

down to zero; there are occasions when a second-rate man arises into nobility. One reading is no indication of what the average is. You must take the whole man, not one side; his whole life, not one bit. The most outrageous pattern that ever offended the eye and agonised the mind of any human being might give one inch of really good colour, and out of the most exquisite web you might get an inch of very bad colour. One must not judge by inches. Hang up the web twenty feet square, and then no one can be mistaken. What a miserable appearance Abraham made at the court of Pharaoh when he declared Sarah was his wife and was rated by the Egyptian king for falsehood. Abraham stood at his lowest when he lied to Pharaoh and Pharaoh stood at highest when he judged Abraham. Suppose one of us had been present and taken up his parable. "You may talk as you please of Abraham's faith, but did you hear his lie? you may call Pharaoh a pagan, but give me his keen sense of honour." So acting on our principle of common sense and plain downrightness and what not, we should have put Pharaoh first and Abraham second, and we should have been very shortsighted people. Nobody knows anything about Pharaoh; but Abraham is the most majestic figure in ancient history. We have heard all this sapient deliverance. "A may be a religious man, but if you had seen him in a temper yesterday." And "B may not be a religious man, but I saw him give ten shillings to a poor man to-day." So A is condemned and B approved. It would be wise to gather a little more about A and B before deciding. How they live at home; how they carry themselves in business; how they bear affliction; how they serve their fellow-men. One would then have some confidence in his judgment. Neither let it be forgotten that Christianity chooses the miserable, the worthless, the bad subjects of the world. To-day some of the worst stuff inside humanity may be found within Christ's Church, and, alas! some of the finest material which came from the hand of the Almighty outside. There are Christians who would be in jail to-night had it not been for their Christianity. Will

you condemn Christianity because it has received publicans and Magdalenes and mean and stupid people? Will you say there is no use in religion, because here and there you see a man who is a hero and yet an unbeliever? This argument does not run on fours; it is unequal. Christianity should be approved because it has taken such miseries and made so much of them. Every one has drawn a contrast between Esau and Jacob. Esau was so straightforward, brave, kind, manly, a big, fine animal. Jacob was so deceitful, false, timid, disagreeable, a despicable fellow. Agreed. What came of Esau? What did he grow into? Nothing: a mere hunter and desert chief. But religion made out of that unpromising Jacob a prince and a saint, and in the end a very noble and lovable man. It is nothing to get a harvest from the rich plains of Lombardy, but it is a feat to wrest corn from a bare hillside in Scotland. That is agriculture.

Above all things, let our neutral remember in judging religious people that the work of religion is not yet finished in them. Far from that, it is only begun. There is this difference between the plan of a religious man and the plan of a secular, that the one is on a much larger scale than the other. When a man has not faith, his culture is bounded by time. The man of faith is being trained for eternity. It is a villa in the one case, in the other a cathedral. From one point of view a well-finished villa will always compare favourably with the rough foundation of a gigantic building. You must imagine, you must anticipate, before you judge. Here is a child with the most regular and finished features; we say, What a beautiful woman she will be. Are we sure? We have seen all we will see. Here is her sister, unformed and irregular in face and features. How plain? Look more closely; here are capabilities and promises of beauty that will put her sister in the shade. It is so with character. We see estimable men every day, fair-minded, clean-handed, kind-hearted men, who are complete. Nothing more will come of them. Their character is a product of time, and has no power of expansion. We see by their side very crude and incomplete men, but we have vast hopes of them. They are men seeking after God, men following Christ, men fighting spiritual battles, men with their hopes in eternity. They are not shrubs, but oak saplings, and it will take ages to bring them to maturity. What a man may come to without religion can be seen in this world; what a man may come to with religion can only be judged in eternity.—*The British Weekly*.