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REVIEW SECTION.

I.—THE STUDY OF SCIENCE BY MINISTERS.

By J. O. MURRAY, D.D., DEAN OF PRINCETON COLLEGE.

THERE lies open before me a choice edition of a delightful and suggestive book, White's "Natural History of Selborne." It was once said of it, that "it proves in how laudable and useful a manner a parish priest may employ his leisure time, and how serviceable he may be to the natural history and antiquities of his country." Christopher North, in *Blackwood*, has a more glowing encomium: "Who ever read, without the most exquisite delight, White's 'History of Selborne'?"* It is, indeed, a Sabbath book worth a whole library of sermons, nine-tenths of the Bampton Lectures included, and will make a deist of an atheist, of a deist a Christian." The book was published in 1789, while the author was curate at Selborne. Allibone specifies fifteen different editions of it. In fact, it is a classic in English literature. Its story is simple. While fulfilling his parish duties, White was a careful and constant observer of nature. He studied the habits of the birds, the trees and shrubs, the insects, the reptiles which made Selborne their habitat. One of Mr. Darwin's latest scientific studies was the earthworm. I think a reference to White's thirty-fifth letter to Hon. Daines Barrington would show that White anticipated Darwin by a century in his notice of these creatures, which he introduces by saying, "earthworms, though in appearance a small and despicable link in the chain of nature, yet, if lost, would make a lamentable chasm." In a series of letters to his friends, charmingly written, White gives all his observations, often very minute, sometimes very striking, always fascinating. It is a book to make one love the outer world. It will rank in literature with "Walton's Angler," and I pity the clergyman who does not appreciate both. Yet Gilbert White was a parish priest, declining all church preferment, and finding his life not in ecclesiastical rivalries nor theological subtleties, but in simple and devout study of God's works about him. In Dr. McCosh's "Typical Forms and

* Bennett's Ed., revised by Harting. London.