

Our Contributors.

A COMFORTING THOUGHT FOR SENSIBLE MEN.

BY KNOXONIAN.

Commenting on the Briggs case, a writer in one of the journals makes the sensible remark, that "most things are not as bad as they seem."

Some things are as bad as they seem. We fear it must be admitted, that a few things are even worse than they seem. A man may seem to have nothing more than a trifling ailment, when he is actually dying. A firm may seem to be nothing more than a little hard up, when it is really insolvent. A young man may appear to be only a little thoughtless, when he is morally bad. Some things are as bad as they seem; a few things are actually worse than they seem, but the great majority of things are not nearly as bad as they seem.

One point of difference between a good, sensible man, and a foolish, bad man is, that the good man always hopes, and often believes things are not as bad as they seem, while the bad man hopes, and tries to believe, things are a great deal worse than they seem.

Why should any man want to believe that things are worse than they seem? Because his heart is bad or his liver is on strike, or both calamities have visited him.

Reading the American journals a short time ago, some people would conclude that the American Presbyterian Church is torn into fragments. Go over there next September, and you will find the pastors preaching with renewed vigour after their vacation, the teachers at work in the Sunday schools, the missionary societies flourishing, and the people working, worshipping, and providing a million for Foreign Missions, and another for the Home Field. In the sensational newspaper despatches, the Church seems almost wrecked. As a matter of fact, it never was more prosperous.

Some of these days the cry may be raised, that the Presbyterian Church in Canada is in a bad way; that the Presbytery of Montreal is rent, and our excellent college down there, about wrecked. Old women in men's clothes may become panicky, hysterical people may raise a great noise, ambitious men who want to be called leaders, may rush to the front, but sensible Presbyterians will keep quiet, do their duty, and remember that "most things are not as bad as they seem."

Occasionally we hear sweeping statements made about bribery at elections. It is alleged that Canadian voters can be bought up like beasts on the market. So far, discussion of this question in Canada, has been mainly in the hands of party politicians, and they, as a rule, discuss it by saying that the other side is notoriously corrupt. Across the lines, college professors, publicists, and literary men of various kinds, have been examining the question in a scientific way, and have tried, apparently with success, to ascertain approximately the total number of venal voters in the United States. The total, though shameful, is not so large as one would expect. An examination by experts in this country would probably show that a few constituencies are hopelessly debauched, that in a number, more venal voters hold the balance of power, but that the vast majority of the electorate, would spurn a bribe. Even in elections, things may not always be as bad as they seem.

Another and more difficult matter to determine, would be the number of municipalities that could be influenced on the wholesale plan by promises of "improvements."

We often hear sweeping statements made about the wickedness of politicians. As a matter of fact, politicians are just like other people—some are good, some are bad, and some are rather indifferent. The worst of them are as good as the average of the constituents who elect

them. Things are not as bad as they sometimes seem, even among politicians.

A goodly number of people have the opinion that newspapers are—to use the words of the Scotchman—"sairly given to leein'." Errors in regard to matters of fact, may creep into any newspaper. Considering the number of men in every community who want to use the newspapers to air their personal grievances, or give vent to their personal spleen, the wonder is not, that an occasional misstatement appears, but that misstatements are not made every week. An occasional paper may publish a wilful, deliberate lie, just as an occasional man tells a wilful falsehood, but the number of Canadian journals that lie wilfully and deliberately, is small in proportion to the whole number. Too many allow correspondents to put things in their columns that should not go into a family newspaper, but it is much easier to moralize, than to edit. In the world of newspaperdom, many things are not as bad as they seem.

The same rule holds good in business. How often do you hear it said that "business is awfully dull," "nothing doing," "country going to the dogs," "not a man paying expenses," and all that sort of thing, and yet, the very people who raise the cry dress as well, live as well, smoke as much, some of them drink as much—some of them dance as much—some of them drive as much—as they ever did. In business, things cannot always be as bad as they are said to be.

