little ingenuity and skill. But none the less, perhaps all the more, I gravely object to them, and that for many reasons, of which I will briefly indicate a few. (1) They swell the bulk of these volumes till the volumes grow unwieldy, and the task of

consulting them becomes difficult and onerous. (2) They abet and encourage a large class of men to continue preachers who, both for their own sake and for that of the Church, had far better betake themselves to some less exacting vocation, by furnishing them with "discourses" which they are unable to make for themselves. (3) They are out of keeping with the good work with which they are associated; the homilies throughout standing on a much lower level than the expositions to which they are appended. And (4), above all, they help to perpetuate precisely that sort of expository sermon which is unworthy of the name and goes far to bring the science of exposition into contempt. When a man has to make a whole homily on well nigh every verse in such books as Joshua or Judges, we all know what the result must be, whatever his learning or ability, how poor, jejune, and unprofitable, how far afield he must travel for his material, even if he do not have to make his bricks without any straw, and how his mind must be drawn away from the real moral of the story on which he professes to comment. If in reading these volumes I have sometimes been tempted to envy the expositor, I have never ceased to pity the homilist.

It is much to be hoped that the editors of this series, Canon Spence and Rev. Joseph Exell, should they carry out their work on its present unwieldy scale, will at least detach the commentaries from the vast mass of "homilies" in which they are imbedded, and allow those of us who do not want so much for our money to possess ourselves of these valuable expositions in a separate form.

I have also to advise our readers of another exposition of much value. Vol. II. of *The Popular Commentary* on the New Testament, edited by Dr. Schaff (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark), contains an exposition of THE GOSPEL OF ST. JOHN, by *Professor Milligan* of Aberdeen, and *Dr. Moulton* of Cambridge. It is but a few months since Canon Westcott's commentary on this Gospel appeared; and it then seemed as if there would be no room for any other, of the same class, for many a long day to come. But I am bound to say that this subsequent, or rather subsequently published, exposition fully justifies its existence by its scholarship and by its sympathetic interpretation of St. John's profound words. To the scholar Canon Westcott's work must still stand first and highest; but, to the general reader, it may be doubted whether that of Drs. Milligan and Moulton may not prove to be the more useful;

while even the scholar may derive from it many hints the full worth of which he alone will be able to appreciate.

But of all the expositions I have met with for many months past, none has hit me so hard as that which *Canon Evans* has contributed to Vol. III. of THE SPEAKER'S COMMENTARY on the New Testament (London: Murray). It is one of the most original, scholarly, and fascinating commentaries in the whole range of Biblical literature. I doubt whether we have a score as masterly. No Epistle in the New Testament has been so hackneyed by commentators as I *Corinthians*; so that to write a fresh and delightful exposition of it is nothing short of a feat. This feat Professor Evans has achieved, apparently with the utmost ease. His fine scholarship enables him to suggest many new renderings, of which, if a few are questionable (*e.g.* that of the final clause of 1 Cor. viii. 3), the more part are very helpful and suggestive, and commend themselves the more the more they are considered; as, for example, his rendering and explanation of Chapter xv. Verse 29, where his brief dissertation on the force of *ἕνεκα* gives the *coup de grace* to the legendary view of the "baptism for the dead," although that view is generally accepted by modern critics. The learned professor is at least as great a master of English as of Greek, and uses it with a force and delicate precision which compels it to express the finest distinctions of thought; and though at times there is a certain quaintness or even eccentricity in his style, he abounds in happy idioms which linger on the ear, and rises, when his subject prompts him, into a strain of unforced and picturesque eloquence. In reading him one is again and again reminded of the skilful workman who plays with his tools even while he works with them. It is plain, too, that he has studied the "emphatic terseness" which he, very justly, ascribes to St. Paul; for his commentary is one of the briefest, as well as quite the best, yet published on this Scripture. And indeed it is so good that, having once taken it up, I was unable to lay it down again till I had fairly gone through it. It is much to be hoped that we may get many more expositions from the same original and accomplished pen.

Of the other commentaries contained in this Volume, which covers the whole series of St. Paul's Epistles, that on *Philemon*, by the *Bishop of Derry*, is very charming and full, and on the whole

is perhaps the best exposition of that Apostolic "note"—note rather than letter—we have; while that on 2 *Corinthians* by *Rev. Joseph Waite* is sensible and scholarly; as indeed are many other of the commentaries associated with these. But of the rest I must be content to say that as many of them as treat of Scriptures on which Bishop Lightfoot has written suffer by contrast with his far abler and better work; and that those who possess Dr. Reynolds' exposition of the Pastoral Epistles need not trouble themselves to consult the "critical notes" of the Bishop of London, though they cannot fail to be interested in Mr. Wace's brief introduction to them.

It is rather late in the day to bring out a translation of EWALD'S COMMENTARY ON THE PSALMS (London: Williams and Norgate); for what is best in that work has long since been appropriated by those who have followed him. Still, despite his pragmatic and self-confident temper, Ewald must always take his place in the front rank of Biblical expositors, if only in virtue of his learning, erudition, and fine historical insight. And to those who are unable to consult him in his native German *Mr. Johnson's* translation may be recommended with confidence.

