

CURRENT MAGAZINES

The Round Table—and After:—Lord Meston, in the *Nineteenth Century*.

Carlyle, Fifty Years After:—Mr. H. W. Clark, in the *Contemporary*.

Humanism and Pseudo-Humanism:—Prof. C. S. Keyser, in the *Hibbert*.

Religion Meets Science:—Prof. Julian Huxley in the *Atlantic*.

LORD Meston, as an ex-Lieutenant-Governor of the United Provinces of India, writes with high authority on the question now most urgent in British policy abroad. His opinions are all the more interesting because they are so markedly different from those of some other Anglo-Indian officials whose articles have shown more heat than light.

“Once again the subtle wisdom of the East has triumphed.” Lord Meston reminds us that, six months ago, little was hoped from the Round Table Conference. The Congress was holding aloof, Sir John Simon’s project had apparently been filed away into oblivion, and in India itself the difficulty of maintaining order seemed to grow worse from day to day. But, like a flash, the forces thought most likely to resist a peaceful settlement began to promote it. The Indian Princes adopted with enthusiasm the idea of federation between their States and British India, while the British Government met no serious dissent in the parliamentary Opposition when it pledged itself to relinquish control on Indian affairs. One wonders whether this paragraph in Lord Meston’s article was written before Mr. Churchill’s dramatic outburst. Even if it was, there was surely time to amend it, if he wanted to amend it in proof? Is it possible—*horribile dictu*—that he does not look upon, Churchillian dissent in such circumstances as “serious”?

It is a long step, apparently, that has now been taken in advance of the recommendations of the Simon Report. That Report had recommended a federal system, of the sort which Canadians at least will readily understand—with provincial legislatures and ultimately a Dominion legislature for India; but there was a proviso that, for the present at all events, the Viceroy and his Executive in Delhi should remain subject to the British parliament alone. In the provinces, responsibility to the native elected

representatives; but British control at headquarters! An outcry from the Nationalist camp soon, however, scared the Viceroy and his advisers into yet a further compromise, by which even the central Government at Delhi would be in part responsible to the local legislature. This looked like a revival of the old discredited Dyarchy, under the new name "Dualism", and whether it would have fared any better than the scheme of 1919 might well have been doubted. In any case, it was not given a chance to show.

With great skill, according to Lord Meston, the Indian representatives pressed their advantage still more, and the battle-cry of full responsible government was adopted. Nothing was easier than to exhibit the unworkable character of a shared responsibility. On the other hand, those adroit Indian negotiators, whose finesse Lord Meston cannot sufficiently admire, were deliberately asking more than they expected to obtain. In the end, an agreement was immediately reached at the Conference when the conversion of Lord Reading had brought a change over the whole face of the dispute. "Responsibility with Safeguards became the word of salvation". On many sides it was taken up with acclaim, and only an insignificant minority dared to make vocal a discontent which perhaps a considerable number felt. Does "Responsibility with Safeguards" mean anything essentially different from "Part Responsibility"? Perhaps not. But if it does not, this just shows how pointless was the old query "What's in a name"? The whole story reminds me of the reflection made by an old cynic in Disraeli's *Contarini Fleming*: "Few ideas are correct ones, and what are correct no one can ascertain; but with words we govern men".

Those who have had to combat the idea that Indian statesmen are not qualified to manage Indian affairs will be reinforced by the tribute which Lord Meston pays to the "skill, versatility and courage" with which they negotiated at the Round Table Conference. "They measured up their British colleagues to a nicety, and employed upon them all the arts in the repertoire of Eastern persuasiveness". It seems that they even excelled in the eloquence of a language which was not their own. But there was too much sentiment and rhetoric, too little consideration of the fitness of the country for the institutions which it was proposed to establish there.

All the same, a step has been taken upon which there can be no going back. One thing, says Lord Meston, is certain:

Niagara has been shot, and there will never be any climbing up the cataract into the old smooth waters... Certain safeguards and reservations of a transitory nature will be proposed, and parliament will no doubt insist on seeing clearly what these are

and how the machinery for applying them will work. From the broad plain promise, however, there will be no receding. Grey-beards who have spent their lives in India may shake their ineffective heads; but we have all of us to make up our minds to a complete change of conditions in a very near future.

