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I.

DR. BRIGGS' HIGHER CRITICISM OF THE HEXATEUCH EXAMINED.

IN the *Presbyterian Review* for January, 1883, Dr. Briggs published "A Critical Study of the History of the Higher Criticism with Special Reference to the Pentateuch." This is now reprinted in a volume, with a few additions and such verbal corrections as his subsequent change of attitude has rendered necessary, under the title of *The Higher Criticism of the Hexateuch*.^{*} In this amended form it may consequently be regarded as presenting the carefully considered views of the author corrected up to date.

There is an obvious distinction between the Higher Criticism *de jure* and the Higher Criticism *de facto*; and these may differ widely from each other. Critical investigations may be rightly conducted and lead to correct conclusions; or they may be based on wrong principles, follow wrong methods, and lead to false conclusions. Dr. Briggs tells us (*Presbyterian Review* for 1881, p. 578) that "Biblical criticism is represented by two antagonistic parties—evangelical critics and rationalistic critics." And he claims to have shown (*Presbyterian Review* for, 1883, p. 70) that "evangelical Biblical criticism was based on the formal principle of Protestantism, the divine authority of the Scriptures, over against ecclesiastical

^{*} *The Higher Criticism of the Hexateuch*. By Charles Augustus Briggs, D.D. 8vo, pp. 259. The Preface states that "ten years ago the author undertook to write a little book upon the Higher Criticism of the Hexateuch, and at that time he advanced some distance in its preparation. But on reflection he turned aside from it, with the opinion that the times were not yet ripe for it." Now "he presents to the public the result of his studies so far as they have gone."

most beneficent powers, must not die a natural death and his soul or life, conceived of as separable from and outliving the body, be lost to his worshippers or be caught by a successor only at the moment of his natural death, when impaired by disease or decaying strength. He must be slain, therefore, and when in full vigor, by one who can catch and appropriate his divine life at its best. "So long as he could maintain his position by the strong hand it might be inferred that his natural force was not abated; whereas his defeat and death at the hands of another proved that his strength was beginning to fail and that it was time his divine life should be lodged in a less dilapidated tabernacle." The author connects the rule at this point with the general conception of the death and resurrection of vegetation, celebrated so widely in Egypt and Asia Minor under the names of Osiris, Adonis, Dionysus and others with ceremonies strikingly like those of modern Europe, some of the most significant of them tracing back to human sacrifices "designed as a charm to make the sun to shine and the crops to grow."

The second main question finds its answer in illustrating how the wood-kings' life or soul was supposed to be simultaneously embodied also in the golden bough, the two being a sort of twin incorporation of the tree spirit. The divisibility of life, or, otherwise expressed, the plurality of souls, is easily conceived by the savage, unshackled by dogma as he is and "free to explain the facts of life by the assumption of as many souls as he thinks necessary." Plucking the golden bough, therefore, was no unnatural preliminary to attacking the King of the Wood.

The closing chapters of the author's work connect the golden bough with the mistletoe, and through this the ceremonies at Nemi with the primitive cult of the oak, once, it may be, the supreme Aryan god. "The result of our inquiry is to make it probable that, down to the time of the Roman Empire and the beginning of our era, the primitive worship of the Aryans was maintained nearly in its original form in the sacred grove at Nemi as in the oak woods of Gaul, of Prussia and of Scandinavia, and that the King of the Wood lived and died as an incarnation of the supreme Aryan god whose life was in the mistletoe or golden bough."

To all results of such inquiries as our author's, gathering materials from the most widely separated sources in time and space, only degrees of probability attach. The book is diffuse where it might have been condensed, and overprofuse, we think, in its illustration from modern savage life. Yet it has very much valuable suggestion for the student of classical antiquity, and insight into the conceptions of primitive and uncivilized and un-Christianized mankind.

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LIFE AND LETTERS OF ROBERT BROWNING. By Mrs. SUTHERLAND ORR.
Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin & Co., 1891. In 2 vols., pp. xii, 646 (in the two). Index.

This is a semi-authorized biography, Mrs. Orr having the aid and coöperation of the poet's sister in its preparation, and it appears in a uniform print with Messrs. Houghton, Mifflin & Co.'s authorized edition of the poet's works. There is no sign of the assistance of Mr. Barrett Browning, and it has been prepared in direct opposition to Browning's oft-expressed wish. It is to be regretted that so great a man, the sure mark of not one, but of many biographers, should have had such an invincible determination to make the task of writing his life as difficult as possible, and the result as unsatisfactory to his admirers. The dislike he felt for all prying into his private affairs, actual and anticipatory, was settled and morbid, and extended with equal intensity

to his wife's life. This is the more remarkable in that he loved the biographies of others, and that he had plainly learned both in his wife's case and his own experience with the various Browning societies, the strong appetite of the reading public for biographical details. The result shows itself in these volumes. Instead of all those who knew and loved the man uniting in a cordial effort to prepare a book worthy of his noble life, we have a semi-authorized work, full of materials, but by no means prepared from full materials. The result is most readable, but as a biography utterly inadequate. Let us not be thought to condemn the work. We have enjoyed it heartily; it has all the marks of loving and painstaking care; it is written from a standpoint of closest sympathy, and of great familiarity with the works and the person of Browning, and there is scarcely a dull or prosy page in the more than six hundred beautifully printed octavo pages on which the publishers have spent all the book-maker's art. But this does not bring the work up to the mark which we have set for a biography of this truly Titanic man.

