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REVIEW SECTION.

I.—BEAUTY AS A MIDDLE TERM.

(THE TRUE, THE BEAUTIFUL, THE GOOD.)

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IN our day there are two practical as well as philosophical theories which tend to dis sever the beautiful from the true and the good. The one may be styled atheistic negation ; the other, pantheistic indifference. The one is based upon the assumption of universal materialism ; the other is based upon the assumption of universal spiritism. The one denies the individual human soul and a personal God ; the other denies a personal God and the individual human soul. The one would locate beauty in the feeling of the brain, whether of man or beast, and make it objective and sensuous to consummate (logically) in sensuous indulgence ; the other would locate beauty in the æsthetic sense, and make it subjective and æsthetic to consummate in æsthetic indulgence. The one would begin and end in atheistic negation ; the other would begin and end in pantheistic indifference. Both would practically and logically dis sever the beautiful from the true and the good.

It were well to trace these fully and expose their evil tendencies and defects. But that is not our purpose in this article. It is rather to trace in rapid outline the third or medium view.

In the article on "Spiritual Truths Self-Verified" (HOMILETIC REVIEW, December, 1888), the writer states, incidentally, an important principle in regard to beauty : "Æsthetic truths on a level with a soul's æsthetic development are self-verified."

It may be difficult to define beauty. It may not be important to do so. Indeed, beauty may be simple as truth, and ultimate as the right, and undefinable as either ; yet it is none the less real, and is recognized and known by a correlated, sympathetic faculty of the human soul. Beauty might, does exist, in earth and air and sea and sky, but without the correspondent faculty (or spiritual sense) in the human soul, it would not be recognized or known. Yet evermore this spiritual faculty verifies for itself. It does not depend upon the judgment of others. It is not to be argued into an admission. It sees for itself, or there is no recognition of the beautiful. It feels for itself, or

this moral consistency. Goodness should and does consist with Truth. Beauty should, does consist with both—Truth and Goodness. The false should appear, as in reality it is, deformed and ugly, and should never be agreeable. The false is not in reality good, and should not be chosen. Even style, says a rhetorician, “becomes beautiful so far as—and only so far as—it is the adequate expression of worthy thoughts.” “Language,” says Herbert Spencer, “is the symbol for conveying thought,” and hence should first of all be truthful. True oratory recognizes the same law, relation to the true and the good. The eloquence of the bar should be loyal to justice. Civil eloquence should seek the public good. Sacred eloquence should exalt Christian virtue and proclaim the truth as it is in Jesus, and thus, by the grace of God, win sinners to the Saviour. The beautiful should not be dis-severed from the true and the good, but rather be more closely and constantly allied to both. Thus beauty as the middle term should promote truth and goodness, until moral character consummates in ‘the beauty of holiness.’

II.—THE POETRY OF MODERN SKEPTICISM: MATTHEW ARNOLD. JAMES THOMPSON.

BY PROF. J. O. MURRAY, D.D., DEAN OF PRINCETON COLLEGE.

SOME years ago the attempt was made by an English barrister, Mr. N. J. Birch, to prove from Shakespeare’s plays that he was an atheist. The work has been shelved among the “Curiosities of Literature.” The Christian element in Shakespeare is too pronounced for any question as to his faith in Christianity, and the book in question was alike a blunder and an injustice, if indeed it was not a ghastly joke. In fact, the skeptical spirit did not affect English poetry till the time of Pope. Dryden boxed the compass of theological belief, but he never gave up his faith in Christianity. Pope’s “Essay on Man”—a jumble of Spinoza and Bolingbroke—is yet believing as far as it goes. It is theistic and optimistic both. Still Deism is all the faith it recognizes. No great poet followed in his track till Byron and Shelley appeared. Byron’s “Cain” and “Shelley’s “Queen Mab” sounded a bold and blasphemous note of defiance to existing beliefs. They have had no successors in the special line of their infidelity. That infidelity of theirs to law and moral purity and decency was enough to disarm their unbelief in Christianity of much of its power. But the modern unbelief is at work, and marking the poetry of our time to greater or less extent. It would be passing strange if this were not so. The air is so full of the revolt against supernaturalism, that poetry, always one of the best reflectors of the spirit of an age, would be sure to catch it. Tennyson is no unbeliever. His poetry is not anti-Christian, nor yet agnostic. Still he sounded some notes, which have had an echo

in strains from other poets in open war with the faith of the ages. In such lines as these :

