

An Hour with the Editor

PROGRESS OF CHRISTIANITY

A missionary writing to an Indian periodical discusses the prospect for the adoption of Christianity by the people of Hindustan. He has reached the conclusion that while it may be accepted to a greater or less extent by the poorer and more ignorant classes, it stands very little chance of being taken seriously by the educated and influential, that is Christianity as it is now preached. He says in so many words that Roman Catholic, Anglican, Presbyterian, Methodist or any other practical presentation of the faith has little chance of acceptance among the educated classes in the great empire. He gives his reason for so believing, and summed up in a sentence it is that these people demand a system of religion that shall be less doctrinal and more ethical than Christianity as is presented by denominational missionaries. The observation has a wider application than he gives to it, for it holds good in lands that are nominally Christian. Doctrine at best is an effort to explain what is not explainable. A moment's thought ought to convince any intelligent person that to attempt to judge of the relations between man and his Creator, by the rules that are useful in judging of our relations to each other, must necessarily end in failure. If the appeal of Christianity were an appeal to reason alone, it would fail inevitably. It is an appeal to intelligence, but to attempt to argue out the proposition that "Whosoever believeth in Him shall be saved" is to invite defeat. The argument of Christianity is from facts, not from abstract propositions. It may be possible to establish, as has been attempted on this page in recent articles, by abstract reason that there must of necessity be law for the governing of human conduct, that this law must necessarily be of divine origin and that religion must have been either implanted in man at his creation or been conveyed to him by some external power, but to set about to prove by reason that individual salvation in any sense whatever may be accomplished by belief in Christ is hopeless. This can only be proved from facts. Christianity, if it is to make converts of educated non-Christian people and hold its own among those who nominally profess it, must be presented not as an organization, not as a set of observances, not as a collection of doctrines, but as a fact, a fact as real as the force which we call gravitation. Perhaps you remember the case of the blind man, who received his sight at the hands of Jesus. The only thing he pretended to know as to how the cure had been accomplished was, as he expressed it: "Whereas I was blind, now I see." He could not answer the arguments of those who sought to account for the cure by attributing it to some other agency than one inherent in Jesus. He knew the fact; he did not know and it was not necessary for him to know the explanation. Probably not even He, who worked the miracle, could have explained it so that the men could have explained it to any one else. Christianity as it is preached concerns itself too much with definitions of things that cannot be defined, with explanations of things that cannot be explained. Science takes no such course. It accepts facts, and while it may seek to analyze these facts, in its constructive work it takes them for granted. It knows for example that a message can be sent over a wire by means of electricity, or through the air or by some other means. It does not hesitate to employ these means because it does not know how to explain how they act. It attempts to find out the reason of the process, but that is a separate line of inquiry. Applying this thought to constructive Christianity, it is not reasonable to say that the teachers of this faith should rest upon the fact of Christianity and endeavor to impress the truth of that fact upon others and leave the explanation of it for those who think it worth while to try to account for the unexplainable?

Many a man, desirous of accepting Christianity, has been led to turn aside from it because some teacher, acting in the best of faith as he understood it, insisted upon some specific idea, to which the other could not give assent. And when on the top of this comes the statement, as so many of us have heard it over and over again, that unless some particular form of explanation is accepted or some particular ceremony is performed, eternal suffering will follow a life spent in conformity with the law of love, it is not surprising that Christianity as often preached not only fails to make any impression upon educated Hindus but is even losing its hold upon active and intelligent men in Christian countries. It was said in this column last Sunday that religion was not founded upon the Bible, but the Bible upon religion. In like manner it may be said that Christianity is not founded upon doctrine, but doctrine upon Christianity. Doctrine is the attempt of men of greater or less intelligence to explain the fact of Christianity, and it is an effort to explain the divine in terms of humanity, to measure the infinite with the measuring rods of the finite, to define the spiritual in the language of the material.

