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Some Notes

MORALITY AND RELIGION.

"BY CRUX."

IN the last issue of the Literary Digest, there appears a strange mixture of opinions upon the important subject expressed in the question "Can Morality Exist Without Religion?" While the editor who gleaned these items seems to think that religion does play a large part in the ethical development of the human race, and that it is generally conceded that morality cannot exist without religion, still, if one is to judge by his quotations and the writings from which he has selected his views, it would be necessary to conclude that morality is so distinct from religion that it has no need of any support from that source. His main object is to cast some light upon a book entitled "The Study of Religion," by Prof. Morris Jastrow, of the University of Pennsylvania. Before touching on the professor's opinions he takes the trouble to quote from that other erratic professor—Goldwin Smith.

PROF. SMITH'S IDEA. — Goldwin Smith, who has something to say upon every conceivable subject on earth, which does not mean that he is a master of all of them, declares his belief that were Christianity and the belief in immortality to be finally abandoned, the world would experience a "bad quarter of an hour," but adds:—

"Whatever turn may ultimately be taken by our convictions about a hereafter, society will uphold by law or social influence rules necessary to its own security and convenience here. It may even uphold them more rigorously, perhaps cruelly, if it is convinced that the present life is all. The natural affections, parental, conjugal, and social, will also retain their force."

In the opinion of your correspondent this is absolutely false. The natural affections parental, conjugal and social, not to speak of aught else, have not retained their force when the systems of godless education came into play in various lands. Without going any further, the divorce plague, which is the outcome of irreligion and the abandonment of religious doctrines, is due to no other cause than the unbridled license for which human immortality craves. It is the religious influence of the Catholic Church that alone preserves the remnant of morality that the divorce fiend has not been able to sweep away. In fact, experience is there to prove beyond a doubt that the only restraining force to-day, the only power that preserves the home, that secures the children, that saves the whole social fabric is that of religion.

PROF. JASTROW'S IDEA. — Here is what the Philadelphia professor propounds:—

"Religion is no longer the source of ethics, but proves a stimulus to it. Matthew Arnold's definition of religion as 'morality touched with emotion,' while defective as a definition, yet reflects this modern relationship between religion and ethics. But while religion thus furnishes the stimulus to morality, it must be confessed that in the most advanced, or, if you choose, the most diluted forms of faith, the influence of ethics on religion is reduced to a minimum. There may be ethical strains in these forms of faith, but if that is the case, it is due to the inevitable entrance of ethical considerations into any purely intellectual interpretation of the universe—and its mysteries."

Only that abuse is not argument, and that "calling names" is no proof. I would be inclined to characterize the foregoing as unmitigated nonsense. It is a confused jumble that means absolutely nothing. As to the value of Matthew Arnold's opinion the writer effaces it himself—by telling us that his definition is defective. Then he says that "in the most diluted forms of faith, the influence of ethics on religion is reduced to a minimum." I do not know what a diluted form of faith is, but that does not matter, as the professor seems to understand it; but he goes aside from the issue raised by himself. No body is asking about "the influence of ethics on religion," the question concerns the influence of religion on ethics or on morality. It would seem that the foregoing is the sum and substance of the professor's book; if so it contains so little that there is absolutely no use in bothering with it.

But all this leads to a quotation from the New York "Tribune," which is the statement of some facts "relative to the influence of religion upon conduct" as furnished by a clergyman of a western city who had gathered statistics about those who dropped away from local churches during the last ten years.

