

AN INDIVIDUAL RETROSPECT OF THE RELIGIOUS THOUGHT OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY.

It has been remarked, many times before now, that the nineteenth century has seen greater changes in the general tone of religious thought than any age since the Christian era, saving only the century that included the Reformation. The changes have been effected more gently and unobtrusively than those of the previous crisis, because the temper of the age does not admit of direct physical persecution, but they are none the less real and lasting. The results of thought are not precisely what they were, but it is the method of thought that has altered yet more, and this is of wider importance, since it affects every subject on which we think, and all future accretions of knowledge will necessarily come under its scope and sway. The scientific temper of mind is aroused, facts are sharply separated from our inferences from those facts, and the whole mental machinery by which we deal with any new problem has become so much more accurate and incisive that we look on in amazement at the looseness of the older methods and wonder how they could have satisfied cultivated minds.

If one man could have lived through the whole century, and been touched by the phases of religious thought in a long consecutive series, it would be very interesting to hear his testimony, and, strange as it may seem to make this claim, I think I can approximate towards it, for though my own mental and spiritual life does not quite cover the later half of the century, that of my parents, with whom I was

associated with a quite unusual closeness of sympathy, fills up nearly the whole of the earlier half. There must be others who have the same tale to tell, and it would need the aggregation of many such experiences to give a correct impression of the crisis the religious mind of our English race has passed through, a crisis of which the bewilderment has scarcely yet left us, although the poignant suffering of its first shock is over. The lesson is learned, and we cannot go back on it. On some matters the human mind wavers continually between good and evil, but on others it makes progress that never has a retrogressive step, and just as the injustice and futility of persecution took long to learn but is now written on our common mind for as long as the earth shall be habitable, so have the lessons of this century been learned and indelibly fixed, though what they are it is perhaps hard to say. We are even yet too near them to see them as a whole and be able to word them clearly and succinctly. A modern writer says, "The dissociation of the moral judgment from a special series of religious formulæ is the crucial, the epoch-making fact of our day," but to me this seems but a partial statement. Any answer I could give must be couched in a historical form, for the facts are clear and definite, while the gathering up of results lies scarcely within my power.

It is therefore necessary to picture the spiritual surroundings that greeted the first dawn of consciousness, and this is not hard, the mental scene lying as vividly before me as any that was seen by the outer eye. Had my father been alive, he would have been a hundred years old in April, 1900, and my mother was less than seven years younger, and both having been gifted with minds peculiarly tenacious of childhood's training, they represented the first decades of the century rather than those of their maturer years. As they had received they gave, and never were children more profoundly impressed with the real core of

the Puritan doctrine in its more attractive forms. Reverence, not only for God Himself, but for all that belonged to Him—His book, His day, His truth, His people, His future judgment—the sense of our own littleness before His greatness, and in consequence the entire independence of man and of man's opinion that was the birthright of every one who forsook the world for the knowledge of God, these were the oft repeated and indelible lessons. Not that we ever had what would now be termed a "Bible Class," or ever were spoken to individually with an appeal to decide for Christ; so that, looking back, it is not easy to know how it was effected, but the result remained in every young heart of unquestioning obedience of soul to the high though vague demand, and a strong desire to be able to live worthy of the vocation. There was no scorn, no reaction as time went on, only a kind of fear, a brooding sense that was felt half as an honour half as a regret, that we could never be quite like other people, never join in the general swim of the world's varied interests, but must always be set aside as something apart. The true Christian, like the Greek philosopher, must not be a part of the unthinking stream he looks at, where each particle hurries on the next and there is no real choice or self determination toward any goal but one that is involuntary, but rather must stand on the shore and consider it all and keep his own aims, his own desires. That such teaching would produce a somewhat critical spirit is obvious.

Any description I can give of the earlier years of the century necessarily, from this purely personal point of view, takes the form of the opinions held by my parents, so it will be forgiven if their characters and aspirations are dwelt on in so far as they affected the religious life of those around them.

Our father was a great reader, yet it was not reading that led him far out of the one chosen circle of his thoughts.