Christianity is making great progress outside of professedly Christian organizations, for unquestionably the world is steadily progressing towards better things. Men are beginning more and more to observe the precept that they shall do to others and as they that others should do to them. Such measures as

old-age pensions, the relief of poverty, the reformation rather than the punishment of criminals, and so on are all steps in the direction of practical Christianity. They demonstrate the value of the ethical side of Christianity, but have no bearing upon the doctrinal side of it. They would commend the religion which inspires them to any educated man in any part of the world. In these things members of all religious denominations find no difficulty in working in perfect harmony. It is only when they get inside of their own particular church edifices that they feel constrained to strain the mantle of their doctrines, or the barriers of their organizations around themselves. Over the door of many churches is written, so to speak: "Thus far shalt thou come and no further and here shall thy steps in the direction of the betterment of humanity be stayed." Of course there are exceptions, but speaking generally there are three divisions of the church, the Roman Catholic, the Anglican and the various other Protestant organizations, which confine their co-operation in good work to spheres outside their several organizations. To a certain degree this lack of full co-operation is an obstacle to the progress of Christianity, although, doubtless, it also serves to some extent as a stimulus to action. The experience of the last half century certainly shows that, in proportion as the field of co-operation has broadened, the good result achieved by the church organizations has expanded and been more satisfactory in every way. Christianity is both positively and negatively ethical. It does not only say "thou shalt not," but also "thou shalt," and the one obligation is as binding as another. The great rival systems of religion stop at the negative, or perhaps it would be more accurate to say they do not lay much stress upon the positive. They can be supplanted by a Christianity that is distinguished by activity along ethical lines and demonstrates its usefulness by deeds.

SCOTTISH HISTORY

When Queen Mary returned to Scotland, which she had not seen since early childhood, it is said that she wept over the poverty of the land, and she seems to have set herself to work to win the confidence of her subjects. The doctrines of the Reformation had at this time acquired ascendancy in the Northern kingdom, and John Knox, with his dauntless courage and fervid eloquence, had roused the people to a pitch of enthusiasm against the Roman Catholic Church, as represented by Mary of Guise during her regency. The story of John Knox will be told at another time; suffice it to say now that under his powerful leadership the party of the Reformation had obtained such a position that Mary found it necessary to stipulate that she should be allowed to worship according to the dictates of her own conscience. In 1562 the Earl of Huntly, the leader of the Roman Catholic party in Scotland, was slain, and with his death the influence of Protestantism became intensified.

Mary is described as having been a very beautiful woman. Her portraits show a face with regular features, but somewhat weak and sensuous. Suitsors for her hand were many, and her choice fell upon Don Carlos, heir to the throne of Spain. The Kings of Sweden, Denmark and France, the Archduke of Austria, the Dukes of Ferrara, Nemours and Anjou, and Earls of Arran and Leicester were among the number. Suddenly, to the surprise of every one, she selected her cousin, Henry Stewart, Lord Darnley, son of the Earl of Lennox and great-grandson of Henry VII. of England. He was handsome, but weak and vicious, and he was several years younger than Mary, who at the time of her marriage to him in 1565, was only twenty-three years of age. We shall understand the tragedy of Mary's life the better if we remember that it was all crowded into the short space of forty-five years. Darnley was a Roman Catholic, and the marriage was the signal for a Protestant uprising; but Mary proved herself fully equal to the emergency thus created. Her courage and goodness of heart would have probably made her successful as a sovereign, if it had not been for the overbearing and vicious conduct of Darnley. She had conferred upon him the title of king for life, but he attempted to extort from her recognition of his right to succession in the event of her death without children. Mary's chief minister at this time was David Riccio, an Italian of humble origin, but a man of exceptional ability. He came to Scotland with the ambassador from Savoy, whom he served as a musician, and was employed by Mary in the same capacity. She was so impressed by his fidelity that she made him her French Secretary, which office he held at the time of her marriage to Darnley. He and Darnley became very intimate friends, their intimacy extending so far that they often dined together, and not infrequently occupied the same bed. The Earl of Lennox looked with great disfavor upon Riccio's influence, for he regarded him as an obstacle to Darnley's ambitions. He formed a plot with some of the Protestant leaders for Riccio's assassination, Darnley having given his solemn pledge that, if the minister were removed, he would support the Protestant religion. Accordingly, on March 9, 1566, less than eight months after her marriage with Darnley, as she sat at supper with a small party in a room near her sleeping chamber, Darnley led the conspirators to the place. They set upon Riccio, who hid behind the Queen, but while Lord Ker of Fawdon held a pistol to Mary's breast, George Douglas stabbed Riccio

