

AMONG OUR BOOKS.



WHEN the chronicler of bonnie Drumtochty sends out a new book, he finds that the great mass of common people—who have heard him so gladly—are ready, with more than passing interest to listen to his further words. Any author who establishes rapport between himself and his readers, by the creation of a common sympathy,—whether it be song, sermon or story,—comes to occupy the position toward them of a master and teacher, as well as a friend beloved. They are in receptive condition—will-

ing to listen, eager to learn, ready to believe. It is an attitude which, if the author but perceive and use wisely, not only gives him a magnificent opportunity for doing good, but strengthens his own position until he becomes firmly entrenched in the hearts of his readers.

It is always a critical point in an author's literary life when, having roused the reading world to appreciation and watchfulness, he sends out a new venture. Full frequently it means either permanent literary success or oblivion.

Happy is the writer who understands his public and their expectation from him.

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It is very evident to us that Ian Maclaren has made no mistake in this latest volume, "The Mind of the Master."

It is a book for the people—first his own congregation, to whom their minister proffers it in the simple dedication, "To my people, in grateful recognition of their love, loyalty and patience"; and afterwards for that larger audience, almost world-encircling, who are also his people in love and sympathy created by that dear Drumtochty bond.

Such a dedication removes "The Mind of the Master" from the critical sphere of theology. It is not written for theologians nor ecclesiasts, but for the people,—the common people who hear of Christ so gladly when He is brought in sympathetic touch with every-day life. Therefore it should be pronounced upon, 'reviewed,' if you will,—since the word that has come to be so formidably interpreted signifies only a thoughtful 'viewing back,'—by one of the people.

I hardly think any apology is needed for the gravity of our chief book choice this month. If there were, it would be offered thus:

Here is a new book by an author who recently stirred the reading world to its merriest, tenderest depths; who gave us exalted conception of humanity; who discovered divinity in the lowliest guise; who suggested in his previous writings the possibility of a broad, beautiful interpretation of religion. In this book he gives a revelation of the faith which made the Drumtochty ideal possible; and being human, and athirst from long feeding on theological husks, we are eager to consider and accept the same.

Here is a writer whose style has charmed

and fascinated us—with its simple Saxon, its terse phrasing, its force and vividity. We would again enjoy it.

And, not least, here are readers,—not theologians certainly, nor yet the light thought-lutterflies who dip no deeper than the fluttering leaf; but men and women of spiritual perception, who, being all unversed in dogmas and all perplexed by creeds, yet look out with broad and gentle vision into the unseen.

It is for these that "The Mind of the Master" has been written; and since such thoughtful spirits are found as much or more among women than men, since this is a valued volume for their bookshelf,—we write our thoughts concerning it. * * *

"The Mind of the Master" is a book to charm by its magnetism of literary style; all the magic of the pen that wrote Drumtochty is in it; and we are kept in perpetual pleasure by the breezy speech that is so simple, yet forceful and fresh.

In the hands of one less skilled, the grave topics dealt with, chapter by chapter, would become inert; but as we turn the pages, each sparkles with thoughts that indeed may not be new, yet arrest us by the frank vigour of their expression. The author wastes no words, but the very crispness of his phrasing serves to accentuate his meaning.

So we read through this volume of over three hundred pages, turning back many times to re-read and ponder over the broad, generous conceptions of this modern theology. Now the breeze of a sweet reasonableness sweeps through the book; while a robust common sense is its chief basic element.

Often we are thoughtful, many times surprised, yet always interested, and, as a rule, acquiescent, in the statement made. Whether these frank, reverent audacities of belief be acceptable to the theologian, we, who are of the people, know not; whether they be of the humanitarian, latitudinarian, or any other polysyllabled school, we care less. That they clear away perplexities, make faith easier and more beautiful, give a larger hope, glorify human service, uplift the dull plane of daily living, and always and ever magnify the Master, is sufficient for us.

Yet, as our eyes rest upon the many startling statements, so vigorously couched, we know that for less than these the Presbyterian minister of a quarter century, nay, even a decade ago, would have suffered the ban of the Church.

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It is difficult to choose the chapters which take strongest hold upon us, since all are trenchant utterances upon important phases of religious belief, and every chapter is illuminated with spiritual insight, every page with truth shafts tersely winged.

