

it leaves me full of what the lawyers call reasonable doubt. His logic has a curious habit of going half way to a plausible conclusion, and then blowing up completely. For example, he starts off, in one place, by showing how the early criticism of the Gospel of John has broken down—and then proceeds gaily to the assumption that proving an error in criticism is identical with proving the complete authenticity of the thing criticized. Again, he denounces the effort to raise up doubts of the Mosaic authorship and divine inspiration of the Pentateuch—and then clinches his case by showing that the Bible itself “claims in all its parts” that it is “the very literal Word of God.” But the record of a personal experience exhibits the workings of his mind even more beautifully. Early in manhood he had to give up his medical studies on account of ill-health, and went West to recuperate. In Colorado, during a blizzard, he was beset by snow blindness, and had to take to his bed. Suddenly there came upon him “an overwhelming sense of a great light in the room.” How would any ordinary medical student interpret that great light? How would any ordinary ice-wagon driver, or chiropractor, or Methodist bishop, or even catfish interpret it? Obviously, he would refer it to the violent conjunctivitis from which he was suffering—in other words, to a purely physical cause. But not Kelly. After forty-four years of active medical practice he still believes that the glare was due to the presence of God! This divine visitation he speaks of very simply as “the chief event” of his life! It surely was—if it was real!

What I'd like to read is a scientific review, by a scientific psychologist—if any exists—of “A Scientific Man and the Bible.” By what route do otherwise sane men come to believe such palpable nonsense? How is it possible for a human brain to be divided into two insulated halves, one functioning normally, naturally and even brilliantly, and the other capable only of the ghastly balderdash which issues from the minds of Baptist evangelists?

Such balderdash takes various forms, but it is at its worst when it is religious. Why should this be so? What is there in religion that completely flabbergasts the wits of those who believe in it? I see no logical necessity for that flabbergasting. Religion, after all, is nothing but an hypothesis framed to account for what is evidentially unaccounted for. In other fields such hypotheses are common, and yet they do no apparent damage to those who incline to them. But in the religious field they quickly rush the believer to the intellectual Bad Lands. He not only becomes anaesthetic to objective fact; he becomes a violent enemy of objective fact. It annoys and irritates him. He sweeps it away as something somehow evil.

This little book I commend to all persons interested in the mysteries of the so-called mind of man. It is a document full of fascination, especially to the infidel and damned. There is a frankness about it that is refreshing and commendable. The author does not apologize for his notions, nor does he try to bring them into grotesque and incredible harmony with scientific facts. He believes the Bible from cover to cover, fly-specks and all, and he says so (considering his station in life) with great courage.

A Master of Platitude

THE LIFE STORY OF ORISON SWETT MARDEN,
by Margaret Connolly. New York: *The Thomas Y.
Crowell Company.*

“IF DR. MARDEN had not written his first book,” said the late Frank A. Munsey “he would have been a millionaire.” By Munseyan standards, praise could go no higher—and Munsey knew his man, for they were fellow waiters in a Summer hotel fifty-five years ago and kept up friendly exchanges until Marden's death in 1924. Both sprang from the hard, inhospitable soil of Northern New England, both knew dire poverty in youth, both got somewhere a yearning for literary exercises, and both cherished an immense respect for the dol-

lar. But though fate brought them together when they were young, they chose different paths later on. Munsey, with "Afloat in a Great City," "The Boy Broker" and other inspirational master-works behind him, abandoned beautiful letters for the stock market, and eventually gathered in so much money that he could afford to butcher great newspapers in sheer excess of animal spirits, as lesser men butcher clay pigeons. Marden, going the other way, abandoned the hotel business, for which he seems to have had genius, for the pen, and devoted the last thirty years of his life to composition.

His bibliography runs to a hundred or more volumes—a colossal, relentless, overwhelming deluge of words. All his books have the same subject: getting on in the world. That was, to him, the only conceivable goal of human aspiration. Day in and day out, for three decades, he preached his simple gospel to all mankind, not only in his books, but also in countless pamphlets, in lectures, and in the pages of his magazine, *Success*. The success of that gospel was instantaneous and durable. His first book, "Pushing to the Front," went through hundreds of editions, and was translated into a dozen foreign languages. It remained, to the end, his best-seller, but it had many formidable rivals. Altogether, his writings in book-form must have reached a total sale of 20,000,000 copies, including 3,000,000 in 25 tongues other than English. In Germany alone he sold more than 500,000 copies of thirty volumes. He remains today the most popular of American authors in Europe, and by immense odds. I have encountered translations of his books on the news-stands of remote towns in Spain, Poland and Czechoslovakia. In places where even Mark Twain is unknown—nay, even Jack London, and James Oliver Curwood—he holds aloft the banner of American literature.

