

## REVIEWS OF BOOKS.

## CHARLES WESLEY.

CHARLES WESLEY: A STUDY. By D. M. Jones. London: *Skeffington & Co.*  
7s. 6d. net.

The literature of the Methodist revival of the eighteenth century, and of the Wesley family in particular, is very extensive, and on first thoughts any new book on the subject seems superfluous. But the memory of Charles Wesley has been so overshadowed by the memory of his greater brother, that a popular sketch of him has been a desideratum, and here it is. The author (or authoress ?) is indicated by the dedication to be a son (or daughter ?) of "William Rodwell Jones, for over fifty years a Wesleyan minister," and apparently has a special sympathy with Charles Wesley and, to some extent at least, with those ecclesiastical views of his in which he differed from John. So we can thank "D. M. Jones" for a book written with competent knowledge of the hero's life and environment, and with full appreciation of his mind and of his character.

Charles Wesley worked for many years alongside John as an earnest evangelist and devoted leader of the Methodist preachers. But his marriage, and his less robust health, prevented his continuing a laborious life as John did to extreme old age; and in his later years he had more intercourse with literary and musical folk than John; besides which he had not the heavy responsibilities of his brother, who always remained sole head of the Society. Moreover, he retained his High Anglican convictions, and insisted on them strenuously, while John, though still holding them by tradition, let them yield sometimes to the urgent need of unrestricted liberty of action. Charles used all his influence to prevent the Methodists from the Church of England. John did the same, but with less decisiveness. When John sent Coke and Ashbury to the American Colonies as "superintendents," commissioning them to ordain ministers because there was no bishop there, Charles expressed himself bitterly in the familiar lines—

How easily are bishops made  
By man's or woman's whim !  
Wesley his hands on Coke hath laid,  
But who laid hands on *him* ?

So again, when John reluctantly registered his "preaching halls" (as he called them) as "Dissenting Meeting Houses" under the Toleration Act because it was the only way of legalizing them, Charles strongly objected.

But Charles Wesley's chief claim to honour and to our grateful remembrance is due to his hymns. He was certainly the greatest of all hymn-writers. Of the six thousand which he wrote, only a small minority now survive, but they did a mighty work in the revival; and although there are individual hymns by men which are equal or even superior to his best, no other writer has equalled him in the excellence of a large number. The whole Christian Church owes him a debt never to be repaid for our Christmas hymn, "Hark ! the herald-angels sing" (so now written); our Easter hymn, "Christ the Lord is risen to-day"; our Ascension hymn, "Hail the day that sees Him rise"; our Advent hymn, "Lo ! He comes with clouds descending"; also "Jesus, Lover of my soul," "O for a heart to praise my God," "Come, let us join our friends above," "O for a thousand tongues to sing," "Love Divine, all love excelling," "Rejoice, the Lord is King," "Soldiers of Christ, arise,"

and that magnificent sacred poem, "Come, O Thou Traveller unknown." It is good to have so interesting a sketch of the man who enriched our hymnody with these and many others, as we have in the volume now before us.

#### MR. MACDONALD'S RECOLLECTIONS

AS A TALE THAT IS TOLD: RECOLLECTIONS OF MANY YEARS. By the Rev. F. W. Macdonald, sometime President of the Wesleyan Methodist Conference. London: *Cassell & Co.* 10s. 6d. net.

The eminence of Mr. Macdonald as a Wesleyan preacher and his services for many years as Secretary of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society are well known to members of the Church of England, amongst whom this distinguished preacher and speaker has many friends. We welcome, therefore, this account of his long life of happy usefulness told in the graceful and easy English for which he is famous. It brings us into closer acquaintance with the many members of his family who have shone in the artistic and literary worlds. When it is stated that one sister was the mother of Rudyard Kipling, another was the wife of Sir Edward Poynter, and yet another of Sir Edward Burne-Jones, it will be realized that Mr. Macdonald has personal experiences to record which do not fall to the lot of the average minister of religion. Himself a Methodist minister in the third generation, he speaks with great reverence of the influence of both his grandfather and his father. In these days of selfish extravagance the record of what was possible in a home where plain living and high thinking went together conveys something of a reproach. The accounts kept by his father in 1841, the year he was born, are in Mr. Macdonald's possession, and they show that with four children the total income was £163 16s. 0d. and the total expenditure £162 5s. 1d. In the expenditure household expenses appear for £72, subscriptions and charities £7. Besides smaller sums given to poor friends, the £7 included four guineas to the Missionary Society, one guinea to the Kingswood School, Bath, and one guinea to the Bible Society, revealing principle as well as generosity in the matter of charity.

Mr. Macdonald's long life—he is now seventy-eight years of age—falls into three main periods: his work as a circuit minister, his stay at Didsbury College as Theological Lecturer, and many years spent as a Missionary Secretary. He has been a very considerable traveller, and all his life devoted to literature of the best kind, so that his reminiscences of, and comments on, books are many and interesting.

Mr. Macdonald's well-known humour, and great powers of preserving and telling stories, contribute many a light touch to the volume which, by reason of its style, is delightful to read.

Mr. Macdonald's devotion to the Bible has proved itself by the ready service he has ever rendered to the Bible Society. Three times has he spoken at its annual meeting. He was a member of the special Centenary Deputation that visited the Australasian Colonies and Ceylon in 1903, and he has appeared hundreds of times upon the Bible Society's platform in England. Friends of the Society in the Church of England are grateful to him for this service.

