

Knox-Little has several natural, as well as acquired qualities, that specially fit him to speak to his fellow-men effectively on religious themes. His presence and manner bespeak favourable attention. He is an orator, and he does not disdain the graces that belong to oratorical address, but these are clearly subordinated to the chief purpose he has in view in bringing his hearers under the power of Gospel truth. He is a thoughtful and cultured man, and avoids with rare skill the use of clap-trap and commonplace. His addresses, so far as manner is concerned, will not offend the refined tastes of cultured hearers, neither will his meaning be misunderstood by even the most illiterate listener. The subject of his preaching is mainly the great verities of the Gospel. These he presents in telling and most impressive form, and it is obvious from the eager and sympathetic attitude of his hearers, that his message is sure, in many instances, to obtain a most favourable reception. In so far as he preaches the Gospel as revealed in Scripture, he will receive the hearty God-speed of a vast number of Christians, both within and outside the Church to which he belongs. As such, he is everywhere recognized and welcomed as a power for good.

Mr. Knox-Little is also a High Churchman, no doubt sincerely enough, but even sincerity of conviction is no certain guarantee against mistakes. To his credit be it said, he is not one of a class of fierce polemics who pretentiously claim that their Church is the only true Church, and that all outside their communion are wretched schismatics, and worthy only of scorn and contempt. Mr. Little does not deal in ecclesiastical vituperation. He speaks with becoming respect of those who differ from his churchly views with a sincerity and intelligence at least equal to his own, but he unchurches them all the same. The Anglican Church, according to the way of thinking in the school to which he belongs, is the chief and the purest wing of the Catholic Church, which, according to them, embraces the Church of Rome and the Greek Church, but from which all the branches of the Evangelical Church are excluded. To do him justice it is cheerfully acknowledged that he expressed his belief that there were many outside the Catholic Church—Presbyterians, Wesleyans, Baptists who were better than he; he loved them if they loved his God, and he was very sorry that they have missed this great blessing of God's love. This, though not so offensively put as it sometimes is, is unworthy of the large-hearted charity that ought to find a home in the Christian breast. After this it is no surprise that the eloquent Canon should insist, in season and out of season, on the peculiar dogmas of the Sacramentarian party in the Anglican Church, such as baptismal regeneration, the implication that membership in what he is pleased to call the Catholic Church is essential to salvation, the necessity of confirmation, belief in the real presence in the Eucharist, confession and absolution by priestly hands. The Knox part of him is all right; it is the other that is Little.

A POSITIVIST ON AGNOSTICISM.

A RATHER remarkable article, from the pen of Frederic Harrison, appears in the current number of the *Fortnightly Review*. Mr. Harrison is one of the few thoughtful Englishmen who are enthusiastic disciples of Auguste Comte. To his vision the French *doctrinaire* is one of the greatest men that ever lived. Lest this should be thought an exaggeration, the following passage from the article mentioned is here submitted:

It is therefore quite natural, however much it may surprise some, that the first task of Auguste Comte was to show religion was a force deeper, wider and more omnipresent than theology had ever deemed it; what are the eternal bases of religion in the heart and in society; and what are the indestructible elements of religion, and functions of religion. It is not in the least a paradox, but a truth capable of easy proof, that no theologian in ancient or modern times, neither Paul nor Mahomet, neither Aquinas nor Bernard, neither Bossuet nor Calvin, neither Hooker nor Butler, have ever penetrated so profoundly into the elements, the functions, and the range of religion in the abstract, as does Auguste Comte. . . . It is so because Comte was the first who exhaustively considered religion apart from any creed, on a social analysis of human nature and society, by the light of history and social philosophy at once.

Throughout, the article of Mr. Harrison gives no adequate definition of what he understands by religion. It is obvious that a believer in Christianity does not understand by religion what Mr. Frederic Harrison means by it. "What," he asks, "is the source of religion? Religion means that combination of belief and veneration which man feels for the power which exercises a dominant influence over his whole life. It has an intellectual element and a moral element. It includes both faith and worship—something that can be believed, and something that can be revered." In all this it can be seen that

a divine revelation is simply ignored. According to Positivism, only a religion of humanity is possible. But if man only is recognized as the most exalted being in the universe, what is "the power which exercises a dominant influence over his whole life," how is it to be known, how revered? How are we to be assured that it is worthy of reverence?

