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Poetry.

THE DESERT ROCK.

Rock of the desert, pouring still
Thy streams the thirsty soul to fill:
Rock of the desert, now as full
Of living water, pure and cool,
We stand beside thy stream.

Rock of eternity, to thee
In thirst and weariness we flee;
Thy waters cannot cease to pour;
Their fulness is forevermore.
Let him that thirsteth come.

Bright Water of eternity,
We come, we come, to drink of thee.
The voice of welcome that we hear,
The voice dispelling every fear,
Is, "Whosoever will."

River of life, upon thy brink
We sit and of thy waters drink;
The murmur of thy sparkling wave
Speaks still of Him who came to save,
Who bids us drink and live.

Bonar.

Religious.

MR. GLADSTONE ON THE TENDENCIES OF MODERN UNBELIEF.

On the 21st ult., Mr. Gladstone distributed the prizes to the pupils of "Liverpool College," and afterwards delivered a long and instructive address to the audience assembled on the occasion. His views on education were expressed in the following terms:—

"With regard to the old education, I would speak in terms, I hope, of moderation. Here and there you may find a man whose self-training power is such that he can dispense with all appliances from without; but these are rare instances indeed—

Pauci,
Dis geniti, potuerunt.

I speak not of the one, but of the million; and, as among the million, I affirm that there is no training for the conflicts and the toils of life, so far as I have seen, which does greater justice to the receiver of it than the old training of the English public schools and Universities. I speak of my own experience and observation in the sphere in which I have lived; but probably there are few spheres, though I will not say there are none, in which the whole making of a man is more severely tried. That my testimony, which is limited, may be definite, I will add that I speak of such training as it was at Oxford more than 40 years ago. All this must be a paradox and a stumbling-block to such as think that the sole or main purpose of education is to stock the mind with knowledge as a shop is stocked with goods, and that the wants of life are to be met like the wants of customers. And doubtless one of the purposes of education is thus to furnish materials for future employment; but this is its lower, not its higher, purpose. The shop takes no benefit, though it may take damage, from the wares which it receives; but the greatest and best use of the information which is imported into the mind is to improve the mind itself. (Hear, hear.) A more instructive comparison may be drawn between education and food. As the purpose of food is to make the body strong and active, so the main purpose of education is to make the mind solid, elastic, and capable of enduring wear and tear. The studies which are most useful, so far as utility is external to the mind, though they are on that account the most popular, and though they are indispensable—such, I mean, as reading, writing, arithmetic, modern languages, or geography—are those which do not most but least for our intellectual and moral training. The studies which have it for their main object to act on the composition and capacity of the man, will, to such as follow them with their whole heart, be found to yield a richer harvest, but the seed may be

longer in the ground. Yet I fully admit that the test of a good education is neither abstract nor inflexible. Such an education must take account both of the capacity of the pupil and of the possibilities of his future calling. All I would plead for is that where there is a choice the highest shall be preferred. "It was our duty to have loved the highest," and our duty it ever must remain. In this institution I trust the prerogatives of the highest will always be admitted; and around it will be marshalled, each in its due order and degree, the numerous and ever multiplying studies of which every one has an undoubted title to honour in its tendency to embellish or improve the life of man. But, indeed, there is much to be said and done about education besides determining the relative claim, or, as it would now be called, the due co-ordination, of the different kinds of knowledge. Quite apart from these claims, much, my younger friends, and more than you can as yet perhaps fully understand, depends upon the spirit in which those kinds of knowledge are pursued. And this at least depends, not upon the incidental advantages of birth or wealth, but upon ourselves. The favours of fortune have both their value and their charm; but there is in a man himself, if he will but open out and cultivate his manhood, that which will supply their place."

It is truly refreshing to read the observations and warnings of the Prime Minister of Great Britain, on the dangers and tendencies of modern unbelief. We quote again from the report in the Times:—

"On an occasion like this I should not have desired, even before those of you, my younger friends, who are on the threshold of active and responsible manhood, to dwell in a marked manner on the trials you will have to encounter. But the incidents of the time are no common incidents, and there is one among them so obtrusive that youth cannot long enjoy its natural privilege of acquaintance with the mischief, but at the same time so formidable that youth really requires to be forewarned against the danger. I refer to the extraordinary and boastful manifestation in this age of ours, and especially in the year which is about to close, of the extremest forms of unbelief. (Applause.) I am not about to touch upon the differences which distinguish and partly sever the Church of England from those communions by which it is surrounded; whether they be of Protestant Nonconformists, or of those who have recently incorporated into the Christian faith what we must suppose they think a bulwark and not a danger to religion, the doctrine of Papal Infallibility. For handling controversies of such a class this is not the time, I am not the person, and my office is not the proper office. It is not now only the Christian Church, or only the Holy Scriptures, or only Christianity which is attacked. The disposition is boldly proclaimed to deal alike with root and branch, and to snap the ties which under the still venerable name of religion unite man with the unseen world, and lighten the struggles and the woes of life by the hope of a better land. (Applause.)

