

MISCELLANEOUS.

INTELLECTUALISM AND MORAL EVOLUTION.

Certain reviewers have properly emphasized the essential thesis, or moral, of Mr. H. G. Wells's extraordinary, if superficial, *Outline of History*, while refraining from just and necessary criticism of that thesis. Mr. Wells is an intellectualist. He seems to have profound faith in mere knowledge, in science. He is a "collectivist" of the Fabian school, or evolutionary type, and he believes that ignorance and error are the chief obstacles to human and social progress. In particular, Mr. Wells deplors the harmful effects of popular ignorance of history. What ails lame, blind, halting humanity is the lack of a common tradition, he affirms, and the failure to realize that we are all members of one another, and that our salvation lies in brotherhood—the spirit of unselfish service.

To quote one of the most striking passages in *The Outline*:

"There can be no common peace and prosperity without common historical ideas. . . . Our internal policies and our economic and social ideals are profoundly vitiated by wrong and fantastic ideas of the origin and historical relationship of social classes. A sense of history as the common adventure of all mankind is as necessary for peace within as it is for peace between the nations."

What basis, we may ask, is there in history, in psychology, in sociology, or in our own direct experience, for these very positive, far-reaching affirmations?

For more than nineteen centuries the Christian Church has preached the doctrine of the Fatherhood of God and brotherhood of men. Assuredly this preaching has been inspired by the sense of history as the common adventure of all mankind and the solemn responsibility of each for all and all for each. No organization in the world has a deeper sense of history as the common adventure of all mankind than the Catholic, or "Universal," Church. Yet what is the condition of the civilized and Christian world to-day?

Moreover, if ignorance of the past were the root of all modern social and international ills, the educated, cultivated elements would naturally exhibit more unity, more solidarity, than the illiterate and vulgar. What are the facts? Are the educated persons in any country, or in the world at large, in agreement concerning any difficult economic, social or political problem? Were the German intellectuals and professors less prejudiced and blind in the critical days of 1914, when Junkerdom demanded war in the name of German and Austrian honor and prestige, though neither was affronted, than was the populace generally? How many of the educated Germans saw the situation steadily and

whole at that juncture? Did a sense of history as the common adventure of all mankind tend to clear their minds of cant and poison?

Was there ever a time in history when special privilege, injustice, wrong, narrow and bigoted forms of nationalism, were not supported by educated and cultivated men? The defenders of religious and racial persecutions, the champions of slavery, the apologists for anti-social monopoly have not been deficient in education. Hatred, malice, vanity and arrogance are not the especial vices of the ignorant. Intellectual education, with any amount of history thrown in, does not purge the human heart or substitute sweet reasonableness for passion and sentiment.

Is it necessary to cite authorities on the question at issue? If so, the embarrassment that faces one is the proverbial embarrassment of riches. From St. Paul down to Spencer, John Morley, Anatole France, all serious thinkers have contended that intellectual culture alone will never insure moral and social progress.

"The love of money is the root of all evil," said St. Paul. Dante, no mean psychologist, found the root of human evil in greed, pride and ambition. Herbert Spencer called the intellect a tool of the emotional nature and always stressed the need of educating the heart, the emotions. John Morley, in his *Notes on History*, argues that each school of thought draws from history what lessons or morals it finds suitable and convenient for its own purposes; that the same event is interpreted in different ways by different partisans or doctrinaires. Lord Macaulay says somewhere that if the law of gravitation were deemed to be inimical to any considerable material interest, there would not be wanting arguments against it. Anatole France, who has recently declared himself a disciple of Lenin and a convert of Russian sovietism and communism, insists repeatedly in his critical essays that "passions and sentiments," not ideas and knowledge, govern mankind. By passions and sentiments he means racial and national and class hatreds, prejudices, antipathies, appetites, desires, and the like.

Is it not true, then, that, in Mr. Wells' words, the history of mankind has been a race between education and catastrophe? Yes, it is true, and it is equally and sadly true that, as a rule, catastrophe has won. Revolutions, civil wars, wars of aggression, famines, economic crises—all these episodes in human history show that humanity learns only in the school of bitter experience, learns slowly and imperfectly even in that school, and too easily forgets its lessons. Too many of us—more than one is apt to imagine—are Bourbons—persons who resist necessary and inevitable change until a terrible explosion occurs. Would the study of history change the nature and the mental habits of the Bourbons among us?