I lack the stomach for the job myself, but I think a lot could be learned about the psychology of *Homo boobiens* through an intensive study of Marden's vast shelf

of books. Those I have read seem to be exactly alike: no doubt all the rest resemble them very closely. What they preach, in brief, is the high value of hopefulness, hard work, high purpose and unflagging resolution. The appeal is to the natural discontent and vague aspiration of the common man. The remedy offered is partly practical and partly mystical—practical in its insistence upon the sound utility of the lowly virtues, mystical in its constant implication that matter will always yield to mind, that high thinking has a cash value. An evil philosophy? Surely not. A valid one? There it is not so easy to answer. Marden is full of proofs that what he preaches works—but only too often those proofs show the incredible appositeness and impeccability of patent-medicine testimonials. How many false hopes he must have raised in his day! One imagines humble hearts leaping to his gaudy tales of Judge Gary, Beethoven and Edison in the darkest reaches of Montenegro, Norway and Idaho. Down went the dose, but was the patient actually cured? Well, perhaps, he at least *felt* better—and that was something. Marden was not to be pinned down to clinical records; he was, in his way, a poet, and even more a prophet. A religious exaltation was in him; he knew how to roll his eyes. The first article of his creed was that it was a sin to despair—that pessimism was a black crime against the Holy Ghost. He reduced the Beatitudes to one: Blessed are they that believe in their stars, and are up and doing.

His influence was immense, and perhaps mainly for the good. He soothed his customers with his optimistic taffy, and made them happier. It is, indeed, no wonder that eminent figures in finance and industry admired him greatly, and gave his books to their slaves. He turned the discontents of those slaves inward; instead of going on strike and breaking windows they sat up nights trying to generate inspiration and practising hope and patience. He was thus a useful citizen in a democratic State, and comparable to the Rev. Dr.

Billy Sunday. He preached a Direct Action of a benign and laudable sort, with Service running through it. His mark shines brilliantly from the forehead of every Y. M. C. A. secretary in the land, and from the foreheads, too, of most of the editorial writers. Many lesser platitudinarians followed him—for example, Dr. Frank Crane and the Rev. Dr. Henry van Dyke—but he kept ahead of all of them. None other could put the obvious into such mellow and caressing terms. None other could so completely cast off all doubts and misgivings. When he spit on his hands and let himself out, the whole world began to sparkle like a Christmas tree. He was Kiwanis incarnate, with overtones of the Salvation Army. In early manhood he had cast off the demoniacal theology of his native hills, but one treasure of his Puritan heritage he retained to the end: he knew precisely and certainly what God wanted His children to be and do. God wanted them to be happy, and He wanted them to attain to happiness by working hard, saving money, obeying the boss, and keeping on the lookout for better jobs. Thus, after a hiatus of 137 years, Marden took up the torch of Poor Richard. He was, in his way, the American St. Paul. He carried the gospel of American optimism to all the four quarters of the world.

Miss Connolly's biography of him is full of lyrical admiration. She plainly believes that he was a very great man. His early sufferings—he was an orphan, and bound out to heavy farm-work in rocky New Hampshire—cause her to shiver with horror, and she is immensely enthusiastic over his early successes as a hotel-keeper. The collapse of *Success*, as she depicts it, was due wholly to false friends. Her hero, taking a swig from his own jug, bore it philosophically. Presently he was reviving the magazine, and I believe that it still survives. A bachelor until he was fifty-five, he then married imprudently—the bride was less than half his age, and had musical ambitions—and lived to turn the gamble into an extremely happy marriage. A more

industrious man never lived. Always he was writing and writing—the same old story in ever-new words. How much he got upon paper in his time I don't know, but, as I have said, his published work ran beyond a hundred volumes, and shortly before he died he told Miss Connolly that he had 2,000,000 words of unpublished manuscript in his desk. Let his heirs get them into type! The world still yearns for words of hope. It will go on hoping until the final bugle blast. The last sound to issue from a human gullet will be three cheers from the last optimist.

The Aframerican: New Style

THE NEW NEGRO: AN INTERPRETATION, edited by Alain Locke. New York: *Albert & Charles Boni*.

THIS book, it seems to me, is a phenomenon of immense significance. What it represents is the American Negro's final emancipation from his inferiority complex, his bold decision to go it alone. That inferiority complex, until very recently, conditioned all of his thinking, even (and perhaps especially) when he was bellowing most vociferously for his God-given rights. It got into everything that the late Booker Washington ever said or did: the most he could imagine was a Negro almost as good as a white man. It even got into the bitter complainings of the tortured Dr. W. E. Burghardt Du Bois: he seemed to be vastly more intent upon getting Negroes into Pullman cars and Kiwanis than upon finding the Negro soul. Here, at last, it is thrown overboard, without ceremony and without regret. The Negroes who contribute to this dignified and impressive volume (including Dr. Du Bois himself) have very little to say about their race's wrongs: their attention is all upon its merits. They show no sign of being sorry that they are Negroes; they take a fierce sort of pride in it. For the first time one hears clearly the imposing doctrine that, in more than one way, the Negro is superior to the white man. "Suddenly," says Dr. Locke, the editor, "his mind seems to have