

Literary News and Criticism

A French Scholar's History of All the Religions.

ORPHEUS. A General History of Religions. From the French of Salomon Reinach, author of "Apollon," etc., by Florence Simmonds. Revised by the author. 8vo, pp. xiv, 428. G. P. Putnam's Sons.

For the reason that these "infinitely curious products of man's imagination and of man's reason in its infancy" called religions are not equally interesting, it is most that the larger share of our attention should go to those faiths that have occupied the greatest place in history. In these studies, offered as a modest summary of religions in general, and of their histories, an entire chapter is devoted to the Egyptian, Babylonian, and Assyrian, the second to Aryan, Hindu and Persian, the third to the Greek and Roman and the fourth to Celts, Germans and Slavs. The fifth chapter, of twelve pages, deals with Chinese, Japanese, Mongolians, Finns, Africans, Oceanians and Americans. The Mussulmans and the Hebrews have a chapter each and Christianity has five chapters. With Judaea and the Christian religion filling more than half the pages of the book, Buddhism takes seven pages, while the religions of China and Japan take three and two, respectively. The author's preoccupations prevent any very close following of his own principle of allotment. The actual basis of religion he finds is so long anterior to literature that we cannot depend on the poets and philosophers for our knowledge of it. Rather, it is by primitive works of art, says M. Reinach, and still more clearly by analysis of religious customs, of rites which often survive the conceptions of which they are the echo, that the real structure of religion is revealed to us.

Looked at by the light of survivals and ancient rites, the beginnings of cults so referred as the Greek are seen to be identical with those of all other religions, even the most savage. Only, where the Australian native remained, the Greek neverly passed by. The study of antiquities being, then, a necessary discipline for understanding the subject, we are provided in the present volume with a store of materials that gives new witness to the author's lifelong researches and to his encyclopedic enthusiasm in matters not directly archaeological. Whatever the religion in question, some compact account is always forthcoming; but it is the illuminating and full accompaniment of examples of early customs that constitutes the worth of the book, a worth that need not be impaired by the author's opinions about the essence of religious faith. Here are discussions, and they are never dreary, as to philological affinities between the Saxon and Scandinavian mythologies, as to the motive of magic in the poems of the Skalds, the *huld*, and in the Roman *carmina*; descriptions of animistic idolatries, sacrifices, purifications, masquerades, incubations, mystic and funeral rites. Such an assemblage of savage and civilized cults is seldom seen, and the apparatus may lead some sinner in the seat of the scornful to call the mind "Wild religions I have met," the alternative title so cheerfully proposed for Professor William James' "Varieties of Religious Experience." True to the manes of that Orpheus who once upon a time introduced to humankind as many as three hundred and sixty gods, M. Reinach has

erected a commodious pantheon, and it is open to all comers. For the purposes of a working definition, M. Reinach proposes to call religion "a sum of scruples which impede the free exercise of our faculties"; its primary elements are animism and taboo, and these are accompanied by totemism and magic. He continues: To the natural, I might almost say the physiological, action of animism are due the conceptions of those invisible genii with which nature teems, spirits of the air and of the moon, of the trees and waters, of thunder and lightning, of mountains and rocks, not to speak of the spirits of the dead, which are souls, and the spirit of spirits, who is God. To the influence of taboo, which creates the ideas of sacred and profane, of things or actions forbidden or permitted, religious laws and piety are due. The Jehovah of the rocks and clouds of Sinai is a product of animism; the Decalogue is a revision of an old code of taboos.

Totemism, an obvious consequence of believing that all things are animated by spirits, is the worship of the animal, plant, mineral or celestial body in which the clan acknowledges a protector and a rallying sign. Magic, the fourth element, might be called the strategy of animism. As an attempt to subdue nature in man's interest, it is an anticipation of true science. A priestly magician in Babylonia pondering a sheep's liver is doing more than to satisfy an immediate need of the worshipper; he is unwittingly pointing the way toward anatomy, just as by seeking signs in the heavens he is giving an initial impulse in the direction of astronomy. Similarly, it is the attempt by magic to fascinate comestible and desirable animals that leads to the primitive art attested by carvings, engravings and paintings on the walls of caves in Périgord and the Pyrenean region, in Gaul.