Both the recent additions to THE CAMBRIDGE BIBLE FOR SCHOOLS—*Jeremiah and Lamentations*, by *Rev. A. W. Streane, M.A.*, and *St. John's Gospel*, by *Rev. A. Plummer, M.A.*,—are well up to the mark of excellence which has been so fairly maintained throughout this Series, and are admirably adapted to their special purpose. That of Mr. Plummer indeed is one of the very best yet issued, and may be profitably consulted by more advanced students than those of our public schools and colleges.

Under the care of the same general editor, the Dean of Peterborough, as the Cambridge Bible, a new enterprise has been taken in hand; that namely of furnishing a GREEK NEW TESTAMENT FOR SCHOOLS. The first volume has just been published. It contains the text of *St. Matthew's Gospel*, with annotations by *Rev. A. Carr, M.A.* Mr. Carr, it will be remembered, wrote the notes to this Gospel in the former work. Of these notes he now makes use, expanding them however wherever expansion seemed desirable, and adding, of course, critical and grammatical notes on the Greek.

His work seems well and carefully done, and makes an auspicious commencement of the new series. On one point, however, it lies open to question. I am disposed to think that he would have done better to accept either the Greek text followed by the Revisers, or, if the choice were open to him, that finally adopted by Messrs. Westcott and Hort, than to frame a new text of his own, although the principles on which his text has been selected ensure that it should be a fairly good one. The unnecessary multiplication of texts is surely a thing to be avoided; and I can hardly admit that this new text was necessary.

It is but rarely that one meets with a volume of sermons of equal calibre with that which contains *NON-MIRACULOUS CHRISTIANITY AND OTHER SERMONS* by *Rev. George Salmon, D.D.*, the Regius Professor of Divinity in the University of Dublin (London: Macmillan and Co.). These discourses are marked alike by vigour of thought and beauty of form. Addressed to a select and cultivated audience, they deal with the difficulties of Christian thought and belief, or with the plain duties of the Christian life as they are likely to present themselves to cultivated and easily conditioned men. It must have been a pleasure of no ordinary kind to listen to them; it is most refreshing and instructive to read them. They are quick with thought and emotion to their very extremities,—as sermons should be, but rarely are. They bring us into contact with a strikingly original, cultured, and liberal mind, a mind which moves and utters itself with ease under the burden of reflection and experience. Mainly apologetic in their tone, they minister a potent medicine to immature minds infected with the modern materialistic scepticism; as, for example, in the following effective passage (for the italics of which, however, Dr. Salmon is not responsible):

“The investigations of recent years have so forced us to take notice of the physical antecedents of thought, that there has resulted a tendency to look upon thought as a kind of material product. The brain secretes thought, some of the coarser materialists have said, as the liver secretes bile. But if we wish to see how completely *sui generis* thought is, we have only to take notice of the process by which thought is generated and sustained. No secreting organ in our system *creates* that which it secretes. Every particle of bile given out by the liver must have been contained in that which entered into the liver. The organ has done nothing but

separate and form into new combinations the substance on which it acts. The chemist can find in the food the constituents of all the products of the animal frame. Is it so with our thoughts? Can we find *them* in the blood which courses along our veins and arteries, and which, entering into the blood-vessels of the brain, sustains the activity of that organ? Will a delicate analysis ever detect them in the food whence that blood was derived, and thus shew that the brain does nothing but disentangle these thoughts from the envelope which had concealed them? Chemistry has taught how to vary the manure of a plant or the food of an animal according to the kind of product which he who rears them desires to obtain. Can we imagine that, in the progress of science, it will be discovered how the diet is to be varied according as the product we desire to obtain is the poet's fine imagination or the philosopher's deep speculation, or the mother's fond affection, or the martyr's stern resolve? *If thought were matter, matter would supply it.* But thought can only be fed by thoughts."

But with this fine apologetic strain there are blended many touches of genuine expository power; as, for instance, in the sudden and unexpected turn given to a point in the Parable of the Sower.

"A few words may be said as to the lesson of encouragement to those who, while desirous to work for God, are conscious of feeble powers, and despondent because such work as they have done shews little signs of success. With respect to feebleness of powers, it is sufficient to say that *it does not require great power to cast a seed.* In other words, the reflection how very small a part of the work is really ours is one that not only suggests humility to the successful, but encouragement to the despondent: for if they honestly fulfil, to the best of their ability, the task committed to them, they call into action forces far more powerful than they. The good seed which they sow has a Divine power of its own, and when it falls into an honest and good heart, and is watered with blessing from above, its growth is not affected by any weakness in the first planter."