over her shoulder, and then dragged him from the room, where he completed his work, inflicting no less than fifty-six wounds upon the unfortunate Italian. Mary had pleaded passionately for the life of her minister, but when word was brought to her that he was dead, she said: "I will now dry my tears and study revenge." There is not the least reason to suppose that the relations of Mary to Riccio were other than were proper between a Queen and her minister, and it gives us some idea of the spirit of the time, when we read that John Knox described the murder as "a just act and worthy of all praise." That Mary held Riccio in high affection seems not to be disputed, but the most careful critics have united in absolving her from any charge of criminal intimacy. Darnley displayed the meanness of his nature by exhibiting abject fear after the crime had been committed, and followed the Queen from Holyrood to Dunbar, where she took refuge and where a number of the nobility gathered to meet her with a force of good men. At Mary's request he published a statement denying all complicity in the death of Riccio, and she forebore to prosecute the leading conspirators. Her son, afterwards James VI. of Scotland and I. of England, was born June 19, 1566, and at this time her relation with Darnley were badly strained. At this time he was about twenty years of age, and little more than a petulant, quarrelsome and selfish boy; yet his conduct affected the history of two kingdoms.

James, Earl of Bothwell, now assumed a very prominent part in the affairs of Scotland. He was about forty years old, bold, ambitious and impetuous. He was almost continually in strife of some kind, and had found himself compelled to leave the kingdom and take refuge in France. He returned and gave Mary strong support in her efforts to overthrow the conspirators who had slain Riccio. He set himself to work to win the favor of the Queen, and succeeded only too well for her mental and political comfort. It seems as if Fate had determined that this unhappy lady should never be free to exercise her own judgment, and that she should ever be under the influence of men, who, while professing loyalty to her, aimed only at advancing their personal interests.

THE EARTH

XIX.

The river and lake systems of Africa are very extensive and remarkable. Africa has the somewhat unique distinction of having rivers that flow from mountains and discharge into a desert, where their waters are either evaporated or sink into the ground. The streams which flow down the southern slopes of the Atlas mountains are lost in the Sahara. Whether it is their waters which are brought to the surface from artesian wells in the northern part of this desert must of necessity be a matter of surmise. There is only one river of magnitude flowing northward in Africa, namely, the Nile. This is beyond all question the most celebrated river in the world, and it is also one of the largest. For centuries its sources were unknown, and with its annual floods all manner of mysterious ideas were associated. The distance from its ultimate source, or more properly speaking from the source of the southernmost feeder of the Victoria Nyanza, to the sea is 4,100 miles. This is nearly 1,000 miles longer than from the source of the Missouri to the sea. The Nile is formed by the junction of the White River and the Blue River, which unite at Khartum. The former is regarded as the Nile proper, and it receives several important tributaries. Below Khartum it only receives on one tributary, the Atbara, which flows from the mountains of Abyssinia, and from that point to the Mediterranean, a distance of 1,300 miles, measuring the sinuosities of the river, it receives no tributaries. The fall from the Victoria Nyanza to the sea is 3,740 feet. Above its Delta, the Nile maintains an average width of 700 yards, so that it is not nearly as imposing a stream to the eye as one might be disposed to think. The rise of the Nile varies in proportion to the width of the valley. At Cairo it is about 40 feet. A peculiar feature of the upper Nile is the great mass of vegetation, known as the Sudd, which obstructs navigation. So extensive is the growth that no satisfactory means has yet been devised to clear the river of it. The water of the Nile is said to be remarkably soft and sweet. The source of Nile water is the Indian ocean and the moonsoons carry the rain clouds which cause the needed precipitation. As these occur with regularity, the rise of the river is also regular, and in the light of this fact all the mystery attaching to the floods vanishes.