Education is indeed the only preventive of catastrophe, but the knowledge of the past is but a small part of the education that can save humanity from avoidable catastrophes in the future. The education chiefly needed is social, moral, practical. We must seek to understand one another, to grasp each other's point of view, to sympathize with one another's difficulties and troubles, to recognize each other's honesty, sincerity, and right to his opinion. Capital and labor will get rid of many of the obstacles in the way of harmonious industrial relations by taking counsel together; by conferring and learning to know each other's needs and anxieties; by establishing direct and intimate contacts. In America we have no classes, and no wrong or ridiculous notions

concerning the origin of social distinctions and divisions. We know that the employer of to-day is often the laborer of yesterday and that the servant of to-day may be the master or boss of to-morrow. We have no aristocracy, and we have no superstitious reverence for our plutocracy. Yet do we know one another, do we seek to understand one another, to remove barriers of station, condition, education, race?

We moderns face certain grave and great problems. Not all of us realize this fact. The first step in education is to bring that fact home to many of those who, though capable of understanding, are indifferent, complacent, ignorant, cynical. The second step is to cooperate systematically in working out the solutions of our problems, cooperate in a hundred different ways, formal and informal. Community centers, neighborhood forums, conferences, symposia, church and club discussions, newspaper publicity—these are some of the means of attaining the end in view—solutions of grave menacing, by mutual accommodation, timely compromises, wise adjustments.

VICTOR S. YARROS.

DR. S. MENDELSON'S "THE ARTERIAL FUNCTION ETC. IN ANCIENT RABBINIC WRITINGS."¹

That the study of ancient Hebrew writings deeply interests and amply rewards any one who has the inclination and the aptitude for it, may be postulated from the fact that so many students, mostly abroad, employ their untiring pens in recording and promulgating the produce of their lucubrations in those musty volumes of the long past; but that it could add much to human knowledge, or in any way correct historical data, twentieth century scholarship is loath to believe. Demurring against the "bookworm's" claim to recognition, the prejudiced critic dismisses him with the sixteenth century anecdote which relates of a Rabbi in some out of the way place, who when told of the discovery of America, after a few minutes cogitation, naively remarked: "No! it is not true; it cannot be true, for the Talmud knows of no such continent!"

Hence it may be with more curiosity than predilection that one will open Dr. Mendelsohn's pamphlet and apathetically start to turn its leaves; but before progressing beyond the first fifty lines, his curiosity will become interest and his apathy will give place to eagerness. He will not lay it down before reading it through; and having read it through and digested the wealth of information crowded into it, he will unhesitatingly subscribe to Huxley's dictum, quoted by our author (p. 26): "That the science of former days is not so despicable as some think; and that, however foolish undue respect for the wisdom of the ancients may be, undue respect for it may be still more reprehensible,"—a dictum which is abundantly demonstrated in the pages of the modest publication before us.

The author's primary object is to prove that, notwithstanding the doctrine of their contemporary physiologists: *Spiritus ex pulmone in cor recipitur et per arterias distribuitur* (Cicero *De Nat. Deorum* II ss), the ancient Rabbis in Palestine and in Babylonia maintained that the arteries are not air tubes (arteria), but blood-carriers; and that, owing to the anastomosis between all arteries and veins, the perforation of the *weridin* (carotids) lets out all the

¹ "Die Funktion der Pulsadern und der Kreislauf des Blutes in altrabbinischer Literatur," von Dr. S. Mendelsohn. *Jenaer Medizin-historische Beiträge*, No. 11. Jena: Gustav Fischer, 1920. 26 pages.

blood from the animal (p. 19f). But while this is his main object, he incidentally corrects many errors in the chronology of scientific discoveries or inventions. For example, he shows that periodicity of comets was known 1500 years before the advent of Newton, and that the use of a crude telescope dates from about the same period (p. 6). These and many other inventions and discoveries, which we have learned to credit to scientists of comparatively late times, he shows, were familiar to the doctors of the Talmud; and the fact that they are spoken of in that stupendous collection of Rabbinical writings the final redaction of which closed about 500 C. E., he rightly adduces as palpable evidence of their high antiquity (*loc. cit.* n. 3).