“There lives more Faith in honest doubt
Believe me, than in half the creeds ;”

and

“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,”

a truth, no doubt, is expressed. But the truth they conveyed was forgotten quickly in the inference that it was better to doubt than to believe, and that all systems of theology must go. The poetry of modern skepticism has found full voice, and, what is more, *as poetry* it has qualities which seem likely to insure its life. It has a gift of song, which will certainly secure its place—and that a high one—in our Victorian poetry.

The ministry should know clearly what singing robes it is putting on, and what are the notes which arrest if they do not captivate the ears of some. Poetry is read widely ; more by the pews than the pulpit sometimes suspects. For that reason the preacher should be at some pains to acquaint himself with the poetry of modern skepticism. Nay, he may point his discourses sometimes by references to this muse of unbelief. At any rate an educated ministry should know distinctly all the shapes which the modern protean unbelief is wearing. I have been more than once astounded at the ignorance of matters discussed in reviews and magazines, and in the hands of the young people, by those who turn over their commentaries and read up in old theologies, as if the ministers of to-day needed no knowledge of current thought. These are only the exceptions. In the assured belief that no class of educated men more gladly welcome any hints than the ministry, I propose in this article to bring to their notice the poetry of modern skepticism in two of its forms—agnosticism and pessimistic atheism.

That Matthew Arnold is the poet of agnosticism is well understood. Mr. Arnold's career is too well known to need any full details. It is noticeable that the volumes of poetry and the work of fiction which are more unsettling than any other of our literary productions both originate with descendants of Dr. Arnold, of Rugby. The poetry of Matthew Arnold, his son, will be read long after the “Robert Elsmere” of his granddaughter has been forgotten. Mr. Arnold's first poems were published about the year 1850. He was then a young man of 28. The poems which first gave signs of the reaction in him from the old beliefs—the *Empedocles on Etna*—then appeared. That poem embodied the restlessness of a soul swung from its old moorings and tossing wildly on upheaving waves of doubt. The reaction went on. His prose writings, such as “Literature and Dogma,” “God and the Bible,” made his position clearer as an agnostic. His poems were written from time

to time, and reveal the inner life of his spirit. They reflect certain aspects of the modern unbelief in very definite form and very instructive lights.

First. Matthew Arnold's poems illustrate that characteristic of modern skepticism which *assumes* that the old faith is done for—its *hic jacet* written—its beliefs all vanished in the blaze of nineteenth-century criticism. That Mr. Arnold conceives this to be the case nobody doubts. That Mrs. Humphrey Ward thinks so is equally clear. So of old the question was asked, Have any of the rulers or Pharisees believed in Him? What we complain of is that this assumption is unfounded, false, and unjust. It is something to be resented. Who and what are our modern skeptics, that they have the right to put on such airs and write as if all the believing people were of no consequence intellectually. Here, for example, is a specimen of this assuming tone in one of Mr. Arnold's poems—that entitled "Dover Beach":

"The sea of faith
Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore
Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furled.
But now I only hear
It's melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,
Retreating, to the breath
Of the night wind, down the vast edges drear,
And naked shingles of the world."

It may be that this was all Mr. Arnold could hear of the "sea of faith." But the assumption in these lines is that this is all there was to be heard by anybody. To that we demur, in the name of that large and growing body of intelligent Christian discipleship.

