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Annie Besant.



THE anniversary of Mrs. Besant's visit to Toronto is almost upon us, and Mr. Gladstone's article in the Nineteenth Century brings her again prominently before the public.

"It has always been somewhat of a grievance to me that I was born in London 'within sound of Bow Bells,' when three quarters of my blood and all my heart are Irish," she writes in her autobiography.

Her Irish descent may explain everything to some materialists, and it suggests much to the theosophist. Even the man in the street may consider the unfortunate cause of Mr. Gladstone's article, the fatal attraction of all things Irish for the grand old man being proverbial.

A local writer recently said Mrs. Besant found the message from blat-

ant Atheism to theosophy easy, as though that were something to be deplored, but her evolution has rather been the ascent of the Hill Difficulty. From Orthodoxy to atheism was no less a struggle than from secularism to theosophy, and those who are born to a creed and die with it cannot be expected to understand the pangs of a spiritual path which they have not experienced. In Stanley's larger heart better ap-

preciated the wayfaring of the pilgrim when he told her mother to "Remember our God is the God of Truth, and that therefore the honest search for Truth can never be displeasing in His eyes." They will do well who cavil at her position to remember the text which has been her life-motto: "Whoso loveth father or mother or friends more than Me is not worthy of Me."

Mr. Gladstone's article "pulverizing" Mrs. Besant is probably the result of



ANNIE BESANT.

want of familiarity with her opinions. His view of the church teaching of the atonement is that which theosophists point out as being taught in all the great religions. The Church never taught the doctrine of a substitutional sacrifice, but the priests have not stated that fact plainly. The life of Jesus is a guarantee of possible holiness and perfection to every man and that is the message of theosophy. To spread that Gospel is Mrs. Besant's mission. Mrs. Besant holds no actual official position in the "Theosophical Society," but, with a roving commission, she is traveling from land to land, trying to stir up the religiously indifferent to see the Light that shines in their own particular creed. As she happens to point out the truth in one form or another we hear of her being converted to Hinduism, Buddhism or Roman Catholicism. Theosophy is greater than all, since it explains them all.