

think, even if one differed from him. I can hardly do better than close this inadequate notice of a great and good man by the following quotation from an interesting "In Memoriam" sketch contributed by a loyal hand to the *Record* of October 1st:—

"So he is gone, and with him is taken from us one of the most masculine, best furnished, and comprehensive minds in the country. Sound in the faith; as a theologian hard to match, whether in his own diocese or out of it; fertile as a writer; powerful in the pulpit—he leaves a blank which it

seems hard indeed to fill. . . . His knowledge was methodical and at command; he was not only learned, but (which is far more) wise also. He was always ready to impart of his stores, and there were few men to whom an intellectual or a spiritual difficulty could be communicated more freely, or with better hope of salutary counsel."

"Farewell, whose living like I shall not find,
Whose faith and work were bells of full accord;

How subtle at tierce and quart of mind with mind,
How loyal in the following of thy Lord!"

Ernest Renan.

BY THE REV. JOHN TAYLOR, D.LIT., M.A., WINCHCOMBE.

It is not our purpose in this brief article to pass in review all the writings of the brilliant Frenchman who breathed his last on Sunday, 2nd October. The ground which would thus be covered is much too extensive. Nor do we profess to offer an exhaustive estimate either of the man or of his work. The fairest judges will have no unkind verdict to deliver concerning the man. And his works are for the most part too well known to need any reopening of the case. But his removal from our midst does compel some notice of what he has given us. And without, on the one hand, pursuing the inquiries into his mental history which are opened by such productions as the *Souvenirs* or *L'Abbesse de Jouarre*, or, on the other hand, weighing his contributions to the archæology and philology of the Semitic races, we may do all that is incumbent on biblical students by examining that History of Israel, the concluding volume of which is, we believe, ready for completion. He himself regarded that work as finishing his life's task. Of it he would have said exultingly, *Finis coronat opus*: in that *opus* we may see almost the whole man.

It need hardly be said that this most interesting work possesses the strong recommendation of a beautiful style. The charm which good French always exercises is very potent here. A single quotation conveys a quite inadequate idea, but it is not easy to resist the temptation to refer to the splendid passage in which the genius of the Hebrew

language is depicted:—"Un carquois de flèches d'acier, un câble aux torsions puissantes, un trombone d'airain, brisant l'air avec deux au trois notes aiguës; voilà l'hebrieu. . . . Les lettres de ses livres seront en nombre compté; mais ce seront des lettres de feu. Cette langue dira peu de chose; mais elle martellera ses dires sur une enclume. Elle versera des flots de colère; elle aura des cris de rage contre les abus du monde; elle appellera les quatre vents du ciel à l'assaut des citadelles du mal. Comme la corne jubilaire du sanctuaire, elle ne servira à aucun usage profane; elle n'exprimera jamais la joie innée de la conscience ni la sérénité de la nature; mais elle sonnera la guerre sainte contre l'injustice et les appels des grandes panégyres; elle aura des accents de fête et des accents de terreur; elle sera le clairon des néoméniés et la trompette du jugement." What translator could turn this into equally impressive English? Moreover the story told in these volumes does not lose its fascination even when it is turned into English. Renan's vivid imagination would have lit up any subject, and the unrestrained freedom with which he has handled his theme has made of it a veritable romance, with all the attractiveness, if with much of the unreliableness, of fiction. That this involves disadvantages we shall not be slow to point out. It has, however, advantages also. History cannot be understood by any one who looks on it as a chronicle of bare, unconnected facts. The historian must have followed the stream from source

to sea with a comprehension of and delight in its every bend which he has skill enough to communicate to his readers. To what extent M. Renan's general view may be trusted will, of course, be matter of dispute. But he seldom, if ever, commits the unpardonable fault of being dull. What he describes lives for him. And on the occasions when we come to the conclusion that it is but a life in his own fancy, we are at least drawn to it as no dead object could draw us. He knew so much about human nature as to make his work abound in flashes of insight into men and institutions which should be welcomed as real contributions to their knowledge of the past by those who most unhesitatingly reject his main principles. We read Ezekiel more attentively when the germ of the synagogue and consequently of the Church is traced to the gatherings in the exiled prophet's house.¹ We are warned against an error into which both the uneducated and the instructed repeatedly fall when Renan reminds us that a law such as that against usury cannot with safety be transplanted from the *petite communauté de frères* for which it was framed.²

THE EXPOSITORY TIMES numbers amongst its readers both adherents and opponents of what is invidiously and most objectionably called the "Higher Criticism." Neither of these classes need telling that the deceased writer belonged wholly to the school with which it is the custom to associate Wellhausen's name. One of the most useful features of the *Histoire du peuple d'Israel* is its presentation in clear, untechnical language of the genesis of the various biblical documents as our author conceived it. This may be profitably read by persons who are deterred by that formidable array of symbols with which we are familiar elsewhere. And the present writer would add, without in any way entering on the merits of the question itself, that some such exposition as this book contains *ought* to be read by all. It is a real, independent attempt to enter into the heart of the problem.

Textual criticism excites fewer animosities. It would have been strange if a man with Renan's history had suggested nothing of value in this field. Very wisely these suggestions are relegated to the foot of the page so as never to interfere with the flow of narrative or discussion. Merely as a sample we may mention the emendations which are found at vol. ii. p. 45 of the verses Num. xxiv. 17-19.