The Niger is rather a system of rivers than a single one. It drains the great area lying between the Gulf of Guinea and the Sahara. Not very much is known of some of its tributaries, but from the head of the principal one of them and following its sinuosities to the sea, the distance is about 3,000 miles. It is a very great river and is navigable for many miles. The Senegal is a fine river, flowing into the Atlantic after a course of approximately 1,000 miles. The Gambia is a river in the same part of the continent and is about of the same magnitude. The greatest of the African rivers flowing into the Atlantic is the Congo, which ranks among the world's greatest waterways. It receives the outflow of the great Tanganyika lake, but some of its tributaries take their rise in the great equatorial forests. In volume the Congo far exceeds the Mississippi, and is probably next to

the Amazon. In times of flood the turbid waters of the Congo can be distinguished plainly a hundred miles out at sea. Ocean steamships can ascend the river 150 miles, and there are at least 1,400 miles of it that are available to river steamers. Much has yet to be learned of the Congo and the regions through which it flows, but its basin is undoubtedly one of the most fertile in the world. Further south than the Congo the Orange flows into the Atlantic. It is a stream of considerable volume and importance. On the east coast of the continent the great river is the Zambesi, which is about 1,800 miles long.

The African lakes are large. Tchad is nearly in the centre of the northern. In the dry season it has an area of 10,000 square miles. At the time of flood it covers an area 50 per cent. greater than Lake Superior; but its depths are not great and therefore it is not in the same class with Superior. Tchad receives no tributaries and has no permanent outlet, but at very high water some of its surplus contents find their way the sea by way of one of tributaries of the Nile. The Victoria Nyanza is a fine lake having a circumference of nearly 1,000 miles. Its greatest length is 250 miles. The Albert Nyanza is a smaller lake in the same part of Africa. Tanganyika is nearly 500 miles long and varies in width up to 60 miles. Lake Nyassa is near the southeast coast of Africa. It is 350 miles long with an average width of 38 miles. Nyasa is very deep. In this same region are several other lakes of considerable magnitude.

Examination of the map of Africa will show that from the mouth of the Nile to the mouth of the Zambesi, or from latitude 30 north to latitude 20 south there is a great series of lakes and rivers extending almost directly north. In fact the mouth of the Zambesi is only a few degrees to the east of the mouth of the Nile. A very short watershed separates the waters of the Nile from Lake Tanganyika, and another short watershed separates that lake from the sources of the Zambesi. This suggests that there is a certain geological uniformity in the construction of the whole continent. This great water region apparently being very different geologically from the remainder of Africa. The Nile made Egypt. The Congo made eastern Africa south of the Gulf of Guinea. The Niger made the region around the head of that Gulf. The Senegal and the Gambia made the extreme western portion of the continent. The Zambesi formed a part of the southeast. We may almost infer with certainty that the moonsoons are primarily responsible for Africa as it is. These winds carried the rain-laden clouds from the Indian Ocean, and they deposited their moisture upon the great plateau which lies parallel to the east coast and not very far inland. The water following down the sides of the table-land carried with them silt and this built up lowlands. The process is not unlike that which formed the Mississippi basin, the prairie land of Canada, the great fertile basin of the Amazon, the pampas of Argentina, the great Plain of China, the vast low-lying areas of Siberia and the fertile areas of Hindustan. The same process is going on all the world over. It can be seen in a relatively smaller scale at the mouth of the Fraser. The traveler to or from Vancouver sees the grey waters of that river heavy with silt. These waters in the centuries have past built up the rich lands of its lower valley and they are continuing to build up new land. The process is slow, but it is steady and in thousands of years it accomplishes great results. The building up of the habitable and cultivable parts of the continents must have required long ages.

Stories of the Classics

(N. de Bertrand Lagin)

The Legend of Prometheus

For the earliest story of Prometheus we are indebted to the poet Hesiod, but subsequent poets innumerable have used the oldtime tale in one form or another, until it has become one of the most familiar of early Grecian myths. Prometheus was one of the sons of the Titan god Iapetus, and the self-appointed guardian and saviour of the human race. Zeus, the supreme god of the Grecian universe, had made up his mind that mankind was an unnecessary and troublesome blot upon the face of the earth, and had resolved to begat a new race. But Prometheus took pity upon man and resolved to save him at all hazards. Zeus' resolve was taken not only on account of his antipathy to man, but because of an old quarrel against Prometheus, and he hoped by the annihilation of the human race to effect two ends, his revenge, and the re-peopleing of the world.

The old quarrel is described by Hesiod, who incidentally explains why it was the practice among the Greeks to offer in sacrifice the bones only of the victim encased in fat. At the period when the gods and mortal man first came to an understanding about privileges and duties, Prometheus killed a steer, and dividing it into two portions, placing on the one side all of the flesh, which he covered with the skin, and on the other side all of the bones, which he covered with the fat. He then invited Zeus to choose which should be the portion of the gods, and which should be retained by man.

