

NEW BOOKS

THE MESSAGE OF SADHU SUNDAR SINGH. A Study in Mysticism on Practical Religion. By B. H. Streeter M. A. (Oxon.), Hon. D. D. (Edin.), Fellow of Queen's College, Oxford, Canon Residentiary of Hereford, and A. J. Appasang, B. A. (Madras) M. A. (Harvard), B. D. (Hartford). New York; The Macmillan Company. 1921.

Mysticism is not a plant which thrives lustily among modern western Christians, especially among Anglo-Saxons. We are so matter-of-fact, or unimaginative, that there has never been an English St. Francis. St. George, who killed the dragon, and St. Patrick, who drove out the snakes, are more to our way of thinking. Therefore when we find an Indian Christian mystic on a triumphal tour in England, with archbishops, deans, and foremost theological writers and teachers of the Church of England (not to mention non-conformist divines) waiting for interviews and publishing the results of them, we can only infer that the centre of this extraordinary interest must be a most extraordinary personage. And such Canon Streeter shows the "Sadhu" ("holy man") Sundar Singh to be, in the volume of two hundred pages before us.

Born in 1889 of Sikh parentage, Sundar Singh was converted to Christianity in 1904 after an experience which, as described by himself, was almost an exact parallel to that of St. Paul. He saw a vision of the glorified Christ, Whom he had been persecuting, and heard Him say in Hindustani "How long will you persecute Me?" As in St. Paul's case, indignity and persecution were heaped upon the convert, but none of these things moved him. He adopted the role of a Sadhu, or Holy Man, in order to bring the message of his new faith to his Indian fellow-countrymen, and "for seven years he wandered from place to place possessing nothing but his robe, his blanket, and a copy of the New Testament, living on food offered him by hearers grateful or compassionate, or, when that was not forthcoming, on roots or leaves, accepting hospitality when offered, or—failing that—sleeping in caves or under trees". He refused to take Holy Orders in the Church of England, because "it would hamper his freedom of action in regard to Christians of other denominations, and would impose restrictions and limitations on his sphere of Christian work. In his missionary work he was continually in peril of his life, in peril in the wilderness, in peril by the heathen". "On a particularly dark night, after a discouragingly hard day, the Sadhu found a cave where he spread his blanket and spent the night. When daylight came, it revealed a large leopard still asleep close to him. The sight almost paralysed him with fear, but once outside the cave he could only reflect upon the great providence of God that had preserved him while he slept". "Never to this day", he says, "has any wild animal done me harm". At a town in Tibet he

was arrested and condemned and led away to execution. Stripped of his clothes he was cast into a deep and ghostly pit at the bottom of which were the rotting bodies of previous victims. In the horror of it all he cried out "My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" On the third night in this awful place the top of the pit was removed, a voice reached him, and a rope was lowered. He was drawn up, the cave was covered again, and his rescuer disappeared. When morning came the Sadhu struggled back to the town, and news quickly spread that the condemned man had returned. He was again arrested, and being brought before the Lama told his story. The Lama was furious, saying that someone must have secured the key and gone to his rescue, but when search was made the key was found on the Lama's own girdle. The Lama and his people were struck with amazement and fear, so that no further violence was attempted against the Sadhu.

In his twenty-third year the Sadhu felt driven to attempt a fast of forty days in imitation of his Master. It almost cost him his life, and before the end of the time he was found in a semi-conscious condition by two wood-cutters in the jungle. But he always asserted that this fast had a great effect upon his subsequent spiritual life.

The great source of illumination and spiritual refreshment for the Sadhu is the recurrent state of Ecstasy in which he feels himself caught up to what he believes to be the place mentioned by St. Paul as "the third heaven" (II Cor. xii. 2.) It is granted to a certain few, of whom the Sadhu is privileged to be one, to make short visits there during their earthly life. "I understood" he says, "what St. Paul meant when he said "Whether in the body or out of the body I know not", because when I found myself there I seemed to have a body with form and shape, but all made—as it were—of light. But when I touched it" (here he touched his left arm with his hand) "I felt nothing. This is what St. Paul speaks of as a spiritual body." "The face of Christ, as I see it in Ecstasy with my spiritual eyes, is very much the same as I saw it at my conversion with my bodily eyes. He has scars, with blood flowing from them. The scars are not ugly, but beautiful and glowing. He has a beard on His face. The long hair of His head is like gold, like glowing light. His face is like the sun, but its light does not dazzle me. It is a sweet face, always smiling, a loving glorious smile. Christ is not terrifying at all."

All this must seem very remote from the every day life of a Christian in a busy world, and whether the imitation of Himself which Jesus desires is a literal imitation of His mode of life is open to debate. But a little more of the Indian experience of the immediacy of religion would do us all good. And the life of the Sadhu serves to remind us Occidentals that the New Testament is still an Oriental book. H. A. K.

