

VII. CHRISTIAN LIFE.

Religion and the Higher Life. Talks to Students.

By William Rainey Harper, President of the University of Chicago. The University of Chicago Press. \$1.00.

In these "Talks" President Harper will appear to many in a new role. The "Talks" must be judged in the light of their purpose. The "Higher Life" is not used in the hackneyed religious sense. He takes pains to distinguish it from "that which is below," and also from "that which we may call the highest." Yet, he says, "it is only the man who lives *the highest life possible for him to live* that may be said to live the higher life." In the very act of becoming associated with an institution of higher learning one announces his purpose to be of those who interest themselves in the higher things of thought and life. The "higher life" includes in its broadest sense, then, the spheres of art, philosophy, science and ethics.

Now the question arises, What has religion to do with this "higher life?" It is to that the lecturer addresses himself. The answers are negative and positive: Religion is not to be identified with—is not the enemy of—one or all of these. Religion is essential for the fullest development of all these phases of the higher life. Religion is "something as imperishable as the mind itself," taking on different form at different periods; but Christianity is taken as a concrete type of the religion of this day—"the highest and most perfect form of religion thus far developed." Now the religious spirit must have characteristics to work in harmony with art, philosophy, science and ethics.

In setting forth the nature of the religion which to-day will prove acceptable to men and women of higher thought, Dr. Harper maintains that it will be: (1) *simple*—truth is always simple; (2) *reasonable*—i. e., it must stand the test of investigation; (3) *tolerant*—one's neighbor must be allowed to differ; (4) *idealistic*—think of a

religion with no prophetic vision, devoid of poetry and music; (5) *ethical*—capable of inciting to righteousness the lives of those who accept it; and (6) capable of affording *comfort* in the time of trouble, *consolation* in the hour of distress—what neither art, nor science, nor philosophy, nor ethics can do. All this he essays to show “the religion of Jesus Christ” is, and can do. It is capable of adjustment to every individual. The greatest minds of nineteen centuries have found it so.

He recognizes in university life, as in the larger life of our day, special difficulties. Of different tendencies by nature, coming from different communities and environments, representing many phases of belief and unbelief, and a greater or less variety of opinions, forms of worship and religious activity, men and women here find the cultivation and manifestation of the religious spirit no easy thing. Amidst such confusion of ideas and interests the temptation is to suffer the religious life to be pushed aside. How shall a unifying and uplifting religious spirit be cultivated? To the multiform answer of that question he devotes himself in a dozen familiar but far-reaching talks like a man in earnest. In doing it he deals with such large subjects as the Religious Spirit, Loyalty to Self, Dependence and Independence, Certainty and Uncertainty as Factors in Life, College Experience an Epitome of Life, Our Intellectual Difficulties, Bible Study and the Religious Life, and America as a Mission Field.

The opinion that once prevailed, that in order to work together in the religious field, men must have the same theological beliefs and the same forms of worship, was wrong. In the future union of effort on the part of those holding different theological views and practicing different forms of worship may be expected to increase. But the hue and cry so common to-day against creeds can be justified, he maintains, only on the ground that it is directed against the effort to compel men to accept some form of belief, or all the details of any system of belief,

as a whole. From any other point of view it is possible. On the other hand, he rejoices that the range within which one may exercise his belief, without injury to his influence and without necessary change of ecclesiastical standing, is constantly widening; and that, paradoxical as it may seem, in proportion as larger liberty of thought, within reasonable limits, prevail, ethical standards are elevated. We may surely agree, he says, not only to permit, but indeed to encourage, the widest possible divergence of thought and belief within reasonable limits; and such divergence should serve, not as a mark of separation, but rather as a token of that freedom which alone is found in Jesus the Christ. We may join in a common effort to elevate the life of the school, the community, the state, and the nation; the effort to establish righteousness and truth on every side.

The book abounds in vivid pictures and interpretations of present day tendencies, perils and opportunities, and, though here and there it may provoke dissent, is well deserving of the serious attention of students, teachers and preachers everywhere.

GEO. B. EAGER.

The Master's Questions to His Disciples.

By the Rev. G. H. Knight. New York. A. C. Armstrong & Son. 1904. Pp. XV and 367.

This is a series of fifty-two "Meditations," based on questions asked by our Lord of his disciples. They are "meant for Christians" and "written in such a personal form that each reader may adopt them as his own." There is no logical or topical order in the arrangement. The author says there could not be. We may at least agree that there need not be, for meditations do not pursue a line determinable by the logical analysis of topics. One may find what suits the mood of the hour by consulting the table of contents, which gives both the questions, quoted in full, and the subject which the author takes for the study in hand.