

BRIEF NOTICES.

It is very natural that men who have laboriously acquired some mastery of Rabbinical Hebrew should at first value, and over-value, the literature to which it gives them access. But there is a danger before them of which they are seldom aware, the danger of being infected by the tone and method of that literature, and so degenerating into the habits of the most inaccurate and illiberal class of expositors the world has seen, if indeed they can be called expositors who simply wrest the word of God out of its natural and proper sense. To translate and annotate one of the Rabbinical treatises may be a wholesome scholastic exercise; but if the *Rev. Edward G. King, B.D.*, really imagines, as he appears to do, that *THE YALKUT ON ZECHARIAH* (Cambridge: Deighton Bell & Co.), which he has been at the pains to translate, possesses any exegetical value, we need no other proof that his Rabbinical studies have already overpowered his English common sense. And there is too much reason to fear that he does approve some at least of the stupid Jewish conceits, which in the Yalkut take the place of sound historical interpretation: for more than once he avows that he believes them to have a real exegetical value, though he admits that they will be "quite new to Christian commentators," and though they are even more incredible than new. Here are a few illustrations of the impossible nonsense which passes for interpretation of Holy Writ with the Rabbis and their admirers and disciples. The gloss on Zechariah i. 8 runs thus: "Rabbi Yochai (or Yochanan) said *I saw Night*, (*i.e.*) the Holy One, blessed be He, was about to turn the whole universe into Night; when however He bethought Himself of Chananyah, Misael, and Azaryah, He was appeased, as it is said *He was staying among the Myrtles which were in the M'tzul-lah* (depth). Now *Myrtles* (Hadassim) mean (here) nothing else than *Saints*, as it is said (Esth. ii. 7), *And he was bringing up Hadassah* (*i.e.* Esther); and the *M'tzulah* (depth) means nothing else than *Babylon*, as it is said (Is. xlv. 27), *He saith to the Tzulah* (depth) *be thou dry*." And here is a note appended to Chapter ii., verse 2, which sounds more like a lunatic's recollection of something he had read in the Arabian Nights than an exegetical annotation in a grave religious treatise: "There is a tradition that Rabbi Yose said, I myself saw Sephoris in its prosperity, and there were therein a hundred and eighty thousand streets of pastrycooks!"

And here is another, which might have had a similar origin, in Chapter iii., verse 2: "Rabbi Joshua ben Levi says, The Angel of Death told me, Never do you stand before the women when they are returning from a funeral, because I go leaping before them and I (then) have permission to injure. But suppose one has met him (*i.e.* the Angel of Death)? what must be his resource? Let him spring four cubits from his place, or if there be a river let him cross over it, or if there be another road let him turn into it, or if there be a wall let him stand behind it, but if not let him turn his face and say, *And the Eternal said unto Satan,*" etc. Every clergyman will know what to think of Rabbi Joshua ben Levi after that; for which of them has not had, alas! to stand before women when they were returning from a funeral, and has neither repeated the appointed formula of rebuke, nor sprang four cubits from his place, neither crossed a river, nor turned into another road, nor even hid himself behind a wall, and yet has not found himself in any special danger from the leaping angel of death? But who will tell us what to think of a clergyman who gravely translates and publishes this preposterous rubbish, and offers it to us as an aid to a due understanding of God's most Holy Word? Are the writings of Zechariah so easy to read, or are good commentaries on them so plentiful, that any man who, by virtue of his capacity and scholarship, might help us to read them with intelligence should waste his time and gifts on the absurd litter of this Rabbinical *Pouch* (Yalkut = "purse" or "bag") which, for all the real aims of life and learning, is about as valuable as the contents of an average schoolboy's pocket?

The mere waste is pitiful when the church and the world so sorely need all the help good men can give to a wise and scientific interpretation of Scripture; but it is still more pitiful to see men of some learning and ability degenerating under the Rabbinical influence, and throwing about them such ill considered and uncritical data as may be found in Mr. King's appendix. As for example, this: "It is to the sufferings of the Captivity that we owe the three noblest poems in the Bible, 'Job,' 'Jonah,' and 'the Servant of the Lord' (Is. liii.). Job, the ideal sufferer, represents Israel, upon whom every possible suffering falls. In Jonah the thought is carried still farther; we see, in him, Israel suffering for the world," etc. There are almost as many blunders here as words. "Jonah" is *not* one of the three noblest poems in the Bible. It is hardly possible that any one of the three poems named should date from the Captivity. Job

was not a representative of suffering Israel, nor was Jonah. But it is almost as childish to deny, as to affirm, these critical improbabilities or impossibilities, the rather as Mr. King does not condescend to argue for them, having apparently adopted the Rabbinical idea of logic, When you want to prove what you have said, say it again. And we must conclude by wishing him well out of the Rabbinical fog into which he has so heedlessly plunged.