COMPARATIVE RELIGION. A survey of its recent literature. By Louis Henry Jordan, B. D. (Edin.) Vol. I. 1900-1909. Humphrey Milford, Oxford University Press. 1920.

The author of this volume is well known to many readers of *The Dalhousie Review*, for he is a Haligonian, at one time minister of St.

Andrew's Church, and a graduate of Dalhousie University. During recent years he has devoted his time to research and writing, chiefly on the subject of Comparative Religion, and has also published a book entitled *The Study of Religion in the Italian Universities*. The present work consists of a collection of reviews of the chief books on the subject of Comparative Religion during 1900—1909, with two brief chapters on the requirements of this science and the gains and tendencies to be observed during the first decade of the twentieth century. Mr. Jordan notes with pleasure the increased facilities for pursuing this study, and the establishment of lectureships and fellowships to this end in the universities—especially of Britain and the United States—and the international collaboration among scholars. "The supreme need of the present hour is the systematic co-ordination of all these scattered forces, and the focussing of their combined energies upon selected individual problems."

Mr. Jordan is not very sanguine as to the assistance which may be expected from Theological Colleges in strengthening the teaching of his favourite science. "The man in the street recognizes that these institutions teach only what they were established to teach, namely, a certain authorized interpretation of a given sacred book". "They" (the theological professors) "should deal with their subjects as university subjects, as sciences, as departments of knowledge worthy of thorough and unbiased treatment". One wonders what kind of Theological Colleges Mr. Jordan may have been unfortunate enough to encounter. There are some still of the kind he indicates in England and in the United States. But there are none such now remaining in Scotland, and there are—we think—very few in our own country. Some readers of his review may be interested to note that Mr. Jordan ranks Knox College, Toronto, among those still un-emancipated, and the Co-operating Theological Colleges, Montreal, among those freed from all confessional restraints.

H. A. K.

POEMS. By Arthur S. Bourinot, Author of *Laurentian Lyrics*.
Toronto. The T. H. Best Printing Co. 1921.

These verses gain in interest from the fact that many of them were written while the author was a prisoner of war at Holzminden. Mr. Bourinot has a keen sense of beauty, and his poems possess manliness and sincerity of tone, with a refreshing freedom from the artificiality and affectation of eccentricity which disfigure so much of the work of our "minor poets" of the present day. If he has not yet attained to a marked distinction of style, his verse makes pleasant reading, and gives promise of a higher excellence that may be reached in the future. "Canada's Fallen", a poem which won the Governor-General's Prize in the Canadian National Literary Competition, has real beauty of thought and expression. "The Western Hills" presents pathetically that nostalgia for the far-distant Canadian home which our soldiers in German prisons must so constantly have had in their hearts. Blank verse is a severe test for the young writer, but in "The Old Indian" it is

employed with much success, the whole poem having an agreeable Wordsworthian flavour. Yet in this as in most of the other poems the subject is essentially Canadian, and the word pictures are really characteristic of the scenery of our own country. It is to be hoped that Mr. Bourinot will continue to cultivate his genuine gift for verse.

E. R.

THE MANUALE SCHOLARIUM. Translated by Robert Francis Seybolt, Associate Professor of the History of Education in the University of Illinois. Harvard University Press; Cambridge, Mass. and New York City. 1921.

This book, which in its Latin form is well known to students of the development of education, will make appeal to a much larger public in its English dress. Its authorship is unknown, but it appeared first in 1481, and the studies, the life, and the manners of a German university of that date are what it brings before us. According to Zarncke, the editor of the Latin text, the manual "was composed chiefly to give to anyone entering the university directions as to how he should properly express and conduct himself"; but the contents are by no means so dry as this description might seem to indicate. It is not only what the students of that time were expected to do and say, but what they actually did and said, that these dialogues bring before us. The initiation with its feast at the expense of the newly matriculated scholar,—the hazing of the "beanus" or freshman,—the chat of the young men at table,—their excursions into the country,—their criticisms of their teachers, their studies, and their examinations,—all help to give us a tolerably clear, as well as a very lively, picture of university life in late mediaeval times. For in the last half of the fifteenth century Germany was still mediaeval; and it is interesting to note that at the very date when in Italy the Renaissance was almost at its height—when Poliziano and Lorenzo de Medici were writing poetry absolutely modern in thought and form—when Botticelli and Leonardo were painting subjects drawn from Greek mythology, and when Pico di Mirandola and Ficino were expounding Plato to the Florentines, the students of Heidelberg were still disputing over the claims of Nominalism and Realism, discussing in bad Latin the relative merits of St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Dominic, while the reading of even the Latin poets was regarded as a dangerous innovation. The *Manuale Scholarium* is not only instructive, but quite entertaining reading, and certainly its translation was well worth while.

E. R.