

woman of our Parable, but one of the ten precious coins which formed her most cherished ornament; and this would be a loss even more vividly felt than that of the shepherd when one out of his flock of a hundred went astray.

So that immense as is the advance from both the care of the Shepherd for his sheep, and of the pride of the Woman in the burnished coins which gleamed upon her forehead, to the yearning and pitiful love of the Father for his prodigal and selfbanished son, we can nevertheless find a link between the first and last terms of the climax, and trace an advance even between the grief of the Shepherd over his stray sheep, and that of the Woman over her lost coin. A piece of money in her purse might easily be stolen or spent; but a coin from the headdress could not be so much as touched by any stranger, nor even taken from its wearer by her husband unless she cut it off of her own accord and placed it in his hands. It was safe, sacred, dear. It was a strictly personal possession, and might very well be a heirloom—like “the silvers” of the Swiss women—hallowed by many fond and gracious memories.

A. G. WELD.

BRIEF NOTICES.

OF making many *commentaries* there is no end,” saith the Preacher, saith every preacher just now, although only from ten to twenty years ago they were so scarce, and, as a rule, of little worth. The fact is, and it is one which calls for recognition, that the publishers are trading on the revived interest in the study of Holy Writ, and striving to turn an honest penny out of it; they are producing *Commentaries* on the New Testament, or the Old Testament, or the whole Bible, just as they are rivalling one another with “Lives of Christ,” mainly as a business speculation, to “meet a want” as they say. *Commentaries* made to

order, and made to sell, projected by men of business as matter of business, are not likely to be of the first quality. They may secure a competent editor; and the editor may be happy enough to secure the services of scholars, like Dean Plumptre, Canon Westcott, or Dr. Morison, who will not write on any subject they have not mastered, and who will put their best work into whatever they do; but they must also enlist or press men to write on Scriptures to which they are not drawn by any free movement of their own minds, of which they have made no special or profound study, and in which they take no deep or particular interest. Even if the nominal editor be faithful to his duty, and does not, after lending his name to the enterprise, hand over the work to some official of the counting-house, he is driven to seek the aid of such contributors as these, although he knows full well that their contributions are sure to betray their lack of interest or of sympathy, of competency or of due preparation.

And hence, with all this new world of books before them from which to choose, clergymen and ministers are involved in much perplexity. They may have their rules, and the rules may be good. They may hold that no commentary, by one author, on the whole Bible, or on the whole of either of the Testaments, is likely to be worth much; that no such commentary, even if by many authors, is likely to be good throughout; that it is best and even cheapest in the long run, to buy separate commentaries on single Scriptures; and that even these are worth little if they are not works of love, and of a love which has induced their authors to study and brood over the Writing they have taken in hand year after year. But how, under present conditions, are they to work these and the like rules? They are desperately in need of real helps to the study of the Word; but, for the most part, they have little money to expend on books, especially in the years in which they most require them. What are they to do? If they want Canon Cook on *Job*, or Canon Westcott on *John*, or Canon Evans on 1 *Corinthians*, must they purchase the ten volumes of the Speaker's Commentary, or even the odd volumes in which these valuable expositions are contained? If they want Dr. Morison on *Ruth*, or Mr. Cheyne on *Jeremiah*, must they enter on an enterprise of unknown magnitude, order in the long array of the Pulpit Commentary, and load their shelves with the endless homilies by which that commentary is burdened, and which to

real students of the Bible are simply of no worth, or even less? If they want Canon Farrar on *Judges*, or Dean Plumptre on *the Synoptic Gospels*, must they expend eight guineas on Bishop Ellicott's Commentary on the Old and New Testaments, or, here again, put up with that most distressing spectacle to a scholar's eye—odd volumes standing about on his shelves, and for ever mourning the loss of their comrades? Even if they should submit to that misery—and men in want must not be over nice—it would cost them something like five pounds to secure only the seven expositions which have just been named, most of that sum, moreover, going to pay for what they do not want, and may not even care to have. And if five pounds be a serious sum for even clerics to spend on Commentaries, how many of the laity, who need the best help to the right reading of Scripture quite as much, are likely to lay out so much upon them?

How this serious and pressing difficulty is to be solved, it is hard to say. But there are two ways in which many of us might do something to lessen it. It would be well, we think, if those scholars who have made any Scripture a study for years, and who really have something to say on it which will be helpful to their brethren, were resolutely to refuse to contribute to any general Commentary, except on the understanding that they retained the right to republish their contribution in a separate form. And, again, it would be well if critics would deal a little more severely both with those Commentaries which are evidently produced mainly for the private profit of publisher or editor, and with those inadequate or pithless expositions which form too large a portion even of the best Commentaries on the whole Bible which issue from the press. Now that this form of literature has grown so popular, and the motives for producing it are often so unworthy, a severer standard should be applied to it; a sharper line of distinction should be drawn between work of a really high quality, and work which is merely respectable, or which might be allowed to pass without too strict an examination were there not already much better to be had; while indifferent, perfunctory, and, still more, incompetent or unnecessary, work should be visited with the keenest rebuke; for *bonis nocet, quisquis pepercit malis*.