Zeus "with both hands" seized upon the white fat, and his wrath was boundless when he discovered the trick that had been played upon him. But he was obliged to abide by his decision, and for all time the gods were entitled to nothing more than the bones and the fat of the sacrifice.

So, in order to effect his purpose of ridding the earth of men, Zeus took away from them the gift of fire. Prometheus, however, managed to secret some of the necessary commodity in a hollow ferule, and thus mankind was saved. Outwitted once more, the supreme deity determined upon an artful scheme, which, carried out successfully, would at least entail endless suffering on the troublesome race of humans.

Prometheus' brother Epimetheus was known as "after thinker," and he was the antithesis of Prometheus in everything, and subservient to him; it was through this brother that Zeus was able to effect his purpose. The gods fashioned a most fascinating female, bestowing upon her the gifts of personal beauty and seeming brilliance of intellect, investing her with "the mind of a dog, a deceitful spirit, and treacherous works." This bundle of inconsistencies was brought to earth and presented to Epimetheus, when Prometheus was absent, and though the wiser brother had strongly enjoined upon him the necessity of refusing any gifts Zeus might offer, Epimetheus was unable to resist the charms of the "Fascinating Mischief," and he allowed her to take up her abode with man.

Now heretofore mankind had been without disease or suffering of any kind, for all the various and many evils had been confined in a strong box, of which Prometheus had the key. But the treacherous Pandora, to further the design of her master, broke open the cask and set all of the evils free, whereupon the earth was encumbered with sin, disease and death. Hope alone remained imprisoned, and without efficacy.

Prometheus' punishment for outwitting Zeus the second time was terrible beyond words to express. He was bound by heavy chains to a great rock which overlooked the sea. Every day wild eagles fed upon his flesh, and through every night his wounds healed, only to be reopened. For many generations did this brave champion suffer this acute torture, until at length Zeus, in order to immortalize the fame of his favorite son Herakles, permitted the latter to kill the eagles and set the captive free.

Some stories tell us that Prometheus was compensated for all of the terrible suffering he endured by day by the happiness which each night brought to him. For then was he transported to the highest heaven and furnished with a thousand delights. Again we are told that so great was his joy at the knowledge that he had saved mankind, that bodily suffering had no pangs for him. It is Eschylus, the famous old Greek tragic poet, who makes of Prometheus this last and noblest incarnation of all.

From Prometheus Bound

Change good to their own nature. I gave Evil Minds all
He has; and in return he chains me here,
Years, ages, night and day, whether the sun
Split my parched skin, or in the moon's night
The crystal-winged snow cling round my hair;
Whilst my beloved race is trampled down
By his thought-executing ministers.
Such is the tyrant's recompense. 'Tis just:
He who is evil can receive no good;
And for a world bestowed or a friend lost
He can feel hate, fear, shame; not gratitude.
He but requites me for my own misdeed.
Kindness to such is keen reproach, which
breaks
With bitter strings the light sleep of revenge.
Submission thou dost know I cannot try;
For what submission but that fatal word,
The death seal of mankind's captivity,
Like the Sicilian's hair-suspended sword,
Which trembles o'er his crown, would he
accept,
Or could I yield? Which yet I will not yield.
Let others flatter crime where it sits throned
In brief omnipotence! Secure are they:
For justice, when triumphant, will weep down
Pity, not punishment, on her own wrongs,
Too much revenge by those who err. I wait,
Enduring thus, the retributive hour
Which since we spake is even nearer now.
But hark, the Hell-hounds clamor. Fear delay!
Behold! heaven lowers under thy father's
frown! . . .

Mercury:
If thou mightest dwell among the gods the
while,
Lapped in voluptuous joy?

Prometheus:
This bleak ravine, these unrepented pains.

Mercury:
Alas! I wonder at it, yet pity thee.

Prometheus:
Pity the self-despising slaves of Heaven,
Not me, within whose mind sits peace serene,
As light in the sun, throned. How vain is talk!
Call up the fields. . . .

REMEMBER THIS

"How did the fatal accident in the air omnibus happen to Dr. Jenks?"
"He was used to stepping off the street car before it stopped, and tried it with the air-bus."
—Fliegende Blaetter.