A still more notable illustration of this assumption that supernatural Christianity is over and done with occurs in the "Obermann Once More," when, speaking of the Christ, he says:

"Now he is dead! Far hence he lies
In the lone Syrian town,
And on his grave with shining eyes
The Syrian stars look down."

He assumes that the Resurrection is an exploded theory—speaks of Christ's grave just as he would speak of Joseph's of Arimathea or that of Nicodemus. He brushes aside with two lines of his poetry all that mighty fabric of historical evidence on which hundreds of our most intelligent minds calmly rest. See how it is done:

"And on his grave with shining eyes
The Syrian stars look down."

Secondly. Mr. Arnold's poetry illustrates that phase of modern skepticism which makes Christianity the same in kind with other religions, only possibly higher in its type. As in the poem on "Progress":

"Children of men! the unseen Power, whose eye
Forever doth accompany mankind,

Hath look'd on no religion scornfully
That men did ever find.

* * * *

"Say ye : The spirit of man has found new roads,
And we must leave the old faiths, and walk therein?
Leave then the Cross as ye have left carved gods,
But guard the fire within."

I have transposed the order of these stanzas, but their import is the same. It is, that as yet there is no absolute religion for man. Christianity is but one of many. The Cross—and carved gods! To be left behind—the one as the other.

Thirdly. Mr. Arnold's poetry reflects that phase of the modern unbelief which is well described as moral languor. It shrinks from the problems which beset us on every side. It has a hopeless tone. There may come "tears from the depths of a divine despair," but they contrast painfully with the tone of the Gospel as a gospel of hope. The closing stanzas of the poem on self-deception may be cited to show this :

"And on earth we wander, groping, reeling,
Powers stir in us, stir and disappear.
Ah ! and he, who placed our master-feeling
Failed to place that master-feeling clear.
We but dream we have our wished-for powers,
Ends we seek we never shall attain.
Ah ! *some* power exists, then, which is ours?
Some end is there, we indeed may gain?"

But oh ! the infinite difference between this vague, languid questioning and the clear, stirring energies of divine hope in the Gospel of Christ.

Fourthly. There is a tone of intellectual pride in Mr. Arnold's poetry which is that of the modern unbelief toward the faith of Christians in the mysteries of their religion. He betrays a "condescending sympathy" with the adherents of the old faiths. But its very condescension is what makes it offensive. What right has his poetry to put on any such airs ! "There is always," as an acute critic* has remarked, "a tincture of pride in his confessed inability to believe—a self-congratulation that he is too clear-eyed to yield to the temptations of the heart." It comes out in the very poem, "Obermann Once More," in which the subjugation of the old Roman world by the Christian church is so finely sung, for its closing stanza is :

"Alone, self-poised, henceforward man
Must labor ! must resign
His all too human creeds, and scan
Simply the way divine."

There is a note of sadness in all this, but it is a proud sadness. And it suggests finally, what all modern and ancient skepticism alike reveal, the hopelessness, the unrest, the spiritual desolation, which

—* Hutton's "Literary Essays," p. 352.

come from negation of faith. This tone is the most dominant note in Mr. Arnold's poetry. It is profoundly sad, depressing. He does not disguise it. He does not apologize for it. In fact, he deserves credit for the honest avowal that to this complexion it comes with men like himself, who fling up old faiths and find nothing in agnostic positions to give the soul any cheer. Indeed, in a recent article* Mr. Frederick Harrison has plainly told the agnostics that they must either contrive some faith or retire—that the demand and the need for one cannot be trifled with by everlasting assertions of "We do not know." For an illustration of Mr. Arnold's hopeless, dreary, saddening position, take the closing stanza of the poem on "Dover Beach":

"Ah, love, let us be true
To one another! for the world, which seems
To lie before us like a land of dreams
So various, so beautiful, so new,
Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;
And we are here as on a darkling plain,
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,
Where ignorant armies clash by night."