We have to report that, judged even by the severest standard, *Canon Westcott's Commentary on THE EPISTLES OF ST. JOHN* (London:

Macmillans) possesses almost every quality of first-rate work ; and as it is published in a separate and convenient form, we are bound to give it the warmer welcome. It is based on the same lines with his invaluable exposition of St. John's Gospel. It has been in his thoughts for thirty years. And it is not saying much to say that it is by far the best exposition of these Epistles which we possess. For few Scriptures of the New Testament have been so little or so inadequately commented on. Up to this time, Huther and Haupt have easily taken the first place on our shelves,—indeed there has been little else to consult ; and both of these are naturally better adapted to German than to English wants and modes of thought. Canon Westcott's book, therefore, fills a notable gap, and fills it admirably. In his introduction he goes, with the sound learning and cool judgment to which he has accustomed us, into the critical questions of text, authorship, style, language, etc. In the commentary proper he prints the best Greek text, and illustrates it by notes which not only trace out the general flow of thought, but also "call attention to the minutest points of language, construction, order" which serve to define its meaning. And to this he appends three long and carefully written essays—on "The Two Empires—the Church and the World," "The Gospel of Creation," and "The Relation of Christianity to Art"—which cannot fail to remind the student of the fine dissertations with which Bishop Lightfoot has adorned his Commentaries on St. Paul's Epistles,—essays as erudite and thoughtful, if not so brilliant and powerful, as those masterpieces of our chief Expositor. In fine, he has given us just what we wanted, and almost all that we wanted, on these too long neglected Epistles, the first of which at least is as remarkable for its profundity of thought as for the simple beauty of its form.

In this same category, different as the two books are, both in aim and style, we must also include *Dr. Morison's* Practical Commentary on MATTHEW, of which a new and revised edition has been recently published by Messrs. Hodder and Stoughton. Our opinion of this masterly work, the value we put on it, is well known. It was, in our judgment, the best Commentary on St. Matthew's Gospel a dozen years ago ; and, despite the almost incredible advance in the art and practice of exposition which has been witnessed since then, it remains the best to this day.

We come now to a work of a more mixed and dubious kind, in which, while there is much that is fairly good, and some which is very good, the good is so blended with the indifferent, and occasionally even with the worthless, as to lie open to the censure with which we commenced. THE OLD TESTAMENT COMMENTARY FOR ENGLISH READERS, edited by *Bishop Ellicott* (London: Cassells), still disappoints us on the whole, though three volumes of it have now appeared, and in parts still looks like work done to order rather than work freely chosen and enjoyed. Its average level is below that of the New Testament Commentary, published by the same Firm, and under the same Editorial care. It may be doubted even whether it quite comes up to the mark, it certainly does not rise above the mark, of the Cambridge Bible for Schools, a much less expensive and voluminous work. For the most part, indeed, it seems to have no higher aim than the School Bible, although in the Preface to Volume I. the learned Editor promised a much higher aim. Not that it is without its excellencies and attractions. It carefully explains whatever is likely to give the ordinary reader of the Bible pause. It deals fairly well with all minor difficulties, historical, chronological, geographical; but it offers comparatively little help on the graver critical and religious difficulties by which even "English readers," of the Old Testament, if they be at all thoughtful and inquiring, are in these days perplexed. Those who seek for large and generous handling of large moral problems, or adequate treatment of the graver critical difficulties, or an exposition of Scripture which lingers over its greater events and noblest utterances till it draws out and enforces their significance, and the style of which rises with occasion, must look elsewhere. *Their* quest will not end here.

But if we are to judge this Work, not by the aim announced in the Preface, but by that which its several writers have obviously placed before them, our verdict must be a more favourable one. They have done much good work of the kind indicated above, explaining the sort of difficulty by which an ordinary reader is brought to a stand for want of exact knowledge, *e.g.* difficulties of name, time, place, sequence. Even from this point of view, however, the work is very unequal. Rev. C. H. Waller's exposition of *Deuteronomy* for instance, Dr. Gardiner's of *2 Samuel*, Dr. Pope's of *Ezra and Nehemiah*, are much slighter and less satisfactory than Canon Barry's comment on *1 Kings*, or Rev. C. J.

Ball's on 2 *Kings* and 1 and 2 *Chronicles*. Canon Barry's work, indeed, within the limits he appears to have set himself, is thoroughly good; while Mr. Ball's is, in our judgment, still better, because more thorough. Canon Spence, again, on 1 *Samuel*, aims still higher, and makes his exposition more nearly what we hold that all serious exposition should be—a grave and earnest attempt to bring out the meaning, force, and beauty of the document in hand, as well as to explain its terms and the points by which an unlearned reader is likely to be puzzled and checked.

