

Religion's Voice

As Heard in Recent Books

THE KEEN popular interest manifested in such books as Eddington's *Science and the Unseen World* (Macmillan), previously noted in these pages, is one more evidence of the necessity of adjusting our religious outlook to our scientific knowledge. Professor James Young Simpson in his new book, *Nature, Cosmic, Human and Divine* (Yale University Press), states the matter none too strongly when he says, "It seems clear that that expression of religious thought will alone have the possibility of survival which can show that it is not unrelated to the rest of thought and knowledge." It is that very task which he has attempted in this volume. Writing with a detailed knowledge of even the latest in the field of physical and biological science he shows how science itself drives us back to some ultimate World Ground. And when we let the cosmic process produce its full impression upon us we see unity, order and sustained progress, manifestations that are all of the nature of Mind. These signs do not prove but they point in the direction of what religion has meant by God. This is one of the most rewarding books in this highly important field. It is impressive in its argument and charming in its style.

But men and women with intelligent interest in this field ought not to be satisfied with the religious interpreter's presentation of these fascinating facts of physical science. They ought to go to the astronomers and physicists themselves. Among them there is no greater authority than Sir James Jeans. In *The Universe Around Us* (Macmillan), this distinguished scientist presents the latest conclusions and theories about the universe in which man finds himself. If one would bring his astronomy and physics up to date and thoroughly relish doing so let him read Jeans. And sincere religious men and women will want to do so because of the bearing of all this upon the age old problem of God, a problem which is really at the center of the issues raised by Humanism. Indeed what distinguishes this latest religious movement from liberal Christianity is its denial for all practical purposes of the concept of God. This is evident in the best exposition of Humanism which has yet appeared, *The Quest of the Ages* (Harper), by A. Eustace Haydon. He says, "Instead of asking, 'Does God exist?' . . .

the question is asked direct, 'What support does the universe give to our moral ideals?'" The Cosmic Companion is surrendered as a mere illusion created out of human desires. This is a scholarly summing up of where, the author believes, we have arrived or will soon arrive in religion.

But both liberal theologians and Humanists are at one today in stressing the need for religion's proving itself in the everyday life of men. Spengler in his second volume of *The Decline of the West* (Knopf) may voice his contempt for the sociologist-preacher and insist that religion has nothing to do with the world of actuality, but the genius of present day religion is just the opposite. Particularly is it wrestling with the age old evil of war. Three books on this highly important subject have recently appeared. One of them, *Pacifism in the Modern World*, edited by Devere Allen (Doubleday, Doran), is a compilation of articles by well known advocates of peace. Tagore, Kirby Page, Rufus Jones and a number of others consider this whole subject from their varied points of view. No one, who senses the danger of war and is desirous of working against it while there is still time, should miss this volume. *Must We Have War?* (Harper), by Fred B. Smith, well known religious leader, is an earnest plea backed by facts, many of them secured at first hand, for a warless world. The author would not limit us to any one attack upon the war system. The World Court, the League of Nations, the Kellogg treaty, all these will help, but he believes that religion holds the final verdict for war or peace, so his book is addressed primarily to the Church with a plea that it give "the moral dynamic to win the victory" for peace.

At the heart of the peace movement and the source of much of its driving power there is the out and out pacifist of the Quaker type. *The Christian's Alternative to War* (Macmillan), by Leyton Richards, is one of the best expositions of this position which has yet been published. It is searching in its criticism of the war system and the Christian's relation to it. These three books are a notable addition to our peace literature. Whether one agrees with them or not they are proof that religion is relating itself to the everyday problems of men.

EDMUND B. CHAFFEE.

Oxford Is Rather Better

(Continued from Page 91)

sions the tutor uses his subtle, almost imperceptible, persuasion, but never force, to interest him more deeply in his studies. To this treatment the average student responds readily.

The Yale system is much more closely allied to the procedure of the English schools than to the Oxford system. First and foremost, the student's original choice of subject is far more limited here than at Oxford. Far from being able to select one subject in which to specialize, he has to spend at least half his time studying subjects totally irrelevant to that in which he intends to "major." The result of this can only be that he never goes deep enough into any one subject to become truly interested in it. He is forced to spend a certain number of hours in the classroom, and here the element of force enters in, inevitably eliciting the contrary element of resistance. One could hardly expect a boy of seventeen who has to take eighteen hours of classes per week, and is theoretically expected to do two hours outside reading in connection with each class, not to make every effort to evade the burden as far as possible. He would certainly be unusual if he attempted to exceed this ration by doing further voluntary reading in any sphere which particularly interested him.