Let us we should imagine his fourfold account of religion (as animism, taboo, totemism and magic) to be but the dingy outcome of a sort of slumming expedition in the ends of the earth. M. Reinach replies us with examples of these very elements among enlightened and highly respected religions. Animism indelibly traced in the cults of Egypt and Babylon, of India and China and of Greece and Rome has left its impress on our own times. Even the personifications of our poetry are an inheritance from that primeval moment when those distant relatives of ours were fain to invest every object with a living spirit. And what great gift is there, we are asked, between the state of mind of the redskin who says of the river's flow, "It is the spirit of the water taking flight" and the state of mind of Lamartine when singing to his *Lac du Bourget*?

With his flair for anything like a survival from early or prehistoric forms, the author is never happier than when delving for relics of pagan worship and showing us treasures like the heifer's head in silver exhumed at Mycenae. The head recalls the "ox-eyed Hera" of Homer, and it seems to indicate animal worship resembling that prevalent in Egypt, where divinities with animal heads and human bodies were long represented by art. A bronze group discovered near Berne and dating from the first or second century of the Christian era reflects the cult of Artio, the bear goddess. From time immemorial the town of Berne has kept bears, and the practice has not lacked the usual explanatory legend. Thanks to the fortunate discovery of the bronze group, we

are now able to discern in the municipal custom a legacy from the prehistoric worship of the bear as a totem. A more patent instance is offered in the fact that the Hebrews abstained from killing or eating animals such as the pig, whose ancestors, wild boars, had been the totems of their forefathers. In the pervasiveness of Balaam's belabored and somewhat overworked assistant our author comes upon a precious find, an echo, of course, of the worship of the ass considered as an oracular animal. The idea of taboo common to all primitive races has left numerous vestiges in the religion of Israel. The tree of Paradise was taboo, God forbade man to eat the fruit thereof without saying why, and the penalty of disobedience was death. If we find that Adam, after disregarding the taboo, did not die it is because the present text in Genesis is a compilation from earlier documents, one of which probably recorded the sudden death of the first man. Imperatives of taboo applied likewise to the ark of the covenant to spoils of war, to parturients and corpses. The Sabbath also was taboo, an unlucky day, much as Friday is to some superstitious moderns. Here, says the author, we are at the genesis of morals, and if taboo is the principle of morality and decency, all honor to taboo!

When we reach the chapters dealing with Judaism and Christianity it is the encyclopedist rather than the antiquary who attempts to guide us. There is the same alert imagination as before, with the difference that the material is less under control, for, while the bibliographical references are many, the sources from which the author draws are comparatively few. The heartiness with which he acknowledges the moral preclusiveness of the Hebrew prophets goes well with his regard for the fine interpretative insight of James Darmesteter. The Bible, he thinks, has done much harm by furthering fanaticism. Yet, on the whole, it has done more good than harm. "It was the Bible, not the somewhat disdainful philosophy of Greece, which was the first educative force in Europe, which prepared her to assimilate Hellenism after the Renaissance, which by opening wider vistas before her, has gradually enabled her to dispense with its guidance." Touching on the vicissitudes of the Hebrews through the latest rignors of anti-Semitism, the author deplores the fact that, in France, after the rehabilitation of Captain Dreyfus, prejudice has reappeared in all classes of society, and now a Jew who aspires to position of any sort requires greater talent and more strenuous efforts than his fellows of other confessions.