His favourite chapters in the Bible were Isaiah i. and ii., chapters that represent a Divine fury of iconoclasm, and his favourite verses were Isaiah ii. 22, "Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils; for wherein is he to be accounted of?" and also 1 Corinthians ii. 14, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned," and other similar words that dwell on the nothingness of man and the fullness of God. His mind was intensely individualistic, and he cared little for Church gatherings, or tendencies of thought, or widespread movements of any kind. That truth was generally not found on the side of the majority was his belief, and while personally exceedingly humble and even diffident, he yet believed his judgment on the deep things of God was based on the direct utterance of the Divine Word, and was therefore right and not to be gainsaid. Complete dependence on the revealed truth of God, rendered him as completely independent of the opinion of man as were any of his spiritual forefathers in the ranks of Cromwell's Ironsides, and he was as utterly certain that the final truth and right were on the side of his words, as they were that these overmastering and victorious allies were on the side of their swords. They say you can tell a man by his books. The main bulk of his library was sold at the breaking up of our old home; but even the few shelves that remain of his well bound and well marked companions show a fair outline of his mental courses. About a third of these books must be omitted, for they fall outside our range of time. There are all William Law's works, and strange old brown volumes of Jacob Böhmen, the translations themselves being dated 1649; there are Eusebius and Josephus, Foxe and Rollin, Lavater and Paley, and Chevalier Ramsay's ponderous *Principles of Religion*. But most of these are works that are not affected by the lapse of time,

and one has a sense of being further afield when one comes to the books that are written in the early years of our own century. Here is an imposing book in four volumes, full of Greek quotations, and bearing the ambitious title, *A New System, or an Analysis of Antient Mythology, wherein an Attempt is made to divest Religion of Fable, and to reduce the Truth to its original Purity.* Jacob Bryant, 1807. This work is composed of classical stories and tales of ancient travellers, illustrated by beautiful old engravings of Serpent temples, the rites of Serpent worship and Fire worship, with altars, priests, and strange designs copied from seals and rings. Another book by the same author bears an even more cumbrous title, as though the reader might feel himself defrauded were not every portion of the subject on hand mentioned on the first page: *Observations upon the Plagues inflicted upon the Egyptians, in which is shewn the Peculiarity of those Judgments, and their correspondence with the Rites and Idolatries of that People, to which is prefixed a Prefatory Discourse concerning the Grecian Colonies from Egypt.* 1810. The object in the introduction is said to be "to authenticate the Scriptures," and truly no pains are spared. The index runs thus, "Observations, Considerations, Arguments, Objections Answered, Short Recapitulation, Argument Pursued, Different Opinions, Opinions Canvassed, Alternatives, Other Objections, Review of the Whole, Further Observations, Conclusion." These two books were read with profound interest by our father, but to us now they seem to have come from another world, so remote are they from our researches. But here is something different; seven stately bound volumes of *The History of the Church of Christ*, four by Isaac and Joseph Milner, dated 1810, and three by Scott, dated 1828. The other books I have mentioned we only looked into for the pictures, but this one was taken down and carefully and reverently read, and it remains with me still. It is the

fashion to mock at "Milner," as written from the most arbitrary and untenable point of view, but from where we then stood together it was one absolutely reasonable. We did not want the outer circles of religion, we did not want to see how the things of God have been travestied and abused by the corrupt minds of men, we wanted to follow the single pure stream of Divine truth through the tangled thickets of the world's history. That this aim could not be perfectly carried out on account of the Church of Christ being an invisible body, was acknowledged at the outset and accepted by the reader as inevitable, but at any rate an attempt could be made to trace the main current of those living waters; so we watched the disciples of Christ in the cloister and amid the gorgeous ceremonials of Rome, and then when that system became too corrupt we abruptly left it, and found ourselves on the open hill side amid the poor and simple, following the fortunes of the Waldenses or the Lollards. However historically imperfect such a method as Milner's may be on account of the breaks in continuity destroying the sense of development, the impression gained by the growing mind of what the Church of Christ really is, it is beyond the power of subsequent time to efface. It is the individualistic and not the collective view, and to adopt it colours all after life. But we must pass on to another group of books of rather later date that represent groping attempts to combat unbelief and to introduce into Scripture unity both with itself and with the world outside, and we open first on this: *The Theology of the Early Patriarchs illustrated by an Appeal to Subsequent Parts of the Holy Scripture, in a Series of Letters to a Friend.* T. Biddulph, 1825; and here the absolutely literal fashion in which the story of Adam and Eve is handled down to the minutest details and curious inferences from those details, makes one feel how many miles have been mentally traversed since it was written. Next we find a row of the Bridgewater

