

NEW BOOKS

THE GROPING GIANT. Revolutionary Russia as seen by an American Democrat. By William Adams Brown, jr. Yale University Press.

This volume is not without a pathetic interest for the Canadian public; for it is published on the Theodore L. Glasgow Memorial Fund, an anonymous gift to Yale University in memory of Lt. Glasgow, R.N., who was a Canadian, born in Montreal, educated at Toronto University, and at the Royal Military College, Kingston. He enlisted in the air force, and was killed on the Ypres front in 1917.

The author himself comes not unheralded; for he is the son of Professor Adams Brown of Union Seminary, New York, whose textbook on Theology is perhaps the most widely known in the English-speaking world; and it is to the father that the present book is dedicated.

Mr. Brown jr. has had exceptional qualifications for the difficult task of throwing clearer light on the Russian situation. Going to Russia in September 1917 as Secretary of the American Y. M. C. A. he was just in time to witness on the streets of Moscow the October revolution, which placed the Bolsheviki first in power; and on a visit to the Y. M. C. A. huts in the tenth Army, he saw Russia's great military force melting away like snow-drifts in June. Subsequently attached to the American Committee on Public Information, he came in immediate touch with the powers behind the revolution, and tapped sources of information denied to others. But his unique qualification for his task is his selective instinct, which knows how to avoid confusing detail, and by skilfully chosen incidents and a few graphic strokes of the pen makes a complicated situation easily understood. This vividness adds a great charm to the book, which is not easily laid down before it is finished. Scenes and events pass in rapid succession,—the crowded railway station, the timid Russian landlady, the guns of the revolution, the sacred stillness of the Kremlin, the horror of the morgue, the funeral of the Bolshevists, and amid it all the ballet; then the hut-burning at the front, the quiet village life, the peasant, the Jew, a glimpse into the All Russian Congress of Soviets, a local bookstore and its politicians, a local election and its excitements, the shadow of the "Black Reactionary" over the country, the pitiful plight of the "ladies of the old school", the intelligentsia to whom a university degree was a sentence of death by starvation. All is depicted so clearly that the reader almost feels he has been in Russia himself.

Mr. Brown left that country in March 1919, and of course many kaleidoscopic changes have overtaken it since then, about which his book can give no authoritative information. But mankind will never lose its interest in those feverish months that inaugurated the great

Russian experiment, and nowhere is the thrilling story more pleasantly told, and nowhere is the lesson more wisely enforced that human progress is impossible apart from social justice, freedom of expression, and a due regard for the sentiments of all classes.

C. McK.

SHADOW VERSES. By Gamaliel Bradford. Yale University Press.

The motto chosen for this volume of poetry is taken from Webster's Duchess of Malfi,—

"In what a shadow, or deep pit of darkness,
Doth womanish and fearful mankind live."

But the "shadow" of Mr. Bradford's lyrics is no "deep pit of darkness" at all; its pessimism is light and at times fantastic, and though his irony has a tang to it, it is not bitter. Yet "shadow verses" these poems are; unsubstantial and vague things,—not without a certain piquant charm. The author has the poetic vision, though its range may be limited, and his work shows a nice sense of form. He is perhaps at his best when he is most simple and least egotistical. The following tiny poem shows the quality of his verse:

Little shreds of ecstasy
Float across the gray.
Otherwise our life would be
Stuff to cast away.

Here a kiss and there a kiss.
Love that laughter screens,
Walking through a wilderness,—
Tell me what it means.

If the reader has some sense of disappointment as he turns over the leaves of this book it is because he wonders why, when so much is good, there is nothing among these little poems that is of the very best. Several of the verses are called "Heinelets", they are not among the most successful; Mr. Bradford says he sees no reason why one should not attempt to convey a little of Heine's charm into English; there is but one reason,—that it cannot be done.

E. R.

PREACHING AND PAGANISM, by Albert Parker Fitch, Professor of the History of Religion in Amherst College, being the Lyman Beecher Lectures on Preaching in Yale University, 1920.

The Lyman Beecher Lectureship in Yale University has been held by many very distinguished preachers during the last half century. Great names, such as Henry Ward Beecher, R. W. Dale, Phillipps Brooks,

James Stalker, Henry Van Dyke, George Adams Smith, J. H. Jowett, Henry Sloane Coffin, and John Kelman, are sufficient to show the excellence of the whole series of lectures. But preaching, although it is to be regarded as a science, is not an exact science; the last word about it is never said, so that Professor Fitch has an opportunity to say something worth while, and he does so. His "sole and modest purpose is to endeavour to restore some neglected emphasis, to recall to spiritually minded men and women certain half-forgotten values in the religious experience, and to add such observations regarding them as may by good fortune contribute something to that future reconciling of the thought currents and value judgments of our day to these central and precious facts of the religious life."

The title of the book is arresting enough. Not only is the world of today largely pagan, but the Christian preacher is too often a pagan too. For two centuries transcendental ideas of God and religion have been more and more rejected. The scientist and the humanist together have been reading God out of the world, the former by making Him unnecessary, and the latter by making Him a man. Of the two the humanist has been the greater menace to Christian preaching. "The contemporary sermon on Deity minimizes or leaves out divine transcendence; thus it starves one fundamental impulse in man, the need and desire to look up. Instead of this transcendence modern preaching emphasizes immanence often to a naive and ludicrous degree . . . We are filled with a sort of intoxication with this intimate and protective company of the Infinite: we are magnificently unabashed as we familiarly approach Him. 'Closer is He than breathing, nearer than hands or feet.' "

Undoubtedly Professor Fitch is right in asserting that there is a kind of preaching of this sort which is well intentioned but quite useless. It is the difference between God and men which makes men who know themselves trust Him. It is not the sameness of God and man but the great gulf between them that makes Him a power in men's lives. The same is true with regard to preaching about Jesus. "Humanism has made Jesus obvious, hence relatively impotent. He is not so much a divine revelation as He is a human achievement. Humanity and Divinity are one in essence." In other words too many preachers preach Jesus as a Teacher but not as a Saviour. "We are preaching to educate not to save, to instruct, not to transform. We are accepting the Socratic doctrine that knowledge is virtue; intelligence needs no support from grace."

The chief approach to transcendence Professor Fitch would find in worship, not in homilies. He has some rather hard, and we think rather unfair, things to say regarding the Protestant Churches. It is simply not true to say of the great churches of the Reformation that "their attendants are assembled to hear about God rather than to taste and see that the Lord is good." And it may also be replied that the great religious movements that have made Christian history, have been brought about by the preacher, not the liturgist. The Pharisee was a liturgist, but the fishermen apostles were preachers, and it was the fishermen that turned the world upside down. It is, however, very true

that the enrichment of worship, the deepening of the sense of reverence, of awe in the presence of God, is one of the crying needs of our time. "Whatever may be the means that worship employs, its purpose must be to make and keep the Church a place of repose, to induce constantly the life of relinquishment to God, of reverence and meditation. And this it will do as it seeks to draw men up to the "otherness," the majesty, the aloofness, the transcendence of the Almighty." These and other wise and well-spoken words make this book a thoroughly good one. We feel sure, however, that there are more true prophets left in the world still than Professor Fitch would allow. It is comforting to read in a book by another American preacher, (Professor Hoyt, of Auburn) that, "the man who sees in the modern pulpit signs of decay and talks of the giants of former days, must be singularly lacking in appreciation."

H. A. K.