The upshot of M. Reinach's inquiry regarding the New Testament and other early Christian literature it that not even the elements of a reliable biography of Jesus are available. This is to forsake the consensus of critical scholarship, but it is the most radical opinion that usually gets the vote, and any failure on the part of a book in the Bible to substantiate some traditional claim about its authorship is quite enough to brand the document a forgery. True, Irand the documents scattered throughout the Roman Empire by 100 A. D., and the religion remains not only a great institution, but "the mightiest spiritual force which has ever transformed souls, a force which continues to evolve them." As for St. Paul, having superimposed theology on life he can be awarded only scant praise, the perpetrator of archaic errors of redemption and expiation, and the promoter of eighteen centuries of erid discussion. Nor is there any lyrical expansion over ecclesiastical Christianity with its councils and forged decretals, its fanatical crusades and sanguinary inquisitions, its burning of witches and harrying of heretics and its persistent diffusion of dogmatic darkness. On the contrary, M. Reinach quickly turns to the mention of a Papal bull, and his chronicle is ever much mixed with indictment. Of the orthodox church responsible for the deterioration of the Greek people, he says: "It familiarizes them from their earliest youth with horrible color daubs which it calls icons, with drawing and nasal voices, with stories of the saints which are an outrage on reason. The modern Greeks are no artists; they cannot sing in tune and they have not yet given a man of genius to the world." To deny, entirely, the excellence of the medieval church would, he says, be making a miracle of its duration. The church did proclaim a gospel whose principles, without much support from Christian practice, served as a check on barbarism; it gave to Europe the external forms of Christianity; it fostered art; it affirmed, in words at least, the superiority of the spirit to mere brute force and it upheld the doctrine of the equality of all men before God. If M. Reinach prefers the frank atheism of Diderot to the opportunist deism of Voltaire, and dissents roundly from the view held by the latter of religion as due to priestly imposture, he nevertheless frequently recalls that Negulling penman in wizardry of phrase and in a slightly mischievous inadequacy of detail. Could anything be more in the master's manner than this comment on the priority in composition of the code of Hammurabi over that of the Ten Commandments: "If, then, this latter was dictated by God to Moses, God must have plagiarized from Hammurabi." The prophecy of Daniel is called a literary fraud, with no mention of the fact that the Book of Daniel belongs to a group of Jewish apocalypses whose literary form required the invoking of venerable names, much in the way that M. Reinach's fascinating book is called after Orpheus. St. Augustine is made to absolve the Manicheans of all immoral practices, and the later sect of Paulicians is erroneously assimilated to the Manicheans. The Christian Trinity is confused with a trio of deities—that is, with polytheism. The extension of Methodism in America is credited to the Calvinist, George Whitefield, and it is charged that the great meetings of this sect have been occasionally discredited by a touch of convulsive charlatanry. Despite the incontestable contribution of Protestant missions to the higher life of China during the last century, the entire relation of Christianity to the empire is disposed of in a sentence or two, to the effect that the Chinese do not like the Christian missionaries, who now disconcert among them and protect many converted criminals. Tribes these are, to be sure, but in their limited setting they make travesties of their subjects.

The Christian religion, to whose manifestations he has devoted so much of his space, is very closely identified in the author's mind with an institutional, obscurantist orthodoxy having its back to the future. Accordingly, he has a deep feeling of moral responsibility in presenting for the first time an account of religions considered as natural phenomena and nothing more. For the reader, the solemnity of the step may be miti-

gated by the remembrance that such reports have been published before, and that not only in matters of textual criticism but also in the wider field of comparative religion our author could ill afford to dispense with the aid of Christian scholarship. As for the attempt to reduce religion to the limits of definitions based on a scrutiny of origins, the endeavor is futile in a day when psychology rather than anthropology is the chief witness to religion. It would indeed be a poor confession for our human nature to suppose that beyond animism and totemism there had been no essential advance, and no spiritual earnings for the race from its tumultuous joys and through its uncounted years of pain. Seeing, nevertheless, that in the life of our time religion is in no aspect entirely negligible, there can be nothing but welcome for such light as M. Reinach has brought to bear on religious antiquities.

THE CLOWN

A Vivid Story of a Happy, Hard-working, Useful Life.

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF A CLOWN. As Told to Isaac F. Marcossou. Illustrated. 12mo, pp. xii, 192. Moffat, Yard & Co.

This brief and uncommonly interesting narrative closes with a sentiment which might well have been placed upon the title page—"It is good to be a clown." Mr. Marcossou's modest friend, Jules Tournour, has hardships to relate, but his is a happy autobiography, and this not simply because it embraces one specific matter of cheerfulness or another, but because there shines through it a rare sweetness of character. The story is told, too, with a very winning and sometimes touching simplicity. It is an honest little book, which readers who are interested in the homely virtues of humankind will not neglect.

Mr. Tournour was fortunate in his birth. He first saw the light in a circus wagon, the child of an acrobat and a dancer. Thenceforth he travelled with the show managed by his parents until, at the age of six, his thrifty French father took him to London and handed him over to a "Mr. Conrad." The moment, of transcendent importance in his life, is thus tersely described: He and my father talked a long time. Every once in a while I heard my name mentioned. Finally the man came over to me, poked me up in one hand (he was a giant in strength), and flung me up in the air. He caught me, and then let me slide to the floor. After he left my father said: "Jules, henceforth you are to live with that man, he is to be your father and teacher. Be a good boy." Then he told me that I had been apprenticed to the hands, who were a famous acrobatic family.

The Conrads proceeded to turn him into a good contortionist. One took him by the arms and another by the feet and bent him back and forth until sometimes he thought he should die from weariness and ache. When he wept they would jeer and say, "Only babies cry. Be a man." The boy had pluck and pulled himself through. Ten years later his apprenticeship, during which he had received not a cent of pay, came to an end and he was at liberty, being by this time a clever performer, to form an acrobatic "family" of his own. He earned now \$100 a week, but after a year of this prosperity he collapsed. Repeated stays in hospital only left him in his twentieth year to face the fact that his career as a contortionist was ended. There is a quiet pathos about it. He had gone through a "little lifetime of pain and struggle and had had to admit defeat. But there is no self-pity in his story. That is one of its charms.

