

have been a libertine, but in my opinion it is not probable that the report of his treason is reliable, or its historicity even probable.

Rabbi Kaplan calls gnosticism the last flicker of dying paganism, and in this connection we call our readers' attention to our articles on gnosticism and kindred subjects which appeared some time ago in *The Monist*. Gnosticism, in our opinion, is indeed a last flicker of paganism, but it is at the same time the dawn of Christianity. Gnosticism is a religious movement which may be regarded as the initiation of a new faith. When through the conquest of Persia by Alexander the Great, the barriers of the several nationalities, especially that between the Greeks and the Asiatics, broke down, people of different race and religion met for the first time in a friendly exchange of thought, and by contrasting their different beliefs a powerful fermentation set in which, moreover, was fertilised by thoughts of Indian missionaries who preached the doctrines of the great religious leaders of Brahmanism, Buddhism, Jainism, and other Eastern faiths. Thus, the doctrines of the ancient Babylonian religion, purified by Zoroastrian monotheism, were mixed with Indian, Syrian, Jewish, Greek, and Egyptian notions, and the result was a movement the intensity of which came to a climax in the time of Christ. Gnosticism antedated Christianity, and when Christianity appeared Gnosticism at once fell in with it, but with the growth of the Christian Church it soon came to be considered as a mere Christian sect.

That Elisha Ben Abuya was affected by gnosticism is but natural; that it should have been the cause of his apostasy may be true according to our conception of gnosticism, for gnosticism is different according to our definition of it. If we consider it as the whole movement in its full breadth, we ought to look upon it as one of the most powerful factors that produced Christianity. If, however, we take it in the sense in which the Church Fathers understood it, it is a mere Christian sect the vagaries of which provoked criticism and caused its early disappearance from the pages of history.

That the story of Elisha Ben Abuya is a most exquisite subject for a Zangwill or a Franzos, or any scholarly author who writes novels depicting Jewish life, there is no doubt; but if anyone undertook the task it would be highly desirable that he should delineate the character of Acher in a sympathetic spirit and in the light of analogous Jewish characters, viz., Spinoza, Mendelssohn, Heine, etc.,—men who dared to advance far beyond their own time, who read the traditions of their people in the light of a higher philosophical understanding, and thus became suspected as apostates, without necessarily thereby becoming traitors to their own people.

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#### BOOKS FOR THE YOUNG.

Vast as juvenile literature is, selection for critical and classical taste is not easy, and a glance at the ordinary publishers' or literary list will show that the emphasis is only too seldom placed on what is best and noblest in literature. We are glad therefore to be able to commend to the attention of our readers four books from recent juvenile literature that meet the most exacting requirements. Three of these books are new prose versions of the classic tales of the *Odyssey*, the *Æneid*, and *King Arthur*; the fourth is a new compilation,—*A Book of Verses for Children*, by Edward Verrail Lucas.<sup>1</sup>

This anthology of verse for the young is not the first successful compilation

<sup>1</sup> Henry Holt & Co., New York. Pp., 548. Price, cloth, \$2.00.

that Mr. Lucas has attempted, and it bids fair to rival his former and later ventures. The selections cover a wide range, and are drawn, in overwhelming majority, from British, as distinguished from American, literature. While this is intelligible in the case of the great poets, we wish that Mr. Lucas had spared us some of the effusions in the style of Elizabeth Turner and Ann and Jane Taylor; surely, something more virile, and yet perfectly suited to the infantile mind, might have been found even in American literature, to match the real gems of children's poetry which the author has selected. But we will not be captious: there is so much here that is of highest value, culled from the purest and soundest sources, and all so difficult of access in its diffusion, that the book must be regarded as a decided boon to parents and teachers desirous of cultivating, as all from a real religious duty should, the nascent germs of a taste for poetry in children. The infantile in this book is easily separated from the juvenile, and so a wide range of choice suited to all the ages of childhood is possible. As a gift to a child, one could not imagine a more sensible one. Mr. Lucas's work is far from definitive; its volume could, without loss of quality, probably be doubled (only one of the numerous songs and ditties of Shakespeare is included). But what has been done, has been done well, and no one is more conscious of the limitations of the book than the compiler himself. He says:

"I want you to understand there is a kind of poetry that is finer far than anything here; poetry to which this book is, in the old-fashioned phrase, simply a 'stepping-stone.' When you feel, as I hope some day you will feel, that these pages no longer satisfy, then you must turn to the better thing."