Lord Meston thinks that the Round Table Conference was an event of which both Britain and India have reason to be proud, that it has demonstrated a good will towards India and a readiness on the part of the long dominant Power to make sacrifices for India's welfare which is creditable at once to the eastern people which won it and to the western people which displayed it. But, like the greybeards to whom he alludes, he shakes his own head gravely about some prospects. A great deal has yet to be done, and there is abundant room to break down in reducing an agreed principle to concrete application. All depends on the attitude of Indians to the "Safeguards". Will these be genuinely observed, or will there be a constant effort to break them, together with a continuous agitation for their removal? How will the detailed adjustments, necessarily very complicated, with the rulers of hundreds of Indian States be made? What about dealing with the Moslems, the Untouchables, and the Anglo-Indians? The Conference, says this critic, had nothing but rosy pictures of what India will be when she is mistress in her own house:

It would be possible to paint another picture, a picture of what India tolerates in her own house to-day; though this is unfashionable at the moment, and the painter is apt to find his (or her) testimony and motives severely impugned. If, however, the ex-official hints at what he has seen and knows on the other side of the Conference shield, he might in fairness be given credit for not thinking exclusively of the safety of his pension, but for some honest doubts as to whether the ballot-box is certain, in Indian conditions, to cure social ills and change human nature.

It seems a fair plea. Who, pray, is meant by the parenthetic (or her)? The conspicuous use of the bracket is suggestive. But the writer of *Mother India* does not seem to have been called as a witness to the Conference.

EXACTLY fifty years after the death of Thomas Carlyle, an article on him is contributed by Dr. H. W. Clark to *The Contemporary Review*. It is opportune, in the sense that after the passage of half a century a great writer whose repute has been affected by many adventitious causes should be re-examined without bias.

Fifteen years ago, when "war-psychosis" was at its height, Carlyle's admiration of the Germans was incessantly quoted to his disparagement. But this merely revived an older complaint. In 1870, when he communicated to the press his approval of Bismarck's seizure of Alsace-Lorraine, he had drawn upon himself a fierce diatribe from a friend of France. The French, wrote Frederic Harrison, were being abused by half-crazy pedants, men who had grown purblind and anti-social through long toil in the stifling mines of German records, so that they could see the good spirit of mankind only "in the wild and valorous doings of panoplied Rittmeisters". But by this time tempers have cooled again, and Dr. Clark's argument against the foolishness of calling Carlyle a believer that "Might is Right" will now obtain a very sympathetic hearing.

What really troubles this latest critic is to explain how such mis-reading of the Carlylean text can have arisen, and he explains it with subtle skill. The prophet's essential doctrine being that of the supremacy of Right, he was confronted with plausible tokens to the contrary, and was hence compelled to explain these away. Carlyle had to argue that many an apparent or temporary success was real and ultimate failure; also that in cases of indisputable victory the apparently unscrupulous tyrant who achieved it had Right, after all, on his side. This is, no doubt, the real account of the matter. It seems as if it were by no means the doctrine of German war-lords, but rather a sort of Puritan Theodicée, which brought about such strange interpretations of history as in the notorious *Frederick the Great*. Once you have committed yourself to the doctrine that the way of the world is right, it is an easy and perhaps inevitable step to the conclusion that "Right" means no more than the way of the world. But though the critics of Carlyle are justified in distrusting him wherever it is a triumphant despot he has to appraise, Dr. Clark has no difficulty in showing that his heart was always on the side of justice, and that his numerous errors in extolling injustice were honestly committed. The contrary opinion, this article boldly says, can be maintained only by ignoring almost every other sentence on every page, in some cases by ignoring many whole successive pages of what Carlyle set down.

It is not so easy to follow the critic in some of his further opinions, for example, in his insistence that the writer of *The French Revolution* was not a philosophical historian. This he surely at least tried to be, and I am in some doubt whether Dr. Clark means, by denying him the title, that he did not make the attempt or that he made it unsuccessfully. It is pointed out that Carlyle "does not study the underground movements of the world-spirit, and

explain how this and that historical event was that spirit's manifestation coming to the surface." I should have supposed it at least as easy to maintain that his enthusiasm for extracting a moral from history, and compelling history to give more definite evidence for sweeping generalizations than had hitherto been obtained from her by anyone except perhaps Herodotus, involved him in the reproach now so common against "philosophies of history". But no doubt what the critic really has in mind is the plausible marshalling of explanations by "the economic factor", "mass psychology" and the rest, about which opinions will differ regarding its value, but whose absence from Carlyle's work was one of his own proudest boasts.

