

## Notices of Books.

WITNESS—THE WORK OF DISCIPLES AND FRIENDS. By the Rt. Rev. G. H. S. Walpole, D.D., Bishop of Edinburgh. London: *Robert Scott*. Price 2s. net.

This volume is a continuation of one written a year previously, entitled "This Time and its Interpretation," and deals very definitely and helpfully with the National Mission, or, as it is known in the North, the Call to Religious Revival. "The first need is the conversion or awakening of our own people. This should be our objective now, with a view to the further objective of the nation after Peace, and when the men return." The military spirit that now pervades England is due to the fact that a little cluster of people is deeply interested in each of the five million of men who have joined the colours. All this is a parable and an encouragement for religious revival. Were but ten people in each congregation of the land quickened to make an absolute surrender of all they have for Christ and His Church, they would carry so much with them that there would be a force sufficient to change public opinion. "It is this that we must strive for in the days that are coming." "The need of the hour is to make disciples, for only through disciples can we hope for friends, and only through friends for that strong, clear, united witness that will change a nation's ideals, or restore them."

The volume consists of five chapters. "The Great Commission" is based upon the Lord's words, "Go, make disciples." The Church has been tempted to make compromises in order to secure the support of men of position; but the chief characteristic of her members is that they should be full of the Holy Ghost. There is plain speaking in this chapter as to the Church's wrong aims and failures. "It is not a new system that is needed but new men, not so much a fresh proclamation as fresh people to make it."

Chapter ii is entitled, "Thy Disciples," and the author deals with the aim of the School, Conditions of Entrance, the Principles of Learning, the Scholar's Witness. The reader is reminded, "Great Britain needs to learn again, and we hope that by the war she will learn it, what the Christian standard of goodness is."

Chapter iii is called "My Friends," and Chapter iv, "Witnesses." It was on witnessing that our Lord was to rely for the spread of His Gospel. The qualifications and duties of witnesses are set forth, and the solemn pronouncement is made: "There is no witnessing. Everywhere there is silence. Even in the Churches testimony is seldom heard. . . . The power of witness lies dormant." The world may hate testifying, and no religious person may be so ashamed of his faith as is the English Christian; but our silence is culpable, and this chapter shows how witness should be borne bravely, and can be borne naturally. This is the desired end in the National Mission.

The closing chapter, "The Witness of the Perfect Life," reveals in Christ the example of Perfect Witness. His life is examined and illustrations from it are drawn to show how to use an opportunity, how to make one, and how to witness when faced by hostility.

This little volume is amongst the most useful and practical of the contributions to the literature of the National Mission: it breathes the deep spirit of devotion which is characteristic of its author; and it should be read, and will be treasured, by all who have any part in developing the National Mission of Repentance and Hope.

THE CONFIDENCE OF FAITH. By J. Stuart Holden, D.D. London: *Robert Scott*. Price 2s. 6d. net.

Dr. Stuart Holden is one of our foremost London preachers, and of the crowds who flock to hear him none come empty away. The secret of his success is not far to seek. It is not to be found in mere oratory, although as a graceful and eloquent speaker he has few equals. It rests rather in the simplicity and reality of his message. As one listens to him, one feels that here is a man who understands life and who is possessed of a passion for bringing men and women into personal relationship with God as the only means by which they can live out the purpose for which they were created and fulfil their destiny. In the *Confidence of Faith* he seeks to interpret the ways of God with the nation and the individual and to present a view of Christian life and duty from the war outlook. He deals also with those sure things which war cannot shake and which are an interpretation of life in every age. A more helpful and inspiring book for these dark times we have seldom read, and it is a joy to know that it is not a volume "written up" for the occasion, but represents sermons preached in the ordinary course of his ministry during the last six months. The congregation of St. Paul's, Portman Square, are privileged indeed, and we are thankful that these stimulating and faith-helping messages are now given to a wider circle. The book contains nineteen sermons, and every one of them has a distinct appeal. We quote the following pregnant messages from a striking sermon, "Other refuge have I none," based on 1 Samuel xxx. 6, "David encouraged himself in the Lord his God"—

We need to live in these days amid the great realities which circle around God. The outlook is dark enough; but the uplook has lost nothing of its eternal brightness. God is our refuge and strength; and in Him alone is to be realized the renewal of those qualities which are vital to the life of a man and a nation.