SERMONS PREACHED IN THE CHAPEL OF HARROW SCHOOL. *By the late Rev. T. H. Steel, M.A.* (London: Macmillans). Very wholesome sermons for the Harrow boys to hear these sermons must have been. 'Tis evident that Mr. Steel took pains to select suitable topics, and short striking texts. In his treatment of them, too, he shews much sympathy with the prevailing currents of thought and emotion, a real knowledge of the doubts bred by the application of physical tests and methods to meta-physical facts and phenomena, and some skill in meeting them; while yet he rarely oversteps the limits within which an educated and thoughtful lad might follow him, and never fails to infuse a tone of true godliness into his expositions and appeals. But we have not found in these discourses any of those touches of imagination or genius in virtue of which alone sermons can be expected to live, or to work for good much beyond the bounds of the congregation that listened to them. Doubtless they will prove a very welcome memorial of a man much respected and beloved to those who knew him; but, to outsiders, the main charm of this little volume will lie in the prefatory memoir contributed by Professor Nettleship, which is admirably written, and leaves a very pleasant impression of the scholar and the man whom it describes.

In his book on *Canonicity*, *Dr. Charteris*, rendered a great service to scholars by collecting into a single volume the ancient testimonies to the authorship and authenticity of the New Testament Scriptures and their early admission into the Canon. In the Croall Lectures for last year, now published under the title *THE NEW TESTAMENT SCRIPTURES: THEIR CLAIMS, HISTORY, AND AUTHORITY* (London: Nisbets), he has rendered a similar and equal service to unlearned but intelligent readers. He here shews in a lively and telling way how the eight or nine Apostles or Apostolic men whose writings compose the New Testament advance for their Scriptures a claim to truth, unity, and authority altogether unparalleled in the sacred

books of the world; and how these Scriptures were accepted by the Church and stamped with her approval, just as the Hebrew Scriptures were accepted by the Synagogue. He describes the conditions under which the Canon was formed or rather grew, adduces the evidence by which the Church was convinced of the inspiration and authority of the Scriptures they included in it: and in adducing this evidence he briefly but graphically characterizes the men who bore it and the documents from which it is drawn. We doubt whether it would be possible to find elsewhere, and in the same compass, a summary of the grounds on which we receive the Scriptures of the New Testament Canon so scholarly, interesting, and fair-minded as this. The author is thoroughly loyal to his own fine maxim: "In the search for truth, we can have no help save from what is true."

IN AUTHORIZED OR REVISED? (London: Macmillans) *Dr. Vaughan* has struck out the best possible line of argument in defence of our New Version,—all the better because there is so little formal argument in it. Instead of engaging in a critical defence of the changes which the Revisers have introduced into their Version—though he occasionally offers suggestions which have their critical value—he takes up some of the principal changes, brings out their meaning and force, and shews how much we gain by them. His samples, moreover, are fairly chosen, and include some of those which at first sight are most unwelcome to the indolent or prejudiced reader. And having selected his texts, he justifies the corrections made in them in the most effectual and persuasive way, by bringing out the truths affirmed or implied in them, and indicating how the truths conveyed in these new readings or renderings harmonize both with the several sequences of thought in which they are found, and with the general scope of the New Testament revelation.

The accomplished Master of the Temple publishes so many sermons and volumes of sermons that, among them, there must be some of an inferior quality, and some which are likely to detract from his reputation and usefulness rather than to add to them. But in these "Sermons on Some of the Texts in which the Revised Version differs from the Authorized" he is at his best. They are full of valuable suggestions to preachers as well as to hearers, and cannot fail to give those who peruse them much food for devout

meditation, as well as a clearer view of the merits of the New Version, than they are likely to get elsewhere.

Mr. Beet, whose commentary on the *Romans* has already won for him "a good degree" among New Testament scholars, now follows it up with A COMMENTARY ON ST. PAUL'S EPISTLES TO THE CORINTHIANS (London: Hodder and Stoughton), which is as painstaking, as methodical, as scholarly as his previous work, and can hardly fail to add to his reputation. There is an immense amount of careful and patient labour compressed into his clear cut sentences and sententious pages. Now and then, in his desire to be brief, and his determination to avoid that vain repetition of other interpretations and opinions than his own, apart from any consideration of their intrinsic worth, which is the besetting sin of most commentators, he fails to consider, or to *shew* that he has considered, readings which deserve or even demand consideration: *e.g.* in 1 Corinthians ii. 13, where in dealing with the final clause of the verse he takes no note of Canon Evans's valuable suggestion, "*Matching spiritual things with spiritual phrase,*" or, better still, "*suiting spiritual things to spiritual minds.*" On the other hand, what can be happier, in so small a compass, than his summary of 1 Corinthians iii. 14, 15? "The picture may be thus conceived. Two workmen are building on one foundation, one with imperishable, the other with perishable, materials. The building is wrapped in flames. One man's work survives the fire, and he receives pay for it. The other's work is burned up, and he rushes out through the flame, leaving behind him the ruins of his own work. And for his work, which the fire proved to be worthless, he receives no pay." The Commentary, which has this peculiar distinction that as it proceeds it seeks to gather up the leading conceptions of the Apostle and to weave them into a system, is the fruit of much toil and much thought, and will well repay all who study it.