Treatises, *On the Power, Wisdom and Goodness of God as manifested in the Adaptation of External Nature to the Moral and Intellectual Constitution of Man*. There is Dr. Chalmers 1834, and Kidd, Whewell, Bell, Prout, and Roget follow in order due. Then we have *An Attempt towards an Improved Version, being a Metrical Arrangement of the Twelve Minor Prophets*. W. Newcome, D.D., 1836. This book was evidently held to be a store of learning, and with it there stand various old re-translations of the New Testament, with notes and comments of all kinds of laborious scholarship. Among these is *An Introduction to the Critical Study and Knowledge of the Holy Scriptures*. T. H. Horne, D.D., 1834, which contains a certain amount of historical knowledge, being full of notes from classical writers and the early fathers, with description of local antiquities, but not one point that we should call "criticism." Then come some of the first glimpses of the East, a subject to which he was specially attracted through all his later years, having a latent belief that the well-spring of certain pure elements of primeval religion derived through the sons of Noah or possibly the later sons of Abraham might still be discovered there. The mass of these books, and there were many of them, were sold, but a few remain. *The Precepts of Jesus, or a Guide to Peace and Happiness, by Romauhon Roy*, 1824; and *Christianity and Hindooism contrasted, or a comparative View of the Evidence by which the respective claims to Divine Authority of the Bible and of the Hindoo Shastrus are supported*. G. Mundy, 1834; and further, a work with an exceedingly ambitious title that runs thus, *The One Primeval Language traced experimentally through Ancient Inscriptions in Alphabetic Characters of lost powers from the Four Continents, including the Voice of Israel from the Rocks of Sinai, and the Vestiges of Patriarchal Tradition from the Monasteries of Egypt, Itruria and Southern Arabia*.

C. Forster, 1852. To the writings of Max Müller he never could fit his mind, though in latest years he greatly valued those of Sir Monier Williams on these subjects. But now we get into a distinctly more modern atmosphere, with Merle D'Aubigné's *History of the Reformation*, in three tall volumes, of the date 1840, a book much read and dearly prized, and that made the times of the Reformation as vivid and clear to us all as any personal reminiscence. *The Tongue of Fire*, by W. Arthur, of which the thirteenth edition came out in 1858, was the only book of that kind that was read and valued by him, and somewhat similar in tone were a few papers by a certain "C.H.M." that appeared in 1860 in *Things New and Old*," a publication belonging to the Brethren. Though a member of the Church of England and unremitting in his attendance Sunday by Sunday with never a break, and also a communicant, he yet seldom found there what was to his mind in doctrine, and the writings of Nonconformists more often suited the channels along which his hopes were laid. With the Tractarian movement of 1833 and onward he had no sympathy whatever, and none also with the Platonizing movement that succeeded it; the one was to him the foolish unthinking retrogression toward Rome of people who knew no Church history, and the other the relapse into the "heathenism of the natural man" of people who knew no Theology. He had not patience to read the books or hear the sermons of either party, so fundamentally opposed did they appear to him to the plain and straightforward declaration of Holy Scripture; and if ever he accidentally came across them, he would be both vexed and sorrowful that English people could take up such false and superficial ideas, endeavouring to lower the demands of God, and to make them easy and congenial to the natural heart by lowering them to be either lax or merely formal: and then, recovering himself, he would say these errors were all

transitory, and we must wait a few years yet, and often end with a favourite motto that was one of the anchors of his trust, "Magna est veritas et prævalebít." Though he identified himself with the Evangelical body by giving generous support to objects he approved and by seeking out Evangelical Churches to attend when away from home, he yet always kept aloof from their lines of thought in his own inner spirit; those representatives he met he seemed to feel too bustling and too much immersed in good works; he thought they employed solemn phrases too easily, and took the personal assurance of salvation too much for granted, and could not go down deep enough into the truth to be able to help him, and this feeling he retained to the close. He was a Puritan and not an Evangelical; and though they coincide on many points, there is a distinct note of difference between the two, and to this note his whole life was attuned. Although he lived to be eighty-eight, I do not think he read with personal interest any religious book more modern than those of thirty or forty years before, and we usually found he had reverted to those over a century earlier, Law's Letters and parts of Böhmen's *Aurora* being with him to the end, so thoroughly were the hopes of his spirit anchored to the past below the tossing confusions of the present. It is not wonderful that the impress of a solid, inflexible character, nourished on food such as this and full of a kind of devout spiritual integrity, remains stamped on the being of all of us to this day.