Beginning over again, with only the world of the circus to explore for a living, he was presently advised by a friendly ringmaster to "try clowning," and proceeded to study what he characterizes as "a serious and difficult business." The true clown is born, not made, but there is much for him to learn. For example, the ridiculous fall which so often makes the children laugh requires the most elaborate kind of preparation. "It may look very easy," he says, "to take a tumble in the sawdust, but I assure you it is only done after long practice. Every step of it must be rehearsed. Unless the funny fall is natural, it fails utterly." How Mr. Tournour came to practise tumbling as an art, how he wandered far and wide as a circus performer how he saw his mother again after many years, how he fell in love and was cured, and how all the time the fascination of clowning grew upon him, we leave the reader to find out for himself. We would note further only the genuineness, the force of character, the kindly feeling and the essential dignity belonging to this hegeter of innocent mirth. It is good, he says, to be a clown, and we believe him, for he shows us what a true and helpful life a clown may lead.

MAITRE BORONALI

The Founder of Excessivism, a New School of Art.

The utmost sensation has been created in Paris by the sudden appearance in the world of French art of a new great painter. He has leaped into fame at one bound, and his reputation now bids fair to become universal. All the town is talking of him, and certainly it falls rarely, if ever, to an artist's lot to achieve such phenomenal success with a single picture, and that his first. The name of the exceptionally gifted personage is Joachim Raphael Boronali, and it is at the Salon of the Independents that he has won his imperishable renown. His canvas, which is not large, and might be described as a cacophonous discord in ochre, blue, vermillion, green, yellow and violet, represents a sunset upon the Adriatic. Such is the originality of M. Boronali's genius that he caused his one picture to be catalogued as three, and it is, therefore, indexed as 604, "And the Sun Slept," 605, "On the Adriatic," 606, Sea piece. But the initiated spectator will rightly read these three titles into one poetical descriptive phrase. To represent his one picture as three is, in fact, in keeping with the principles of the new school of "excessivism," which M. Boronali has founded.

From the first his work attracted the attention of the Paris art critics. Opinion was, of course, divided, as it always is when the views of professional experts are concerned, and there were some who hesitated to accept without reserve the theories propounded in M. Boronali's proclamation, copies of which were distributed to all the chief newspaper offices of Paris shortly before the Salon of the Independents opened its doors. In this document the painter called upon his brother painters to "break up the old palettes, make a bonfire of the false chefs d'œuvre, and to law down once and for all

the eternal principles of art. An ass has said that 'excess is a fault in everything.' On the contrary, we proclaim that excess in everything is a force, the only force. The sun is never too ardent, the sky never too green, the distant sea never too red, obscurity never too deeply black. . . . No more lies, no more fluctuations, no more 'mêlé,' nothing but 'bedazzlement!' Here, indeed, was a voice crying in the artistic wilderness, and earnestly as to whence exactly it came and what might be the personality of its owner was keenly aroused. The technique of the picture was, moreover, entirely in accord with the doctrines enunciated by the brilliant founder of the excessivist school—broad bands and splashes of the most brilliant colors alternating and contrasting with one another to produce an effect suggestive of the explosion of a dynamite bomb in an aniline dye works. A horde of interviewers promptly overran the Bohemian quarters of Paris seeking for the whereabouts of M. Boronali, and they finally ran him to earth at the famous artistic "cabaret" in the Rue Lepic, at Montmartre, which carries the sign of "Au Lapin Agile"—"The Nimble Rabbit."

Then it was discovered that M. Boronali was neither more nor less than a real live-donkey. The "cabaret" "Au Lapin Agile" possesses an elderly, small and unusually docile squirrel colored ass named Lolo. But in France all donkeys have, in addition to their individual name, the traditional cognomen of "Maitre Aliboron." It occurred to certain young "rapins," or struggling painters, living at Montmartre, who were disgusted with the meretricious success obtained by even the most farcical representatives of the impressionist school at the Salon of the Independents, that the name Aliboron might be conveniently transposed into Boronali, and that "Maitre Aliboron" himself, if a brush dipped in color were to be tied to his tail and the tall made to dab and slap and brush itself upon a canvas, could produce a picture which would exceed in originality and impudence the most brilliant efforts of the impressionists, and pave the way to the foundation of an entirely new school of technique, the school of "excessivism." In any case, it would be the real work of a donkey. Encouraged by the satirical paper "Fantasio," the plan was promptly carried out. A notary and a photographer were requisitioned. "Maitre Aliboron" was brought into the bar of the "cabaret," a brush was tied to his tail; Frédéric, the host, dipped the brush into oil color, and by dint of tempting Lolo with lumps of sugar caused him to make such movements as to daub a canvas, suitably adjusted to the extremity of the donkey's tail, with all sorts of multi-colored splashes and smears. The masterpiece had been created!

