

## EFFECT OF UNBELIEF ON THE FEMININE CHARACTER.

MANY years ago I joined a so-called Free Church, which had no creed but morality. Agnostics, atheists, pantheists, theists, spiritualists, and transcendentalists, together with one or two Christians styling themselves "liberal," made up the camp.

One evening I took a highly intelligent and warm-natured Christian friend to a meeting of the members. When we came out, he remarked to me that unbelief had a very damaging effect on womanly character. He had observed, that evening, a young girl, who, only a short time before, had been gentle and modest, now joining in discussion with irreverent raillery and mannish self-confidence. I felt the keen edge of my friend's remarks, but did not like to admit it. Twelve more years of life and observation have only too sadly confirmed all that he said. I have seen the finest of women almost unsexed by a fierce career of antichristian thought, degenerating at last into mere ignorant hatred of a religion whose claims, nature, and history, they have never seriously investigated. Once thrown off the track of faith by the influence of masculine friends, they have abandoned themselves to self-will, and their unbelief has ceased to be a matter of thought at all; it is a reversal and rebellion of their affections. They never read the New Testament, but will talk loftily of writers like George Eliot and Olive Schreiner as furnishing much superior food to the soul.

Several years ago a university professor told me of a girl student who boasted that she had read the Koran, but not the New Testament. This means no mere rebellion against some coarse type of Christianity, no mere disgust with professing Christians, but a profound and radical hatred of Christ himself. A woman or man of culture, and some amount of literary taste, who prefers "The Story of an African Farm" to the Gospel of John is simply suffering from mental disease. Even as literary classics, the books of the New Testament are to be ranked with Plato and Plutarch as against ephemeral novelists, essayists, and magazinites. But the shallow semi-culture of the age has made it possible for the half-educated to overturn all the ideals of the race by sheer caprice and lust of novelty.

It is high time that the New Testament and the great epic narratives and prophecies of the Old were made a subject of literary study in our college courses. As

long as they are confined to the theological seminary, so long will this cultured ignorance and prejudice last. It is the nature of woman to act from what she loves; and no intelligent woman, brought up to reverence and enjoy the sacred writings, can fail to be influenced by them. Something of their majesty and dignity would steal into her soul; something of their noble restraint would temper her spirit; the serenity and self-control of the old-fashioned Christian maiden would be restored to us, and the world be redeemed from that ugliest of nightmares, that walking contradiction in terms, an infidel woman.

—Albert J. Edmunds, in *S.S. Times*.

## SEIZING OPPORTUNITIES.

SOME men are never awake when the train starts, but crawl into the station just in time to see that everybody is off, and then sleepily say, "Dear me, is the train gone? My watch must have stopped in the night!" They always come into town a day after the fair, and open their wares an hour after the market is over. They make their hay when the sun has left off shining, and cut their corn as soon as the fine weather is ended; they cry, "Hold hard!" after the shot has left the gun, and lock the stable door when the steed is stolen. They are like a cow's tail, always behind; they take time by the heels, and not by the forelock, if indeed they ever take him at all. They are no more worth than an old almanac; their time has gone for being of use; but unfortunately you cannot throw them away as you would the almanac, for they are like the cross old lady who had an annuity left her, and meant to take out the full value of it; they won't die, though they are of no use alive. Take-it-easy and Livelong are first cousins, they say, and the more's the pity. If they are immortal till their work is done, they will not die in a hurry, for they have not even begun to work yet. Shiftless people generally excuse their laziness by saying "they are only a little behind"; but a little late is much too late, and a miss is as good as a mile. My neighbor Sykes covered up his well after his child was drowned in it; and was very busy down at the Old Farm bringing up buckets of water after every stick of the house had been burned. One of these days he'll be for making his will when he can't hold a pen, and he'll be trying to repent of his sins when his senses are going.

These slow coaches think that to-morrow is better than to-day, and take for their

rule an old proverb turned topsy-turvy—"Never do to-day what you can put off till to-morrow." They are for waiting until their ship comes home, and always dreaming about things looking up by and by, while grass grows in their furrows and the cows get through the gaps in their hedges. If the birds would but wait to have salt put on their tails, what a breakfast they would take home to their families; but while things move as fast as they do, the youngsters at home will have to fill their mouths with empty spoons. "Never mind," say they, "there are better times coming, wait a little longer." Their birds are all in the bush, and rare fat ones they are, according to their account; and so they had need to be, for they have had none in hand yet, and wife and children are half starved. Something will turn up, they say. Why don't the stupids go and turn it up themselves? Time and tide wait for no man, and yet these fellows loiter about as if they had a freehold of time, a lease of their lives, and a rabbit warren of opportunities. They will find out their mistake when want finds them out, and that will not be long with some in our village, for they are already a long way on the road to Needham. They who would not plough must not expect to eat; they who waste the spring will have a lean autumn. They would not strike when the iron was hot, and they will find the cold iron very hard.

"He that will not when he may,  
When he will he shall have nay."

Time is not tied to a post like a horse to a manger; it passes like the wind, and he who would grind his corn by it must set the mill-sails. He that gapes till he is fed will gape till he be dead. Nothing is to be got without pains except poverty and dirt. In the old days they said, "Jack gets on by his stupidity." Jack would find it very different nowadays, I think; but never in old times or any other times would Jack get on by foolishly letting present chances slip by him; for hares never run into the mouths of sleeping dogs. He that hath time, and looks for better time, time comes that he repents himself of time. There's no good in lying down and crying, "God help us!" God helps those who help themselves. When I see a man who declares that the times are bad and that he is always unlucky, I generally say to myself, "That old goose did not sit on the eggs till they were all addled, and now Providence is to be blamed because they won't hatch." I never had any faith in luck at all, except that I believe good luck