

To those who can walk far and plan their own excursions, the forest is full of beauty and instruction.

The committee has recommended that steps shall be taken not only to preserve the trees, but to make judicious clearings, opening up the many beautiful views. These clearings are also of great use in encouraging the growth of wild flowers, none of which flourish in the densest shade. Then again, the natural drainage, by streams, is not to be interfered with more than is necessary for the maintenance of the drives and pathways.

A Book of the Week.

"SOCIAL EVOLUTION."*

THIS remarkable book has caused so much controversy among thoughtful people that, difficult as the subject is, of which Mr. Kidd writes in such a masterly manner, it seems as if it were shirking a responsibility in not bringing it before the notice of the readers of the NURSING RECORD.

Mr. Kidd wishes us to share in his conviction that "Nature contains no sanction either for morality or for social progress," and that large "advantages have been given to 'believers' in their struggle for existence." The central point of Mr. Kidd's argument is that there is "no rational sanction for progress, and that the history of mankind is the history of the struggle of man *acting under religious influences against his own reason.*" From this brief statement it will be gathered that "Social Evolution" is a book that cannot fail to be profoundly interesting to all men and women who are trying to solve the puzzle of human existence.

After many learned and admirably written chapters of argument, this is the conclusion at which Mr. Kidd arrives:—

"The evolution which is slowly proceeding in human society is not primarily intellectual but religious in character."

In other words, that—

"The most distinctive feature of human evolution as a whole is, that through the operation of the law of natural selection the race must grow even more and more religious."

Valuable as the book undoubtedly is, it is yet possessed of some grave defects in argument, and there are many people who will robustly differ from Mr. Kidd in his theory, which to my mind is unsupported by his evidence deduced from history and the study of sociology, "that reason and religion are necessarily at war," or that all "reason" is selfish and concerned with material existence only, while "religion" furthers the progress of social evolution against the worldly interests of the men and woman who are parts of its organism.

It has been pointed out in a most able review of this book, that there is "great danger in interpreting history in the light of a preconceived theory," and therefore "seeing only the facts in history which appear to conform to that theory."

Mr. Kidd's theory promises much to many men. It will captivate all believers (to whatever creed they may belong) by exalting faith at the expense of reason; it will attract the scientific by claiming natural selection as the only key to the history of man; while it must appeal to the Individualist and the Socialist by respectively proclaiming the "universal law of competition" and "the prospects of equality of opportunity"; but—and it is an exceedingly important *but*—can Social Evolution, in the course of even ages to come, fulfil all these promises?

The historical deductions made by Mr. Kidd have proved unsatisfactory to modern historians, who have pointed out that—

"Mr. Kidd has no more comprehension of the social dynamics of the present state of France than he has of the social dynamics of ancient Greece.... whom he blindly brackets together as alike illustrating his doctrine of future development."

More crucial than these historical shortcomings is his argument, "that religion has been the guardian of progress." Having argued over this proposition, he then proceeds to the further and totally different proposition, "that religion has been the *only efficient* creative cause in progress" which entirely ignores one of the greatest principles of modern development—"the *instinct* to seek truth and ensue it."

Arguments in plenty have been hurled against Mr. Kidd's book; but, nevertheless, during the last few months it has been more read and talked about than any other book (dealing with the same problems) since Herbert Spencer's inspiring and suggestive "History of Sociology." The principal Reviews have every month been full of articles approving and disapproving its line of thought and argument, and controverting its conclusions; but after reading and hearing all the arguments for and against, the thoughtful inquirer will most probably agree with Lord Farrar's eloquent summing up in the "Contemporary Review":—

"If his theories are at fault—if it is not true that reason and religion are necessarily at war, or that the function of reason is essentially selfish and materialistic, whilst the function of religion is to further the progress of society; if it is false that the interests of the social organism are at variance with the interests of the men and women who compose it; if, in short, Mr. Kidd has not solved the puzzle of human existence; let us thankfully acknowledge that he has touched subjects of the deepest interest, and has touched them in an interesting way; that he has called fresh attention to the influence which different religions, and especially the Christian religion, have had on the development of mankind; that he has stimulated inquiry in this fruitful field of research; that he has emphasised the value of character as compared to intellect, and the importance to character of man's relation to the Inscrutable and the Unknown; and finally, that he has given us a view of the progress and aims of modern society which, if not as complete as he supposes, contains elements which are true and important, and which are all the more valuable because his views are animated by a spirit of humanity and of reconciliation."

A. M. G.

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*"Social Evolution." By Benjamin Kidd. (Macmillan & Co. 1894.)

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