Dr. Edward Brooks has retold for boys and girls the stories of the *Æneid*<sup>1</sup> and King Arthur.<sup>2</sup> Dr. Brooks has not minced his English, nor stooped to his audience. His "boys and girls" must know the language if they are to enjoy his stories. But the human interest of these famous classics is so intense that younger readers will be carried by sheer enthusiasm over the difficulties of the vocabulary. Of the *Æneid* we need not speak,—it has both delighted and bored centuries of readers, The original story of King Arthur is much less read. Let us hear Dr. Brooks's comment on it: "The Story of King Arthur is a tale of absorbing interest to both young and old. It tells of knightly encounters and valorous deeds and acts of courtesy, that touch the imagination of youth and inspire their hearts with heroic impulses. Youth is a time for hero-worship, and nowhere in literature can be found nobler examples of lofty heroism than in this story. The events, moving in a shadowy past, give the work a charm of romance and mysticism that appeals to the youthful mind which delights in peopling wood and dale with the creations of its imagination."

Then again the doctor speaks of its moral influence: "The work not only affords a story of surpassing interest for youth, but one that carries with it an influence for noble ideals and actions. While it deals with the conflicts of arms where the spear and the sword are in constant evidence, yet it does so usually for high and noble purposes,—to deal justice and to right the wrongs of the weak and unfortunate. Nearly all the characters are moved by noble impulses and are types

<sup>1</sup> *The Story of the Æneid, or The Adventures of Æneas*. For Boys and Girls. By Dr. Edward Brooks, A. M., Superintendent of Schools of Philadelphia. Philadelphia: The Penn Publishing Co. Pages, 366.

<sup>2</sup> *The Story of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table*. For Boys and Girls. By Dr. Edward Brooks, A. M., Superintendent of Schools of Philadelphia. The Penn Publishing Co. Pages, 383.

of courage, courtesy, and generous actions. The noble order of the Table Round was a shrine of virtue in that early age of darkness and injustice. King Arthur, Sir Galahad, Sir Percivale, and others are model knights of worthiness who are ever striving to act 'worshipfully' and to be true to their knightly vows; and Sir Launcelot, 'the flower of chivalry,' was a model of courtesy, gentleness, and courage,—possessing all those traits that call forth the admiration of the young for noble and heroic deeds. No boy can read the story of King Arthur as here presented without having aroused within him a noble purpose of true and knightly living. That it may bring many happy hours to those who may chance to read it, kindle in their hearts a love of truth and virtue, and awaken high ideals of a life of courtesy and courage and knightly deeds, is the sincere wish of the author."

Dr. Brooks has also told the tales of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. Many are yet to know the fund of inspiration and ennobling thought that lies in these olden epics, and how necessary a knowledge of them is to an appreciation of the world's literature and culture. Yet it is not too much to say that young people can gain more of this inspiration from such versions in their own language as these we have here noted, than they can from the garbled study of a few books or passages of the originals.

We turn to a version of the *Odyssey*<sup>1</sup> for boys by Walter Copeland Perry. Mr. Perry's tale was written for his son Evelyn when in his seventh year. It is based on the translation of Messrs. Butcher and Lang,—being carried in the same style and affecting the same archaic diction: Evelyn must have been, indeed, a precocious youth. Why a modern translation of the *Odyssey*, intended for modern readers, should be couched in the language of the Bible and of Chapman, with much of which we are not familiar save through literature, is difficult to understand. Chapman would scarcely have made his translation into Anglo-Norman; and the translators of the King James's Bible would doubtless not have viewed the proposition with favor to translate the Bible into Anglo-Saxon. But to literary fetishism there be no bounds. And one cannot deny that there is to it all (to its *gat him up's*, its *yea now's*, and its *dight's*) a certain æsthetic titillation. Mr. Perry has, fortunately, preserved but little of Mr. Lang's sixteenth century English, though possibly more than was necessary to impart flavor, vigor, and dignity to his style; and while versions in the style of Charles Lamb's (which should not be forgotten) are more to our taste, yet so conscientious has Mr. Perry's work been, and so sure his emphasis on the vital parts of the story, that no one can err in selecting for their children's reading this version of the immortal Greek classic.

T. J. McCORMACK.

#### MR. MAUDE'S ARTICLE ON TOLSTOY.

The article on the "Misinterpretation of Tolstoy," by Mr. Aylmer Maude, in reply to Mrs. Evans's article on the Russian reformer, published in *The Open Court* for August, was forwarded to the editor by Mr. Ernest Howard Crosby, of New York City. Mr. Crosby, while returning to New York from an international appointment in Alexandria, Egypt, visited Count Tolstoy at his home in Russia, and has, since this meeting, under the influence of Tolstoy's writings, devoted considerable attention to social reform. Mr. Crosby writes that the author of the article

<sup>1</sup> *The Boy's Odyssey*. By Walter Copeland Perry. London: Macmillan & Co., Ltd. New York: The Macmillan Company. 1901. Pages, 204.