It is, however, in the poem on the "Grand Chartreuse" that this utter sadness, the requiem over lost faith, the blank and cheerless bewilderment in which his doubts leave him, are most sincerely and most poetically given:

"Wandering between two worlds, one dead,
The other powerless to be born,
With nowhere yet to rest my head,
Like this on earth I wait forlorn.
Their Faith—my tears the world deride,
I come to shed them at their side."

The whole poem should be read in order to feel the force of its overpowering sadness. But there is no wail in English poetry which has in it a deeper accent of gloom than that in the lines already quoted. They afford the pulpit a never-to-be-forgotten illustration of what will come when men forsake Christ and Christianity, and at the same time *think* and *feel* on the problems of life. It would be unjust to Mr. Arnold not to mention that he has written some poems deeply religious in tone, and for which any Christian scholar would thank him. His sonnet on "East London," "Monica's Last Prayer," his fine descriptive poem, "Saint Brandon," are specimens of a poetry which is of high religious type. So, too, there are poems which inspire the reader with very lofty views of life. Take that on "Worldly Place," or that on "The Second Best," or the exquisite elegy, "Rugby Chapel," in which his noble father's life and work are commemorated, and no one who reads them can fail to see that Mr. Arnold's view of life and its ends is of the noblest type. And though through

——* *Fortnightly Review*, January, 1889.

the "Scholar-Gypsy" there breathes that deep-toned sadness of which we have spoken, yet there are also notes of high, unquenchable aspiration which shames much of the showy glitter and noisy shouting which we call life in the world.

The poetry of skepticism has had, however, in recent years a far different expression than is found in the mild agnosticism of Mr. Arnold. A poet has come and gone who has left behind him a poetry of unbelief, the most outspoken yet heard. The author of "The City of Dreadful Night" was known to a very limited circle while he lived, and his poetry has attracted more attention since his decease than during his life. Beautiful as much of it is, with a liquidity of verse like that of Shelley or Swinburne, it is yet doubtful whether it would have been so noted but for its defiantly bold, and remorselessly dark skepticism. James Thomson, author of "The City of Dreadful Night," "Vane's Story," "A Voice from the Nile," and other poems, like his namesake, the author of "The Seasons," was a Scotchman, born 1834 at Port Glasgow. He became a school-master in the army, and was sent to one of the Irish garrisons near Cork. There he spent the happiest years of his life, greatly beloved by his friends, among whom was the somewhat notorious Charles Bradlaugh, and formed the passion for a young lady, whose untimely death clouded his whole life with gloom. He left the army in 1862 and went into business in Mr. Bradlaugh's office and employ, his lifelong and devoted friend. In 1872 he was sent out to America to report on a silver-mining property, and soon after his return was engaged by the *New York World* to go to Spain as its correspondent with the Carlists. The remainder of his life was spent in literary work. He had become the victim of intemperance, suffering horribly from insomnia and from remorseful struggles against his hereditary foe, strong drink. There is a world of pathos in the two poems, "Mater Tenebrarum" and "Insomnia." He died June 3, 1882. Thomson was trained in the school of Scotch orthodoxy, and for some time appears to have stood by his ancestral faith. In 1855, however, he wrote a poem suggested by Matthew Arnold's "Stanzas from the Grand Chartreuse." It is a response to Arnold's

"Dirge for a mighty creed outworn,
Its spirit fading from the earth,
Its mouldering body left forlorn."

But the response is this : "What if it be that the old creeds are gone ; that men must find new beliefs?" that Christ died centuries ago and never has risen again :

"Our adoring love shall have
More faith than to believe that He
Before another comes to save,
Can leave us in blind misery
Without a guide : God never can
So utterly depart from man.

