

are not. Thousands, however, can trace a deeper current, for which we acknowledge an inestimable debt to John Ruskin. From him came, not only some unveiling of the beauty of the earth and sky, but the conviction of meaning in that beauty; a meaning which one may not always think of, and may never be able to unravel, and yet be deeply moved by. We may not be able to interpret the hills and rocks and clouds and infinite sky, and yet be profoundly impressed, as, in a lesser way, in a great library, with the conviction that there is something there expressed infinitely worth knowing. The sense that something is being said which one cannot interpret is sometimes positively painful, especially when we stand in the midst of some special profusion of nature. Perhaps the reason why one comes down from the hills subdued yet exalted, with a purified sense of a meaning and worth in life, is just that uninterpreted sense of a word in all around far removed from the words of men.

Charles Dudley Warner makes one of his characters say, "You Americans want scenery, we Germans love nature." What brings refreshment is not the search for the striking, the picturesque, the unusual, but the delight in the broad aspects of the earth, the acceptance of nature as it is presented, taking what is offered at the time and "possessing" it.

"The hills interpret heavenly mysteries," sings one of our American poets. Many of us cannot receive that interpretation, and yet feel with more or less clearness that the hills are rooted in heavenly mysteries, in the New Testament use of that word—as something made known to those who are prepared to receive it. That is why, in some scenes, all books seem inadequate, if not impertinent, but one. "I am the true vine," said Christ, the original vine. All others are derived from him and have their particular meaning from him. The relation between vine and branch was not first in the stock that grows in the vineyard, but in the relation between Christ and his own. My Father giveth you the true bread—the original bread. And so He is the original of all. He is the word that speaks to us in the silences of the hills, and on the plains, and by the rivers. To listen is to be refreshed—is strength and peace.

Agnosticism—Good and Bad

There are two philosophies entitled agnosticism, which are confounded in the popular mind and often treated as identical by religious teachers, but which are very different, not only in their spirit, but also in their intellectual affirmations. The one is modest, reticent, perplexed, and is adopted as a refuge from perplexity; the other is positive, dogmatic, aggressive, a denial that life is perplexing. The one is a confession of the limitations of the human intellect, the other an affirmation of the limitation of the knowable universe. The one finds its expression in Tennyson's verse:

Our little systems have their day;
They have their day and cease to be:
They are but broken lights of thee,
And thou, O Lord, art more than they;

the other, in the exultant declaration of D'Argenson, quoted by John Morley in his biography of Diderot, "Our nation and our century . . . will banish every priest, all priesthood, all revelation, all mystery." The second agnosticism rests on the assumption that all our knowledge comes through the senses—that we can know only what we see, hear, touch, taste, smell, and by our reason deduce from our senses, and that all inquiring into a supposed invisible world which transcends the senses is at best an inquiry into the nature of the other side of the moon, at worst the parent of every kind of superstition. The other agnosticism, with Herbert Spencer, recognizes the fact that "a brute thinks only of things which can be touched, seen, heard, tasted, etc., . . . but the developing man has thoughts about existences which he regards as usually intangible, inaudible, invisible, and yet which he regards as operative upon him," but it declines to be dogmatic respecting this transcendent world, or to assume to frame a theory of the universe which, including this world, shall be complete and comprehensive. It is in this sense that Professor Huxley, who invented the word "agnostic," first used it, though he sometimes in his writings seems to assume the truth of the philosophy which underlies the other view. "I took thought," he says, "and invented what I conceived

to be the appropriate title of 'agnostic.' It came into my head as suggestively antithetic to the 'gnostic' of Church history, who professed to know so much about the very things of which I was ignorant."

This type of agnosticism, which protests against the shallow conceit that assumes to analyze, classify, and confine in a complete survey the Infinite and Eternal, is not new. The noblest sages have given expression to it in all epochs. It is the theme of Job's complaint against his gnostic critics:

Canst thou find out the secret of God?
Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?
Higher than Heaven—what canst thou do?
Deeper than Sheol—what canst thou know?

It is the basis of Paul's counsel to the pretentious wise men of his time: "Knowledge shall vanish away; for we know the truth only in fragments." It is implied in Christ's rebuke of the Pharisees who thought they knew all theology: "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." No other illustrations are needed to make it clear that this type of agnosticism is quite consistent with the most devout faith. "I hardly dare name His Name," said Tennyson; "but take away belief in the self-conscious personality of God, and you take away the backbone of the world."

But if this agnosticism is not modern, if it is as old as intellectual humility, it is more common to-day than it ever was before. We have lost our satisfaction in the completed creeds of our fathers, and we try in vain to construct some new and better-framed creeds to take their place. We have learned that we are finite, and we are learning that the Infinite is Infinite, and that no finite thoughts can give satisfactory account of Him. Science has destroyed our creeds and given us no new ones. We have learned that revealed religion can no more complete our knowledge of the invisible world than can natural religion, since the imperfection is in us, not in the statements presented to us. We are learning to appreciate the humble claims of the Bible to be "a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path." The lantern which one carries swaying in his

hand in a dark night does not illumine the whole forest through which he picks his way; it is enough that it sheds a ray of light on the path in which he walks, and shows him where to put his foot in his next step. Revelation is not a disclosure of all truth; it is an interpretation of each day's duty. Knowledge is not an end, it is a means; and knowledge adequate to show us what is the duty which lies next to us is knowledge sufficient for our needs.