I will not pain and weary you with a multitude of details. I will only refer by name to one who is not a British writer—to the learned German, Dr. Strauss. He is a man of far wider fame than any British writer who marches under the same banner. He has spent a long life in what he doubtless thinks a good cause; and I mention him with the respect which is justly due not only to his ability but to his straightforward earnestness and to the fairness and mildness towards antagonists in argument with which, so far as I have seen, he pursues his ill-starred and hopeless enterprise. (Applause.) He has published during the present year a volume entitled *The Old Belief and the New*. In his introduction he frankly raises the question whether,

considering the progress which culture has now made, there is any longer occasion to maintain religious worship in any form whatever. Why, he asks on behalf not only of himself, but of a party in Germany for which he speaks and for which he claims that it answers to the state of modern thought—"why should there be a separate religious society at all, when we have already provision made for all men in the State; the school, science, and fine art?" In his first chapter he puts the question, "Are we still Christians?" And after a detailed examination he concludes, always speaking on behalf of modern thought, that if we wish our year to be year, and our nay, nay—if we are to think and speak our thoughts as honourable, upright men, we must reply that we are Christians no longer. This question and answer, however, he observes, are insufficient. The essential and fundamental inquiry with him is, whether we are, or are not, still to have a religion? To this inquiry he devotes his second chapter. In this second chapter he finds that there is no personal God; there is no future state; the dead live in the recollection of survivors—this is enough for them. After this he has little difficulty in answering the question he has put. All religious worship ought to be abolished. The very name of Divine Service is an indignity to man. Therefore, in the sense in which religion has been heretofore understood, his answer is that we ought to have no religion any more. But proceeding, as he always does, with commendable frankness, he admits that he ought to fill with something the void which he has made. This he accordingly proceeds to do. Instead of God, he offers to us what he calls the All or Universum. This All or Universum has, he tells us, neither consciousness nor reason. But it has order and law. He thinks it fited, therefore, to the object of a new and true piety, which he claims for his Universum, as the devout of the old style did for their God. If any one repudiates this doctrine, to Dr. Strauss's reason repudiation is absurdity, and to his feeling blasphemy. These are not the ravings of a maniac; nor are they the mere dreams of an imaginative high-wrought enthusiast such as Comte appears to be; they are the grave conclusions, after elaborate reasoning, of a learned, a calm, and so far as form is concerned, a sober-minded man, who in this very year has been commended to us, in England, by another apostle of "modern thought" as one of the men whose guidance we ought, if we are wise, to submit in matters of religious belief. I would not, even if I had the capacity and the time, make an attempt in this place to confute them; for I have no fear that by their exhibition they will beguile you. Neither do I search for the hard names of controversy to describe them, for they best describe themselves. (Applause.) Neither can I profess to feel unmixed regret at their being forced, thus eagerly and thus early, into notice; because it is to be hoped that they will cause a shock and a reaction, and will compel many who may have too lightly valued the inheritance so dearly bought for them, and may have entered upon dangerous paths, to consider, while there is yet time, whether those paths will lead them. In no part of his writings, perhaps, has Strauss been so effective as where he assails the inconsistency of those who adopt his premises, but decline to follow him to their conclusions. Suffice it to say these opinions are by no means a merely German brood; there are many writers of kindred sympathies in England, and some of as outspoken courage. But, in preparing yourselves for the combat of life, I beg you to take this also into your account, that the spirit of denial is abroad, and has challenged all religion, but especially the religion we profess, to a combat of life and death.

But I venture to offer you a few suggestions, in the hope that they may not be without their use. You will bear in your after life much of the duty and delight of following free thought;