¹ Vol. iii. p. 394.

² Vol. iii. p. 428.

"Read *זרה* for *דרך*. *שח* is impossible: perhaps *שאת*. Verses 18 and 19 are full of mistakes. I read *שעיר* for *מעיר* at ver. 19: I delete it as a dittography at ver. 18. In the second clause of this verse *ירשה* seems again to be a dittography. At the beginning of ver. 19 we must undoubtedly read *יעקב יורדם* for *יורד מיעקב*." Perhaps this is the place to add that it is much to be hoped that many young scholars will take into serious consideration the stress which our author laid on the necessity for a thorough study of Semitic palæography. Of late years fresh finds have been accumulating, and the excellent reproductions of the inscriptions which are now accessible make the subject comparatively easy. "*L'avenir de la philologie hébraïque est de ce côté.*"

The defects of the *Histoire* lie on the surface. The most generous critic must admit that narratives are altered or rejected, and corrections are made in an unwarrantably arbitrary manner. Having determined, for example, to deny the presence of almost all generous and noble qualities in David's character, he has no hesitation in suggesting that the "touching scene" of the king's refusal to allow the priests and the ark to accompany his flight is "perhaps legendary." How much more of the historic sense is shown in Canon Cheyne's acceptance of the fact and recognition of the limitations of David's religious views which it implies.³ Equally arbitrary is the doubt cast on the biblical account of David's original relations with Bathsheba:—"Il est difficile de dire si ce récit renferme quelque parcelle de vérité." And why should we hold that the true text of the Book of Kings credited Solomon with "five thousand *sir* (lyrical chants)"? It is not enough to say that the number one thousand and five "has something peculiar about it." So has the number one thousand and one!

Closely connected with the fault of arbitrariness is that of inexactness. If we wish to represent the true worshipper of Yahweh saying of Solomon's altar, "*L'autel de pierres non taillées, en plein air, valait mieux que cela!*" we have no right to adduce this as a *quotation* of Ex. xx. 24. "*Les plus jeunes des fils d'Israel*" is not the proper rendering of Ex. xxiv. 5. On the strength of Canticles iii. 11, no one would have the right to assert that Solomon wished to be crowned by his mother's hand; certainly that right cannot belong

³ *Aids to the Devout Study of Criticism*, p. 37.

to the critic who, quite correctly, tells us that the Canticles were written at a much later date than that of King Solomon.

We reach a yet more serious fault in that lack of sympathy with religion and religious men which betrays the author into gratuitous offensiveness. Isaiah should not be compared with a sandwich-man. The prophets were not so ready to act the charlatan as Renan imagined. Attention needed to be called to those uses of the ephod which to us seem pagan rather than otherwise, but *l'odieux tourniquet* is a phrase which might have been spared, would have been spared if the writer had pondered a little more deeply. But he seemed never to learn the lesson that one of the surest ways of being ineffective is to be intemperate. And the worst of it was that his was a calculated intemperance of speech.

In a modern infidel production what is called *The New Book of Genesis* is quoted:—"So Man created god in His own image, in the image of Man created He him; male and female created He them." With real pain we must declare that the *Histoire* is to a great extent a commentary on that text. There is no personal God in it. The national deity, Iahvé (as M. Renan spells the name), is simply the creature of the people's brain and heart. The nation works out its history under the guidance of a sort of instinct which has not been inspired from on high:—"It has never been observed that a Higher Being occupies himself, either for a moral or for an immoral purpose, with the things of nature or with those of humanity." "It has never been proved that a Higher Being interposes in the mechanism of the universe." Expressions which seem inconsistent with these are, no doubt, frequent. Israel is spoken of as having a mission, a vocation, and so on, but the prevalent tone leaves us no alternative but to believe that this is worse than meaningless. "We have no interest," a writer in *The Freethinker* said

last April, "in deities of any description, and we have a shrewd suspicion that (except for literary purposes) M. Renan has a little." That is a severe way of putting a truth. If it is a truth, it is a serious one. For therein is implied a habit of looking on Israelite history which renders a satisfactory explanation impossible. Our consolation is that the causes which are admitted are insufficient to produce the results which must be recognised. If the Jews could once be named as the decisive proof of the truth of Christianity, it is at least certain that the entire course of Hebrew history bears testimony to the existence and the providence of Almighty God. The gains to humanity which have come through the seed of Jacob, gains which are ungrudgingly enumerated by Renan, did not originate in that national character which is depicted in the Bible.

Some harm will be done by the diffusion of erroneous beliefs and unbeliefs in the Frenchman's beautiful language. We venture, however, to doubt whether it will not be very small in bulk. Weak-kneed Christians stumbled over the *Vie de Jésus*. Stronger men saw that if the alternative lay between Christianity and Renan's account of the Resurrection the former had not much to fear. The teachers of religion are better prepared now than they were then to learn from those who differ from them, and to show that freshly discovered details are not necessarily irreconcilable with established principles. The truths contained in the *Histoire* will be utilised thus. And, for the rest, we still believe that the human heart crying out for God, even the living God, will not rest content without Him, and that the longing for immortality, a full and worthy immortality, will not be put off by the exhortation to wait patiently for the reign of righteousness here below, "Far on in summers that we shall not see." *Fecisti nos, Domine, ad te, et inquietum est cor nostrum donec requiescat in te.*