

BRIEF NOTICES.

A DICTIONARY OF CHRISTIAN BIOGRAPHY, LITERATURE, SECTS, AND DOCTRINES DURING THE FIRST EIGHT CENTURIES, *Edited by Dr. William Smith and Rev. Henry Wace, D.D.* (London: John Murray.) The recent issue of the third volume of this important work gives us an opportunity of recommending it very heartily to our readers. It is a noble monument of English scholarship and erudition. Dr. Salmon's contributions to it, *e.g.* his articles on Hippolytus, Leucius, Marcion, and the Muratorian Fragment, have a special force and value. And, indeed, most of its articles are marked by sound critical judgment, as well as by solid learning; while such essays as those on the Holy Ghost, Irenæus, Jerome, Justin Martyr, and Muhammad, (though one hardly sees what right *he* has to a place, and so large a place, in *Christian* biography), would confer distinction on any Cyclopædia in which they were found. In England, at all events, this Dictionary has no rival. Even in Germany itself it has, so far as we know, no peer.

AN OLD TESTAMENT COMMENTARY FOR ENGLISH READERS, *Edited by Bishop Ellicott.* (London: Cassells.) The high quality of Cassell's *New Testament Commentary for English Readers*, made the prospect of a companion work on the *Old Testament* Scriptures, under the same editorial care, very welcome. But we cannot honestly say that as yet the latter has touched the high mark reached by the former. Volume I. opens with a judicious and well written preface by Dr. Ellicott, in which he asserts that the two great objects of the Commentary will be to bring home the life and power of God's Word to those who believe, and to meet the difficulties—scientific, historical, and moral—of sincere sceptics; this second aim being, as he adds, of special importance in dealing with the *Old Testament*. The Preface, therefore, is full of promise; for what should be the aims of any good commentary if not these? But the promise of its opening pages is hardly fulfilled in the bulk of the volume. In handling *Genesis*, the Dean of Canterbury does, indeed, bring forward many familiar and approved answers to the difficulties by which that Scripture is beset; but the answers are neither original nor profound, and do not include even the forcible and well-known arguments of Godet and Newman Smyth, which were summarized, not without some valuable additions of his own,

by *Peloni Almoni* in the last volume of this Magazine.¹ Dr. Rawlinson writes on *Exodus* in a manner which shews his familiarity with ancient history rather than any very keen or deep spiritual insight; but he makes no contribution toward a solution of the critical problem of its date and authorship, which may not be found in previous commentaries of slenderer pretensions. In his brief Introduction to *Leviticus*, the legislation of which he handles with abundant learning and skill, Dr. Ginsburg is allowed to say, "I do not believe that the Book of Leviticus, *in its present form*, was written by Moses," but finds himself precluded, by "the plan of this Commentary," from stating what his own conclusion really is, or giving the reasons which have led him to it. While Canon Elliott, in his belated exposition of *Numbers*, actually reproduces all the antiquated and absurd misconstructions of Balaam's character and actions, which were exposed in pages 7-9 of the present volume of THE EXPOSITOR, errors so open, gross, and palpable, that our exposure of them went near to being struck out as no longer necessary!

Apart from all these questions of the higher criticism, the work, always excepting that of Canon Elliott, is fairly good, the expositions of Genesis and Leviticus being by far the best; although, on the whole, and as commentaries go now, we cannot pronounce the average level it attains a high one. But if every work is to be judged by its avowed aims, it is impossible to say that the professed aims of this Commentary have, for the present, been adequately wrought out. There is, however, plenty of time, as well as room, for improvement; and from the names of some of the contributors to the forthcoming volumes, we gladly augur that at least some of these volumes will much more nearly approach to the high mark set up in the Preface, and fairly reached on the whole in the companion Commentary on the New Testament.

¹ See the Essay, entitled *And God Created Great Whales*, in vol. iv. of this Series.
