

MISCELLANEOUS.

THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE OCCIDENT.

BY THE EDITOR.

How often do we hear the spirituality of the East praised in contrast to the material interests of the West. The Oriental is more frugal and contented, more submissive to destiny or God. Lacking the energy of the more rigorous northern races he is easily satisfied in poverty so long as he can eke out a scanty subsistence, and he leads the simple life in a spirit of childlike happiness. The West, on the contrary, is stimulated by an unbounded ambition. Originally so poor in resources and hampered by an unfavorable climate, the northern races of the West started on a career of industrial conquest, of invention, of bold enterprise, and of a culture based upon the utilization of machinery. When we compare the two we must admit the enormous superiority of the West over the East in everything that pertains to the development of life, but we must at the same time recognize that the satisfaction of industrial progress has not always helped to raise the culture of the heart to a higher level. It almost seems as if in the scramble for wealth the most important feature of civilization, the refinement of humaneness, had been lost sight of, and under the influence of such a consideration we hear the praise of the Oriental with his simple childlike faith, with his submission to the dispensation of God and the naïveté of his emotional life. We are fully aware of the advantages which lie on either side. Nevertheless we cannot help raising a protest against the overestimation of the East and the scorn of the West in its own superiority.

Mr. Stanwood Cobb's definition of spirituality as "renunciation, submission to God, and the absence of all desire save his will," (see page 306 of this number) appears wrong, and if we consider the spiritual elements of life as the refinement of man's emotional nature, as his belief in ideals, and the ability to devote all effort to the elevation of humanity, we cannot help thinking that this passive Oriental piety is quite a primitive condition which characterizes the child, while western spirituality in its manly vigor should be ranked higher.

We will say at the same time that the greed and the egotism so strongly marked in western dealings is by no means absent in the Orient. On the contrary, those who really know the Orient from inspection at first hand must grant that the eastern vices of the landlord's greed, of the oppression of the poor, of extortion, of cruelty exercised by the conqueror against the conquered, of brutality, of the most outrageous lasciviousness, of such institutions as child marriage, and generally a disrespect for the natural rights

of the female sex, have produced conditions which it will take centuries to reform under the influence of western civilization. Western visitors see the suffering produced by Oriental traditions which make millions of unfortunate martyrs to the curses of Oriental habits miserable, and we admire the patience, the endurance and the spiritual submission they display. Some of their sufferings have been mitigated under the influence of the western conqueror, as we see for instance in the abolition of such customs as widow-burning. But does it not seem preposterous to denounce the western man as lacking in spirituality in comparison to the Oriental who in his helpless condition needs the assistance of his materialistic and unspiritual brother to drag himself gradually out of the slough into which he has sunk in spite of a so-called superior spirituality?

If by spirituality a dualistic belief in spiritism or kindred notions is meant we must confess that there is more of this sort of spirituality in the East than the West. But is not this an antiquated phase in the conception of spirit? The Orient still lags behind the West in its religious development and is much marred by anti-scientific superstitions. Is there not danger that these childlike races while developing into broader views will lose their religion entirely and become useless and unscrupulous? It seems that a progress which overlaps the natural phases of development is not desirable and that in thus losing their traditional religion, whether to become Christians or atheists, they will simply lose the nobler qualities of their more primitive faith.

We would say in conclusion that with all due respect for the noble qualities of the eastern races, with all the recognition which we must give the elevating influence of the ancient eastern civilization which about 2000 years ago was imported into the northern West, with all the confidence we may cherish for the future development of the East, we must not forget that the West has arisen above the East and that it is now our turn to lend them a helping hand, to develop a higher spirituality which does not consist in a submission to God or the powers that dominate destiny, but in a courageous effort to build up a nobler life through a deeper comprehension of the laws of nature.

CHRISTIANITY AND THE NICHIREN SECT OF BUDDHISM.

On another page we are publishing some instructive facts with regard to the Nichiren sect and its founder. It will be of further interest to our readers in this connection to learn that the present Lord Abbot of that sect regards it as similar to Christianity in essentials if not in outward form. For the following translation from Abbot Honda's writings published in *The Japan Advertiser*, of Tokyo, we are indebted to the Rev. Ernest W. Clement.

"Many who have become aware of evils and the lack of solidarity and harmony, have discovered that the principles of Nichiren are perfectly suited to the needs of the time, and that these teachings are idealism, realism, religion, and nationalism harmoniously combined and can promote the national feeling. Our efforts to lead men to study the Nichiren tenets are not for the purpose of promoting any single religion nor any single sect, but the happiness of the nation and people as a whole.