Our mother exactly coincided with him in opinion, but, being of French Huguenot descent, the same thoughts took in her mind a different colouring. It was certainly her influence that was the paramount one in our lives; and though in many ways full of talent and invention, bright and eager and industrious, her inner life was a strangely solitary one. Her central expression from Scripture was that we were intended to be "strangers and pilgrims," and

to this idea all others gave way. Any one self-satisfied, fashionable and talkative, any one who surrounded himself with luxury and seemed to be "building a nest in this world" was an object of genuine repulsion to her, and she loved to single out of all ranks the humble and unambitious, those who had a meek and quiet spirit and kept themselves free from the ordinary amusements of the world, whether they were enlightened or not. Teachableness, humility, contentment with being overlooked, industry and happiness in dull circumstances, these were what she valued and inculcated, even down to the evidence of trifles. The great recognized amusements of the world were never mentioned in our home; her own dress and that of her daughters was studiously out of the prevailing fashion, smoking she utterly condemned, slang, even a word of it she could not endure, and any sentiment or attitude that betrayed indolence or self-indulgence was at once checked. Her watch was intuitive and incessant, being due to her nature more than to any words, and her authority was never disputed. These great motives influenced her choice and decision in the veriest trifles, though she seldom openly expressed them. I remember her selecting a set of little cups for afternoon tea, and though of some three or four the quality and price were equal, she chose without hesitation the simplest pattern and colour, gently saying they looked to her more like "pilgrim cups" than the others. She was through life profoundly affected by her own early experience, which was that of longing for the simplicity and purity of the highest type of life within her ken, and of turning away heart and soul from the pleasures of society in which she had been brought up. This, her fixed idea, derived perhaps as much from philosophy as from Christianity, was only strengthened by her subsequent enlightenment, and received a further ground for its reasonableness from the example of our Lord. Of definite religious

instruction she gave us but little, yet it was as if she formed the very texture and shape of our minds by her unremitting example and criticism being always along the same well defined lines, and by her endless demand for industry, simplicity, and contentment. She often pointed out the shortness of life and the poverty of its aims unless it is dominated by a nobler spirit within, and she would repeat with feeling, but without any comment, the second title of Law's *Spirit of Prayer*, which runs, "The Soul rising out of the Vanity of Time unto the Riches of Eternity." This was a favourite expression with her and seemed to embody her working creed. Beside a few old books, such as Cowper's Poems and Romaine's Letters, she loved, as did also our father, the earlier works of Thomas Erskine of Linlathen, and *The Unconditional Freeness of the Gospel* above the rest. This essay was out of print then, and she would take much trouble to find the second-hand copies and present them to her friends. Erskine had brought her accessions of light in early days, and she was faithful to him all her life. These were his writings between 1815 and 1830, before the strange forty years of silence descended upon him; for of his posthumous writings she did not approve any more than of those of Maurice or Kingsley. Never blinded by the name of a good author, she preserved a keen, unerring vein of criticism for every fresh work presented to her, a criticism that always had in it something of the Greek philosopher, as well as the Puritan or the Huguenot.

Our Sunday books in early days were very few. We read that much scoffed-at work, *The Fairchild Family*, and others similar in tone; but though I believe she approved of the theology, she always drew back at the personal applications made at the close of each chapter. To a mind like hers, lofty but somewhat rigid, it seemed like a lowering of divine truths and consolations to make them

fit too closely to the conduct of children with their petty disobediences and their elementary struggles towards the right, and with us she invariably worked on the more ethical plane, speaking of what was due to another, of what befitted our station, of how sweet was true humility and contentment, and similar motives. Sermons too we read by Evangelical preachers, and whenever opportunity occurred we heard them with great interest and delight, and were encouraged by her to take diligent notes to be stored up for use in the more barren land where our own home was cast; but we observed that while she loved explanation and enlightenment she always shrank from the expression of emotion, and never alluded afterwards to any appeal made to the heart or the will. This was a loss as years went on, and with all our respect and love for her we yet felt there was a region she could not understand and could not touch, while some others laid their hand right on the central spot, and this produced a sense of separation which tended to increase with time.

