

ARCHDEACON FARRAR'S LIVES OF THE FATHERS.*

FIRST NOTICE.

WE entirely agree with Archdeacon Farrar that the most interesting form of Church History is biography. We have often wished that some competent person would do for the English reader what Bohringer's work has done for Germans. Something of the kind has now been taken in hand by Dr. Farrar, and we acknowledge with thankfulness and cordiality the general success of his work. It would be quite easy to find out slips, if not serious errors, in these volumes. "The critic who eagerly searches for defects will find them abundantly," says the author. "I can only hope," he adds, "that generous and unbiassed readers will find them compensated by some merits." The latter sentence is certainly truer than the former. The book has many excellencies and few faults. The latter are unimportant. On the very first page, in a footnote, we meet with an erratum. At least we have never heard of an edition of the Apostolic Fathers by Henck. It must certainly be Funck's very good edition which is meant. But this is no great matter.

In previously reviewing some of Dr. Farrar's later works, we have noted the great improvement in his literary style as compared with that in which some of his earlier productions were written. The same may be said of his *Lives of the Apostles*. While retaining all the brightness and vividness which have given him so wide a popularity, he has shaken off that excessive floridness of style which was peculiarly offensive to a certain class of educated and cultivated readers. Moreover, we are glad to find that, in his present work, he has resisted the temptation to quote poetical extracts with inordinate copiousness. The specimens given are "few and far between." We imagine that some, at least, of these biographies have already appeared in the new edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, although we have not, at the present moment, an opportunity of verifying our supposition. If we are right, this may account for the welcome change.

The first volume, after some introductory matter, gives the lives of Ignatius, Polycarp, Irenæus, Justin, Tertullian, Cyprian, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Athanasius, Hilary of Poitiers, Martin of Tours, and Gregory of Nazianzus—a goodly roll, followed by another to which we shall hereafter draw attention. We are sorry that the author has omitted the important name of Eusebius, although he does refer to the full and excellent article of Bishop Lightfoot in the Dictionary of Christian Biography. If he is continuing his work—which is much to be hoped—he should include Eusebius in his next volume.

In the introductory chapter Dr. Farrar gives an account of the writings of those Apostolic

*Lives of the Fathers: Sketches of Church History in Biography: By F. W. Farrar, D.D. 2 volumes. Macmillan, New York, on sale by Rowsell and Hutchison, Toronto, 1889, \$5.

Fathers of whom we may be said to possess no personal knowledge, Clement, Hermas, Barnabas (certainly not the companion of St. Paul) and the author of the beautiful Epistle to Diognatus. He takes no notice of the theory that this work may be spurious, which is, perhaps, all the attention that the theory deserves. In regard to Ignatius, Dr. Farrar follows mainly in the footsteps of Bishop Lightfoot, and he could not do better. Besides telling us what is known of the Saint, he gives an excellent analysis of all the genuine letters, and some very good remarks on their general contents, followed by a careful account of their theology. The author remarks judiciously that we must not understand the high phrases respecting the Episcopate employed by S. Ignatius as having precisely the same meaning as they would have if used by ourselves; and on the Eucharist, he says, "it may be doubted whether modern meanings are not read into some of his expressions."

The chapter on Polycarp, Irenæus and Justin are brief but excellent. Probably it is because of the connexion between Polycarp and Irenæus that the life of the latter was placed before that of Justin who belonged to a somewhat earlier period. In a note on Hippolytus, Dr. Farrar gives as his opinion that Dollinger's theory is the true one, namely, that Hippolytus, was an anti-pope. We quite admit the greatness of Dollinger's authority, but after reading Wordsworth's latest book on the subject, we incline to his opinion that he was Bishop of Portus. The chapter on Tertullian is one of peculiar interest. As the author says, this striking character "is well known to us in his personality, because that is stamped upon every page which he wrote;" and although not many details of his life are preserved, we know the man himself almost as well as though we possessed a complete biography of him. Dr. Farrar divides his Life of Tertullian into four sections, the first dealing with his Catholic period, the second with his relation to Montanism, the third with his Montanistic writings, and the fourth with his controversial works. Dr. Farrar, while quite sensible of the fierceness and other excesses of this great man, does full justice to his nobler qualities and gives many beautiful specimens of his writing. "The Church has dealt gently and forgivingly with him; and though he spoke of her sons as 'the carnal,' and dared to reiterate against them insinuations which were more discreditable on his lips than on those of the heathen, she accepts the fruits of his zeal and genius, and, in spite of his errors, reckons him among her teachers."

The great importance of Tertullian is seen in the fact that he is the real beginner of Latin Theology, Cyprian and Augustine being his lineal descendants. Jerome relates that he once met an old man at Concordia, in Italy, who told him that Cyprian never passed a day without reading some portion of Tertullian's works, and used frequently to say *Da magistrum*, "Give me my master," meaning Tertullian. "Cyprian did little more in literature than to adopt the style of Tertullian; and

Augustine 'stood upon the shoulders of them both.'"

Dr. Farrar's sketch of S. Cyprian is bright and interesting, and fairly sympathetic, although he regards him as greatly inferior to Tertullian, and the introducer of some objectionable ecclesiasticism into the Church. With Clement of Alexandria and Origen the author has much closer affinity than with the writers of the Latin School. This part of the work is, in some degree, a reproduction of part of the author's Bampton Lectures on the Interpretation of Scripture, with, of course, a great deal of historical matter which had no place in the earlier work. Dr. Farrar's view of the character of Origen is higher than the ordinary Church History theory. He casts doubt upon one story which has been accepted somewhat unhesitatingly by most writers on grounds, which he regards as inadequate, and he sums up his estimate of the great man's character in the words of Mosheim: "Certainly, if any man deserves to stand first in the catalogue of Saints and Martyrs, and to be annually held up as an example to Christians, this is the man; for, except the Apostles of Jesus Christ and their companions, I know of no one among those ennobled and honoured as Saints who excelled him in virtue and holiness."

Naturally the most important essay in the first volume is that which is dedicated to the history of the great Athanasius. Under this head the author treats successively of the rise of Arianism, of the Council of Nice, then of the successive periods in the life of Athanasius. It was a life of wonderful elevation, courage, and endurance. The phrase *Athanasius contra mundum* is hardly too strong. "Only in Athanasius," says Hooker, quoted by Dr. Farrar, "there was nothing observed throughout the course of that long tragedy, other than such as very well became a wise man to do and a righteous man to suffer: So that this was the plain condition of those times: the whole world against Athanasius, and Athanasius against it; half a hundred of years spent in doubtful trial which of the two in the end would prevail—the side which has all, or else the part which has no friend but God and death, the one a defender of his innocence, the other a finisher of his troubles."

The sketch of St. Hilary of Poitiers is a charming one and deals with a character much less known than that of his predecessors. He leaves upon us, says Dr. Farrar, the impression of a gracious and noble personality. He was a man born to lead, and born to be loved. S. Jerome compares him to a cedar of Libanus supporting the Temple of God. The comparison is just. When few of the leading bishops remained true to the Nicene faith,—when even the holy Hosius of Cordova, Father of Bishops and President of the Council of Nice, and Liberius, the Bishop of Rome, had been crushed into brief apostasy by cruel exile, the whole Church might, humanly speaking, have lapsed into heresy but for the indomitable courage and serene wisdom of two great men. Athanasius in the East, Hilary in the West.

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