

REVIEWS AND NOTICES OF BOOKS.

A HISTORY OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN AMERICA, &c., &c. By the late Rev. W. R. WEBSTER. (Second Notice.)

WE noticed last month, with commendation, this excellent History of the Presbyterian Church in the United States. Our remarks then had a special reference to the first half of the volume, which contains a connected narrative of events down to the year 1760. We promised in our next to introduce our readers to the second part, which contains biographical sketches and notices of no less than 400 ministers, dating from the years 1680 to 1758. Many of these sketches are necessarily brief. Little of consequence is known concerning many of the early ministers in the colonies; still, what little is available is not without its interest, and has evidently been obtained by Mr. Webster after much elaborate research. The materials for the life of an obscure man are generally more difficult to get at than those which pertain to the history of a man eminent in the Church or in the world. We can, therefore, easily suppose that the larger and more interesting lives cost less than half the labour which has been spent on those of less note. We think, therefore, that it is a historical excellence of this volume that it contains so much of what we may term antiquarian lore. The facts in biographical history are not all of equal interest or importance in themselves: some are comparatively insignificant, while others become incorporated with the literature of every age; still, the least of them may, like the observations of meteorology, become important as links in the chain of events, or as independent testimonies to more striking affairs. In these gathered biographies, great and small, we thus find important data as to the sources from which America obtained its Presbyterianism. It might, no doubt, be conjectured that most of the early ministers came from Scotland and Ireland; but here we have the fact certified. During the first 36 years one-third of the whole number are from Scotland, another third from Ireland, and the remaining third from England, Wales, and the New England States. For the next 20 years, one-half of the whole are from Ireland, only two are from Scotland, and the remainder are chiefly natives of the country. Again, during the next 30 years, out of 117 ministers, only 19 are from Ireland, and 15 from Scotland—both together being not more than one-third of the whole; the remainder are, with the exception of one from Wales, exclusively native born. In the course of these years it is thus interesting to observe how the church takes hold of the soil, and from an exotic plant, becomes indigenous to the country, enlarging itself from year to year, until, as now, it covers the land with the grateful shade of its wide-spreading branches.

We notice an epoch in the history of this Church in the labours of William Tennant, of Log Cabin celebrity, whom Whitefield regarded as another Zacharias, and his wife another Elizabeth. Four sons followed their father's footsteps and became masters in Israel. It was said of Mr. Tennant and his brethren—"none like them." They were earnest coadjutors of Whitefield, and most efficient agents in promoting the great revivals of religion for which America was then distinguished. From the time of the Tennants the Church became essentially American, and may be said to have begun its noble career as a native institution.

Throughout these biographies there are scattered numerous anecdotes of deep interest, illustrative of the people and the manners of the times. One thing too strikes us, and that with no feeling of pleasure, namely, that many of the ministers who came from Scotland and Ireland came with blasted reputations, or were sent out because unfit for the work at home. The consequences of this procedure are, as might be expected, frequent disturbances in Churches, and