It is because he, too, aims at this ideal, and goes still farther toward realizing it, that we deem Canon Farrar's exposition of *Judges* to be by far the best commentary in these volumes. He deals frankly and honestly with the grave moral questions which this Scripture constantly raises, and blames what he feels to be wrong in the heroes and judges of Israel as freely as if they were English soldiers or magistrates; while yet he makes all due allowance for the necessarily imperfect morality of the age in which they flourished. And he uses his spiritual insight and imagination on the greater or more picturesque events and utterances recorded in the Book, labouring not without success to call up the men and scenes of that rude and antique age, and to make them live in his readers' minds. Nor is he less careful than his fellow-labourers to remove from their path every stone of stumbling over which the unlettered might trip.

But while there is one section of this work which rises well above its average level, there is another which sinks as far below it. It is not easy, either to account for, or to pardon, such a commentary as that on *Ruth* by Rev. R. Sinker, B.D. For there are at least three or four commentaries on this charming idyll so good as to leave any man without excuse who perpetrates a piece of work so poor, inadequate, and insipid as this. Had Mr. Sinker only consulted, for example, works so accessible and well-known as Dr. Cassell's exposition of *Ruth* in Lange, or Dr. Morison's in the Pulpit Commentary, it would have been simply impossible for him so utterly to have missed the mark.

Two additions have been made to THE PULPIT COMMENTARY (London: Kegan Paul, Trench & Co.) since our last notice of it; and in these we have the same blending of good with bad on which we have already remarked. The exposition of *Jeremiah*, by Rev.

T. K. Cheyne, M.A., is one of the most valuable to be found in this voluminous work. The higher criticism of the Introduction may be questionable to some, cannot fail, indeed, to displease as many as cleave to the traditional views of Scripture. But the commentary itself is so careful, reasonable, scholarly, that even those who most strongly dissent from Mr. Cheyne's critical views will confess it to be most helpful and instructive. And though his style is somewhat stiff and cold, he occasionally rises into a very happy strain. What, for instance, can be more happily expressed than the following appreciation of the plaintive Prophet. "In a quieter age he might have developed into a great lyric poet. Even as it is he may fairly claim to have written some of the most sympathetic pages of the Old Testament. And yet, his greatest poem is—his life." It is to be lamented, however, that even this excellent bit of work is so overlaid with a mass of homiletical platitudes, by other authors, as that only half the writings of Jeremiah can be commented on even in this large and bulky volume.

The Exposition of *Mark* by Dean Bickersteth might well pair off with Mr. Sinker's on *Ruth*. With such commentaries on the most graphic of the Gospels at command as Dr. Morison's and Dean Plumptre's, there really is neither room nor excuse for work so poor and dull.

The new volume of the Cambridge Bible for Schools is *Obadiah and Jonah*, by the Rev. H. Perowne, D.D., which we can heartily commend. It is a very useful and sensible exposition of these two Minor Prophets, and deals very thoroughly and honestly with the immense difficulties of the later-named of the two, from the orthodox point of view.

The Fernley Lecture of this year, ON THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PHYSICAL AND MORAL LAW, by *William Arthur* (London: T. Woolmer), came to hand too late to be noticed in any measure approaching to its deserts; but we cannot forbear saying a word or two about it, and shall hope in various ways to return to it again and again. It is the most masterly and triumphant refutation of the modern atheistic hypothesis put forward by a few men of science who have dabbled in metaphysics, especially those of the Positivist school, which we have met for many a day. It covers the ground taken by *Almoni Peloni* in the article on "Miracles" in

our number for September last, but it also covers very much more. Closely thought and tersely expressed, it suggests far more than it affirms; and though the very closeness and compactness of its reasoning may make it somewhat stiff reading for untrained minds, it is nevertheless written with a simplicity and force, and lit up with a wealth of apt illustrations, at times too with quiet touches of humour, which bring it well within the compass of all who care to think while they read, and will afford them a keen and constant delight. We may perhaps best convey our sense of the breadth of its scope and the cogency of its logic if we say that, in less than 250 pages, it unfolds an argument with which men so different as Leslie Stephen, Herbert Spencer, Huxley, Tyndall, and Dr. Congreve—or whoever may have succeeded him as “the high-priest of Humanity” in the Comtist church—will all of them have to reckon, on pain of finding the ground on which they balance themselves in painfully unstable equilibrium cut from beneath their feet. In fine, our advice to our readers—and we are conscious of doing them good service by giving them the advice, if they need it—is, By all means get this book, and read it, and then read it again and again, until you have made its contents your own. And, for once, we fully intend to take our own advice.

GOOD THE FINAL GOAL OF ILL, *By A Layman* (London: Macmillans). A crude dull book, which will injure rather than serve the cause it is intended to promote.
