

## XII.

The noblest universities in the world were Mohammedan institutions and the cultivation of science and learning was brought up under, and indoctrinated in the Mohammedan faith. But the universities and learning of Spain were surely not the result of the religion of the Saracens. Neither are the learning and the universities of England, Germany, and America the result of any form of Christianity. Mohammedanism was less unfavorable to intellectual progress in the Middle Ages than Mediaeval Christianity. So Protestant Christianity as it exists in England or America is far less injurious in its tendency than Catholicism as it exists in Spain and Mexico; but it is certainly absurd to maintain that the progress that has been made in the former countries should be put to the credit of Protestant Christianity. This form of Christianity, like Catholicism, has, in the past, opposed science, philosophy, and reform, and persecuted the pioneers of intellectual progress to the full extent of its power; but, happily, its power, never equal to that of the mother Church, has been growing less gradually, until now it is so weak that, in America especially, it can oppose but feebly the discoveries and innovations which contradict its assumptions and threaten to destroy it entirely. The policy that it now adopts to get a new lease of life is to conform, with the best possible grace, to the teachings of science and philosophy, and to acquiesce, as far as possible, in the reforms of the day.

Hence it is now comparatively harmless in checking intellectual progress. Herein we see the liberalizing and elevating influence of those sciences and arts, and those pursuits of industrialism which have thus expanded the mind and enlightened the understanding, and, in consequence, shorn religion of its power, and forced it, in spite of its stubborn opposition at every step, to abandon many of its antiquated errors, and stop its cruel persecution of the benefactors of mankind. It is scepticism and Freethought, not religion, that have contributed to the progress which we have sketched. "For more than three centuries," says Lecky, "decadence of theological influence has been one of the most invariable signs and measures of our progress. In medicine, physical science, commercial interests, politics, and even ethics, the reformer has been confronted with theological affirmations which barred his way, which were all defended as of vital importance, and were all in turn compelled to yield before the secularizing influence of civilization" ("Hist. Morals," ii. 17).

It is frequently asserted that in the most Christian countries the people are the most intellectual, moral and happy. But the fact is, that in those countries in which scepticism and infidelity have acquired the greatest strength and influence, and in which Christianity has been modified to conform to the changed condition of affairs, the people are the most advanced. The Abyssinians have had Christianity at least

1500 years ago. Scepticism who afford Bruce, seldom devour years of people large people bleeding a feast cut off, air with mon no are ban tianity condition after their necessity interco mechan the fut condition sceptic land w intellec become among advance tian religion Look and inf ent am more p nation, knows unbelie tion, sh assum The gro are Rat declare miracu