

decidedly as Mrs. Ward in favour of the great moral and spiritual influence. Of the three white sheep, the unbelievers in whom the author's soul delights, one is a professor of what Mrs. Ward calls "the most illogical creed that exists," a cheery, breezy, kindhearted little Unitarian. Another is Mr. Grey, an Oxford don, supposed to be modelled on Professor Green, to whose memory Robert Elsmere is dedicated by its author. He is a student of philosophy, and has come to the conclusion of Hume that no testimony is sufficient to accredit miracles, which simply means, that, if God were pleased to work a miracle, it would be impossible for anyone to know that he had done so. Any sensible man who knows that fact is stranger than imagination will not be so ready to dogmatize as to the limits of human testimony. The third is the hero Elsmere, a country parson in the Church of England, well educated and earnest, desiring to serve God and do good to his fellowmen, the happy husband of a woman whose portraiture does Mrs. Ward great credit, for the outward veil of cold saintliness she throws over this heroine clothes a grand nature, a warm loving heart, alike loyal to her husband and to the truth. The author must have felt that Catherine Elsmere is the true radiancy of her book, and that her better angel compelled her in this portraiture to do homage to the faith she calls in question. Elsmere takes up as a work of serious relaxation, the reconstruction of early French history. He reads the materials furnished him by the iconoclastic squire, and finds much of it full of spurious miracle. I suppose a specimen of his reading would be Sulpitius Severus's Life of St. Martin of Tours, a work full of fabulous wonders intended to exalt the apostle of Gaul. From this discovery Elsmere argues: "If this Christian writer allowed imagination to hold such high revel in the life of his apostle, why may not the fishermen of Galilee, nearly four hundred years earlier, have been guilty of the same romancing?" Mrs. Ward seems to think this a very wise, an absolutely necessary, conclusion. It is a very hasty and unwise one, indicating, on the part of Robert Elsmere, and, therefore, on that of his literary creator, a total lack of critical judgment. First of all, the times are very different. Sulpitius Severus lived in the dotage of Rome's empire, when superstition and credulity were unbounded, and manifested themselves in Pagan equally as in Christian writing. The barbarian had come, the dark ages had commenced, the Church had declined from primitive truth and purity. On the other hand the evangelists wrote in the still clear light of the critical, historical Augustan age, and at a time when truth and purity were so valued that thousands died rather than relinquish their hold upon them. The evangelists' narratives of fact, including the miracles, were never called in question until Celsus, an enemy of Christianity, began his attempt at destructive criticism well on in the second century. There were no critics in existence to call in question the fables of Sulpitius. The miracles of Christ and His miraculous life are attested by four independent yet harmonious narratives, while for those of St.