

*A VERY CLEVER MAN.*

Half educated people, who have read little and thought less, can make life very quiet and free from care. They can settle very hard questions in a light-hearted off-hand way, and fancy that they have quickly got to the bottom of deep subjects on which the greatest minds dwell humbly for a lifetime. Some one talks to them what sounds fine, or they get hold of a pamphlet, the bold statements of which are all new to them. They cannot answer what is put before them, and they take for granted that no one else can do so. They think, in their ignorant vanity, that they have found out truth and wisdom. They know nothing of what can be said and has been said on the other side. So some worn-out nonsense is prized by them and boasted of as the newest and highest wisdom. They look down with scorn on those who know all they know; and who, knowing a great deal more, can judge of truth and falsehood, and give each part of truth its right place.

A clergyman, visiting in his parish, talked to a woman about church-going. Asking whether her husband went to church, the answer was, "Oh, my husband is a very clever man, he does not believe in God." It was startling to get a plain hint that the man's cleverness and his unbelief went together, as if faith were a sign of stupidity. So the woman plainly thought. Her reverence for her husband made her take for granted that he was right, and she lived and brought up her children godlessly, quite sure that her clever husband who said there was no God, knew all about the matter.

Presently the Queen was named. The woman at once said, "Oh, my husband does not believe in the Queen." He did not believe, she said, in a God, or in the Queen. But after all, he meant much the same about both.

Now, whether a man believes in the Queen or not, he cannot help the fact that there is one. In this country she is the head of the State, and all authority is put forth in her name. The good order, and safety, and prosperity of the people, depend upon that authority being enforced and obeyed. If a man choose to break the laws, or refuse to pay his taxes, he is prosecuted. The report of the case in the papers is headed, "The Queen against so and so," whatever his name may be. There is no question whether he believes in the Queen or not; he finds out to his cost that his opinion does not help him. If he expresses it, he is laughed at, and he has to pay a fine, or go to prison, or bear whatever punishment the judge may order in the name of the Queen. He still perhaps does not believe there ought to be a Queen, but the loss of money or liberty proves that there is one, whom it is very foolish to defy.

Most of the people who say they don't believe there is a God, really mean that they would rather there were not a God. No one who has carefully thought out the question, can shew any good cause for saying that at the head of all that is and of all that goes on, there is no ruling power and mind. To believe that all things came into being, and fell into their places, and keep their place, by themselves, is a far harder strain on faith than the Christian doctrine is. Any one with any