

Book Notices.

Hindu Literature; or, the Ancient Books of India. By ELIZABETH A. REED, Member of the Philosophical Society of Great Britain. 8vo, pp. xviii. 410. Chicago, Ill.: S. C. Greggs & Co. Price \$2.00.

The writer of this book well remarks that a most fascinating field of study and research is to be found in the ancient literary productions of the Hindus. After a brilliant description of their physical environments, she adds: "The literature born in this dreamland of beauty and fragrance bears within its bosom the eloquence of poetry and the rhythm of song; but India's ancient books are so colossal in their proportions, that European scholars looked upon them for years with dismay. Life is too short to enable any one student to obtain a complete knowledge of Oriental philology, language and history." The accomplished author of this volume has, therefore, conferred a great boon upon Occidental readers who wish to have a clearer and more connected idea of the sacred literature of the Orient. By this succinct description and characterization of its most important remains the work is most thoroughly done. She avails herself of the studies of the great original investigators, Max Müller, who has given twenty of the best years of his life to the Veda alone, and Sir Monier Williams; both of whom have revised and annotated the important sections of the volume.

Our author does not, like some enthusiasts, unduly magnify the value of this literature. "Orientalists," she says, "were at first unable to resist the temptation of giving to the public the gems only, which they recovered from masses of almost worthless literature." "The time has come when the Vedas must be treated with more candour, even though with less enthusiasm."

It was claimed in former times by

the Brahmins that no commandment and no precept in the New Testament had not been anticipated in the Veda. It has been claimed also that the Veda was thousands of years older than the Old Testament, and that much of the latter was borrowed from Hindu sources. Both of these claims are here shown to be unfounded. The oldest MS. of the Veda dates from the twelfth to the fifteenth century, A.D. Its oldest portion may date from the tenth to the twelfth century, B.C., but this is not certain.

"In many points," says our author, "the great epic of India will compare with the immortal productions of Homer. The imagination of the Hindu is as luxuriant as his own tropical forest. Poetry lives in the atmosphere of the Himalayas." In a series of admirably-written chapters she describes the mythology of the Vedas, the Brahmins, the Code of Manu, the Upanishads, the Puranas, and other famous Hindu poems. She finds in the older literature of the Hindus the doctrines of monotheism, the descent of man from a single pair, and the immortality of the soul, of rewards and punishments, and other great primary truths. The so-called resemblance to Christian history, she affirms to be very slight.

Referring to the moral and religious deterioration of the Hindu, she says: "The early Vedic worshipper paid his homage to the sun and moon, but the modern Hindu adores the crocodile, which hides amidst the weeds of the Ganges. How is the mind of the worshipper fallen when, instead of offering his praise to the icy brow of the Himalaya, flushed with the rays of the setting sun, he brings his oblation to the serpents that infest the rocks at her feet?"

"Far better than modern idolatry was their primitive worship of moun-