These sermons abound, moreover, in wise, rememberable, and quotable sentences, bred of keen observation and wide experience of men, and these sentences are often lit up with flashes of humour which make them singularly effective. I quote two or three of them, all out of one sermon, and might quote two or three score. "It is notorious that perfect content with one's attainments can only be had on the terms of knowing very little." "If you want

to find a man completely contented with his knowledge, you must look for one who has spent no trouble in the search for it. Strange, indeed, it is that we value our opinions by a different rate from that by which we value everything else. Other things we value in proportion to the trouble it has cost us to obtain them; but our opinions are the more dear to us the less pains we have taken to come by them!" "The humility of moderating our claims lest they should come into collision with those of God, is like the humility of bowing our head lest we should strike it against the sky," a sentence worthy of George Eliot.

It is with sincere and grave satisfaction that I close this brief notice by informing our readers that Dr. Salmon has promised to send an occasional contribution to the pages of this Magazine.

The lecturing season set in in Scotland last winter with its usual, if not with more than its usual, severity. It is well for us that it did. For, among other happy results of this lecturing industry, it has produced three volumes which cannot fail to win a cordial welcome from students and lovers of the Word. In *THE CHIEF END OF REVELATION*, Dr. A. B. Bruce (London: Hodder and Stoughton) defines Revelation as *God manifesting Himself in the history of the world in a supernatural manner and for a special purpose*; this purpose being the redemption of mankind from the curse and bondage of sin into the obedience of faith and love. With this for his main theme, he proceeds to discuss, in his somewhat blunt but forcible style, the method of Revelation, the functions of Miracle and Prophecy, and the doctrinal significance of the Divine self-manifestation recorded in Holy Scripture. All these points are treated with marked ability, and with a special view to the current forms of agnosticism and materialism, Mr. Matthew Arnold's superficial and supercilious utterances coming in for even a larger share of attention than, in their present discredited and bedraggled condition, they altogether deserve.

Dr. George Matheson, in *NATURAL ELEMENTS OF REVEALED THEOLOGY* (London: Nisbet and Co.), gives us work still more valuable. He sets himself to ascertain what were the solutions of the great problems of religious thought arrived at by the best minds prior to the advent of Christ; and to shew how in the Christian revelation these solutions are taken up, corrected, harmonized, and carried to

a height and completeness it had not entered into the heart of man to conceive. The problems he discusses are *God, Providence, Sin, Human Immortality*; and in discussing them, while he points to whatever rays of light, whether in the East or in the West, penetrated the pre-Christian darkness, he shews how even these broken and scattered rays came from the Sun which brought to later ages the clear Christian day. It would be hard to find any small volume in which the immense need for the Christian revelation, and the Divine all-satisfying character of that revelation, are more lucidly and attractively set forth.

In putting *THE OLD TESTAMENT IN THE JEWISH CHURCH* by *W. Robertson Smith, M.A.* (Edinburgh: A. and C. Black) last on this list of Lectures, I lay myself open to the reproach of the Symposiarch; for I have kept the best wine until now. I know of no other book from which so much new and valuable information may be gained on the structure and history of the Old Testament Scriptures and their translation into Greek, or on the formation and history of the Canon. These, indeed, are not the points in his work which have caught and engrossed the public attention, although they constitute both the greater and the better part of it. That which has most, and most unfavourably, impressed the public mind, especially in Scotland, is his contention that the Levitical law laid down in the Pentateuch, was, for the most part, unknown to Israel until the time of Josiah, or even that of the Exile; and that the authorship of at least those parts of Exodus, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy in which it is found is not to be ascribed to Moses, but to the prophets and scribes who planned and led the Return. Personally, I dissent from the conclusions he has reached, and think he does not make anything like sufficient allowance for the enormous difficulty which would have attended any attempt to palm off on the Jews of the Restoration writings of their own age as ancient and venerable Scriptures, or the work of their own scribes as the work of Moses the man of God. On the whole I find it easier to believe that a people should have a law and neglect it for a thousand years, especially if reading and writing were but rare accomplishments through all those years, than to believe that a thousand years after date, and at a period remarkable alike for its literary activity and its religious devotion, they were both persuaded that such a law had always existed, although such a persuasion ran right in the

teeth of their most sacred records and was contradicted by the leading events of their history, and induced to accept as time-worn and time-honoured Scriptures the immediate productions of their own age. All the same, however, I do not see how any candid man who has really read Professor Smith's most instructive and delightful Lectures can deny that he arrays an immense weight of evidence in favour of his hypothesis, evidence so cogent and advancing along so many different lines as to render it a probable hypothesis, and therefore an hypothesis which may be fairly held. Nor do I see how any such reader can fail to perceive that, despite his probable but questionable hypothesis, he both holds the Bible in undiminished reverence as the Word of God, and holds fast to the doctrinal truths which are most surely believed among us; or that he so handles his hypothesis as to convince those who have accepted the most advanced views of the higher criticism that, even on their own shewing, they are bound to find in the Bible an authentic revelation of the saving will of God. Differ from him as we may, therefore, I hold that we are bound to regard him as a servant and champion of faith, not as a disseminator of doubt, and to thankfully accept the immense contribution to the popular knowledge of Holy Scripture which he has made.

EDITOR.
