

IMPATIENCE IN REFORM.

BY MRS. SARA A. UNDERWOOD.

It is perhaps only natural that one who has been emancipated from the thralldom of old creeds and customs, one who sees all things in the light of new and free ideas, should burn with impatient zeal to set about the work of reform—thinking to find all minds in just that transitional state in which the truth found him, and just as ready to recognize and accept that truth as he himself was. So it often happens that, fired with enthusiasm, the young reformer sets out to make converts to his new opinions, thinking that they need only to be stated to be believed in; but presently, to his utter disappointment and surprise, he finds out what weary, up-hill work such reform is, and how unappreciative of him and his work the great busy world is. So, finding converts few and far between and his pet opinions, though backed by the soundest argument, gaining small headway if perceptibly any, he straightway grows discouraged; his ardor begins to cool, and the chances are that the once ardent reformer will either degenerate into misanthropic indifference or sink back into his old sets of belief. This is the story of many a name that was once frequently and intimately associated with reforms of various kinds. And those who followed the progress of those reforms until their accomplished and triumphant success wonder why this, that, and the other one, once in the van of progressive thought, is no longer heard of in connection with it. This has been and will be the story of many.

But this impatience and consequent disheartening might be prevented by one who has honestly the real good and improvement of his race at heart, instead of a burning desire for self-aggrandizement as a hero and martyr, prevented by a little calm looking over of the history of all accomplished reforms, and a little consideration of the complex organization of the human mind, a little reflection as to the slow evolution of reform from antecedent wrong-doing. The motto of the German poet should be the motto of all reformers or would-be reformers:

"Haste not, rest not, calmly wait,
Meekly bear the storms of fate;
Duty be thy polar guide,
Do the right whatever betide."

All reforms have been matters of very slow growth, of very patient work on the part of genuine (not spasmodic) reformers. There are long periods when the sense of wrong thinking or of wrong done to man by man, is slowly making itself known; felt at first by the most intellectual and most sensitive minds, it gradually touches the consciousness of the more obtuse, but is still borne with from lack of knowing what evils may have to be encountered in the changing of men's views, in the removal of the wrong. Then comes the period of rebellious speech and protest—emanating at first from the more clear-seeing minds and least patient hearts. This, too, is slow work; many speeches have to be made, many fierce pamphlets written, for the masses wisely move and are moved slowly. But some sudden emergency startles at last this seemingly inert mass into action—action which means reform, whether of politics, morals or religion. Then will be seen how many have been thinking the same thoughts, dreaming the dreams in the quietude of their homes as the most active reformers; but it is to the active reformer that the meed of praise belongs, for, but for him, these rebellious thoughts would never have visited these quiet homes, whose inmates are to complete and ratify the work. It is at this stage that the movement is taken advantage of by many who call themselves reformers, but who are demagogues who hope to win a little reputation by noisily proclaiming themselves the lovers who have set agoing this bold, strong, triumphant reform.

Let those who are most impatient for the recognition of new truths remember that the reform of ideas is the most sluggish of all reforms in its movements, from the fact that there is generally little outside pressure goading on to any sudden desperation or determination. The transmitted ideas from generation to genera-

tion undergo slow gradations of change in tone or form. So gradual is the process that there seems to be no change when comparing the ideas of one generation with those of the succeeding one, and it is only by going back several generations and comparing the ideas then extant on any given subject with the ideas prevailing on the same subject to-day, that we discover what real progress has been made.

The duty of the true reformer is to keep steadily at the work of reform from pure love of that work, from pure love of his fellow man, keeping ever in mind the words of the poet:

"But thou
Who minglest in the harder strife
For truth, which men receive not now,
Thy warfare only ends with life.

Nor heed the shaft, too surely cast,
The hissing, stinging bolt of scorn,
For with thy side shall stand at last
The victory of endurance born."

ADAPTATION AND DESIGN.

The following brief communications we clip from three successive numbers of the *Religio-Philosophical Journal*.

"Underwood following Darwin talks about natural selection, and stripping the universe of a controlling intelligence, leaves the world and man to the sport of chance. But the common sense of mankind will always be proof against the vagaries of such teachers. Nature is full of adaptations, and these adaptations convince all unperverted minds that there is design and an infinite intelligence that created and governs all things."—*Christian Herald*.

Parasites are adapted to vegetables and the bodies of animals. Is this adaptation evidence of design? If so, is it right to sprinkle poison on plants or to give medicine to cattle or men with the intention of killing these parasites? What is the design in parasitic life? Potato bugs are adapted to destroy potatoes, and grasshoppers are adapted to eat almost everything upon which man and beast depend for food. Is there design in these adaptations? Were the bugs and 'hoppers designed for the vegetation or the vegetation for the bugs and 'hoppers? A cancer is wonderfully adapted to prey, like a carnivorous animal, upon the living body in which it exists, and the body is well adapted to be preyed upon by this "rebellion within the organism," as the cancer has been termed, by an able writer. Where is the design?

Adaptation is seen almost everywhere, but design in nature has no existence except in the mind which projects itself ideally into the objective world, and imagines the operations of nature subject to volition. What is called design in nature is adjustment of things to their environment. The environment precedes the thing that is adapted to it. The thing must get adapted on penalty of extinction, and in the struggle for life, "the survival of the fittest" is a necessity. In a changing environment, animals or plants that cannot change in adjustment to their medium, must perish, while those whose variations being most closely in correspondence with the surroundings will continue to exist, and their successors be subject to the same law of variations and the same chance of survival in the merciless, yet unavoidable struggle for existence. In the parasite and in man, in good and in evil, I see adaptation, adjustment, fitness, but no where in nature do I see what can perfectly be termed design. "Man designs; nature is," says Atkinson. He who has recourse to volition to supply the nexus between cause and effect in the objective world, simply contemplates, unaware his own personality reflected before him upon the field of phenomena.—B. F. Underwood.

The Rev. J. Marples of Toronto, Canada, writes: In your issue of the 21st instant, is a short paragraph copied from the *Christian Herald*, setting forth that there is design and infinite intelligence that created and governs all things. To this paragraph some remarks are appended by B. F. Underwood, a former opponent of mine in public debate. Mr. U. says: "Para-