Possibly certain topics will appeal to certain readers according to their mental bias. Yet, to many of us, the chapters entitled 'Ageless Life,' 'The Dynamic of Religion,' and 'Fatherhood, the Final Idea of God,' stand first, not merely in the importance of the subjects with which they deal, but in their newness and beauty of thought and their fulness of conception.

The author's plea for a revival of the personal devotion, the ancient Passion for Jesus, which led the early Christian martyrs to glory in death, comes with a shock of surprise in an age when religion is almost entirely subordinated to reason, and the words 'mystic,' 'enthusiast,' 'visionist,' are looked upon as terms of reproach.

This book appeals essentially to reason and common sense; yet here is one of its finest chapters given over to the magnifying of Jesus, not as an abstract conception, but a real, living presence; while this Broad Churchman (for

the writer is surely that) entreats for a return of the sublime passion of adoration for the person of Jesus which once made men saints and martyrs.

At first the reader feels as if the 'Dynamic of Religion' were an isolated chapter, a Middle Age conception grafted between modern ideas; but as he dwells upon the thought, it becomes a natural and telling part of "The Mind of the Master," since the note sounded throughout the book, in keys minor or major, is always and ever—Christ.

The author's treatment of Christ's conception of the Fatherhood of God,—"Jesus' dearest thought," as he terms it,—and its influence upon the new theology, is very beautiful.

There are other chapters equally fine,—'The Law of Spiritual Gravitation'; 'The Culture of the Cross,' a remarkable monograph; 'The Continuity of Life,' which is really a carollary of 'Ageless Life'; and that concluding chapter, so filled with spiritual insight, 'The Kingdom of God,'—which the author also aptly terms 'the Kingdom of the Beatitudes.'

The first and last named of these chapters are thoughtful expositions of the attitude of Christianity toward society, and the solvent of social problems.

Three words form the ever-recurring dominant in this thoughtful and beautiful interpretation of the mind of the Master,—keynotes which sound the full chord of His teaching. They are Beatitudes, Love, Fatherhood.

Beatitudes, the social human lever; Love for a personal Christ, the dynamic; and Fatherhood, the highest and final human conception of God.

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To give any adequate idea of the thought gems which bestrew the book were impossible. They are as the sands upon the seashore. The pages of the volume before us are dotted thick with pencilled passages, from which it were impossible to make choice.

At rare intervals we come across an expression that jars with our sense of fitness, or of truth. We give instances. The italics in each are our own:

Jesus, by the *one felicitous stroke of the Cross*, has replaced the rule of rights by the idea of sacrifice. . . . Christ arranged His life for Calvary. . . .

The Gospels contain the account of *this delicate experiment in religious science* (Christ's training of His disciples).

But these are stray flaws in gem-strewn pages. There are innumerable brilliant passages that arrest our attention:

When Jesus gave His doctrine of Love in final form, one is struck by a startling omission. He laid on His disciples the repeated charge of Love to one another. He did not at once command them to love God. . . .

The Cross has been too exclusively stated in terms of Justification and Propitiation. . . .

When one passes from the Gospels to the Psalms, he is struck by the absence of the Father. When one returns, he is struck by its presence. The Psalmist never said the word; Jesus never said anything else. . . .

The children of Light are not so much those who have walked in the Light as those who love the Light. . . .

Jesus nowhere commanded that one cling to His Cross; He everywhere commanded that one carry His Cross. . . .

Many beautiful thoughts we find. We have space to quote but one. In the chapter on 'The Continuity of Life' the author says:

Round us on every side are cramped, hindered, still-born lives,—merchants who should have been painters, clerks who should have been poets, labourers who should have been philosophers. Their talent is known to a few friends; they die, and the talent is buried in their coffin. Jesus says No. It has at last been sown for harvest; it will come into the open, and blossom in another land. These also are being trained—trained by waiting. They are the reserve of the race, kept behind the hill till God requires it. They will get their chance; they will come into their kingdom.

"Where the days bury their golden suns
In the dear hopeful West."

"The Mind of the Master," by Ian Maclaren. Fleming Revell Co., Toronto.

REVIEWER.