The chief fault the Positive critic of Agnosticism finds with that system of negation is, that it is simply destructive, not constructive. He does not say it in so many words, but he leaves the impression in the mind of his readers, that in eliminating theology and clearing the ground of all certitude concerning God and immortality, Agnosticism is rather praiseworthy than otherwise. The work of clearing the ground has been done well, but the failure of Agnosticism is seen in that it rests contented with blank negation. That man is a being endowed with religious capacities, Mr. Harrison, like his great mentor, Comte, readily admits. In this paper he even eloquently descants on the paramount importance of religion as a factor in human and social life. But how can such a religion as the author of the "Positive Philosophy" suggests, ever commend itself to humanity? Here is its Trinity; 1, Humanity, or Grand Etre; 2, Space, or Grand Milieu; and 3, the Solar System, or Grand Fetiche. To most, this would rather be suggestive of gross idolatry than religion in any intelligible sense of the word. The religion to be constructed when the destructive work of Agnosticism has been completed, must be positive, scientific, human, sociological, and evolutionary, or historical. Mr. Harrison is right in his conclusion that the human mind and heart recoil with infinite weariness from mere negation, hence his new system must be positive, but what are the great soul-strengthening truths, not now known, it will be able to postulate? Theology, then, is not scientific. Whoever else recognizes it as the Queen of the Sciences, the Positivist will not even admit it to be a science at all. But we forget the work of Agnosticism will not be completed till theology is swept out of existence, and it is only then that the fair fabric of the religion of humanity will begin to arise. It must be human. What about Him who bore our griefs and carried our sorrows, the Brother born for adversity, the Light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world? If the Positive Philosophy can touch the profoundest chords of the human soul with a more tender and loving hand, satisfy its noblest aspirations more fully, and inspire nobler lives than the faith in the Crucified has done these last eighteen centuries, it will be more remarkable than any even of the most ardent votaries of Comtism have yet imagined.

Of course Mr. Harrison assumes, what is generally taken for granted by all sceptics, that Agnosticism is embraced by the great leaders of modern thought. That not a few, especially among physical scientists, avow their sympathy with religious negation is unhappily true. Individual opinion, however, in matters of religion are no authority. They are merely opinions and nothing more. Because they remain in contented ignorance concerning the greatest of all problems is no reason whatever why others should be satisfied to know nothing. It would be reasonable to infer that these master minds in science had laboriously, exhaustively, and in the open spirit of truth-seekers, endeavoured to reach a satisfactory solution of the mystery of "life, death and the vast forever" before their helpless negation should, even by their example, be urged on our acceptance. Herbert Spencer cannot rest in Agnosticism, and has recognized an "Infinite and Eternal Energy by which all things are created and sustained." The most of them, however, confine their researches so exclusively to material things that they have become incapable of realizing spiritual facts, and the conclusions to which they come on matters so alien to their thoughts and sympathies are absolutely worthless. There is no doubt of the correctness of Mr. Harrison's prognostication of the decay of Agnosticism, and if ever the "religion of humanity" is constructed, it will speedily follow to the limbo of exploded substitutes for Christianity. Through all aberrations the heart of humanity will return to the ever-living Christ, with the unfeigned confession, "To whom can we go but unto Thee? Thou hast the words of eternal life."

Books and Magazines.

AUTREFOIS. Tales of New Orleans and Elsewhere. By James A. Harrison. (New York: Cassell & Co.; Toronto: W. J. Gage & Co.)—The Cassell publishing firm, represented by Messrs. W. J. Gage & Co., of Toronto, issue weekly a standard work of fiction, of which AUTREFOIS is one. In the same "Sunshine Series" are TEMPLE HOUSE, by Elizabeth Stoddart, and THE ADMIRABLE LADY BIDDY FANE, by Frank Barrett.

BYGONE MEMORIES AND OTHER POEMS. By Alexander Stewart. With an introductory preface by the Rev. Alexander Macleod, D.D., Birkenhead. (Edinburgh: James Gemmell.)—This is a genuine contribution to the evergrowing poetry that gifted singers, great and small, are continually augmenting. Mr. Stewart has been endowed with the true afflatus; he is, withal, modest and unpretending. His songs touch the heart, and several of his Bygone Memories awaken pensive echoes. He has set a wide range of topics, on themes touching various interests of humanity, to the music of his melodious verse. The volume has the good fortune to be introduced to the reader by Dr. Alexander Macleod, of Birkenhead, who speaks in most cordial and commendatory terms of the merits of this pleasing little volume.

