

BOOK REVIEWS AND LITERARY NOTES

PHASES OF EARLY CHRISTIANITY.

Six Lectures by J. Estlin Carpenter, D.Litt. (American Lectures on the History of Religions). G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York and London. \$2.00.

The Announcement at the beginning of this volume makes the following statement: "The American Lectures on the History of Religions are delivered under the auspices of the American Committee for Lectures on the History of Religions. This committee was organized in 1892, for the purpose of instituting 'popular courses in the History of Religions, somewhat after the style of the Hibbert Lectures in England, to be delivered by the best scholars of Europe and this country, in various cities, such as Baltimore, Boston, Brooklyn, Chicago, New York, Philadelphia.' "

The 12th volume in this series is the one now under review, the special period covered being the century and a half from 100 A.D. to 250 A.D. The committee selected as the Lecturer on this subject Dr. J. E. Carpenter, who was already well known as a writer in this and kindred fields. Thus our hopes are raised at the outset, but the general feeling left on the reader when he lays down the book is one of disappointment.

In a series of lectures which aims at reaching the highest standard we expect either some original contribution, or, at all events, a complete mastery of the most recent literature and a grasp of the subject in all its bearings. Judged by either of these standards, the lectures are not strikingly successful. In fact there is very little that might not have been said eight years ago by anyone with a tolerably comprehensive knowledge of the literature.

To begin with, a certain apologetic tendency is apparent in many places; for example, when he calls Irenæus—the most orthodox of all the many personalities of this period—the "profoundest theologian of his age." Again, the writer does not always clearly define his position. To take an example: on page 143 we read of the "man of exalted vision, the healer who could cast out demons and work cures, the speaker with tongues and his interpreter;" this list is introduced by the remark, "imagination readily soared into an ideal realm," and lower down we read, "*In the language of religion* (our italics), their various services were the manifestations of the Spirit." Such observations seem to indicate an absence of conviction of the reality of these divine gifts. Yet lower down this reality seems to be assumed in the sentence, "From church to church this wondrous experience was repeated." As a matter of fact, the author is in the presence of a dilemma.