

*LIFE-SKETCHES IN CALIFORNIA.*

NO II.

Character owes much to outward circumstances,—perhaps almost as much to pressure from without as to principle within. We have seen people who were strong advocates of total abstinence or religious decorum in their native villages, who amongst strangers, and, as they thought, out of the way of observation, soon distinguished themselves by sins of appetite or profanity. California, so largely peopled as it is by strangers from far-off lands, suffers largely from this class, not only in morality of outward deportment, but by lack of inflexible religious principles.

We have often discovered in remote country villages, astonishing instances of unbelief, and even downright infidelity. But these cases are of comparatively rare occurrence, owing to the wholesome checks of surrounding morality and religious observances, and for this reason we are shocked by their occasional occurrence. Remove these checks, and God only knows how much concealed heathenism,—and worse,—is to be found in outwardly christian communities. Every observant traveller knows many proofs of this moral and religious deterioration amongst old-time acquaintances whom he has met in foreign lands, and for this reason could not have recognized, except by outward appearance.

Religion, thank God, is making good progress in California, but amongst the most difficult of its opponents are the class we have described, and others who by their evil example are led to look upon the profession of religion as mere hypocrisy. Still, even these are not entirely inaccessible.

Five years ago a missionary in California, commencing his work in a large village, discovered that even in the midst of evil surroundings some few were to be found dissatisfied with the evil teachings around them, and craving for something better for the soul of the prodigal than the husks from the swine of Satan. A young woman, the daughter of the leading infidel of the place said to the Missionary, "I wish you would make an effort to convert my father." "I met him yesterday," he replied, and he stood on the street in the presence of a crowd, and in a loud voice cursed me, and the Bible, and religion, and even God Himself." She answered, "At home, in the Eastern States, it was not so with him, but 'evil communications corrupt good manners.' I said to him this morning when he forbade me to go to hear you, that although he did this he had given me no satisfactory reason for it, and asked him in all fairness to go even once to your service and hear what you have to say. He promised to go to hear you tonight." Being informed by the daughter of the nature of her father's