

## Short Notices.

*Persia: the Land of the Imams.* By JAS. BASSETT. London: Blackie and Son. 1887.

AN interesting account of an interesting land. The author, an American Presbyterian Missionary, spent fourteen years in the country he describes, and thus fortified by an intimate acquaintance with his subject, he has compiled an instructive and very readable volume. He styles Persia the "Land of the Imams," considering their religious system the most prominent feature of the country. The masses of the people are of the sect of the "Twelve," and their power is supreme. Other religious races, the Fire-worshippers, Jews, Nestorians, and Armenians, are weak in numbers and in influence.

Mr. Bassett plans his book into an account of his travels pure and simple, and a general sketch of the whole region at large. He started on the journey from Trebizond, and completed it at Batoum. The first large town of which he gives a detailed account is Oroomiah, the reputed birth-place of Zoroaster. On his way thither he came across the Yezdees, that mysterious sect whose origin is unknown, and to determine the nature of whose religion has given so much trouble to the Turkish authorities. Mohammedans have greatly persecuted them, under the impression that they worshipped Satan: hence their brand of "Devil-worshippers." They retaliate by dooming Mohammedans to eternal punishment. Proselytes are not received, and circumcision is optional. Both monogamy and polygamy are permitted.

Oroomiah is the headquarters of the Nestorians, concerning whom Mr. Bassett remarks: "The Nestorians are known as a Christian sect, and not as a race of people. . . Doubt has been expressed as to their being of either Chaldean, Assyrian, or Syrian origin. Dr. Grant attempted to establish their identity with the lost tribes of Israel, but it is conceded "that the argument fails, since it rests upon characteristics common to "Orientals."

Afterwards were visited Tabriz (the Roman Tauris), Zengan, Tehran—as the author spells the more common Teheran—Mashhad, Ispahan, and other towns. An excellent map with the route plainly marked greatly assists the reader in comprehending the geographical details, which are very full and exact. The second portion will be to many the most entertaining part of the book. The religion, family life, government, public and social customs of each race, are treated in a very comprehensive way. Especially interesting is a brief account of the history and religion of the Armenians. The last chapter is devoted to missions, in which the American Presbyterians hold the field, the only European establishment being that of the C.M.S. at Julfah. Full statistics are given. Mr. Bassett writes in an easy and effortless style, occasionally marred by Americanisms, which, however much in their place in the States, seem somewhat slipshod to an English reader. But he is to be congratulated on having written a book well worth reading, and this is high praise in these times of word-spinning and book-making.

*Victoria R. and I.: Her Life and Reign.* By DR. MACAULAY: The Religious Tract Society. 1887.

Dr. Macaulay remarks that when the time comes for the history of Queen Victoria's reign to be written, it will be found that no equal epoch since the commencement of the Christian era—except, perhaps, that

which includes the discovery of America, the invention of printing, and the Reformation—has been so full of important events, affecting the condition and progress of the human race. In this most will concur. The author does not wish to forestall such a history; his is an account of the Queen's personal life. It deals with her rather as daughter, wife, and mother, than as Queen and Empress. Dr. Macaulay has given us, in fact, just what is needed—a plain, simple narrative of a Christian life, and to all it will appeal as an example of what can be done by those who live in high places. It is a staid and sober story, warmed by the honest glow of a devoted loyalty. The binding and illustrations are sumptuous; the type clearness itself. With a very large number of English-speaking people, this will be the Jubilee book of the year.

*Pioneering in New Guinea.* By JAMES CHALMERS, author of "Work and Adventures in New Guinea." With a map and illustrations engraved by E. Whymper from photographs taken by Lindt of Melbourne. Pp. 340. Religious Tract Society.

The author's previous book on New Guinea was reviewed in these pages as soon as it was issued; and, with all good wishes, we invite attention to the interesting and informing pages which he has seen printed during his visit to England, after twenty years' spell of work in Polynesia.

"The circumstances of the author's work have given him a unique position in the great Papuan Island. He is well known to many of the tribes, and he is the personal friend of many of the chiefs. He has travelled up and down in all its accessible districts for the last nine years, so that now both the villages and the inhabitants are more familiar to him than to any other white man." He speaks, therefore, with authority. He says: "The influence of the Gospel of peace is already so marked, that it is working rapid changes in the thoughts and habits of the natives. Hence, it is more than probable that no white man of this generation can possibly see New Guinea and her people under exactly the same conditions as the writer. Succeeding missionaries and observers can never see these people in the same stage of savagery as when he acquired their friendship; so that another reason for printing these rough sketches of the life and habits and beliefs of New Guinea is that they may be on record, and thus serve to measure the progress which is now being made in New Guinea, and will continue to be made in the upward growth towards Christianity and civilization. When, twenty or thirty years hence, the workers of that day give their descriptions of the great island, it may be both instructive and interesting to have on record an account of what she and her people were like in the decade when Christian work began upon her shores."