Lastly, the absence of a tutorial system removes the personal supervision which, if wisely handled, can do so much to promote the undergraduate's interest in his work. I remember the delightful impressions I had from my first weekly discussions with my tutor in Oxford. I would go and call on him in his rooms in the quiet college quadrangle at a fixed hour each week, and after we had sat some time smoking our pipes and discussing the prospects of the college football team he would ask me what I had discovered about a certain topic I myself had selected for my investigations. I would read him a short essay on the subject, and he would then state his own views, throwing them out as suggestions not as dogmata, soliciting my criticisms and sometimes admitting their validity, or else pointing out where they failed.

I do not mean from the foregoing analysis of the two systems to imply that it is easy to decide which is the superior. There is so much to be said on both sides that it seems impossible that an objective solution of the question will ever be reached. For instance, the grave disadvantage of the Oxford system is that the inherently idle un-

dergraduate will never respond to the various forces which are brought to bear upon the task of interesting him in his work, and of course there is then no safeguard that he may not waste almost his whole time at the university. The Yale system is fortified in this respect, not only with its requirements for class attendance, but also with constant examinations, in which failure to reach a certain standard means an abrupt and undignified termination of one's college career. The broad education which the American system offers, as opposed to the more specialized Oxford education, shows itself in some degree in the greater ease with which an American college man can talk on diverse subjects. Yet this ease is often rather obviously superficial and may be no greater than that which an English schoolboy derives from the broad training that he receives at school, while the latter is nearly always better equipped to talk with authority on one or two subjects. It is common in Oxford for two or three college mates reading the same subject to spend much of their time during their final year discussing their problems amongst themselves, each contributing his own experience on the subject. I myself derived more from this phase of my Oxford life than from any other academic institution, and yet it is a phase which, for lack of time, could never develop to any extent amongst Yale undergraduates.

The relative success of the two systems may not unfairly be tested by the light in which the respective student bodies judge them. In this connection I may say that while I have heard constant criticism of the Yale system from its undergraduates, I never heard a word of adverse criticism in Oxford save from professional malcontents.

I have tried in this brief survey of my first impressions of an American university to bring out the main features in which it differs from Oxford and Cambridge. These differences seem to a large extent typical of the national characteristics of the two countries. The sense of ease, tolerance, and *laissez-faire*, which is typical of the English temperament, pervades Oxford, and will undoubtedly tend to render it insusceptible to change either for better or for worse. A sense of scientific and business-like management, of tangible accomplishment, characterizes American ideals, and finds its place in Yale. It will as certainly assist the university to go forward from improvement to improvement in the evolution of a first-class college system.

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Forecast

The Outlook and Independent Announces

IN REPLY to the frequent charge that we only present the "wet" side of the prohibition issue we are glad to announce that the leading article of the next issue is by a "dry". In "A Prohibitionist Faces Facts" Francis M. Cockerell, son of the late Senator from Missouri and a strong supporter of the Eighteenth Amendment, admits that the use of liquor cannot be entirely suppressed by legislation and that an obligation to remedy present conditions rests upon those responsible for them—namely the prohibitionists.



AMERICA'S ANNUAL BILL for cosmetics is at least \$2,000,000,000. The tonnage of alluringly named creams, lotions, rouges, etc., consumed yearly is staggering and the lipsticks used, if placed end to end would reach from Chicago to Los Angeles. Such at least is the claim of Paul W. White, a member of the staff of the United Press. In "Our Booming Beauty Business," Mr. White explains how the "beautician" thrives and the woman pays.



THE VOLUME of correspondence that we have received on the subject of Miss I. A. R. Wylie's "The Merest Trifle" published recently in the Outlook and Independent would indicate that our readers have a distinct interest in religion. In "God, 1930" Gilbert P. Simons reveals his personal convictions. While not a member of any church, Mr. Simons indicates that the younger men are still thinking about religion although their definition of it may differ from that formally accepted.