Whatever may be the philosophic remedy for the agnosticism of society, whatever arguments may be required from the religious teacher to show the reasonableness of the Christian faith, the remedy for the individual saddened by some loss of faith and by a great perplexity concerning the great problems of life is that suggested by Paul: "Even as things are, there abide faith, hope, love—these three; but the greatest of these is love." Tennyson has repeated almost the same message:

We have but faith; we cannot know;
For knowledge is of things we see;
And yet we trust it comes from thee,
A beam in darkness: let it grow.

"We cannot know," or at best "we know only in fragments." What then? Even as things are we can have faith, "a beam in darkness;" we are not brutes to think only of things which can be touched, seen, heard, tasted, etc., but men with thoughts about existences which are intangible, inaudible, invisible, and yet operative upon us; and we can have hope—hope that is not seen, "for what a man seeth why doth he yet hope for?"—hope that is not content with the present, but aspires to a clearer vision and a diviner life; and we can have love, greatest of all, love that suffereth long and is kind, that envieth not, vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity but rejoiceth in the truth, beareth all things, trusteth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. We may not know whether the Bible is authoritative and infallible, but we can use it as a lamp to our feet and a light to our path; we may not know whether Christ's unity with his Father is a moral unity or a metaphysical unity, but we can follow his example; we may doubt whether we are immortal, but we can live as we would

live if we were sure of our immortality ; we may distrust all definitions of God, and with Tennyson call him "The Nameless," and still share with Tennyson in the faith that is half desire and half belief: "I should infinitely rather feel myself the most miserable wretch on the face of the earth with a God above than the highest type of man standing alone." Such an agnosticism as this, though it may shadow our life, need not paralyze our activities, and may indeed eventually increase our spiritual aspirations and endeavors by just so much as it decreases our too self-satisfied content with our imaginary knowledge of a life too great for our comprehension.



A Pathetic Appeal

We have received from the Chairman of the University of Virginia, an office which corresponds to the presidency of most colleges, the following letter, to which we are glad to give editorial prominence :

Dear Mr. Abbott : Our little hospital here has been open for two months past and we have been running it experimentally. The building we occupy, as you know, is the Administration Building, which was not originally intended for patients, but we opened it up, with negroes on the first floor and whites on the second, and have been running it in this way for two months. The result of this experience is that, while our negroes represent only six-tenths of our population, they represent three-quarters of our poor and suffering, and we find that we are absolutely unable to accommodate them in proper proportion in our present building.

The appropriation for running this hospital for the present year is already provided for from our State income, but we cannot meet the demands of this suffering race unless we have more room. We have every promise of being able to build the white ward as a memorial, but the proposed negro ward, corresponding, but on the north side of the building, we have nothing for, and no present hope of erecting.

Do you know of any friends of this people, or half-dozen friends, who will raise \$16,000 for us for a twenty-bed negro ward? I know of no charity that would reach the real needs of this people as much, and we have done everything we can, having about ten negroes on hand all the time, and each bed is spoken for five times over before it is vacant. We have nurses enough and every other provision, but we have not the room. Do you know of any one who would help us? With all the millions that have been given by the North

for the education of the negro, it has always seemed strange to me that no attempt has been made to meet his physical wants. When I planned this hospital, it was with the distinct end that its good things would be bestowed equally upon the two races, and this we are ready to do, but we haven't the shelter for the negro unless we dispossess those who are not only needy but able to pay a little for their keep, while our services to the negro are pure charity.

P. B. BARRINGER,
Chairman.

There is something very pathetic in this appeal on behalf of a poor and helpless people by friends whose friendship has been doubted or denied. Whenever a race is put upon its own resources, the line of division begins to show itself between the competent and the incompetent. This division is showing itself to-day in the negro race. A fair proportion of that race are seen gradually rising to the demands of our exacting modern life; a larger number stand, as it were, dazed before the task presented to them; and, alas! another large number have given the task up and are slowly falling back. To meet the physical needs of these incapables, particularly the old slave remnant, worn out in the hopeless struggle, Virginians are trying in the hospital at Charlottesville to provide for some a repair-shop, for others a haven of refuge. It is the glory of modern civilization that in our towns and cities it furnishes to the poorest in free hospitals medical care as good as that which the wealthiest can purchase. It is the glory of Virginia that it is making a heroic attempt to apply this principle to the colored people in the present case. But the attempt is made under great disadvantages. The State is not able to help much because of the enormous State debt and the heavy draft made upon the State resources for the education of a great illiterate population. Of some four million dollars' income from taxation, over six hundred thousand goes first for interest on the State debt, over four millions goes to education, and the other fourteen hundred thousand only is left for current expenses of administration. If the negroes who need hospital care and attention are to receive it, the University of Virginia, which is endeavoring to provide it for them in its medical hospital, must have aid from without the State, and we commend the letter of Dr. Barringer most heartily to the consideration of any