FULFILLED PROPHECY IN PROOF OF THE TRUTH OF SCRIPTURE, by *Rev. B. W. Savile, M.A.* (London: Longmans). In slipshod English Mr. Savile sets himself to explain and vindicate the predictions of Holy Writ on a principle which is, in our judgment, radically and hopelessly wrong, and which can only conduct him to erroneous conclusions. It will however be time enough to review him when he has mastered his native language. An M.A. who has not grasped the simple mysteries of the English grammar is

not precisely the man to whom we should look for a solution of the profound mysteries of Apocalyptic literature.

THE REASONABLENESS OF CHRISTIANITY, by *William Metcalfe*, (Paisley: A. Gardner). If these sermons are, as we suspect, written by a young man, they shew signs of hope and promise. Their author is a little more over-weighted by his subject than he seems to be aware. To demonstrate the reasonableness of the leading Christian doctrines, and the irrationality of the objections alleged against them by the scientific scepticism of the day, is a task for which few men are adequately equipped. Nevertheless there is in these sermons a breadth and catholicity of tone, an evident desire for the truth as it is, and a sincerity of conviction, which render them, so far as they go, a real help to perplexed and doubtful minds.

THE POPULAR COMMENTARY ON THE NEW TESTAMENT, edited by *Philip Schaff, D.D., LL.D.* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark), has reached its third volume. Of Vol. II. we gave some account on its appearance (Vol. I. never reached us by the bye); and we have now to report that in the present volume *Romans* is handled by Drs. Schaff and Riddle, *Corinthians* by Dr. David Brown, *Galatians* by Dr. Schaff, *Ephesians* by Dr. Riddle, *Philippians* by Dr. Lumby, *Colossians* by Dr. Riddle, *Thessalonians* by Dr. Marcus Dodds, *Timothy* by Dean Plumptre, *Titus* by Dr. Dykes, *Philemon* by Dr. Lumby. As yet, therefore, only two American scholars, Dr. Schaff and Dr. Riddle, have contributed to this international Commentary, although, as they took the four Gospels between them, they may be allowed to have done their fair share of the work. And much of the work is fairly good, marked by sound learning and sober thought, a little very good, and a little, in our judgment, very inadequate, insufficient in scholarship and wrong in tone. On the whole it is not comparable in value with the New Testament Commentary edited by Bishop Ellicott and published by Cassells. Yet there are expositions in it with which no student can afford to dispense. In Vol. II., for instance, the exposition of St. John's Gospel by Professors Milligan and Moulton is one of remarkable value; while in this volume Dr. Plumptre's exposition of St. Paul's Epistles to Timothy is also of unusual excellence, not only the best in the volume, but also, so far as our reading extends, the best which has yet appeared. But of Dr. Brown's exposition of the

Epistles to the Corinthians we cannot speak in any terms of praise. Not only does it fall far below that of Mr. Beet, and by consequence immeasurably below the level of the strikingly powerful and original exposition which Canon Evans contributed to the Speaker's Commentary; it is of no critical worth, while its tone is most unfortunate and objectionable. His comment on 1 Corinthians i. 17 is but one of many illustrations of the tone to which we object. Part of it runs thus: "To a people thoroughly vitiated in their taste, to what temptation would the preacher of the gospel be more open than that of shading off those features of it which are repulsive to the pride of the heart, and of urging the reception of it rather on the ground of its own 'sweet reasonableness' than of its being an authoritative message from heaven, as on Mars' Hill the apostle dealt it forth at Athens." Is it, then, so much more virtuous to bow to mere authority than to recognize and rejoice in the reasonableness and charm of the gospel message, its adaptation to human needs, its power to uplift men from the ruins of the fall, its revelation of the amazing wisdom and grace of God? And could anything be more unfortunate than the citation of the example of St. Paul, the great logician of the New Testament, who was for ever appealing to the reason of men, unless it be the selection of the discourse on Mars' Hill, which has always and justly been accounted a masterpiece of courtesy, persuasion, and argument, and than which it would be difficult to find a more perfect model of the very "rhetoric" which Dr. Brown denounces? Is the gospel *unreasonable*? If it be, how should a creature with discourse of reason accept it? If it be not, why are we for ever to appeal to authority to enforce it, and never to its intrinsic reasonableness and worth? And, above all, why are those who seek to commend it to the hearts of men by appealing to its inherent reasonableness, its power to meet and satisfy all their needs, to be accused of "shading off those features of it which are repulsive to the *pride* of the heart"? Did Apollos do that? Yet it was probably Apollos who went to Corinth with "wisdom of words," while St. Paul, becoming all things to all men and adapting himself to the immature spiritual condition of the Corinthian converts, spoke to them as to babes rather than as to men in Christ Jesus.