*Introduction to the Catholic Epistles.* By PATON J. GLOAG, D.D., Minister of Galashiels. Pp. 400. Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark.

Dr. Gloag is known as an able and very careful writer, judicious and truly reverent. His present work will be read with interest by theological students of many grades.

In his Preface, Dr. Gloag states that he has come to the conclusion that the *Didachè* is, with the possible exception of the Epistle of Clemens Romanus, the oldest of the post-Apostolic documents, and was written sometime between A.D. 80 and A.D. 100. "I have seldom referred to the 'Ignatian Epistles,'" he says, "as, notwithstanding all that has been written about them, I consider their authenticity still involved in uncertainty, and their value in Biblical criticism to be unimportant."

The argument on "The Spirits in Prison" is lucid and free from prejudice. He states the different expositions at sufficiently full length, and thus concludes: "The doctrine of a future state, especially that which relates

“to the intermediate state, is a profound mystery : eschatology relates to the darkest enigmas of revelation ; an impenetrable veil hangs over our condition after death, which it has not pleased God to remove. It doth not yet appear what we shall be. We dare not affirm anything positive concerning such a mysterious subject. We have few data to proceed upon. We cannot speak with confidence concerning an eternal hope with regard to those who have died impenitent, however anxious we may be to believe it, in the face of our Lord's strong declarations concerning the undying worm, the unquenchable fire, the impassable gulf fixed between the righteous and the wicked, and especially as the same term (*αιωνός*) is employed to denote the duration of the happiness of the righteous and the misery of the wicked. On the other hand, everlasting punishment is a subject too awful to contemplate, a full realization of which would convert this world, to every benevolent mind, into a scene of unparalleled woe. Here dogmatism is entirely out of place. We must leave the fate of the departed with the Judge of all the earth, Who must inevitably do right, and Whose name and nature is Love ; but whilst we fear His justice, we are still permitted to hope in His mercy.”

*The Moors in Spain.* By S. LANE-POOLE, with the collaboration of ARTHUR GILMAN. London : T. F. Unwin. 1887.

A very careful account of a romantic period in the melancholy history of Spain. The eight centuries of Mohammedan rule are presented in an attractive and accurate picture, and the author compares this Moorish invasion with that of the Turks, with a view to showing that Mohammedanism is not always on the side of culture and humanity, though it certainly was in the case of Spain.

There is a capital account of the battle of the Guadalete, which rang the knell of Spanish independence. Due prominence is also given to the exploits of the Cid, and to Ferdinand's capture of Granada, the Moors' last stronghold. The author views the Saracen occupation with a most favourable eye, and indeed he is justified by the facts. As a popular history the book deserves much praise. It possesses a map and numerous illustrations.

We have much pleasure in recommending a new Tale, *Our Little Lady ; or, Six Hundred Years Ago*, one of Miss Holt's charming and very useful series, “Tales of English Life in the Olden Time.” (John F. Shaw and Co.)

*Pictures of the Past for Little People* is a cheap and pleasing little “Memorial” of the Jubilee reign. It contains a facsimile water-colour drawing by Princess Victoria, June 9th, 1831. (Sunday School Union.)

We have received from the S.P.C.K. two coloured Jubilee portraits of the Queen, and a Jubilee box of attractive little stories. On every cottage wall should hang a copy of the cheaper picture ; very good indeed at the price.—*The Life of Queen Victoria* is an admirable piece of work ; far the best book of the kind we have seen. On almost every page appears an illustration. It is very cheap. The venerable Church Society has conferred a benefit on the masses.

“The Royal Jubilee number” of the *Art Journal* (J. S. Virtue and Co.) is very full and very attractive. The etching of “Her Majesty the Queen” is excellent. We are also much pleased with “The Round Tower, Windsor Castle.”

From the S.P.C.K. we have received *Dandelion Clocks*, *The Peace Egg*, and *A Story of a Birthday*, artistic, pleasing, and cheap.