Both parents had a great love of hymns, whether to be repeated aloud on Sunday evenings or sung to solemn, slow tunes. They were the hymns of the first thirty years of the century, and the stock was very seldom added to. "What is life? 'tis but a vapour," and "Change is our portion here," were called for week after week, and nearly every one had the long-drawn pensive cadences of those times. "O Zion, when I think of thee," was a favourite with us all, and at nine years old I used to take the words to heart without one idea that they might not be suitable. The second verse runs thus—

While here I walk on hostile ground,
The few that I can call my friends
Are like myself, in fetters bound,
And weariness our steps attends.

Others were about worldlings, and scorning earth's baubles,

and looking forward to the pure joys of heaven, and having the heart fixed above transitory pleasures where no evil could penetrate. There was a great deal of aspiration in those hymns and a great deal about heaven, but all were somewhat of the same calibre, and I scarcely remember a verse that spoke of direct personal assurance or personal joy, the contrast of the hopes of the Christian with those of the world being their one prevailing theme. But a few years later the hymns and songs of the Revival began to penetrate the religious community, and some of us brought them back from school with their glad certainties and ringing melodies that ran so joyously together.

He is fitting up my mansion
Which eternally shall stand,
For my stay shall not be transient
In that holy, happy land.
On the other side of Jordan,
In the sweet fields of Eden,
Where the tree of life is blooming,
There is rest for you.

So we sang, pleased at finding these new treasures, and then felt at once the shade of disapproval descend. The tune was far too quick and shrill, the words were uneducated, the rhymes inexcusable, the meaning superficial, and, worst of all, it was putting into the mouths of the young and ignorant the expression of a conviction that was to most of them wholly untrue. Thus it fared with all that class of hymns, and the same fate awaited nearly all the "Sankey's Hymns" that appeared in their turn some eight or ten years afterwards. But though we withdrew the actual singing and reverted to the old type, we were not to be robbed individually of what seemed to us so good. It was not the hymns only, it was the teaching that went with them that won its way into our hearts, though there was sometimes a lurking fear that such teaching was com-

paratively superficial and did not include the deep stores of thought and grand foundation principles, such as we felt actuated the lives of our parents. But other friends and other influences of a potent character came into our lives from the more direct Evangelical side, and as far as religious position was concerned we gradually transferred ourselves in thought from the beginning of the century to its more central years. Some slight modifications crept into our mother's own opinions, judging by the books she accepted in her old age, but it did not affect her standard in speaking. To the end she kept the same unswerving line of stringent criticism combined with a sort of aggressive unworldliness and simplicity of aim, and her inner life was a very silent one, however much its outcome was impressed on all who surrounded her, friends and servants as well as children.

For us, we were chiefly educated with a tutor at home with but a short period at school; under a docile exterior there was a good deal of the ferment that is incidental to most energetic natures. Now and then we used to long to try the excitements of the ordinary world, and to be a little more "like other people," but far more often it was an inspiration towards literary and artistic ideals, which our mother seemed to encourage heartily with the one hand and then crush flat with the other, by her vigorous and correct criticism of our crude efforts. Again we would find the religious life and ambitions of other Christians much more accessible and congenial, with their more easily expressed convictions and their hands full of loving and active work; but so consistent were both parents in word and conduct, so thoroughly did they by their very silences make us feel that depth and fidelity to truth lay with them even if attractiveness lay with the other side, that the ebullitions of repressed energy in any directions were not permanent, and we, both boys and girls, came round to their ways. We carried on the two layers together, as it

were, the foundation laid in childhood being the harder and more indestructible ; and yet the second layer, that of the middle of the century, being a true factor also. We loved to hear the great preachers of the day ; we loved to be in London for the " Week of Prayer," and meetings of that sort, where Sir Arthur Blackwood and Mr. Aitken might be heard, and as no one can drink into the spirit of such teaching without longing to impart also to others, the desire arose to work among the village people at home. A cottage reading, and classes for lads and girls were started, and were endured with kindly tolerance by our parents rather than encouraged, they being as it were divided between satisfaction that we were evidently choosing the better part, and feeling that it savoured of arrogance that we should do what they had never done, and should set up to teach when we might with perhaps more profit take the place of learners.