"As a result of earnest study of Buddhism the glory of the holy Nichiren has been more clearly recognized in society. The reason of this is that the teachings of Nichiren combine the best of Christianity and Buddhism into one great harmonious religion. Nichiren has thrown away the dross of these two religions and has taken the essence of both, thereby forming a most precious teaching. In truth this teaching is founded on life and society. The Nichiren doctrine of the holy one does not depend on real religion and the future state alone. It exists in truth, for the uplift and eternal welfare of the country. The object of these teachings is to promote a healthy state in the society of the present, to satisfy the desires of the individual, to encourage the ideal of benevolence, and though it is hard to steer clear of secularism, the penetrating eyes of the holy one saw these weak points well, and all his life he encouraged organizations for promoting the welfare of society. He planned the reformation of organizations and the peace of the people as individuals. The one thing to lead mankind to enlightenment centers in the doctrine of resolution and the nation's peace.

"Before going into Nichiren's teachings, I should like to say a word about the relation between religion and society. From the beginning in the Nichiren sacred books according to the one vehicle law (*ichi-jeho*) the present conditions of society continue throughout eternity in another world. Faith in religion, and the cultivation of morality are one and the same and are unchangeable. In the future the ideal life and the real life are united, and the spirit and flesh experience a harmonious blending. This thought is expressed in the following words: 'This law of ours (the one vehicle) is enough to fill the world.' The law expressed in other words means time and eternity are the same, different words expressing the same idea. In the same book this expression is found. 'The pleasures of this world are revealed to be continued into Nirvana.' 'The present world is rest and the future will be goodness.'

"These holy words are the most appropriate and harmonious of all the words found in the Buddhist classics. If the people of Europe and America only possessed such classics, how highly would they prize them! That they do not possess them is much to be regretted.

"Generally speaking, Japanese Buddhism has put much emphasis on the thought of the future and future happiness, and has not taken into account real society and the moral life. A way of aiding society has been devised to a limited extent, but the methods have been of a negative character and the failure of Buddhists to exert themselves along positive lines in behalf of the national good, shows Buddhism has lost its vitality. Only Nichiren realized the evil and labored to save society. Nichiren from the beginning proclaimed the establishment of righteousness and the peace of the nation and his reproof of the rulers at that time meant nothing more than the putting into practice this great ideal. When we examine the writings of the holy one everywhere we find doctrine, country and morality equally emphasized. To quote: 'Knowing the doctrine inspires patriotism.' 'A comparison of the laws of the land with Buddhism shows their harmony.' 'The clearing up of the heavens makes earth clear.' 'Knowing Nichiren enables us to understand the laws of the earth.' 'A deep knowledge of earthly laws is found in Buddhism.' These words make it sufficiently clear Nichiren holds out a great ideal to the world and so inspires the faith of society as to enable it to realize this perfect ideal."

BOOK REVIEWS AND NOTES.

BIYONDE CIFRUN. By *George D. Buchanan*. Boston: Buchanan, 1911, Pp. 64.

The author is an occultist or a mystic or whatever we may call that attitude which allows sentiment to take the leading part in building up our world-conception. The naturalist and the scientist pass these propositions by as worthless, and we know very well that from the standpoint of science they possess no value. Nevertheless there is sometimes a poetry in these propositions which is worth heeding, and here lies the secret of the great influence which in former centuries mysticism has exercised upon mankind. The little book before us takes up an idea which is actually the source of all mysticism, the idea of zero, of nothingness, but it is not treated from the standpoint of the mathematician who is fully convinced of the mysterious qualities of the naught, the zero, the cipher.

Mr. Buchanan discusses the zero as the point of rest between motions such as the swing of the pendulum when one force changes into its opposite. He says: "There is much evidence that when a whirling material object, be it a solid, liquid or gas, attains a certain speed, which seems to depend upon other qualities or conditions together with volume and weight, some of the laws which govern it, or rather some of the forces, developed by it below that rate of speed seem to change, some of them even becoming reversed and the object becomes a self-sustaining entity by passing a point in rate of speed (the zero or cifrun) where the development of centrifugal force (that force which tends away from the center) ceases and centripetal force (that force which tends toward the center) is developed both within and beyond certain radii. But at the terminals of those radii it seems to surround itself with a belt or cifrun which separates it in a measure from everything else and at which points it repels, although it attracts at points both within and beyond."

