

minister invited Mr. Burbank to listen to a sermon on his work, and when the guest was in the pew denounced him in bitter fashion as a man who was working in direct opposition to the will of God, in thus creating new forms of life which never should have been created, or if created, only by God himself."

The incident is comical enough, but it was not so humorous to Mr. Burbank at the time when his only consolation was the hope of proving to the world that his hopes were not the useless dreams of a visionary, but definite ideals the realization of which would raise mankind a step higher in civilization and actualize its divinity in a more complete sense.

Burbank's work stands now before the world and needs no further recommendation. He found out by experience, that to be a business man is one thing and to work for an ideal is another. He found that the business part had to be neglected for the sake of accomplishing the great task so near to his heart, and for this purpose Mr. Carnegie has come to his assistance by keeping a scientific station in Santa Rosa and aiding his work in general. Much has been written on Mr. Burbank, but mostly in a popular way by literary authors. Professor De Vries, however, has done justice to the significance of his labors from the scientific standpoint in his new book on *Plant Breeding*. (Chicago: The Open Court Publishing Co.) P. C.

THE HON. P. RAMANATHAN ON CHRISTIANITY.

Mr. Rámanáthan is Solicitor General of Ceylon, and a distinguished man in his own country, where he is a recognized social and political leader. There are few Orientals better known than he to English, if not to American, readers. He has recently visited America and has written a book on *The Culture of the Soul Among Western Nations* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1906). Though he is not a Christian his attitude toward Christianity is very sympathetic, and if he had his way he would reform Western Christianity according to his ideals of a spiritual life. His position is well characterized in the two mottoes which are inscribed on the title page: Emerson's

"In Greece, every Stoic was a Stoic, but in
Christendom, where is the Christian?"

and Tennyson's

"Ring out the darkness of the land,
Ring in the Christ that is to be."

The impression which Mr. Rámanáthan left on a circle of friends and admirers is best echoed by the editor of this book, Mr. Myron H. Phelps, who says:

"Mr. Rámanáthan leaves many friends in America; many who have received from him a new light, a new hope, and a new inspiration, which they believe will ever continue to illumine and cheer their pathway through life."

Some passages of Mr. Rámanáthan's book contain observations on American life, as he saw it. He says on page 73:

"Thus has dogma taken the place of the quickening precepts of Jesus and Paul. The *Christianity* taught by those masters has been, alas, 'killed' by unsound interpretation, and there remains now *Churchianity*, or an aggregate of different literary and historical problems full of 'vain questions and strifes

of words,' wholly incapable of making men 'wise unto salvation'.....What disastrous consequences have flowed from a want of sound religious knowledge and belief in a future! People have become steeped in worldliness, materialism, irreverence and atheism.

"A worldly minded person is a stumbling block unto himself and to every guileless person. He is what St. Paul calls a Lover of Self.When selfish persons take to economical life and deal with the creation and distribution of commodities necessary for the maintenance and comfort of the body, they adulterate food-stuffs, resort to mean devices in production, and charge excessive prices for the articles made or carried. Others resort to what is called 'pooling' in America, or the sweeping together of commercial interests so as to form monopolies or 'trusts,' the profits of which go to enrich them at the expense of the ordinary consumer. They raise and lower prices at will and care not for the fate of the petty trader. Not content with the advantages enjoyed by them, they invade the political arena and buy up largely the elective power of the people. They then press on all sides upon the government and endeavor to control legislation at their will. In the field of literature, too, their baneful influence is in the ascendent. They form the largest portion of the nation, and their taste for reading is all in the line of sentimental and sensational amusement. Consequently, those who are engaged in the production of books, magazines, and newspapers find themselves obliged to write and publish what is funny, fanciful and thrilling, to the serious neglect of the higher life of humanity. The materialism of the age has affected the very teachers of spirituality. Many and wealthy are the churches, and learned and eloquent are the preachers, but the congregations and the rulers thereof have agreed to don and doff their religion with their Sunday clothes. The constituted leaders of religion do not appear to have a hold upon the people, and they are all, with the exception of a few, drifting to the perils of a life devoid of a goal. As to the scientists who are nobly laboring in the colleges and other places, their discoveries have been applied to the further materialization of the country by sensuous seekers of the 'almighty dollar.'"

It would therefore appear that the author has not found among us the "culture of the soul" which he expected, and he wonders what has brought religious life in the West to so low an ebb, and how it can be revived. To answer these two questions is one of the main purposes of the work.

He looks upon Christ Jesus and his Apostles as grand spiritual teachers, but claims that the intent of their teachings has been lost through the meagreness and obscurity of the Scriptures in which they are recorded. He says:

"Jesus delivered his tradition wholly by word of mouth, and so did his disciples for many years after the crucifixion. Then by degrees his sayings and doings were committed to writing meagrely and even obscurely, lest they be misunderstood, misapplied, or despised, or should lead to the injury or destruction of the bearers of the tradition.....The work of redemption of those who hunger and thirst for peace, when actively carried on has always involved the redeemers in danger, for the simple reason that the doctrines relating to the sanctification of the Spirit falsify the ways of the worldly minded, both teachers and the taught, who are the blind leading the blind. The seeds of truth are, therefore, not acceptable to them and should not be given to them. It is not Jesus only who suffered crucifixion, but Peter also;

and Paul was beheaded. And as to those who by native disposition or previous culture are qualified to receive the truth, only so much of it should be given at a time as the intellectual and spiritual condition of each can assimilate. Therefore did Isaiah say in impressive language, 'the word of the Lord was unto them precept upon precept, line upon line; here a little and there a little; that they might go and fall backwards, and be broken and snared and taken.' The necessity of 'snaring' those born and bred to the ways of the world, and taking them captive only gradually and by slow leavening process, did not permit Paul and other masters to record openly even for these spirits the traditions relating to the Kingdom of God. From such causes arose the meagreness and obscurity of the Scriptures," (p. 61 et seq.).