Thus by an almost insensible transition the horizon widened as the years rolled by. The doctrine remained much the same as it had been originally, though in some of its outworks it gained in elasticity, but the practical area was greatly increased. The Church of Christ was felt to be a true and living spiritual unity under many diversities of method, so that brothers and sisters were to be found not only through all the long centuries, as " Milner " had taught us in the old days, but here and now, all the world over, speaking many languages and under many forms of thought, and even making many mistakes, but still most truly one body. This noble conception once grasped by a young mind, it is impossible to change it again for one more limited, or one dependent on the form of Church government or any external mark whatsoever, and the sense of loyalty aroused by belonging to such a " holy, catholic, and apostolic Church " is a factor in all subsequent related conceptions. Looking back I can see that some genuine

building up of the spiritual fabric was going on through these last years of the old home life, though a strain of something unfixed and wavering runs through them also. History was studied, and whether it was ecclesiastical or secular history the sense of the relation to theology was always mentally present as the all-important thing; biographies were read with great interest, new religious books were read and criticized, and best of all, the main points of faith were actually verified here and there by seeing pardon through Christ accepted by some of the village people and the new life of God springing up in their hearts. Yet the sense of being stranded in a quiet bay was ever there, the sense of being outside the great stream of the world's thought and action; and sometimes I could think in the profound stillness of a summer's evening that I could hear it thundering away in the far distance, a dim invitation, fearful yet attractive, and the German proverb came to mind, "And beyond the hills again, there are people." It was a curious strife between a sincere contentment with home and this vague, restless waiting for the call to come. To live and give pleasure and satisfaction to those who are dearest seems a good fate; but when this is accomplished with about one-third of one's being, and the other two-thirds are lying idle, and have just sufficient consciousness to know that they are there and are idle, an unmanageable element is at once introduced. A dumb protest or cry is for ever going on within, a desire for something harder or more dangerous, an eager listening for what may prove to be a new experience, a sense that the untested character is nearly valueless, and all this though the regnant third does its work so completely and well that the presence of dissatisfaction under that smiling exterior is never even guessed at.

The call came at last, and I sprang up to meet it with a

swift impetus that I had never felt before and have never known with the like intensity since. My career was somewhat unexpectedly altered, and on October 14, 1872, I entered the University of Cambridge. The purely personal experiences are necessarily omitted, but it will be my aim to give a correct impression of the new and overwhelming religious influences that fell upon me there. An ardent desire that had never been definitely expressed was now granted, and I stepped from the quiet bay into the full mid-stream. The Universities are, it is acknowledged, subject to waves or alternations of feeling, and Cambridge was at that time passing under that wave of materialistic unbelief, that, though short in duration and followed by strong reactions, was powerful while it lasted. There was as ever much that was only good and strengthening, but it was a great deal to encounter all at once, and the forces of the new thoughts at work were so great that they seemed like a row of fierce spirits standing waiting to devour any young unsheltered spiritual life that passed within their range. Yet all at the time was very natural, very simple. Every one knows the outlines of life at the University, and to me it was a grand experience to wake each morning and realize afresh that this sudden turn had come into my life, and that at last I might learn, really learn the outlines of the thought that prevailed in the thinking world.

O happy days, a grasp we laid
At least upon the varied keys
Of knowledge! ah, such days as these
Are worth regret when all is said!

And while the outer life was full of the spring forward that is the natural heritage of well used youth and energy, and I entered with delight into all that was offered me, the inner life seemed to be faring about equally well; faith held its own in all practical matters, and the destructive

suggestions and negative hints of the first months were repelled like rain off some kinds of hardy leaves, and only a silent sense of pitiful respect was left for the desolate or ignorant hearts that could utter them.

I have a life with Christ to live,
But ere I live it must I wait
Till learning can clear answer give
Of this and that book's date?
I have a life in Christ to live,
I have a death in Christ to die,
And must I wait till Science give
All doubts a full reply?