A MINISTER'S STATISTICS. — Here is the quotation:—

"Out of 679 adults now living who have ceased to go to church during that period, 239 were originally poor church members, ranging all the way from notorious evil-livers to indifferent worldlings. Since these 239 have formally withdrawn from the church their moral condition has in no wise changed, except that a few of them are somewhat more open in their defiance of the moral law. Of the remaining 440, eighteen have deteriorated morally since they left the church. Nearly all of them, it is declared, are persons of unusually weak character, easily led by temptation to do wrong, and one of them confessed that while he was a member of the church he was kept from evil courses not by his belief in Christianity, but by the desire not to seem recreant to the faith he professed. Sixty-three persons have apparently led better lives since they left the church, tho' the change has not been at all marked, and one of these sixty-three declares that he is a better man now because he wants to show his church friends that unbelief does not imply immorality. The remaining 359 of the 679 backsliders are morally pretty much the same as they were before. They continue to be reputable citizens, and are impelled by the same motives of self-interest, touched occasionally by unselfish impulses, that appeared to govern them when they were members of the church. It would perhaps be too much to assume that the results of this particular census would be true of the non-churchgoers of other communities. There may have been special circumstances in the city where it was taken that tended to make the result favorable as to the non-churchgoers; for favorable it certainly is. It is desirable, therefore, that some such investigation be made in other communities, as only in this way can the question be finally decided whether a rejection of the teachings of religion does or does not result in moral deterioration; and it would be better if it were made by men representing the church, as in that case religious men would have no reason to question its fairness."

A PLAIN CONCLUSION. — I am not going to question the foregoing figures; I accept the facts. But do they prove that religion has no influence upon morals and that morals must not go hand in hand with religion? Certainly not! They prove that the particular churches of the special sects, to which this clergyman refers, have no restraining influence. And how could they? They are merely human institutions, founded by men who had their passions, their weaknesses, their errors, their immoral human tendencies. How could they expect that mere "church-going," that attending services consisting of long sermons and countless hymns, could quell the tide of human inclination—which, by nature since the fall of man, has been downward? What practical force can they bring into play that has a compelling influence upon the moral tendencies of the human race? They have not the sources of graces that the Catholic Church possesses; they have not the regenerating sacraments of penance and Holy Eucharist; they have not the innumerable means that Christ left to His Apostles and their successors to curb or guide the moral or the immoral inclinations of the frail being that can do nothing by himself. It is God, and God only that can preserve man from the abyss of immorality; it is He alone that can save the social fabric from being undermined; and He has handed down to His Church the means whereby this work can be done. Consequently the morals of a people do depend upon the religion, but it must be the True Religion. All else only proves the falseness of the religion in question and not the theory that morals are independent of religion.

NOT A MERE PHANTOM. —It is the general cry of those most deeply interested in the success of Masonic associations that the danger, on the European continent, that exists from the spread of Freemasonry, is all a phantom. It has ever been so; in the mid-nineteenth century, when the tide of revolution swept over Europe, when the secret societies fomented all manner of evils in the political and social, as well as religious domains, their watchword was "no danger exists." They certainly were "secret" in the fullest and worst acceptance of the term; for, while seeking fresh adepts in every sphere, they sought to hide their own very existence, and disarm the world and lull it into a false security, in order that they might be more free to strike their effective blows in the dark. A multitude of writers to-day keep the world stirred up with the belief that in France there is no danger from Masonic influence for the good reason that it does not exist. Recently the pastors of various churches in Paris visited Rome, to honor the great Pontiff on the occasion of his jubilee. In his reply to their address, and in his own recommendations to them, the Holy Father said:—

"Work to rid yourselves of the yoke of Freemasonry. The blessing of the Pope and the exhortations of the parish priests will succeed in effecting this result, which is the most ardent wish of my heart."

The great Leo XIII., with his four score and twelve years of life, his vast experience his intimate knowledge of European affairs, and his characteristic exactness of expression, as well as his statesman-like qualities, was never known to base his advice upon "phantoms of the imagination." We may rely, when he thus speaks, that the contention is right that France is menaced by the curse of Masonic domination.

Weak and Helpless.

THE CONDITION OF MRS. WM WESCOTT, OF SEAFORTH.

Suffered From Headache and Dizziness—Could Not Stand the Least Exertion.

From the Sun, Seaforth, Ont.