In what do they find encouragement who seek it in God at this time? First, there is the fact that all discipline, whether of a man or a race, is directed by Him. . . . While far from believing that this war was God-caused, it is certain that it is being God-used. Nor shall we be able to hail its satisfactory conclusion until the moral lessons it emphasizes have been learned. For there is little evidence that we are yet as a people humbled in penitence, and restored to a right mind. There is little evidence that we have awakened fully to the seriousness of the issue which is being determined yonder on the blood-drenched fields of France. But the fact that our discipline is in His hands Who pities His children, and corrects them only that they may become partakers of His holiness, encourages us. The entire meaning of the judgments which are now abroad among us is to be found in His undying love. He is not crushing but recreating us. It took calamity to bring David back to God, and it is certain that this is the meaning of that permissive Will under which we now suffer.

Then there is encouragement in the certainty that God's purpose is unchangeable. This David learned as he betook him to the heavenly audience-chamber in his dark day. . . . Faith, after fluctuating like a compass-needle under magnetic forces, rests at its true north—in God. David is encouraged to recommence a life of loyal subjection to His discipline and guidance, with the assurance of the changelessness of His purpose.

And this is the confident encouragement we may find in God at this time regarding our nation. If we believe that Great Britain has come to an end of the Divine purpose, and that her national mission is fulfilled, there is nothing more to say. But since everything points to the largeness of her possible contribution to the work of the Kingdom of God in all the world, we cannot accept this conclusion. Everything is not lost while the purpose of God persists. Herein we may lift up our hearts.

Thus does Dr. Stuart Holden show us the silver lining of the cloud; the rainbow in the storm. May it be given to us more fully to fulfil our part in the work of the Kingdom of God in the world.

**CONSOLATION IN BEREAVEMENT.** By the Rev. Alfred Plummer, M.A., D.D.  
London: *Robert Scott*. Price 2s. net.

Dr. Plummer's papers in the *CHURCHMAN* on "Prayers for the Dead" excited so much attention that many will be glad to possess this deeply sympathetic volume, *Consolation in Bereavement*, in which the papers are incorporated together with two additional chapters which are altogether new. In one of these he sets out his answer to objections which are urged against the practice of Prayers for the Dead. On one point he writes as follows:—

The question whether our Lord ever heard prayers for the dead being offered in a synagogue, so far from being crucial, is hardly relevant. The question is, Did He *know* that such petitions were used among Jews? If that question is answered in the affirmative, and the affirmative answer is put side by side with the fact that He has nowhere condemned the practice, or instructed His Apostles to condemn it, then that fact becomes clamant in its impressiveness. It will not avail to say that the number of those who practised this form of intercession was so small that He did not think it worth while to condemn it. We do not know that the number was small; and we cannot think of Him as refraining from putting a stop to a serious evil because those who were guilty of it were few. It is not likely that many people defrauded their parents by means of the iniquitous device of Corban. The reasonable explanation of His silence about prayers for the departed is that He saw no reason to condemn them.

But Dr. Plummer's purpose is not controversial. The book is published "specially with the desire to give consolation to the bereaved," and he writes in his preface:—

Even when there are no wars to carry off men by the thousand, one of the sad thoughts which frequently arise in the hearts of those who have lost one who is very dear, is this: "To render service to him has been one of the chief joys of my life; and now I can do so no more." And too often there is the still sadder thought: "There were so many services that I might have rendered to him, and did not; and now it is too late." For more than twelve hundred years the whole of Christendom declared with no uncertain voice that both these thoughts are founded on error; and the vast majority of Christians, since there has been a division of belief on the subject, declare so still. "You *can* go on rendering service; it is *not* too late; you can render the highest service by praying for them." It is only Protestants, and by no means all of them, who have scruples about praying for the departed; and the number of those who have scruples, and even more than scruples, is (it would seem) diminishing day by day.

