

SOME ASPECTS OF THEOSOPHY.

BY HELEN A. HICKS.

Death lieth still in the way of life
Like a stone in the way of a brook ;
I will sing against thee, Death, as the brook does,
I will make thee into music which does not die.

—SIDNEY LAUIER.

The apostle of Theosophy who commands most attention in America just now is Mrs. Annie Besant. To know the story of her life, to see her long, thin face, the face of the enthusiast and dreamer, with its deep eyes and brow too massive for a woman ; above all to hear her speak with the persuasiveness which only comes of sincerity is to be reminded of Emerson's declaration that he who has light must bear witness to the light and ever outrun sympathy by his fidelity to new revelations of the incessant soul. Whoever has felt the peculiar influence of her personality must be sure, no matter what her vagaries may be, no matter what cult she may adopt, that here, under all, is the sincerity that convinces because it is convinced, that here is a soul which has been willing to give up father and mother and husband and child, to afflict itself by faithfulness to truth, and to become a byword and a hissing. The apostolic type of woman seems strangely out of place in this generation, and there are many minded to say that the affliction is of her own imposing and the hissing not without just cause. Mrs. Besant has had many detractors, first because of her separation from her husband on the ground of difference of religious opinion, and again among the secularists because she chose to leave their ranks. With these there is no consideration of the pitiful human side of the story, that it was the sickness and death of her child which led this mother to seek some explanation of death less terrible than the usual one. It was not the desire to

lead or to be known that led Annie Besant into the wilderness of doubt to be tempted ; she, like Byron, was inspired by the genius of pain. It was absolutely without hope, with a weak body and a tortured mind, that this churchwoman began her pilgrimage from Evangelicalism to Puseyism, thence through the Theism of the Broad-Church to what seemed to her the grave of spiritual quest—Atheistic Materialism. But long before this philanthropy had claimed her she opened a club in the East End of London for poor girls, she espoused the cause of the match-girls, she spoke and wrote in the interests of labor, she worked with Charles Bradlaugh for the Secularists ; she has been unremitting in her efforts for the poor. By all these means, by certain glimpses of revelation caught from Modern Spiritualism and by the study of the *Secret Doctrine* of Madame Blavatsky, truth, Mrs. Besant believes, has had in her its perfect work. She has been faithful to pass on the torch handed to her, and is now preaching this system, which was old and has become new again, so eloquently that it has ceased to be the custom to ignore her.

The majority of the recruits among the Theosophists have come from the Secularist camp, because at the first blush Theosophy has in it nothing to antagonize a Secularist as it would an Orthodox Christian. The Theosophic endeavor to explain all phenomena without resort to miracle and the Pantheistic assumption that "God is all and all is God" have in them difficulties which do not appeal to the Secularist. Yet the avowed objects of the Society are very different from its direct teaching, and admit of the greatest diversity of faiths within its limits. These objects are three, and acceptance