Dr. Clark finds as the chief fault in that old Victorian seer that, at least in his old age, he relapsed into such cynical pessimism, and this he thinks not only weakened his immediate influence, but has made posterity unjust to him. It is indeed unfair to judge Carlyle by *Latter-Day Pamphlets*, by his sombre *Reminiscences*, or by such reported outbursts as the one describing this world as "a dark fuliginous chaos" and Europe as "a vast suppuration". But the glory of the earlier work, as this critic well points out, is not to be thus dimmed. He might have added that the perils of a poetic and rhetorical gift are immensely intensified in dyspeptic old age. Probably the really judicious book on Carlyle has yet to be written. No one was more alive to his merits than one who was also most acutely sensitive to his faults. It was the late Lord Morley who said of him that he was not merely the foremost man of letters in the England of his time, but also one of the greatest moral forces of all time. A book to show this would still be opportune, subtracting as Carlyle himself taught us to say, "the due subtrahend".

LIKE a great many others, Professor Keyser of Columbia University has been exasperated by the confusion in current use of the term "Humanism". It is an attractive word, conveying a subtle compliment to the human listener, for it seems to imply that the riddle of the universe is to be read in terms of his own race. The word is so attractive that it has been adopted repeatedly as the motto of some fresh movement, and the variety of the service into which it has been pressed is now shown by its bewildering ambiguities. It was an intellectual battle-cry for the thinkers of the Renaissance, who meant by it an enthusiasm of return to the great classical literature so long hidden from sight, but once more made available on the capture of Constantinople by the dispersion

of the great Library and the almost simultaneous invention of printing. To-day such studies are still known in Oxford as *literae humaniores*, and the Professor of Latin in a Scottish university is called Professor of Humanity. About thirty years ago, the English section of that philosophical group known on this side of the Atlantic as "Pragmatist" decided to call itself "Humanist", and the sparkling essays by Dr. F. C. S. Schiller—in which he adopted practical serviceableness as the test of truth—were entitled *Studies in Humanism*. The protest of certain notable American scholars against the prevailing trend towards scientific rather than literary culture is often called "Humanist". And only a few years ago a new religion, with representatives chiefly in New York, Chicago, and the University of Michigan, has adopted a like name.

Professor Keyser, in revolt against this looseness of usage, but also aware of the difficulty of making usage precise, invites us to agree at least upon a general description. Why this particular term should be so precious in the language that it must be kept even at the cost of such heating of tempers in the effort to define it, and in spite of the fact that defining seems to create more problems than it removes, is not apparent. Nor can I hope much, except in the way of warning, from Professor Keyser's own proposal. He asks us to agree upon Mr. Walter Lippmann's descriptive words—that Humanism "signifies the intention of men to concern themselves with the discovery of a good life on this planet by the use of the human faculties". The last clause is meant, apparently, to rule out appeal to the reinforcements of religious belief, which—like the rest of his school—Professor Keyser sets in contrast, somewhat gratuitously, with the exercise of faculties that are human. What particularly pleases him in Mr. Lippmann's statement is that he finds in it no doctrine, but only the avowal of an "intention". Intentions, however, surely involve one at least in assuming that they may possibly be realized. And without judging whether Professor Keyser is right or wrong in assuming that religious faith is irrelevant to the discovery of the highest life, one may point out that here is indeed a dogma, exposed—like other dogmas—to dispute.

Our critic administers a severe castigation to Professor Babbitt, to Mr. T. S. Eliot, to Mr. Leon Samson, and others who in their use of the word "Humanism" differ from one another and from himself. The controversy about this unlucky term looks like developing on this side of the ocean into a first-class feud. My personal suspicion is that, as in the Middle Ages, it is a poverty of thought on realities which has stirred such bickering about forms.