Considering that, as our author admits (p. 7), the ancient Rabbis delved into the secrets of nature, not with a view of becoming professional anatomists or physiologists, astronomers or geometricians, but with the sense that familiarity with the sciences would aid them in mastering their specialties—religion, ritualism, law; that in fact, one of those Rabbis who was a prodigious mathematician in his age, plainly expressed himself to this effect, saying: "The laws concerning bird-sacrifices and incipient uncleanness are nomological elements, while astronomy and geometry are mere (relishes, appetizers) auxiliaries of wisdom" (p. 6, n. 3),—the attribution to them of high scientific attainments may be astonishing, doubt provoking. However, our author vindicates his claims by numerous quotations from the Talmud and coeval writings. He proves his statements not by ambiguous references and specious constructions of their casual remarks, but by their enactments and actions, arguing on the principle: *Acta exteriore indicant interiore secreta*, and he shows that their practice was the eventuation of their scientific investigation and experimentation. In short, Dr. Mendelsohn's effort shows wonderful learning and is very interesting. His conclusions are perfectly convincing. Carefully pondering them must result in the reader's verdict that the case is gained for the ancient Hebrew teachers, though comparatively late scientists enjoy the plaudits as pioneers.

L. G.

BOOK REVIEWS.

THE ORIGIN OF THE GERMAN CARNIVAL COMEDY. By Maximilian J. Rudwin, Ph. D. New York: G. E. Stechert & Co., 1920. Pp. xii+85.

The author of the book under review, a frequent contributor to *The Open Court*, is favorably known to medieval scholars through a number of researches on the German religious drama (cf. *The Open Court*, Vol. XXXI, 1917, pp. 444-6). He has now followed up his studies on the sacred drama with a monograph on the secular drama. Of the two types of medieval drama, the sacred has almost eclipsed the secular in our interest. While much research has been carried on to further our knowledge of the origin and development of the ecclesiastical plays, the popular plays have received but scant attention from the historians of the drama.

The purpose of this book is to show the growth of the Carnival comedy, the form which the secular drama assumed in medieval Germany, from its earliest beginnings to its culmination in the *Fastnachtsspiele* of Hans Sachs. It is generally assumed that the secular plays grew out of the comical scenes

which had early been introduced into the serious plays. Dr. Rudwin claims an independent origin for the comedy. Just as the Church drama developed out of Christian worship, so the secular drama, the author maintains, originated in the heathen ritual. He then attempts to reconstruct the ancient pagan rites out of the few fragments which have persisted until the present day among the European peasants. He proceeds in much the same way as a scientist reconstructs a dinosaur from the most meagre osseous remains. It is a most ingenious work; and what surprising analogies the pagan beliefs and practices show to Christian creed and cult! This part of the book will interest chiefly the students of the history of religion.

The Carnival, the author maintains, was not instituted by the Church. It is of pagan origin. The word "carnival" is not derived, as is generally assumed, from Latin *carnem levare*, the removal of flesh as food, but from *carrus navalis*, the ship-cart, which played a very important part in Carnival processions for centuries, and which may still be seen in the modern float. The ship had no relation to the sea, but was a symbol of femininity and hence of productivity. In addition to this ceremony were other charms intended to bring about, through "mimetic" magic, the revival of the earth—the death and resurrection of the fertility god, the burning or burying in effigy of Death or Winter, the bringing in of Life or Summer in a tree or branch procession, and the like. In all these magical rites we see the elements of drama, for the leaf-clad mummer is impersonating the vegetation demon. This masked performer the author considers as the originator of the rough and ready comedy of contemporary men and manners. Very soon the ritual acts, it is claimed, were supplemented by comical scenes in which certain individuals among the spectators were imitated.

The Carnival comedy is of country origin, but developed as an art when it later came into the hands of the burghers. In the course of its development it absorbed all the *ludi* of the Feast of Fools and of the Feast of Boys, the *spectacula* of the medieval minstrel, the successor to the Roman *minus* on the one hand and the Germanic *scôp* on the other, and was moreover influenced in its literary form by the Church play. This influence, however, was mutual. The sacred and secular plays of the Middle Ages influenced each other to such a degree that it is very difficult to state in definite terms on which side was the greater debt. The similarities between the two types of medieval drama became so great toward the end of the fifteenth century that they imperceptibly merged into each other. To draw a well-defined line of demarcation between the two would thus be a difficult task.

The author himself thus realizes because of lack of sufficient data, the difficulty of determining the priority and relation of the two types of medieval drama, and he frankly admits, in the Preface, the hypothetical nature of his theory. It must, however, be conceded that his theory is not only original and interesting, but also plausible. Withal the book is well worth reading. It is an acute and accurate study of Carnival custom and comedy in Europe, and a definite contribution not only to the history of the drama, but also to the study of comparative mythology and religion, to anthropology and ethnology.