The notary drew up an authentic legal document in due form, certifying every detail of the scene, and the photographer took pictures of the group. Then arose the question of naming the picture. "A Cyclone," "The Tail of the Comet Touching the Earth" and "Portrait of President Fallières" were variously suggested, but finally "And the Sun Slept on the Adriatic" was decided on. The humorists who have perpetrated this mystification, to the endless amusement of the Parisians, are hugely pleased with the success of their joke. Frédéric, the landlord of the "Nimble Rabbit," is specially proud of having dealt so severe a blow to the pretentious charlatanism of the Independents. "It is all very fine," he remarked to an interviewer, "to be independent, but between the unconventional seeker after new forms of beauty and the quest there is a vast abyss, and this truth my donkey, 'Maitre Aliboron,' has successfully demonstrated." The council of the Independents maintains, nevertheless, an unshuffled countenance. "One sees exhibits this year at the Salon of the Independents," says M. Lepage, a mouthpiece of the council, "but who can count the number of asses who exhibit at the other salons. It would be unjust to close the doors of our Salon to asses when all the others are wide open to them." C. I. B.

Current Talk of Things Present and To Come. There is said to be a striking revival of interest in the study of the Bible among college undergraduates. A paper on this subject has been prepared by Mr. C. S. Cooper, and will be published in the May number of "The Century."

A volume dealing with "Governmental Action for Social Welfare" has been prepared by Professor J. W. Jenks, of Cornell, and will be published soon. Another forthcoming volume in the "American Social Progress Series" is Professor H. R. Seager's "Social Insurance: A Program of Social Reform."

Mrs. Humphry Ward has found another name for her new novel—a story which is coming out in England under the title of "Canadian Born." It is to be published here next week as "Lady Merton-Colonist." It is stated that the heroine of this tale has to do what is done by a queen—she proposes marriage to the chosen swain.

Mr. Robert Herrick's new novel, "A Life for a Life," is coming from the press. It is said to be thoroughly American, but different in interest from his "Together," a book which merited discussion.

News in France under the *ancien régime* did get itself told, though there were no newspapers. MM. Paul d'Estree and Franz Funck-Brentano have been describing the way in which this was accomplished. Many of the *salons*, says "The Author," were like academies of journalism.

The delight of the hostess was when a guest brought some startling piece of news. It was not to be wondered at that with such stirring times in the history of France every one should want to be well posted. This thirst for information led to the establishment of bureaus, where news was copied and distributed to subscribers. There were as many as fifty or seventy subscribers to some of these bureaus. In 1730 Mrs. Douart started a little society in her *salon* called "La Paroluse." She had twenty-nine members, and at a fixed time they all gathered to meet and examine the authenticity of the news which each member contributed. Mme. d'Argental, who was admitted as a member of this little society, took copies of the news, circulated it and obtained subscribers. She took for her motto the words of a police officer continued to circulate the news brought by her *salon*. As she had friends at court, she was able to get the latest and continued her information bureau until her death, at the age of ninety-three.

There is a curious lack of warmth in the comments on Disraeli to be found in the British memoirs of his time. It is worth while to quote this estimate set down after his death by Gathorne Hardy (Lord Cranbrook) and published only the other day: He was a rare and remarkable character, and, as far as I had to do with him, a sure

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friend, and to be relied on as such. He was not a bitter enemy, as many supposed, and could forget and forgive private wrongs. Public criticism and animadversion he took for granted, and was never galled. He was not the impassive sphinx drawn by some, and sitting by him I have noted feelings to which outsiders deemed him impervious. In the course of my career I often differed from him, but where there was time he was always ready for discussion, and not ashamed to give way if convinced. I owe much to his kindness, and as far as I know never failed to do my best in his service, especially when specially called upon, as was often the case. His life will attract attention in future times, and it will be recognized that his heart was with and for England and the Empire.

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