PROFESSOR Julian Huxley, who writes in the *Atlantic* on "Religion meets Science", is grandson of the brilliant mid-Victorian biologist whose encounter with the Bishop of Oxford in 1860 is among the best known of the comic episodes that marked the spread of Darwinism. He has thus inherited an interest in the high debate between theologians and scientists. Those who remember Thomas Henry Huxley's papers, collected into the volume *Science and the Christian Tradition*, will be eager to see what change, if any, has come in the third generation of a controversial family.

The asperity of seventy years ago has been softened. There is here no coarse jesting about Gadarene swine, no proposal for an experiment on prayer in hospital wards, no picture of ecclesiastical thunderbolts launched by palsied hands, no comparison of discomfited dogmatists to the strangled snakes round the infant Hercules. This kind of writing is now at least out of date, and by general consent excluded as indecent. Here and there it may still reappear among those whom Professor Pringle-Pattison has called "doughty survivors of the theological wars of last century". But Professor Julian Huxley is not one of these. The improvement, though welcome, is not unmixed. With the fierceness of his grandfather's style we miss also the picturesqueness, the clear-cut directness which at least never left any doubt in the reader's mind about what the writer meant. What this last article in the *Atlantic Monthly* means, we should be much at a loss to say, were it not that some phrases in which the author deals are plainly borrowed from others whose meaning is clear.

It is indeed open to doubt whether the change is more than one of dialectical manners, and whether the "religion" in which this writer professes an abiding interest is of any concern to a genuinely religious man. A critic once complained of Matthew Arnold that, though he wrote with such tenderness about Christianity, he had first defined Christianity in terms which rendered its treatment a matter of no import to anyone. Only the other day I came across a book with the extraordinary title *The Religion called Behaviorism!* Is anything gained by this juggling with words?

Professor Huxley rehearses some very familiar facts, such as the consequence of scientific discovery in modifying traditional religious views of the universe, and the progress of comparative study of the historic faiths of mankind, showing that these can no longer be classified with the crude vigour of antithesis as "true" and "false". There is much in the article about development, about the ideas of savages in regard to magic, about the primitive cosmology of the Dark Ages, about the solemn sacredness of the

quest for truth, and other very well worn and no longer controversial themes on which such a writer is always ready to dwell, in the hope that his article may be fairly complete before he has committed himself to anything distinctive. Ultimately Prof. Huxley begins to speak of religion as having a field which science does not touch, viz., the sphere of *values*. It is plain that he has been reading some such writer as Dean Inge, and we know well what the Dean here means. We recall his assertion of the *objectivity* of values, his argument that they are not merely *relative* but *absolute*, and that in consequence the only theory of the universe which can hope to endure is one which admits of, if it does not actually vindicate, their validity. This is "saying something", as the dialect of our continent would put it. The relation of the world of values to the world of fact is just what we want to be sure about. But hear Professor Huxley on it:

What man shall do with the new facts, the new ideas, the new opportunities of control which science is showering upon him, does not depend upon science, but upon what man wants to do with them; and this in turn depends upon his scale of values. It is here that religion can become the dominant factor. For what religion can do is to set up a scale of values for conduct, and to provide emotional or spiritual driving force to help in getting them realized in practice. On the other hand, it is an undoubted fact that the scale of values set up by a religion will be different according to its intellectual background; you can never wholly separate practice from theory, idea from action. Thus, to put the matter in a nutshell, while the practical task of science is to provide man with new knowledge and increased powers of control, the practical task of religion is to help man to live, and to decide how he shall use that knowledge and those powers.

So with that we must be content! And all the while, what we were waiting to learn was in what manner or degree the values which religion can thus "set up" correspond to anything real in the scheme of things.

I suspect that the title of the article "Religion meets Science" was devised by an American mind, for it is suggestive of that formula of introduction so often heard on this side of the Atlantic. The parallel seems worth pursuing further. Did the reader ever find himself in the position of having to introduce two people to each other when the name and description of one of them had somehow escaped his mind? It is a painful *impasse*, in which I confess having found myself more than once, and the only possible recourse (short of avowing the whole truth) is to a vagueness rather like Professor Huxley's. Probably a bold avowal of the situation is better than any such temporary relief. Our critic here, in introducing two activities of the human spirit to each other, unfortunately lacks adequate acquaintance with one of them.

H. L. S.