

DR. C. D. GINSBURG.

Dr. Christian David Ginsburg, who has died in London, was one of the most learned of Hebrew scholars, and he worked in a field which most other Hebrews have steadfastly avoided. He was born a Jew at Warsaw in 1831, and he went through the severe Talmudical discipline which was, and to a large extent still is, the education of the more gifted of Jewish lads in the Russian pale. He abandoned Judaism when he was only fifteen years old, and not unnaturally Jews put his "conversion" in the same category as that of his famous contemporary Chevolson, who, long after "conversion" had opened for his scholarship the way of fame, formed a project for founding a Rabbinical seminary to which he was prepared to contribute handsomely. Ginsburg never enjoyed the same measure of fame and fortune as Chevolson attained to, but the London Society for Promoting Christianity among the Jews, with which he became connected, afforded him the opportunity of devoting himself to study and research.

His first ventures were commentaries on "Ecclesiastes" and the "Song of Songs," two books which, from the time of their first admission to the Canon, have had a peculiar attraction for Jews with some leaning to heterodoxy. There are two main lines of Hebrew learning which a Jew who finds strict orthodoxy not to his taste is normally tempted by—medieval Jewish philosophy or textual criticism. The first line has been followed by many Jews who have left their mark on philosophy. The second was chosen by Ginsburg. Textual criticism, as he under-

stood it and as Jewish scholarship understands it, is not the same thing as Higher Criticism. It is the investigation of the traditional text of the Bible.

The Hebrew text of the Bible which has come down has been preserved without alteration by Jews from the time it was committed to writing, although there are evident errors and corruptions. Some of these are indicated in notes which have become part of the accepted text, but apart from these a great many have been handed down by tradition and by the learning of past ages in numerous manuscripts and editions. This Massorah or tradition had been discussed and commented on by numerous mediæval Jewish scholars, but before Ginsburg no attempt had been made at an examination of it which should lead to the establishment of the true Massoretic text. It was this task to which Ginsburg set himself, and which he achieved. He began by an edition published in 1867, text, translation, and notes, of Elias Levitas's fifteenth-century work on the Massorah. His next work was an edition of Jacob Ben Chagim's introduction to his Hebrew Bible, published in 1524. In the next twenty years he collected and issued in three volumes all the Massoretic material which Jewish scholarship had accumulated for a thousand years. The natural sequel was a critical edition of the Bible published in 1894, the introduction to which gives the history of the Massorah, and it is a monument of research into the history of the Bible. Dr. Ginsburg had begun, but not finished, a new edition of the Massoretic Critical Bible, in which he was incorporating much new material.

It is impossible for the layman to appreciate the character of research into so recondite a subject, but one may say that Dr. Ginsburg's services to Bible study by the establishment of the Massoretic text cannot be exaggerated. His life was almost wholly the life of a scholar, but he was a keen Liberal, and he was very gratified when the National Liberal Club gave a dinner in his honour. He was a member of the Committee for the Revision of the Old Testament. He was married twice, and his son is a well-known lawyer.