Reckless, empty-headed talkers, often say a church is dead, simply because it is not shouting. The fact that a Church—at all events, a Presbyterian Church—exists, proves that it has life. Even in cases in which there seems to be but the minimum of life, things are often not nearly as bad as they seem.

It is quite safe to say, that in ninety-nine out of every hundred cases of scandal, things are not as bad as they are said to be. The decent, clean man, makes them appear as little as truth will allow; the unclean, long-beaked scandal-monger, makes them as bad as a filthy, colossal, liar can. When the air is impure with gossip, and all the long-beaked scandal-mongers are in full chase after some unfortunate victim, then is a good time to remember that most things are not as bad as they seem. In fact, that is a good thing to remember all the time.

PROFESSOR HUXLEY ON EVOLUTION AND ETHICS.

BY REV. GEORGE SEXTON, LL.D.

Many of the readers of this journal will doubtless have read a report of a lecture delivered in the University of Oxford, by Prof. Huxley, on 'Evolution and Ethics.' The conclusions at which the Professor has arrived, will, I take it, be a little startling to those believers in Evolution who meet with them for the first time. They are not new, and perhaps are legitimate deductions from the hypothesis of evolution, but anyhow they show the necessity of some other sources of knowledge than those supplied by nature. In the Romanes lecture, the Professor dealt with cyclical evolution and used as an illustration, the well known nursery story of 'Jack and the Beanstalk.' The process of nature he described as a mounting upwards for a time and then a turning back, and ultimately landing at the starting point. From very low forms up to the highest in the animal no less than in the vegetable kingdom—the process of life, he informed us, presented the same appearance of cyclical evolution. In the water flowing to the sea and returning to the springs; in the heavenly bodies that wax and wane; in the inexorable sequences of the ages of the life of man; and in the rise, apogee, decline and fall of dynasties, all movement, he maintained, was of a cyclical character. Thus the most distinguishing characteristic of the Kosmos, was its impermanence. In a sense no

one will dispute this. It is doubtless the mode of working of the Almighty Worker in the physical universe. The bean has to fight for its existence in much the same way as the animal; and man, although possessed of intellectual powers, to which the struggle is largely transferred, has to fight for his life like any other organism. But it is this very struggle which Huxley attacks, in consequence of its ethical results. The cosmopoietic energy working through sentient beings has given rise to pain and suffering. This "hateful product of evolution" increases in quantity and intensity with advancing grades of animal organization until it reaches its highest level in man. The Kosmic process is therefore ethically bad. Now most evolutionists have endeavoured to find a basis for the moral law in nature. Darwin endeavours to trace the whole of the faculties of man, intellectual, social and moral, to the lower animals, and thought they could all be discovered there in an immature and incipient condition. But Huxley discovers that the outcome of evolution is evil, and that one may look in vain for an ethical code in nature. Mill long ago taught the same thing as far as the physical universe is concerned. And so far, no doubt, he was right. From Huxley's point of view man is simply a part of nature, one link in the chain of physical being, and in him, not only intellect but pain and suffering have reached their culminating point. And for this no remedy appears to be forthcoming. No millennial anticipations must be encouraged, for such notions are out of harmony with evolution; and sin and sorrow are permanent factors in the life of man.

All this we are told in the name of science; but is it true? Are there not facts which this theory completely ignores that would entirely change the aspect of the case? Let the appeal be carried from physical nature to the experience of everyday life. True, even there we often find that pleasure is enjoyed by the undeserving, and penalties endured by those who do not merit them. Men suffer for their errors as well as for their sins; and for the wrong-doing of their forefathers. This is the riddle of life, and most of us have at some time or other asked why it should be so. The evolutionary Oedipus is dumb before this sphinx of everyday experience. From the agnostic standpoint of Huxley, no solution of the problem is possible. In physical nature the beginning and end of the cycle is reached. Here the evolutionist must come to a dead stop, or repeat his formula of cycles over again. The sublimated pessimism of Tennyson expressed in his later days is much the same; He sings—"Chaos, cosmos, cosmos, chaos." But all this takes no account of man's spiritual nature and his destiny in the hereafter. Man is certainly a moral being, and as nature is unmoral—not to say with Mill that she is immoral—clearly his moral nature can be accounted for by no process of evolution. In human nature besides life, there is spirit with its marvellous capacity for apprehending the true, the beautiful and the good. The moral powers, which are shocked at the unmoral character of their surroundings, can be no product of that which they look upon with abhorrence, for otherwise they would have been in harmony with it, and would have detected therein no evil.