THE TRAINING OF THE TWELVE: or Passages out of the Gospels, exhibiting the Twelve Disciples of Jesus under Discipline for the Apostleship. By Alexander Balmain Bruce, D.D. (New York: A. C. Armstrong & Son.)—This noble work, the result of scholarly research and earnest and massive thought, by the distinguished Professor of Apologetics and New Testament Exegesis in the Free Church College, Glasgow, has met with a welcome reception wherever it has gone. It is a good sign that frivolous and light reading (sacred and secular) is not quite so universal as some are inclined to assert. If it were so, we would not have the pleasant and agreeable duty of noting that this valuable work has already reached a fourth edition, revised and improved. Worthy books, like worthy men, meet with cordial recognition.

FUTURE PROBATION EXAMINED. By Rev. William De Loss Love. (New York: Funk & Wagnalls; Toronto: William Briggs.)—In this volume the author's purpose is to disprove the dogma of after-death probation. In the discussion of this subject he takes in the status of infants, condition of the heathen, intermediate state, resurrection of the dead, day of judgment, destiny of the wicked, etc. As usage determines the meaning of language, the author has evinced profound research in collating a great mass of testimony, bearing on these points, from the four following sources: (1) Christ, the great Teacher; (2) The inspired Apostles; (3) Uninspired writers before Christ; (4) The early Christian Fathers. This Patristic testimony alone is well worth the price of the book. The work belongs to the realm of dogmatic theology, and some of its positions are debatable. But every Bible student can afford to examine both sides of so vital a question.

FAMOUS WOMEN OF THE OLD TESTAMENT. By Morton Bryan Wharton, D.D., late U. S. Consul to Germany. (New York: E. B. Treat.)—The contents of this popular work are: Eve, The Mother of the Human Family; Sarah, The Mother of the Faithful in every age; Rebekah, The Beautiful but Deceptive Wife; Rachel, The Lovely Wife of Jacob; Miriam, The Grand, Patriotic Old Maid; Ruth, The Lovely, Young and Honoured Widow; Deborah, The Strong-Minded Woman; Jephthah's Daughter, The Consecrated Maiden; Delilah, The Fair but Deceitful Wife; The Witch of Endor, Enchantress of Samuel's Ghost; Hannah, The Praying and Devoted Mother; Abigail, The Wife of the Shepherd; The Queen of Sheba, Solomon's Royal Guest; Jezebel, The Bloody Mary of Scripture; The Woman of Shunem, Elisha's Friend; Esther, The Deliverer of her People. The varied qualities, work and offices of women are admirably described in this book. The book abounds in startling incidents and rich illustrations, and as a whole is a beautiful portrait of true religion as inculcated and illustrated by the saintly women of Biblical times.

THE MISSIONARY REVIEW OF THE WORLD. Edited by Dr. J. M. Sherwood, New York, and Dr. A. T. Pierson, of Philadelphia. (New York: Funk & Wagnalls; Toronto: William Briggs.)—The success of this magazine, its publishers assure us, is phenomenal. By a single bound it has placed itself at the head of the missionary periodicals of the world. The first number of the new year gives promise of making good the editors' promise that 1889 shall excel 1888. In the literature section are nine original articles, every one of which is good. Dr. Pierson's "Christian Missions as the Enterprise of the Church," and "Signs of the Supernatural in the General Work;" Dr. J. M. Ludlow's paper on "Henry Martyn;" "Missions in the Levant;" "British Opium in China," and "Translations from Foreign Missionary Periodicals," are of special value. Under "Organized Missionary Work," we have the latest report of the eighteen Woman's Missionary Societies of Canada, and of Great Britain and Ireland. Then correspondence from China, Brazil, Persia, Asia Minor and Africa. The "Monthly Bulletin" gives a resumé of the latest news from the world-field. A portrait of the Earl of Aberdeen, president of the World's Missionary Conference, adorns the number.