This zero, or, as the author prefers to say, "cifrun," is materialized; or rather it is looked at as an actual positive reality of a mysterious existence which exercises its effects in some way beyond the zero, and thus he speaks of the "Biyonde cifrun." The action of the biyonde cifrun is illustrated with diagrams in which, however, the mind of a materialist will scarcely take much interest. It is a kind of poetry with a mathematical idea at the bottom of it, and we can not deny that it is suggestive. The main object, however, is the author's application to death and immortality. He says: "There are those who enter the dark belt, death, believing that dying is simply lying down to a peaceful eternal sleep; that it is as the bursting of a bubble—that, like the comet, the vacuum which this life sometimes almost seems to be, will close up at that point where we shall touch the inner wall of the cifrun, death, and that we, as individuals, shall there vanish forever—that we exist as does a flame...."

"As the only immortality which it knows is that which lives on in the progeny and reputation which the individual leaves to exist after itself, it influences for high ideals of parentage and personality.

"But whether one believes this or that or any of these, is of little moment. Matters of greater importance, and that demand our immediate attention, confront us at every step."

Attempts like that of our author are interesting both to the psychologist and the historian. Religious movements have grown up from seeds of this

kind, and such phenomena ought not to be neglected by the psychologists of both the individual and the race. There is an intrinsic tendency in all these aspirations which tends to the same goal. It is the goal which all religions aspire for, and our author expresses his aim in the concluding paragraphs as follows:

"The present life is real, full of demands and is the one that concerns just now. He who spends it in doing the right, need have no fears concerning what lies beyond. He who wastes it in dreaming of what awaits him after it is all over, is himself a zero here and might as well move on and make room for better men.

"May it have for its chief aim the elevation of the human race to a higher plane of physical, mental, moral and spiritual, that is ideal, excellence, so that men may dwell together in peace, regardless of differences in beliefs concerning what lies beyond the present.

"The human race is nearing an epoch in which the truthfulness of the basic principles herein contended for will be revealed and acknowledged."

During the autumn and winter months most of the scientific journals and many less technical periodicals of Europe and America have contained obituary essays with reference to the late Henri Poincaré, scientist, but especially mathematician and astronomer. One of the most detailed and appreciative of these is by George Sarton, published in the Bulletin of the Belgian Society of Astronomy, *Ciel et terre*. M. Sarton apparently takes exception to the improvident ways of Providence, saying, "For my part I know of nothing more agonizing (*angoissant*) than a death so unwonted, I was about to say so stupid; it is as if an ill-disposed and jealous fate was implacably bent on destroying the best of us as soon as ever we become too well trained and too discerning. . . . The life of a genius is every bit as fragile as that of an idiot or a bandit. One does not seem to weigh any heavier than the other in the scale of destiny."

Sarton emphasizes as particularly characteristic of Poincaré the encyclopedic quality of his genius in this respect resembling Gauss. He calls attention to the fact that he completed the analytical work of Cauchy and Riemann, that his work in celestial mechanics crowns the magnificent monument whose foundations were laid by Newton, and whose erection was continued by Laplace; that he fathomed and perfected the study of all contemporary physical theories and thus made valuable contributions to the work of Maxwell, Hertz and Lorentz; and that finally this mathematician and physicist has been revealed to us as a master of philosophy, his critical work carrying on most effectively that begun by Kant and Mach.

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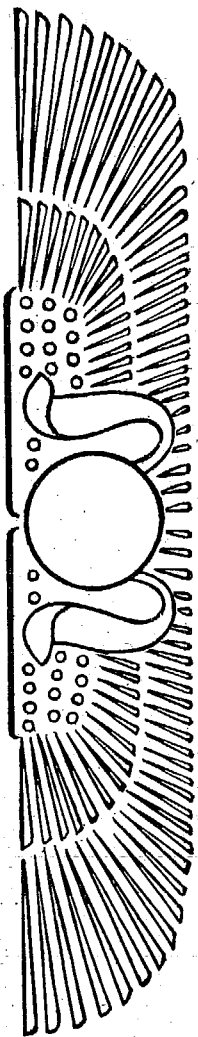
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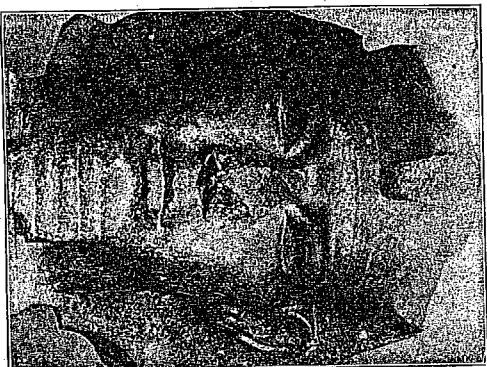
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