The moral nature of man argues a moral governor. A responsibility for one's actions and a life after death. And here we have the solution of the problem which the icy materialism of Huxley makes no attempt to explain. Common experience is at one with pessimism, that if God be removed and man's immortality taken away, very much of human life is a hideous, purposeless tragedy, and that in too many cases "life is not worth living." And at the sight of this tragedy, materialism shudders, which is all it can do, for the genesis of the system reaches no further. But in the face of all the evil in the universe—and the case would be the same were it ten times as great as

it is—the clear ringing note of Browning's faith finds a response in every properly attuned heart, when he sings:

"The year's at the spring
And day's at the morn;
Morning's at even;
The hillsides dew-pearled;
The lark's on the wing;
The snail's on the thorn;
God's in His Heaven
All's right with the world."

Every Christian man and woman feels this, whatever the gloomy theories of pessimists may say to the contrary. Whether the facts of nature do, or do not, encourage "millennial anticipations," deep down in our souls is the conviction that no evolution will explain the nature and destiny of spirit, nor the process of the law by which the soul of man is governed and controlled. There rises before our view a state to be enjoyed in the hereafter, in which all the wrongs of this world shall be righted, and beside which the tragedy of cyclical evolution with its rivers of blood and tears, will pale into insignificance and be forgotten. Man is not simply a child of earth; his birthplace is here, but his inheritance is yonder, in a world of which agnosticism knows nothing, and evolution cannot attain to, and pessimism in its black despair, derides.

Christianity has given us a perfect moral law. This is no evolution, but a revelation from God to man. Dr. Lyman Abbott, following the evolutionary fashion of the times, has given us a work on "The Evolution of Christianity," but even he does not dare to maintain that the Divine founder of that Religion was an outcome of evolution. In Him there was an admitted break in the so-called universal law. And if in His life, why not in His teaching? The most perfect standard of ethics in the literature of the world, is to be found in the Gospels. The perfection of ethics practically illustrated in a human life is seen in the character of Him, described by an old poet as "The first true gentleman that ever breathed."

Now, if the human race followed Him as closely as His commands enjoin, there surely would be a millennium even upon earth. Man, it is admitted, is as yet far distant from the ethical ideal, but the ideal is there, notwithstanding. The world has seen but one Jesus, but that One is sufficient to show that there is at least no universal law of evolution, whatever materialistic pessimism may say to the contrary.

WOMAN'S INFLUENCE.

"Believe me, the whole course and character of your lovers' lives are in your hands; what you would have them be, they shall be, if you not only desire to have them so, but deserve to have them so; for they are but mirrors in which you see yourselves imaged."

If you are frivolous, they will be so also; if you have no understanding of the scope of their duty, they also will forget it; they will listen—they can listen—to no other interpretation of it than that uttered from your lips. Bid them be brave; bid them be cowards; and how noble soever they be, they will quail for you. Bid them be wise, they will be wise for you; mock at their counsel and they will be fools for you; such and so absolute is your rule over them. You fancy, perhaps as you have been told so often, that a wife's rule should only be over her husband's house, not over his mind. Ah, no! The true rule is just the reverse of that. A true wife in her husband's house, is his servant; it is in his heart that she is queen.

Whatever of the best he can conceive it is her part to be whatever of the highest he can hope, it is hers to promote; all that is dark in him, she must purge into purity; all that is falling in him, she must strengthen into truth; from her, through all the world's clamour he must win his praise; in her through all the world's warfare, he must find his peace."

Is this too small a sphere, too little to do? God grant us all power to be and to do all He has entrusted to us.
KIMMO.