THE PULPIT COMMENTARY (London: Kegan Paul & Co.), whatever other merits it may have, is anything but concise. Doubtless

it is intended mainly for those occupants of the pulpit who, unable to make sermons for themselves, are glad to have homilies, or the outlines of homilies, put into their hands. The pity is that, if they must steal their brooms, they do not steal them ready-made and from the best makers. It would surely be far wiser to give their people some of the noble discourses of which our literature is remarkably full, on the avowed ground of lack of leisure or ability, than to inflict on them homilies half borrowed from second or tenth rate men and slovenly filled up from their own scanty resources. The scheme of the Pulpit Commentary has never, as our readers know, found favour with us. Yet it must be admitted, as we have been forward to admit, that its expository parts have been of fair average worth, and occasionally of singular worth. The new volume, which contains an exposition of *Deuteronomy*, by Rev. W. L. Alexander, D.D., is not of any exceptional value, but it is fairly well written from the purely orthodox point of view. If it exhibits few traces of originality, or of profound spiritual insight, or of power to handle the difficult critical questions which have been raised on the authorship, date, form of this remarkable Scripture, so rich in magnificent orations, its exegesis shews that it is in the hands of a careful and adequately furnished scholar who has taken pains with his work. The homilies are of the usual, *i.e.* not of a high, calibre.

A few months since we spoke in terms of high and deserved commendation of THE PARALLEL NEW TESTAMENT, published by the Oxford University Press. We have now received it in two new forms. The first is a charming little pocket edition, bound in flexible morocco, which simply reproduces the English Versions of A.D. 1611 and A.D. 1881. Nothing could well be more convenient or more beautifully got up. The second is for students; a large crown octavo, in plain stiff covers. On the left hand page the two English Versions are printed in parallel columns, with their respective Marginal notes; while half the right hand page contains the Greek text followed by the Revisers, with its Marginal readings, and the other half is left vacant for any manuscript annotations the student may care to make. The former will no doubt prove very popular with the general public; the latter is likely to become the working copy of most critical students of the New Testament: unless indeed they prefer a similar volume—also with the two English Versions on the one page, and on the other the Textus

Receptus with the variations adopted by the Revisers, issued from the Cambridge University Press, under the editorial care of Dr. Scrivener. There is so little difference between the two that we do not see any need for this rivalry between the University Presses, nor can we thank them for "puzzling the will" by compelling choice between them. We must leave every man to make his own selection. Either will do equally well; but he will not require both.

Two new volumes have been added to THE CAMBRIDGE BIBLE FOR SCHOOLS since we last noticed it: *The Book of Judges* by Rev. J. J. Lias, M.A., and the second part of *The Acts of the Apostles* (Chapters xv.-xxviii.) by Professor J. R. Lumby, D.D. Both these Scriptures are admirably annotated; and the two new volumes are fully worthy of their place in this most useful series. We have found no books so well adapted to the needs of Sunday School teachers, and of those private students of the Scriptures—a class which happily is largely and rapidly increasing—who, though they have little Greek and less Hebrew, or even none of either, desire to be guided in their reading by scholars whose attainments and fairmindedness they can thoroughly trust. The very brevity of the notes, since they touch all points of difficulty, renders them the more acceptable.

A valuable addition has also been made to THE CAMBRIDGE GREEK TESTAMENT FOR SCHOOLS. Dr. Plummer's notes on *The Gospel according to St. John* are scholarly, concise, and instructive, and embody the results of much thought and wide reading.

The high merits of MEYER'S COMMENTARY ON THE NEW TESTAMENT (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark) are so well known and have been so freely admitted that we need only announce that three new volumes of it have appeared, Lünemann treating the Epistle to the Hebrews, and Huther the Epistles of Peter and Jude, James and John. So much of that which is best in this great work has now found its way into general use, and may so easily be found in a more succinct form in modern English commentaries, that it is no longer indispensable, as it was a few years since, for every student of the Greek Testament to possess himself of it; but no scholar would willingly be without it, and none who intends to write on any New Testament Scripture can safely dispense with it.