No suggestion passed unheeded, but the foundations had been too firmly laid and personal experiences had too often verified their truth, that they should be soon shaken, and more than a year went by in the protest, sometimes expressed in words, but more often silently given, "*But I know.*" This protest seemed to be one of simple intuitive insight that could hardly be mistaken, something not founded on argument but on immediate apprehension, like seeing a colour or hearing a sound. But the strain was too great to be borne continuously. Glad at first with the gladness of certainty, the protest became more diffident and less joyful as a second side, wholly unthought of before, was seen to the question at issue. Everything seemed to conspire in the one direction; my own studies in the outworks of philosophy, the new lights on historical veracity and the worth of testimony, the sense of the fixity of the laws of nature, the dawn of the world-embracing ideas of development, the stir of falling strongholds of belief, and above all the vague gentle questioning of primary truths, whether in papers or reviews, the hint that what has before been taken for granted is at least open to revision, all this came in softly but irresistibly like the incoming tide. The persistent rain wetted the leaves at last, the questions were

not refused a hearing, and "like the cold snake in the nest of the swallow," doubt slipped in and made there its home. There was no rebellion against past teaching, no definite unbelief of any doctrine, or rejection of evidence, but the presence of a permanent chilling question whether any solid substratum of fact lay under the complex tenets to which all life had been so firmly fastened, or whether they were but figments created by the pressing hunger of our orphaned race. The visible and the material seemed to be the real, and all else as intangible and irresponsible and dependent on the position of the mind that looked on them as the colours in the rainbow. The rock-like faith of the older generation, and the active responsibilities and joyous certainties of the more modern, both were at fault here, for while both had stood persecution and laughter in their day, neither had met this paralysing enemy, this foe who did not seem to attack from without, but in silence and secrecy to be a traitor born and nourished from within.

In old days we used to sing—

Set the prize before thee, gird thine armour on ;
Heir of grace and glory, see thy blood-bought crown.

And again, in other words—

Surely my Captain may depend on me!
If in the battle to my Lord I'm true,
Mine will be the honours in the Grand Review.

And yet again in a more collective expression—

Like a mighty army moves the Church of God ;
Brothers, we are treading where the saints have trod ;

and the desires of untried valour to join in that grand battle of faith with unbelief had been ardent. Impatience had been silenced by the remembrance that David killed the lion and the bear in private before he slew Goliath in public, but the longing for such an encounter remained steadily in the background of thought as an object of

existence. And now it had come, and it was no battle at all, only the numbing of the nerves of faith and devotion that had been so well used before, and the rousing of the nerves of intelligent insight and coherent thought from their long slumber up to keenest employment upon everything within their grasp. One of the primary truths taught in the old days was, "To doubt is a sin," so it was only inch by inch and with a reluctance that was almost despair that any advances were made, and yet, against all the crowd of desires and affections, against the concentrated force of the will, not one sentence, not one half sentence of suggested doubt once heard could ever be forgotten, but remained stored up and waiting its time to avenge itself. It was like a fate that the arguments most dreaded had the most tenacity of life, and when the intellect is on one side and the heart and conscience on the other, it is the intellect that temporarily wins the day. The structure still seemed to stand intact, but beneath the surface brick by brick had been quietly pulled out of the wall till the foundations shook. Is the Bible then not true? Are the Church and the World not separate? Is there no distinction in kind between them? Is there no such thing as the new birth from above? Are we not in prayer speaking to a Divine Friend? Is He not wonderfully irresponsive? Can He really be there at all? It was all so confusing that the best plan seemed to keep the two departments quite separate in the mind, and to endeavour to hold firmly to the old thoughts and duties and methods of expression with the one hand, while pursuing the more urgent inquiries to some extent with the other.

In practical life also the difficulties were very great. Many a story has been written of a noble, free but more worldly nature, suffering from contact with a grim Calvinist or a narrow Evangelical, and severely have these types been held up to the scorn of mankind, but few, very few, have

been able to tell of the pain of the stricter soul amid a new laxity of surroundings. One does not want to be always sitting in judgement, always dividing the sheep from the goats, one longs to be upright, reliable, kindly and winning, and show something of what the life of Christ is like. On a blank page of my Bible stood these words—

In patient, hidden deep accord,
The servant may be like his Lord,
And thy love my love shining through
May show the world that Thou art true,
Till those who see me see Thee too.

But one is all at sea. The old landmarks gone, the final appeal to the Scriptures treated as irrelevant, a kind of general indulgence and hope reigns over all; things one had believed to be sins are spoken of as natural; and the very distinction between right and wrong begins to fade away, or at any rate so to change its place that it is scarcely to be found from the old bearings. At even a suggestion of this the Puritan in the blood gets all aflame, and one feels, "I do well to be angry." The heart may be all sympathy, but the conscience has grown in a form that will not bend, and its rigidity comes in at every turn, giving pain doubtless to others, but ten times more to the heart with which it lives in such close union. The whole inner being is at strife and both sides incur blame, as the sentence now of cowardice and now of unwise aggression is passed on words and actions by the watchful guardian within.

