

for if he did, "what would become of the priests who are very good as workers in the matters of charity and mercy, though of narrow opinions, and bigoted very often." The female portion of the community, too, would be at sad loss without churches and ceremonies and clergy; these are a relief from the monotony of life, these give the ladies topics of interest to talk about, and they promote a feeling of decency and respectability. Mr. Laing is very kind, but we claim for religion a better foundation and a greater security of tenure than that, and certainly than anything he would substitute for it. We agree that the duty of the nineteenth-century man is to follow truth at all hazards; and let us hope he will meet with something better and more substantial than the Polarity which Mr. Laing lauds so highly. As regards the historical element in the Gospels, Mr. Laing does not seem to have gone very much further than Strauss would lead him; the later criticism he does not appear to have grasped. Miracles, of course, he discards; the resurrection and ascension he tries to argue away; and he is not satisfied with the description of faith given in the Epistle to the Hebrews. He assents to the authenticity of the sayings and parables of Christ culled from St. Mark's Gospel, which he considers to be the foundation of the Evangelists' stories; but he says that he can find no solid historical ground until Paul "met the Pillars of the Church at Jerusalem, except the general fact that the Apostles returned there from Galilee, preached publicly, made numerous converts, and that Peter probably played a leading part." The chapter on Scepticism and Pessimism is a political essay mostly; it is against pessimism, and maintains that the world is wiser, kinder, and better than it was; that ecclesiastical religion is less of a motive power than it used to be; that religious persecutions and religious wars are bygone experiences; and generally the truth is, that morals are built on a far surer foundation than that of creeds which are here to day and gone to-morrow. Morals, he maintains, are built upon the solid rock of experience and of the "survival of the fittest," which, in the long evolution of the human race from primeval savages, have by "natural selection" and "heredity" become almost instinctive. Mr. Laing is as radical in politics as he is in matters religious; and so we are not surprised to find Mr. Parnell designated the Bismarck of Ireland, and Lord Beaconsfield a "sort of glorified Gil Blas." Mr. Laing's book is well written, and contains a good deal worth thinking about; but we must withhold our commendation: the perusal leaves an unpleasant sort of odour behind, and does not increase our respect for anything or anybody.

(1) *A Gauntlet to the Theologian and Scientist.* By T. Clarke, M.D. London: Frederic Norgate. 1888.

(2) *The Fate of the Dead.* By T. Clarke, M.D. London: Frederic Norgate. 1889. Price 1s.

(3) *Problems of the Future.* By S. Laing. Third thousand. London: Chapman & Hall. 1889.