and in truth the man who does not value the freedom of his thoughts deserves to be described as Homer describes the slave; he is but half a man. St. Paul I suppose, was a teacher of free thought when he bade his converts to prove all things; but it seems he went terribly astray when he proceeded to bid them "hold fast that which is good" (hear, hear); for he evidently assumed that there was something by which they could hold fast, and so he bade Timothy keep that which was committed to his charge; and another Apostle has instructed us to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the Saints (Applause.) But the free thought of which we now hear so much seems too often to mean thought roving and vagrant more than free, like D.los drifting on the seas of Greece without a root, a direction, or a home. (Applause.) Again, you will hear incessantly of the advancement of the present age, and of the backwardness of those which have gone before it. And truly it has been a wonderful age; but let us not exaggerate. It has been, and it is, an age of immense mental as well as material activity; it is by no means an age abounding in minds of the first order, who become great immortal teachers of mankind. It has tapped as it were, and made disposable for man, vast natural forces; but the mental power employed is not to be measured by the mere size of the results. To perfect that marvel of travel, the locomotive, has perhaps not required the expenditure of more mental strength, and application, and devotion, than to perfect that marvel of music, the violin. In the material sphere, the achievements of the age are splendid and unmixed. In the social sphere they are great and noble, but seem ever to be confronted by a succession of new problems, which almost defy solution. In the sphere of pure intellect I doubt whether posterity will rate us as highly as we rate ourselves. (Hear, hear.) But what I most wish to observe is this, that it is an insufferable arrogance in the men of any age to assume what I may call airs of unmeasured superiority over former ages. God, who cares for us, cared for them also. In the goods of this world we may advance by strides, but it is by steps only and not strides, and by slow and not always steady steps, that all desirable improvement of man in the higher range of his being is effected. (Hear, hear.) Again, my friends, you will hear much to the effect that the divisions among Christians render it impossible to say what Christianity is, and so destroy the certainty of religion. But if the divisions among Christians are remarkable, not less so is their unity in the greatest doctrines that they hold. (Hear.) Well nigh fifteen hundred years—years of a more sustained activity than the world had ever before seen—have passed away since the great controversies concerning the Deity and the Person of the Redeemer were, after a long agony, determined. As before that time in a manner less defined, but adequate for their day, so ever since that time, amid all chance and change, more, aye many more, than ninety-nine in every hundred Christians have with one will confessed the Deity and incarnation of our Lord as the cardinal and central truths of our religion. (Hear.) Surely there is some comfort here, some sense of brotherhood, some glory in the past, some hope for the times that are to come.

On one, and only one, more of the favourite fallacies of the day I will yet presume to touch. It is the opinion and the boast of some that man is not responsible for his belief. Lord Brougham was at one time stated to have given utterance to this opinion, whether truly, I know not. But this I know; it was my privilege to hear from his own lips the needful and due limitation of that proposition. "Man," he said, "is not responsible to man for his belief." But as before God one and the same law applies to opinions and to acts—or rather to inward and

to outward acts, for opinions are inward acts. (Applause.) Many a wrong opinion may be guiltless because that ignorance may not be our fault; but who shall presume to say there is no mercy for wrong actions also, when they, too, have been due to ignorance, and that ignorance has not been guilty?

The question is not whether judgments and actions are in the same degree influenced by the conditions of the moral motives. If it is undeniable that self-love and passion have an influence upon both, then so far as that influence goes, for both we must be prepared to answer. Should we in common life ask a body of swindlers for an opinion upon swindling, or of gamblers for an opinion upon gambling or of misers upon bounty? And if in matters of religion we allow pride and perverseness to raise a cloud between us and the truth, so that we see it not, the false opinion that we form is but the index of that perverseness and that pride, and both for them, and for it as their off-spring, we shall be justly held responsible. Who they are upon whom this responsibility will fall it is not ours to judge. The laws are given to us, not to apply presumptuously to others, but to enforce honestly against ourselves. Next to a Christian life, my friends, you will find your best defence against reckless novelty of speculation in society of temper, and in sound intellectual habits. Be slow to stir inquiries which you do not mean particularly to pursue to their proper end. Be not afraid to suspend your judgment, or to feel and admit to yourselves how narrow are the bounds of knowledge. Do not too readily assume that to us have been opened royal roads to truth, which were heretofore hidden from the whole family of man; for the opening of such roads would not be so much favour as caprice. If it is sad to yield a blind submission to authority, it is not less an error to deny to it its reasonable weight. Eschewing a servile adherence to the past, regard it with reverence and gratitude, and accept its accumulations in inward as well as outward things as the patrimony, which it is your part in life both to preserve and to improve.

WAITING BY THE RIVER.

A NEW YEAR'S MEDITATION—BY MRS. H. B. STOWE.

Nothing in dear old John Bunyan is so sweet and poetic as his picture of the land of Buelah, where the pilgrim, after the toils of life are over, waits for the summons to the celestial city.

In the second part he thus describes the approach of a company of pilgrims to this land:

"After this I beheld until they were come unto the land of Buelah, where the sun shineth night and day. Here, because they were weary, they betook themselves awhile to rest: and because that country was common for pilgrims, and because the orchards and vineyards that were here belonged to the King of the celestial country, therefore they were licensed to make bold with any of his things. But a little while did soon refresh them; for the bells did so ring and the trumpets continually sound so melodiously, that they could not sleep; yet they received so much refreshing as if they had slept their sleep ever so soundly. Here, also, all the noise of them that walked in the streets was, More pilgrims are come to town to-day. And another would answer saying, 'And so many were let in at the golden gates to-day.' 'They would cry again, 'There is a legion of shining ones just come to town, by the which we know that there are more pilgrims on the road, for here they are come to wait for them, and comfort them after all their sorrow.'"

"In this land was a record kept of the names of all that had been pilgrims of old, and a history of the famous deeds they had done.