And again:

"Those who are fit for hearing spiritual truths are the Godly minded, not the worldly one. 'My sheep (i. e., the Godly minded) hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.' Others 'do err,' by misunderstanding the words, and get into perilous frames of mind, becoming controversial, angry, spiteful and even murderous. 'Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under foot and turn again and rend you,' said Jesus.

"Therefore, in addressing a promiscuous gathering it is necessary to speak or write in allegory, parables or proverbs. . . . 'These things have I spoken unto you in proverbs,' explained Jesus; and the disciples said unto him, 'Why speakest thou in parables?' And he answered, '*Unto you*' (the spiritually minded) 'is given to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven, but *to them* (the worldly minded) 'it is not given.'" (Pp. 44, 45.)

Such obscurities and "mysteries" in the Scriptures occasion insoluble difficulties of interpretation to all except those illumined or sanctified men who, having actual knowledge of God and spiritual things, necessarily know the *intended* meaning.

Mr. Rámanáthan has much to say on the Christian doctrine of "the only begotten son" and the term "faith." He would translate the former in the sense that the son of God stands aloof by himself being distinct from the worldly minded, but he criticizes the interpretation that Jesus should be considered as the only son of God, for, insists Mr. Rámanáthan, Jesus himself speaks of his disciples as God's children. The term "faith" so freely used by Paul, however, should not be interpreted as faith or belief, but should be rendered "love."

The central doctrine taught by Christ, as by all true religious teachers, is the prospective union of the soul with God in love. Without it no effective or vital religion is possible. Love should expand in the heart through the successive stages of love for kith and kin, for the neighbor, for fellow-townsmen, for compatriots, until it embraces all beings in the perfect and universal love of God. This is the appointed path for man, and this development of the individual is the only possible cure for the evils which the author sees and deplors in the society of the West.

It is interesting to see how the religious life of the West appears to an Oriental visitor to our shores. No doubt he bases his judgment upon impressions directly received during his sojourn in the United States, and much that he has to say is appropriate. Much also, however, is an echo of opinions which he imbibed from the press and the very people with whom he

became acquainted, and one feels tempted to assume that the spiritual standing of his own country must be gloriously high. We fear, however, that if the tables were turned and a representative of our materialistic world would visit his own country, he would find there the same love of the almighty dollar, with less success in acquiring it, and even the vaunted spirituality would be dissolved into an illusion. Nevertheless, Mr. Rámanáthan is unquestionably a man of high aspirations, and we will do well to become acquainted with his opinions and religious ideals. His book is well worth the perusal.

BOOK REVIEWS AND NOTES.

LIFE AFTER LIFE; or the Theory of Reincarnation. By *Eustace Miles, M. A.*
 London: Methuen, 1907. Pp. 180. Price, 3s. net.

The author would propose for mankind a working hypothesis offering motives for sensible work at once energetic and calm, and for a practical and ethical conduct of life. The theory he advances is that one life in this world follows after another life usually with an interval between (whether of one minute or one hundred and fifty years), and he believes that its adoption would give a sense of infinite hope and infinite responsibility, making us helpers of ourselves and others. He believes that though it may not be materialistically proved true by science it would be true in the sense that it would be safe and sound to use. Mr. Miles says in his preface: "I would ask the reader to recognize its main principle only—namely, that his present circumstances are the fairest possible results of his past lives and his present life up to date, and at the same time the best possible training-ground for his future life and lives. I would ask him not to wait for full proofs, but to begin living daily and hourly as if the theory were proved certainty."

Mr. Miles does not try to force his theory on others, nor does he say that others must believe in it. "I simply say that I must believe it, until I find one that is more useful—one that tends to a better and happier life in this world—one that is more comforting and inspiring."

It is a familiar fact that the maximum amount of information which can be contained in one volume is best evidenced by *Webster's International Dictionary*, published by the G. and C. Merriam Company. In the enlarged edition recently issued it proves itself amply able to keep abreast with the times by the aid of new appendices and by corrections and insertions in the text, while clear and fresh type is insured by a new set of plates. A feature of the Merriam publications that is not so generally realized consists of seven abridgments, called respectively Webster's Collegiate, Countinghouse, Academic, High School, Common School, Primary and Little Gem Dictionaries. These are abridged and arranged with reference to the peculiar needs of the readers for which each is designed. The Countinghouse Dictionary contains commercial tables in its appendix; the High School and Academic Abridgments have specially prepared vocabularies and contain appendices of mythological, historical and classical interest; the Common School and Primary Dictionaries respell the word with phonetic markings to show pronunciation, and the latter restricts its vocabulary to English words. The Little Gem is a pocket manual of great value.