Mrs. Wm. Westcott is well known to nearly all the residents of Seaforth. It is also well known to her neighbors and friends that she passed through a trying illness, but is now happily, in robust health. To the editor of the "Sun," Mrs. Westcott recently gave the particulars of her case for publication, merely in the hope that her experience might be of some benefit to some other sufferer. She said:—"For some time past my health was in a bad state, my whole system being badly run down. I was troubled with headache, much dizziness, my appetite was poor and I could not stand the least exertion. I consulted different physicians, but their treatment did not seem to benefit me, and I gradually became so bad that I was unable to attend to my household duties. I then tried several advertised medicines, but without any beneficial results, and I began to despair of getting better. One of my neighbors strongly advised me to try Dr. Williams' Pink Pills, and somewhat reluctantly I consented to do so. After I had taken the second box I began to note a great improvement in my condition, and by the time I had used five boxes, I was fully restored to my former good health, much to the surprise of my neighbors and relations. I do not suffer the least now from those headaches and dizzy spells; my appetite is good and I can attend to my household duties with the greatest ease. In fact, I feel like a different woman, and all this I can say is due to the use of Dr. Williams' Pink Pills. All who suffer from a run-down constitution should give these pills a trial."

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Canada's Immigration Problem.

(By an Occasional Contributor.)

An editorial in the New York "Freeman's Journal," in which it is claimed that the connection of Canada with Great Britain as a colony has been the principal cause of the tide of immigration running largely to the United States rather than to this Dominion. Here is the opening statement:—

"Canada has been trying for many years to attract immigration. But though she has held out literal inducements, foreigners coming from the old world to the new seem little inclined to settle in the Dominion. During nine years preceding 1890 only 13 per cent. of the emigration from Great Britain and Ireland went to Canada, while 68 per cent. came to this country. For the last nine years—from 1891 to 1900—the proportion was 13 per cent. to 72 per cent. Of this small percentage who go to Canada many cross the border into the United States, and multitudes of native Canadians come here and become citizens. There are probably a million of our people of Canadian birth. They are found settled in all the border States from the Atlantic to the Pacific; and they are industrious, thrifty and successful."

After praising our Canadian institutions and our school system, which it rates as superior to their own, the article proceeds to give the following reason for the lack of immigration into Canada:—

"The Irishman, for instance, whose life at home has been one of wretchedness through English misrule, and to whom the shadow of the British flag is as noxious as the exhalation of the upas tree, is not likely to select his new home in a land where the power symbolized by that flag prevails. We need not philosophize on this state of mind. It is enough that it is a fact, a fact that right or wrongly influences the direction of the emigrant. He wants to get as far as possible from the policy and influences that have made his life wretched. He therefore seeks some place where he will not see the British symbol of power or hear the British or any other royal or imperial drum beat. It is this feeling that makes the immigrant keep well on the south side of the Canadian border. The philosophy of it is found in the saying: 'The burned child dreads the fire.' So far as Canada is concerned, there may be no ground for this feeling—for England's hold on Canada, thanks to her proximity to the United States, is slight, and the bond may at any time be severed. But the feeling, whether well or ill founded, exists, and greatly to the detriment of Canadian immigration."

No more shall I attempt to philosophize upon this subject; we are perfectly willing to take the facts as they are given. But I contend that it is and has been a very short-sighted policy—if such a policy exists—on the part of our fellow-countrymen to prefer the over-crowded Republic with its symbol of liberty, to the more open and broader and more roomy Canada with its actually greater degree of liberty. Not only is it so as far as concerns the future of the Irishman in the New World, but more so in regard to the future of the Irish race at home. I positively believe that were the half of the Irish immigration to have come to Canada, Ireland to-day would be in possession of Home Rule. Canada is the example that is constantly set before the eyes of British statesmen, and Canada is the only land on this continent that has poured in her Home Rule Resolutions to the British Government; the only one that sent a legislator of eminence to battle in the ranks of the Home Rule Party on the floor of the British House. If the Irish population of Canada were as many millions as we have hundreds of thousands, what might not be the situation to-day? Governing in a Home Rule colony, and bringing the example of their power and ability to bear upon the case, the British Government could never withstand the argument. Besides the freedom that the Irishman enjoys in Canada is far and away greater than that which any other nook on earth affords him. This our American cousins may deny, but the facts of our history since Confederation are there to substantiate our claim. But be that as it may: It would have been, and still will be a better policy for Ireland if those who are obliged to emigrate should turn their eyes to the St. Lawrence instead of to the big sea ports of the United States.

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