

## Book Notices.

"The Jewish Encyclopedia." A Descriptive Record of the History, Religion, Literature, and Customs of the Jewish People from the Earliest Times to the Present Day. Isidore Singer, Ph.D., Projector and Managing Editor. Vol. IX. New York and London: Funk & Wagnalls. Toronto: William Briggs. Special price in advance of completion, \$6.00, in cloth.

Three-fourths of this great work has now been issued. It grows in interest with each successive volume. When, in the near future, the whole will be issued, it will present the most complete and comprehensive record of everything connected with the people of Israel, in ancient and modern times, that has ever been published. And their record presents a thousand points of contact with our Christian faith and our Christian civilization. The historical aspect of the Jews is one of tragic interest. The story of their race is one dark record of restriction, oppression, persecution. Even to-day seven millions of Jews are the subject of civil and religious disability, if not, indeed, of political, economic, and social slavery. An age-long prejudice, bitter and intense, is only giving way in the more enlightened nations to justice, appreciation, and kindness.

It is little to the credit of the Holy and Orthodox Russia that nowhere are the Jews so bitterly persecuted and massacred as by the officials of the Czar. The articles on Moscow, Novgorod, and Odessa in this volume give striking illustrations of this. To the last place, for instance, eight two-column pages are devoted. In this city of half a million the Jews number one hundred and sixty thousand. The superior vitality and morality of this despised people is shown in the fact that the death rate in 1902 of Jewish children was 28.5 per cent.; among the Greek Orthodox it was 34.5. The natural increase in that year among the Jews was 14.7 per thousand; among the Orthodox, 7.6, or scarcely one-half. The Jewish children born out of wedlock amounted to only 0.1 per cent., as compared with 11.9 per cent. among the Greek Orthodox, or 120 times as many. Yet these are the people whom the Orthodox bitterly denounce, and make

their struggles for life an almost continuous martyrdom.

The progress of the Jews in England and America has been more marked than in any other countries. An interesting article recites their history at Newport, R.I. Under the "soul-freedom" inaugurated by Roger Williams they had perfect liberty, and won great wealth, Newport at that time exceeding even New York in commerce.

Many biblical names come under review in this volume, as Mordecai, Moses, Nehemiah, Nimrod, Noah, Nineveh, etc. To the life of Moses fifteen pages are devoted. Many legends of Moses are told. He was able to walk the day of his birth. At three years of age, sitting at the table of Pharaoh he took the crown from the king's head and placed it on his own. Horrified at his act, the soothsayers declared that he had come to destroy the kingdom of Pharaoh and liberate Israel. The king's counsellors decided to try whether the act was intentional, and placed a piece of gold and a live coal on a plate before Moses to see which he would choose. He took up the coal and put it in his mouth, it burned his tongue, and caused him to be ever after "slow of speech." Moses and Aaron are said to have been the angels whom Jacob saw in his dream ascending and descending the ladder into heaven.

It is to the credit of Napoleon Bonaparte that by unloosing the feudal trammels under which mid-Europe was suffering, by promoting the principles of liberty, equality, fraternity, inculcated by the French revolution, he did more to emancipate the Jews than had been done during the three preceding centuries.

Among the theological topics treated are the names of God, Nazareth, New Moon, New Year, Origin, Passover, and many others of much interest. An important article is that on the New Testament by Dr. Kohler, giving the Jewish views of the life and character of Jesus, of His miracles, parables, of the Gospels, and the crucifixion of our Lord. The book is full of interest as giving us the point of view of the orthodox Jew.

On the question of mortality and morbidity it is shown that the death-rate among the Jews is much lower than that