In other words, the whole poem, assuming that there is no living and present Christ, is a protest against giving up theistic views, and expresses this resolve, that

“While the dirge still rolls away
 In passionate thunders wildly blent
 With mournful moanings, let us pray
 Still on our Holy War intent.
 ‘O God, revive the seeming Dead,
 Or send Another in his stead.’ ”

But unbelief is a sliding scale, and nothing illustrates this more powerfully than the poetry of James Thomson. Fifteen years later—1870–1874—he wrote “The City of Dreadful Night.” This is the poetry of atheism and pessimism. His brooding over human life and all its ills leads him to a pessimism and atheism as stark and dreadful as that of Schopenhauer. After describing this city, with an appalling power of description, he makes one of its inhabitants utter words like these :

“I aver
 That not for all Thy power, furled and unfurled,
 For all the temples to Thy glory built,
 Would I assume the ignominious guilt
 Of having made such men in such a world.
 As if a Being, God or Fiend, could reign
 At once so wicked, foolish, and insane
 As to produce men when he might refrain !
 The world rolls round forever like a mill ;
 It grinds out death and life and good and ill ;
 It has no purpose, heart, or mind, or will.”

And we are, of course, in no way surprised to come soon upon stanzas like these :

“And now at last authentic word I bring,
 Witnessed by every dead and living thing,
 Good tidings of great joy for you, for all :
 There is no God ; no Fiend with names divine
 Made us and tortures us ; if we must pine,
 It is to satiate no Being’s gall.

* * * * *

This little life is all we must endure ;
 The grave’s most holy peace is ever sure.
 We fall asleep and never wake again ;
 Nothing is of us but the mouldering flesh,
 Whose elements dissolve and merge afresh
 In earth, air, water, plants, and other men.”*

And, of course, the logic of pessimism is remorseless—as its fruitage of suicide in Germany has shown. See it in poetic form, as Thomson has sung it in this poem :

“O brothers of sad lives ! they are so brief,
 A few short years must bring us all relief ;

——* Cf. Art. on “Ethics of Cannibalism.” *Fortnightly Review*, January, 1889.

Can we not bear these years of laboring breath?
 But if you would not this poor life fulfil,
 Lo, you are free to end it when you will,
 Without the fear of waking after death.

The poem ends fitly—as we should suppose it would end—with a picture of Melancholy :

“Fronting the dreadful mysteries of Time.”

In his poem, “To Our Ladies of Death,” the old cry of French Revolutionists, “Death is an eternal sleep,” is transmuted into modern poetry. The denial of immortality is utter. In fact, this poet’s utterances are the boldest and dreariest skepticism in all English poetry. Atheism, of course, means denial of immortality, but there have been atheists who have held no pessimistic notions such as horrify us in Thomson’s “City of Dreadful Night.” We have no heart to pursue into further detail this theme. Our readers can do this for themselves. But the study of this poetry of modern skepticism cannot wisely be ignored by the modern pulpit. It will serve for an illustration of more than one point in preaching. It will let the clergy know where and when to strike sometimes. The poetry will be read. We may be sure of that. As poetry, it has too high excellence to perish untimely. It chimes in with much of current tendency. Readers of “Robert Elsmere” and “John Ward” will be very apt to finish by a course in Matthew Arnold and James Thomson. Our preachers had better know what is sung in so choice poetic strain. The sirens would have lured no one to destruction if they had possessed only the voices of ravens.

III.—THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM AND THE DIDACHE.

BY REV. D. SCHLEY SCHAFF, BERLIN.

It was my pleasure, on a recent visit in the Holy Land, to have an interview with the Patriarch of Jerusalem, and to hold in my hands the famous document, “The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles.”

The Patriarch of Jerusalem presides over one of the most venerable sees of Christendom. The Church of the Holy City was the mother of all the churches, and for the first forty years after the Resurrection was the chief center of Christian life and a court of appeal in matters of doctrine and practice. The siege and destruction of the city by Titus in the year 70 led to the dispersion of the congregation, which never afterwards asserted a position of primary importance. The political changes to which Jerusalem was subjected until its conquest by the Arabs prevented a steady growth, and the rapid extension of Christianity in other centers of greater population and superior wealth and political influence involved for it a relative loss of power in the counsels and operations of the churches of Christendom.

There was one element of power which the mother church possessed, and which secured for it a position of influence out of all proportion to