As far as the actual results of thought are concerned, there had been some kind of preparation. Hugh Miller's works had been read and assimilated, so that not only was the antiquity of the globe assented to, but also some kind of development in the sense of successive layers of creation, ever advancing in complexity of structure. Also the point at issue in Edward Irving's *Human Nature of Christ* had been considered, and whether future punishment is retributive or

remedial, and other cognate questions had been raised. The old life was not a life without argument and thought within a certain range, but they were strictly bounded by authority. It was not the subject handled, it was the spectator's point of view that was changed, and the change affected every detail, as one can see in comparing such a book as *The Unconditional Freeness of the Gospel* with *Ecce Homo*. The gap is so great, it seems useless to begin on details : in the first the standpoint is from God and His will, and man with his feelings and misguided endeavours is dismissed with scant courtesy, while in the second the standpoint is from man, and it is God who is at the far distance. Human love too much ignored, human conduct too much undervalued, now avenge themselves sevenfold, displaying their attractive colours and varied forms, and coming forward as the only true and tangible treasures of life. To one who has once had a glimpse of the purity and permanence of Heaven, these flowers of the earth are poor things with which to fill one's hands, and those offered me were indignantly flung away, and my soul refused comfort. Earth is valueless if Heaven is empty ; and if life is to continue, the full misery of the possibility cannot be looked in the face.

But I am anticipating. The three years at Cambridge fairly coincided with the crest of that wave that so soon passed by when Mill and Spencer, Huxley and Tyndall were thought to have said the last word on the subject of truth and reality, and it was later that the finer and more subtle antagonists came into the field, but to the true Puritan the enemies of the cross of Christ are all counted as one. If neither sun nor stars appear and the compass has been proved untrustworthy, it does not much matter which wind blows, or in which direction the vessel sails. And it was lonely too, lonely as a tract of land where death reigns—

As in strange lands a traveller, walking slow
In doubt and great perplexity,
A little before moon-rise hears the low
Moan of an unknown sea,
And knows not if it be thunder, or a sound
Of rocks thrown down, or one deep cry
Of great wild beasts; then thinketh, "I have found
A new land, but I die."

It was new indeed, but more as death is new to the living than like a new phase of life. In this present year the world seems full of souls who have passed through a process similar to that which I have described, and books are now written that might help at every step of the way. But twenty-five years ago it was not so. Like myself, those that were in the midst of their sorrowful journey had a hand laid over their mouth and could not speak a word to each other as to their discoveries and their chilling fears; and for the rest, those in the old school of thought might have pity or affection or blame to give, but no help, for they could not see where any difficulty lay, save in the perversity of the human will, which would not accept the plain statements made by God. Again, my companions in the new school of thought took the transition so lightly, and had evidently so superficial a sense of sin and condemnation, and so unspiritual an ambition, that their opinion was worth less still. Of true self denial, of crucifixion with Christ, of walking carefully in white garments, they seemed to know nothing, and an ethical aim of kindly usefulness contented them. Thus between the two camps, between the two halves of the century, the soul walked on alone, desolate in time and space. It was like something empty that ought not to be empty; the sea of faith, as Matthew Arnold says, had retreated, and no mental effort could bring it back. Nothing was left to the ear but "its melancholy, long withdrawing roar" in the pages of history, and nothing to the eye but the bare facts of human life, "the vast edges

drear and naked shingles of the world." It was not the ages of unreasoning belief in the power of Rome to which the heart looked back with longing, the ages of credulity and superstition, but to the glowing, practical victor faith of Wesley and Whitfield, of Archbishop Leighton and Spurgeon—the faith that "obtained promises, and stopped the mouths of lions." Was such faith gone for ever out of reach of all minds that had been trained to consecutive and more accurate thought? Was some great attraction, some irresponsible, blind, invisible force even beginning to lead the bright flood slowly away from our side, and leaving only a sad, empty slope of stones and sand strewn with helpless, dying forms of life? It was a process that might go on further and ever further, and one could not tell where it might end, and all life was robbed and spoiled.

(To be continued.)