

god, and its suddenness and severity in connection with the act of Moses mark it as a preternatural withdrawal of light. Yet it has an analogy in physical phenomena. After the vernal equinox the southwest wind from the desert blows some fifty days, not however continuously but at intervals, lasting generally some two or three days. (Thus Lane, Willman and others quoted by Knobel.) It fills the atmosphere with dense masses of fine sand, bringing on a darkness far deeper than that of our worst fogs in winter. While it lasts no man 'rises from his place; men and beasts hide themselves; people shut themselves up in the innermost apartments or vaults. So saturated is the air with the sand that it seems to lose its transparency, so that artificial light is of little use.' The expression 'even darkness that might be felt' has a special application to a darkness produced by such a cause. The consternation of Pharaoh proves that familiar though he may have been with the phenomenon, no previous occurrence had prepared him for its intensity and duration, and that he recognized it as a supernatural visitation."

Once more. Of the Book of Leviticus it is said: "Leviticus has no pretension to systematic arrangement as a whole, nor does it appear to have been originally written all at one time. Some repetitions occur in it; and, in many instances, certain particulars are separated from others with which, by the subject-matter, they are immediately connected. There appear to be in Leviticus, as well as in the other books of the Pentateuch, pre-Mosaic fragments incorporated with the more recent matter. It is by no means unlikely that there are insertions of a later date which were written, or sanctioned, by the prophets and holy men who, after the Captivity, arranged and edited the Scriptures of the Old Testament. The fragmentary way in which the Law has been recorded, regarded in connection with the perfect harmony of its spirit and details, may tend to confirm both the unity of the authorship of the books in which it is contained, and the true inspiration of the law-giver."

Concessions, such as these, on the part of English annotators on Scripture, mark a new era in biblical study and research, and are calculated to lead to a general revival of deep interest in the subject. In the volume before us, we may add, the new renderings of words and passages are printed in heavy type. Readers can thus readily examine them and compare them with the received English text. They appear to be few after all. The committee for an improved translation will find their labours lightened by the "Speaker's Commentary." The ultimate acceptance of the results of their toil by the public will be thereby too rendered more certain. By the time the eight royal octavos are out, the popular mind will be ready for the desired change. As we have already said, the commentary now introduced to the English-speaking public is for a period of transition. In it as few prejudices as possible are stirred, whilst difficulties have been calmly met, reasonably discussed, and as far as possible put on an intelligible footing. The text to which the notes are appended is the version of 1611, printed once more in the ancient style, with the common divisions into chapter and verse, the old quaint headings and the marginal readings. When the improved translation itself comes to be put forth, it is to be hoped that the division into chapter and verse will be discarded, figures at the side of the pages for purposes

of reference being used instead; that an arrangement of the matter of each book will be adopted which will be in accordance with the intentions of its author, and that the interpretation of names will be inserted whenever the context implies that such interpretation is given, as, for example, where Eve is said to have been so named because "the mother of all living," an explanation unintelligible if it is not announced at the same time that Eve means Life. Notwithstanding the great pains which have manifestly been taken with the typography of the volume before us, a few oversights are discernable as, for example, in the word intended to be "Tabernacle" at p. 694, and in that intended to be "Shakespeare" at p. 876.

**MODERN SCEPTICISM.** A course of Lectures delivered at the request of the Christian Evidence Society. With an explanatory paper by the Right Reverend C. J. Ellicott, D.D., Lord Bishop of Gloucester and Bristol. London: Hodder & Stoughton. Toronto: Adam, Stevenson & Co.

The truth of a religion is not really affected by the errors of its apologists: otherwise Christianity would hardly have survived till now. But a bad impression is produced by weak defences, especially if they are put forth with authority, or with any semblance of it; and such, we suspect will be the practical effect of the volume before us, notwithstanding the eminence of the contributors and the learning and ability which some of them display. The very form of the work strikes us as unfortunate, if it be designed for the satisfaction of those who are in doubt. Suspicion is excited by the appearance of twelve writers, all of them bishops or clergymen, organized under the auspices of a religious society to defend what will be deemed to be professional opinions. A far greater effect would be produced on minds which are seriously seeking for fresh assurance of their faith by the work of a single inquirer, even one far inferior to these writers in eminence, if it were clear that he had studied the question impartially, and that he came forward under no influence but that of a desire to make known the truth. Moreover, where a number of writers are dealing with different parts of a great subject, the treatment is pretty sure to be imperfect, and the most difficult portions, which in the case of an apologetic work, are the most important, are apt to be declined by everybody, and thus to be neglected altogether. This has in fact happened in the present case. The first and fundamental duty of a Christian apologist is to prove that the Gospels were beyond doubt written or dictated by eye-witnesses, and trustworthy eye-witnesses, of the miraculous events which they record. This is the very basis of the whole inquiry, and without it, disquisitions, however learned and eloquent, on the possibility of miracles, the probability of a revelation, or the excellence of the Christian type of character, much more confutations of other religious or philosophical systems, are fabrics in the air. If it were alleged that a miracle had been wrought in Toronto or Montreal, we should at once inquire, not whether miracles were possible to Omnipotence, which no man without holding contradictory propositions can deny; nor whether the miracle was worthy of the Divine Majesty and likely to serve a Divine purpose; but who had witnessed it.