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H. INGERSOLL.

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policeman who would silence a riotous disturber of the congregation, by telling him that his clamor is false and his conduct an offense against public decency.

Nor is the Church in any danger which calls for the special vigilance of its servants. Mr. Ingersoll thinks that the rock-founded faith of Christendom is giving way before his assaults, but he is grossly mistaken. The first sentence of his essay is a preposterous blunder. It is not true that "a profound change has taken place in the world of thought," unless a more rapid spread of the Gospel and a more faithful observance of its moral principles can be called so. Its truths are everywhere proclaimed with the power of sincere conviction, and accepted with devout reverence by uncounted multitudes of all classes. Solemn temples rise to its honor in the great cities; from every hill-top in the country you see the church-spire pointing toward heaven, and on Sunday all the paths that lead to it are crowded with worshippers. In nearly all families, parents teach their children that Christ is God, and his system of morality absolutely perfect. This belief lies so deep in the popular heart that, if every written record of it were destroyed to-day, the memory of millions could reproduce it to-morrow. Its earnestness is proved by its works. Wherever it goes it manifests itself in deeds of practical benevolence. It builds, not churches alone, but almshouses, hospitals, and asylums. It shelters the poor, feeds the hungry, visits the sick, consoles the afflicted, provides for the fatherless, comforts the heart of the widow, instructs the ignorant, reforms the vicious, and saves to the uttermost them that are ready to perish. To the common observer, it does not look as if Christianity was making itself ready to be swallowed up by infidelity. Thus far, at least, the promise has been kept that "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

There is, to be sure, a change in the party hostile to religion—not "a profound change," but a change entirely superficial—which consists, not in *thought*, but merely in modes of expression and methods of attack. The bad classes of society always hated the doctrine and discipline which reproached their wickedness and frightened them by threats of punishment in another world. Aforetime they showed their contempt of divine authority only by their actions; but now, under new leadership, their enmity against God breaks out into articulate blasphemy. They assemble themselves together, they hear with passionate admiration the bold har-

angue which ridicules and defies the Maker of the universe; fiercely they rage against the Highest, and loudly they laugh, alike at the justice that condemns, and the mercy that offers to pardon them. The orator who relieves them by assurances of impunity, and tells them that no supreme authority has made any law to control them, is applauded to the echo and paid a high price for his congenial labor; he pockets their money, and flatters himself that he is a great power, profoundly moving "the world of thought."

There is another totally false notion expressed in the opening paragraph, namely, that "they who know most of nature believe the least about theology." The truth is exactly the other way. The more clearly one sees "the grand procession of causes and effects," the more awful his reverence becomes for the author of the "sublime and unbroken" law which links them together. Not self-conceit and rebellious pride, but unspeakable humility, and a deep sense of the measureless distance between the Creator and the creature, fills the mind of him who looks with a rational spirit upon the works of the All-wise One. The heart of Newton repeats the solemn confession of David: "When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained; what is man that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that thou visitest him?" At the same time the lamentable fact must be admitted that "a little learning is a dangerous thing" to some persons. The sciolist with a mere smattering of physical knowledge is apt to mistake himself for a philosopher, and, swelling with his own importance, he gives out like Simon Magus, "that himself is some great one." His vanity becomes inflamed more and more, until he begins to think he knows all things. He takes every occasion to show his accomplishments by finding fault with the works of creation and Providence; and this is an exercise in which he cannot long continue without learning to disbelieve in any Being greater than himself. It was to such a person, and not to the unpretending simpleton, that Solomon applied his often quoted aphorism: "The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God." These are what Paul refers to as "vain babblings and the opposition of science, falsely so called;" but they are perfectly powerless to stop or turn aside the great current of human thought on the subject of Christian theology. That majestic stream, supplied from a thousand unfailing fountains, rolls on and will roll