**KEEP TO THE RIGHT: A COLLECTION OF TEN-MINUTE TALKS TO CHILDREN.**  
Compiled by J. Ellis. London: *Robert Scott*. Price 2s. net.

An assembly of children is the most difficult of all congregations, and it requires natural aptitude in the preacher to arrest their attention. But even so, the most skilled "children's preacher" needs the help of suggestion and illustration if he is to keep his addresses fresh, bright, and interesting. He will find all he wants in Mr. Ellis's compact little volume, while to those with less experience who have to talk to children, it will be simply invaluable. There are sixty-five outline addresses, and it will serve the reader's interest best if we quote one:—

CHRIST'S BIRTHDAY.  
*Luke ii. 11.*

Christmas Day is Jesus Christ's Birthday.  
Children like their birthdays, and keep them in happy fashion.

We may help Jesus keep His Birthday as well.

1. *The Birthday Greeting.* "Many happy returns of the day," we say to each other. That is really a prayer. "May God send you many happy returns of the day." We must *mean* this, when we say it to our friends: and help to make it come true; by our sweetness and unselfishness making happiness for them. And we can make Jesus happier by trying, each year, to be more like Him; and by helping to make His Kingdom of Love come on earth.

2. *The Birthday Gift.* Let us give Him—

- (1) Our hearts, to love Him.
- (2) Our bodies, to serve Him.
- (3) Our possessions, to use for Him.

3. *The Birthday Feast.* Jesus will give us Joy, that cannot be taken away; Peace, in the midst of all life's troubles: Strength, for all we have to do and bear.

And some glorious Christmas Day, we shall all meet Him at a happy Birthday Feast in our Father's royal Home.

The volume is rich also in illustrations. Here is one culled at random from a very large collection:—

#### THE REAL LIKENESS.

Bishop Thoburn tells a beautiful story about a picture of his dead child, a very imperfect photograph, so blurred that scarcely a trace of the loved features could be seen in it. But one day he took the picture to a photographer, and asked him if he could do anything to improve it. In three weeks the bishop returned, and, as he saw the picture in its frame on the wall, he was startled. It seemed as if his child were living again before him. The image had been in the old picture, but was concealed beneath the blurs and mists that were there also. So Christ, like the skilled artist, took the blurred image of God in the hearts of men, and brought out all its beauty and charm.

Clearly Mr. Ellis has done good service in publishing this excellent volume.

## Christmas Books.

THIS year's output of Christmas books is somewhat smaller than usual, owing, no doubt, to the shortage of paper and other war pressure. But publishers who have faced the conditions make a brave show, and it is certain their venture deserves success. The gift of a book, whether to children, young people, or their elders, is still one of the most acceptable of Christmas presents, and those in search of suitable volumes for the purpose will find in those we notice below a rich variety from which to make their choice.

To take the larger volumes first, "War Inventions and how they are Invented" (by Charles R. Gibson, F.R.C.E.; *Seeley Service and Co., Ltd.*; 3s. 6d.) tells us much about guns, explosives, submarines, torpedoes, mines, airships, etc., in a most fascinating way. The descriptions are simple rather than technical, and the beautiful illustrations and diagrams help the narrative. A most excellent book for these times; boys—and their elders—will be greatly interested in it. Closely allied with this volume is "Marvels of Scientific Invention" (by Thomas W. Corbin; *Seeley Service and Co., Ltd.*; 3s. 6d.), which explains in non-technical language almost everything one ought to know about the invention not only of guns, torpedoes, submarines and mines, but also of smelting, freezing, colour-photography, and other scientific discoveries. A thoroughly illuminating volume. The same