This adjective "Titanic" gives the key to our first criticism. From the first page to the last, there is no recognition of the Titanic force in Browning. It was in his mind perhaps, for Mrs. Orr in referring to that glorious poem, "Prospice," says that if he ever was what he claimed to be, crying

"I was ever a fighter—
So one fight more, the last and the best,"

it was purely subjective. Grant that it was so, yet only a man of large mind and strong grasp of the truths of nature and of God, could hope "to hold the mirror up to life" in writing the life of such a man. We feel that, perchance, it is true, as Mrs. Orr says over and over again, that the great poet was the little man; but we are not prepared to admit it without a struggle. And we are happy in finding no word of his in the all too few letters from his pen which write him down the little man. He comes out human enough, but his vices are the vices of large but self-centred natures. Thus we find him forgetful of the claims of others, over-sensitive at neglect, expecting too much, and bitter when he does not win the applause he expected and doubtless did deserve. But on the other hand we find him swift in his recognition of others, kindly, helpful, and in his superb self-abnegation wasting the wealth of years in his loving care of his poet-wife. It was of all things the great man's soul which struggled for utterance in his poems. The want of service—the constant, fixed occupation—which fills most men's lives, produced the littlenesses and the want of personal constancy in his life. Yet he was singularly true in his loves—parental, filial and conjugal—in his friendships and in his devotion to his task of becoming a poet, and, indeed, to most it seemed that he by force of will worked out a destiny to which he was not born. It is all this which Mrs. Orr has forced into the background, preferring to judge him by his off-duty airs and graces, rather than his bearing in the front where duty was to be done.

This ladylike standard follows us into the, to us, far more serious consideration of his religious attitude. Thus, on page 463, we have this statement: "The arguments set forth in 'La Saisiaz' for the immortality of the soul leave no place for the idea, however indefinite, of a Christian revelation on the subject. Christ remained for Mr. Browning a mystery and a message of divine love, but no messenger of divine intention towards mankind." This is a typical statement. And in most of these statements there is the juggling with the jargon of incertitude which we have in this. Yet in the same sentences we have such statements as these, as made by him (p. 463): "If Christ entered the room I should fall on my knees;" "I am an under-

stander of men, and He was no man"—quoting Lamb and Napoleon (p. 542). "The Evangelical Christian and the subjective idealist philosopher were curiously blended in His composition," is the author's judgment of him in another place. To those who recall the noble Christian spirit of such poems as "The Death in the Desert" and "Cleon;" and the strong trust pictured in his dedication of the "Ring and the Book," in "Prospice" and in so many other poems; and the scorn he shows for the quibbles of the doubters in "Ben Karshook's Wisdom;" something more direct than anything herein given is wanted to shake our confidence in the essentially Christian temper of Browning's mind.

We dwell on these points because they seem to go to the root of the matter, and to make the loving tribute of a firm friend the greatest injury to the memory of the poet. But beyond these things, Mrs. Orr seems to have sought to say something new, rather than to write a complete history of Browning's life. To one familiar with the great mass of literature which has centred about Browning, the omission of much of the best known biographical material is very welcome; but it makes these volumes needlessly ephemeral. Thus, in telling the poetic story of Browning's courtship and marriage and happy wedded life, there is no allusion to the "Sonnets from the Portuguese," the very crown of glory of the whole. Nor do we have any adequate account of the various biographical incidents connected with his greater poems, which certainly were obtainable. Nor yet are we fairly made to see the world, the true world of men and women, in which the poet moved. Now and again the friend suppresses a fact to which the public had a right; now and again exposes a fact connected with others which a more kindly hand had left unnoted.

Taken as a whole, these volumes offer rather a pleasantly written and appreciative outline of Browning's life adapted to the present hour, in the main serious and safe, but requiring to be taken with considerable reserve as to his religious attitude.

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HOW THE OTHER HALF LIVES. Studies among the Tenements of New York. With Illustrations. By JACOB A. RIIS. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1890. 8vo, pp. 304, \$2.50. Same work, cheaper edition, 12mo, \$1.25 net. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1891.

THE CHILDREN OF THE POOR. By JACOB A. RIIS, author of *How the Other Half Lives*. Illustrated. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1892. 8vo, pp. xi, 300, \$2.50.

The year of our Lord, 1890, witnessed the publication of two volumes, as widely contrasted as books could well be in the interests which they represent, and also in the trains of thought which they set in motion in reply to the two questions: Who is my neighbor? and, Is life worth living? We refer to Mr. Ward McAllister's *Society as I have Found It* (and done my best to make and keep it), and the earlier of the studies by Mr. Riis now lying before us. They deal with different social strata and make a very different appeal to earnest minds. The momentous problems raised by the first mentioned of these volumes are the great concerns engaging the attention and energy of the reviser of visiting lists, the designer of visiting cards and the regulator of their use, the grand master of ceremonies, the *chef de cuisine*, tailors, milliners and *modistes* of every class and degree, and all who do, and all who would, belong to the very elect of social life, holding no life worth living except within that charmed circle. The problems of Mr. Riis' volumes are of the most intense and painful interest to patriots and philanthropists and Christians; to the supporters of all our great charities, organized and individual; to the heads and subordinates of the health and