THE APPROACHING London Naval Disarmament Conference is certain to provoke a spirited discussion of the problems of parity and the freedom of the seas. In "A Preface to Parity" Henry Kittredge Norton explains many of the complicated problems which must be solved before a satisfactory agreement can be reached and suggests that the success of the conference may depend on Great Britain's ability to arrive at an understanding with France and Italy. Mr. Norton is a well known author and journalist.

The Theatre

By FRANCIS R. BELLAMY

QUARRELLING with dramatists who amuse you in spite of yourself seems a footless business; particularly when the playwright in question appears to please his audiences.

But we feel just that way about Mr. St. John Ervine's new comedy, *The First Mrs. Fraser*. We are haunted by a picture of Mr. Ervine viewing Ina Claire in, let us say, Somerset Maugham's *Our Betters*—and saying to himself, "Go to! I shall write just such a smartly amusing comedy! Ina Claire, as the attractive wife who is deserted by her Scotch husband for a mere gold digger—only to triumph over both magnificently, in the third act!"

Presto, *The First Mrs. Fraser*; only with Grace George in the title rôle, instead of the accomplished Miss Claire.

Obviously, we are unfair to Mr. Ervine. And yet we cannot shake off our absurd animus toward that erstwhile critic because he has apparently not come through with a strikingly original or distinguished play; but instead has chosen to take all the old tricks out of the bag, and make us laugh at them. More, there remains with us a most unpleasant impression of the subtle emotional undercurrents on which Mr. Ervine has set his characters adrift. We do not like smart young sons who speak like cads to their fathers. We are not attracted by ladies who insult each other and play sharp tricks to gain their ends. We do not believe that rich Scotch husbands who desert their wives for cheap gold diggers, who are so dumb that they are cuckolds and so egotistical that they return complacently to their first wives under the impression that these wives are still their property—we do not believe that such husbands are so attractive that ladies worth marrying spend their time waiting for them to return.

There is none of the original perception of *Jane Clegg* in this play. Instead, there is a stunted hatred of passion, *per se*; of youth, labelled selfish; of groups called Younger Generations, professing New Philosophies.

Really, for Mr. Ervine it is rather stupid. Thank God for A. E. Mathews and the genial Mr. Grossmith and occasionally for Grace George. Here are attractive people whom even their rôles cannot make repellent. Here, too, are skillful actors who can make unbelievable situations genuinely entertaining.

If *The First Mrs. Fraser* were a devastating satire on certain people in society, we should not complain. But it is an uneven comedy in which Mr. Ervine occasionally preaches—and we are unable to believe in his presentation of human motives and psychology. Luckily, laughter is not always akin to tears. Luckily, that is, for Mr. Ervine. For the beholder there remains an unpleasant after taste, as if one had been laughing at dwarfs. To judge from this play, Mr. Ervine's perceptions of the verities of human emotion have not kept pace with his intellectual abilities.

In fact, as an example of the English point of view, we much prefer Mr. Charles B. Cochran's London revue, *Wake Up and Dream*. Here is that handsome devil Jack Buchanan singing "She's such a comfort to me," playing the lover in one skit, the gigolo in another, the enraptured and idiotic traffic court defendant in a third, and generally being his engaging self. Here is Tilly Losch dancing most enchantingly, Tina Meller doing startling specialties, and a young lady named Jessie Mathews presenting the Briton's idea of a musical comedy lead. Here, too, is such an absurd affair as the

famous performing horse "Pogo" with his belligerent eye and his unmanageable legs.

Place these characters in a succession of scenes which might have been collaborated on by Lewis Carroll in his *Alice In Wonderland* mood and M. Balieff in his more sane *Chauve Souris* moments—and you have *Wake Up and Dream*.

Cole Porter could have contributed better lyrics and music. We doubt if it will be remembered in twenty years. But it is very engaging, for all of that.

Along Broadway

WE LIKED:

Many Waters
Strictly Dishonorable
Sweet Adeline
Bird in Hand
Journey's End
Little Show
Street Scene
It's a Wise Child
Berkeley Square
Fifty Million Frenchmen
Sons o' Guns

WE FOUND ENTERTAINING:

Gambling
Silver Swan
Heads Up
Sketch Book
Follow Thru
Candle Light
June Moon
Veneer
Game of Love
and Death

WE CAN'T RECOMMEND:

Jenny
How's Your Health
Street Singer
Criminal Code
A Wonderful Night
Mendel Inc.
Young Sinners
Salt Water