

Talks about Books.

MR. CHAPMAN, of St. Catherine St., sends along with other books Benjamin Kidd's *Social Evolution*. This publication of Macmillans is not a very large book; it has only about 375 pages. But it is a tiring book that fails to repay you for your fatigue, for you drop it feeling that you have reached no finality, have acquired no definite hope regarding the future of society. When a man writes a book it should be because he has something to tell, a message of some kind to deliver to the world. Mr. Kidd is an out-and-out evolutionist to whom the names of Darwin and Spencer are dear, yet he does not deny the existence of God, while he finds the moral law to be that of human development. He is indebted to Sir Henry Maine for a seed thought to the effect that Western Civilization is an exception to the general history of the world. From this he develops or infers that social evolution is not primarily intellectual but religious. His meaning is that the development of society is not to be found in the lines either of general culture or of political science, but in that of benevolence or altruism. Here was a splendid opportunity for introducing the unselfish divine influence that has been contending with the lower instincts of humanity from the beginning of

the world and which was manifested in the personality of Jesus Christ, the real author of all that is good in Western Civilization. Perhaps Mr. Kidd is an apologist for Christianity in disguise. If this be the case he is to be congratulated, for his disguise is perfect. Like Gibbon of old, he fails to recognize a supernatural factor in the world's progress, and, whether God were in any of his thoughts or not, he certainly is not in any of his words. He and the evolutionists generally agree with the shorter catechism in believing that all things have been made out of nothing, or that out of eternal homogeneous matter and blind force were gradually evolved all forms of being and all energies of nature and soul, in either case an evolution of the greater from the less. The proof-text "The things which are seen were not made of things which do appear" conveys no thought of nothingness nor of eternal physical potentiality, but that of a Spiritual Being of infinite resources, in whom also lies the moral power by which human society is to be regenerated. The subjective state of mind called religious, in order to possess practical and permanent value, must be the steady reflection of the divine moral personality more or less clearly perceived. It is strange that men will