

Notices of Books.

Sermons of the Age. By the REV. T. MEREDITH WILLIAMS, B.A., Vicar of Llanarth, Cardiganshire. London: Elliot Stock. Pp. 190. 3s. 6d.

Some of the thirteen sermons in this volume are of an expository character; others relate to questions of the day, such as Education and Temperance. The first one, on "The Kingdom of God," is a general survey of the religious and spiritual condition of the nation, which Mr. Williams depicts in somewhat gloomy colours. His discourses are very earnest, containing much plain speaking. Though they were preached in Wales, and there are many allusions to Welsh Nonconformity, they are singularly free from anything like bitterness. It may be doubted whether, as seems to be suggested in one passage, the preaching of the Gospel to the poor is hindered by delays in the reform of Convocation. Other causes have probably more to do with it, and it might not be perceptibly advanced even if Convocation were reformed.

Gospel Records interpreted by Human Experience. By H. A. DALLAS. London: Longmans, Green and Co. Pp. viii+302. 5s.

The chief feature in this extremely discursive volume, and the one most likely to attract notice, is an endeavour to explain the Gospel miracles by the help of "scientific spiritism." Its author takes the ground that the supernatural powers exhibited by our Lord were psychic powers, similar to those now found among men of various nationalities, though greater in degree. Christ was endowed with the gifts of a psychic on account of His being a perfect specimen of our race. The proceedings of the Psychical Research Society have been ransacked by Mr. Dallas for the purpose of extracting ideas on the subject, and numerous quotations from them are given relating to the action of spirit on matter, discarnate intelligences, apparitions of the departed, and so on. The argument is of so specious a character that it may be well to point out where it breaks down. No evidence is brought forward to show that the powers our Lord possessed are "now found," neither does the author produce an example of a single phenomenon that offers a parallel to any of Christ's miracles. By saying that the accuracy of the New Testament record may be left an open question he practically gives up his case, for it is impossible that a comparison with other phenomena can be instituted unless the facts are correctly stated. And even in his treatment of the record as it stands Mr. Dallas himself is not particularly accurate. Thus, on page 266, he contends that our Lord's appearance to the disciples on the evening after His resurrection is "quite in agreement with the appearances attested by present-day witnesses, and among them by so great and careful an observer as Sir William Crookes." The body in which Christ showed Himself on that occasion is said by Mr. Dallas to have "appeared suddenly, the doors being shut, and disappeared as suddenly as it

appeared," though not a word about its sudden disappearance can be found in St. Luke or St. John. As regards the actual Resurrection, the only explanation suggested here takes the form of a tentative hypothesis which is as much beyond the range of human experience as the miracle itself.

Steakfast unto Death; or, Martyred for China. Memorials of Thomas Wellesley and Jessie Pigott. London: Religious Tract Society. Pp. 255. 2s. 6d.

This memoir of two devoted labourers in the mission-field is an inspiring story. Mr. Wellesley Pigott, a near relative of Archbishop Trench, and a member of a well-known Irish family, joined the staff of the China Inland Mission in 1879. With the exception of two brief intervals, during which he came home on furlough, he carried on his evangelistic labours until the time of his death in the July of 1900. He seems to have been a noble example of a Christian layman, presenting a combination of fervid enthusiasm and practical common-sense. The selections from his correspondence published here contain many expressions of opinion on missionary questions. He was opposed to the interference of missionaries in political matters, and more than once prevented his colleagues from taking action in that direction. But he did not agree with Lord Salisbury's view that the punishment of evil-doers by gunboats would injure missions, holding it to be the duty of European Governments to secure the protection of their subjects in China. In one of his last letters he declared his conviction that the Chinese authorities, not the Boxers, were the moving spirits in the troubles which had arisen. The persecution, after raging for some time in other districts, at length reached the scene of Mr. Pigott's labours. On July 9 he and his wife, with their only son, a bright boy of twelve years, won the crown of martyrdom. Forty-five Europeans in all were beheaded at the same time, twelve Roman Catholics and thirty-three Protestants, eleven of whom were children from ten to thirteen years of age. The tale of their martyrdom is told in the words of an eye-witness, a native Christian, whose narrative is given in full. It is remarked by the author of this volume, not unjustly, that the religious press has failed to bring home to the mind of the Church the lessons taught by the momentous events in China, and has passed them over in comparative silence.

A recent number of the *Indian Witness* notices an address delivered at Lahore by the Maharaja Gaekwar of Baroda which has attracted much attention. The spectacle of an Indian reigning Prince lecturing on religious and moral questions to British subjects outside his own territories is a novel one. Repeated visits to Europe have at various times brought the Gaekwar into close contact with Christianity, and a few years ago it was popularly supposed that he had been baptized in Germany. His Lahore speech sufficiently disproves this idea. Part of it was devoted to a defence of the nautch as a social institution of great antiquity, which

should not be condemned, and to an apology for idol worship. Idols, the Gaekwar observed, are not considered by the intellectual portion of the Hindu community to be gods, but representations of God, and their worship is in no way demoralizing so long as this is kept in mind. The idea of one true God is inculcated by the highest philosophy of Hinduism, as well as by Mohammedanism and Christianity, and in a lesser degree by Buddhism. These forms of religion may differ in external details, but their cardinal principles are the same. It is a fact that "low-class people are turning Mohammedans and Christians by the hundred," yet Hindus may arrest this by fair treatment of the lower castes, whose members take refuge in other faiths as a means of escape from the inhumanity of their own countrymen. The address is an instructive example of the effects of the levelling-down process by which all religions are made out to be equally true.

The "Parson's Handbook" Series. The Catechist's Handbook. By the Rev. J. N. NEWLAND-SMITH, M.A., Assistant Diocesan Inspector of Schools for the Diocese of London. London: Grant Richards. Pp. xxiv + 226. 3s.

It is unlikely that attempts to substitute the St. Sulpice method in place of Sunday-schools will meet with any wide success. Improvements in our Sunday-school system are no doubt desirable, but it has gained far too firm a hold to be easily dislodged. Two of its advantages are that it provides an outlet for the energies of many zealous and active workers, who practically constitute an army of volunteer evangelists all over the country, and that it brings teachers and scholars into direct personal relations with each other. Friendships thus formed constantly exercise a beneficial effect in after-years. Mr. Newland-Smith will scarcely allow that Sunday-schools are of any real use, and greatly exaggerates their deficiencies. He gives an account of the "Catechism," as the St. Sulpice method (which, by the way, English Roman Catholics have not adopted) is called, describing at length its very complex mode of operation. There are very few parishes where it could be carried out in its entirety, even if desirable, and a clergyman working single-handed certainly could not manage it. We were unaware, until we met with the information in these pages, that both the Baptismal service and the Church Catechism seem to imply the presence of children at the Eucharist, at any rate upon occasion. Mr. Newland-Smith lays it down that "the Baptismal service, by directing the sponsors to take care that their godchildren hear sermons, implies their attendance at this service, because at this service alone does the Prayer-Book enjoin a sermon. The Catechism, by its *abrupt* question, 'Why was the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper ordained?' assumes the children's familiarity with it as a fact of the Christian life." Coming as they do from an inspector in religious knowledge, these interpretations of the Church's formularies must be considered astonishing. His plea for a so-called "Children's Eucharist" could hardly be based upon weaker arguments.