

Many readers will turn with interest to the intercalated chapter viii., of the first volume, which brings together what is to be said of Darwin's religious views. In 1879 he wrote to a correspondent:

"What my own views may be is a question of no consequence to any one but myself. But, as you ask, I may state that my judgment often fluctuates. . . . In my most extreme fluctuations I have never been an Atheist in the sense of denying the existence of a God. I think that generally (and more and more as I grow older) but not always, an Agnostic would be the more correct description of my state of mind."

One gathers from the correspondence that the qualifying member of the sentence might have been emphasized. Again:

"It is impossible to answer your question briefly; and I am not sure that I could do so, even if I wrote at some length. But I may say that the impossibility of conceiving that this grand and wondrous universe, with our conscious selves, arose through chance, seems to me the chief argument for the existence of God; but whether this is an argument of real value, I have never been able to decide. . . . Nor can I overlook the difficulty from the immense amount of suffering through the world. I am also induced to defer to a certain extent to the judgment of the many able men who have fully believed in God; but here again I see how poor an argument this is. The safest conclusion seems to me that the whole subject is beyond the scope of man's intellect; but man can do his duty. . . . For myself, I do not believe that there ever has been any revelation. As for a future life, every man must judge for himself between conflicting vague probabilities."

In several pages of the chapter, printed in this connection (although they form a part of the Autobiography, written in the year 1876), Mr. Darwin gives a kind of history of the change in his thoughts. It begins: "Whilst on board the *Beagle* I was quite orthodox, and I remember being heartily laughed at by several of the officers (though themselves orthodox) for quoting the Bible as an unanswerable authority on some point of morality. I suppose it was the novelty of the argument that amused them."

He "gradually came to disbelieve in Christianity as a divine revelation. . . . Disbelief crept over me at a very slow rate, but was at last complete. The rate was so slow that I felt no distress."

Some pages follow in which the argument from design in nature is concluded to fail, "now that the law of natural selection has been discovered," and in which he touches the question, "Whether the world as a whole is a good or bad one," giving his judgment that "happiness decidedly prevails, though this would be very difficult to prove," and that, "if the truth of this conclusion be granted, it harmonizes well with the effects which we might expect from natural selection."

"That there is much suffering in the world, no one disputes. Some have attempted to explain this with reference to man by imagining that it serves for his moral improvement. But the number of men in the world is as nothing compared with that of all other sentient beings, and they often suffer greatly without any moral improvement. This very old argument from the existence of suffering against the existence of an intelligent First Cause seems to me a strong one; whereas, as just remarked, the presence of much suffering agrees well with the view that all organic beings have been developed through variation and natural selection."

"At the present day the most usual argument for the existence of an intelligent God is drawn from the deep inward conviction and feelings which are experienced by most persons."

"Formerly I was led by feelings such as those just referred to (although I do not think that the religious sentiment was ever strongly developed in me), to the firm conviction of the existence of God and of the immortality of the soul. . . . I will remember my conviction that there is more in man than the mere breath of his body. But now the grandest scenes would not cause

any such convictions and feelings to rise in my mind. It may be truly said that I am like a man who has become color-blind, and the universal belief by men of the existence of redness makes my present loss of perception of not the least value as evidence."

"Another source of conviction in the existence of God, connected with the reason, and not with the feeling, impresses me as having much more weight. This follows from the extreme difficulty, or rather impossibility, of conceiving this immense and wonderful universe, including man with his capacity of looking far backwards and far into futurity, as the result of blind chance or necessity. When thus reflecting I feel compelled to look to a First Cause having an intelligent mind in some degree analogous to that of man; and I deserve to be called a Theist. This conclusion was strong in my mind about the time, as far as I can remember, when I wrote the 'Origin of Species'; and it is since that time that it has very gradually, with many fluctuations, become weaker. But then arises the doubt, Can the mind of man, which has, as I fully believe, been developed from a mind as low as that possessed by the lowest animals, be trusted when it draws such grand conclusions?"

It is noteworthy that, after stating and truly feeling that there was nothing in the theory of natural selection that need disturb religious convictions, it seems to have had that very effect upon him. It is also notable that his great difficulty was the very old one, of the existence of evil in the world—one which, however insoluble, was not at all raised, but is in some sense mitigated, by the theory of natural selection. Finally, and in respect to the whole aspect of such questions, one may find reason to conclude that the prevalent Latin-Church conception of transcendent Divinity—of a God apart from the world and operating extraneously—may have operated as unhappily in natural as in Christian theology; and that the fuller recognition of Divine immanence, of the Divine presence in nature and in the course of nature, might help to lessen some of these difficulties.

RECENT NOVELS.

The Crusade of the Excelsior. By Bret Harte. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co.

Thirteen Stories of the Far West. By Forbes Heermans. Syracuse, N. Y.: C. W. Bardeen.

Mr. Incoul's Misadventure. By Edgar Saltus. Benjamin & Bell.

Daddy Dave. By Mary Frances. Funk & Wagnalls.

Edith. By Mrs. Ottilie Bertron. Jenkins & McCowan.

Button's Inn. By Albion W. Tourgee. Boston: Roberts Brothers.

The Great Bank Robbery. From the diary of Inspector Byrnes. By Julian Hawthorne. Cassell & Co.

Jill and Jack. By E. A. Dillwyn. Macmillan & Co.

Sea Spray; or, Facts and Fancies of a Yachtsman. By S. G. W. Benjamin. Benjamin & Bell.

A Game of Chance. By Anne Sheldon Coombs. D. Appleton & Co.

MR. BRET HARTE'S stories invariably have the charm which is inseparable from a well-constructed narrative. He has always something interesting happening, generally something amusing to note, and occasionally something so near to nature that it is beyond art. In spite of the unevenness of his work, one never can doubt the authorship of any page of it; and though his may be in some respects a bad style, it is none the less style, and is entitled to the full ratio of influence which is accorded to that illusive and indefinable element in literature. 'The Crusade of the Excelsior' is in every

respect characteristic of Mr. Harte's general methods. In construction, aim, and execution it is neither better nor worse than any one of half-a-dozen of his books that might be named. The plot, while not at all impossible or unreal, is still fanciful enough to admit of continual surprises and absorbing complications. Perhaps the conception of the Todos Santos community, cut off from the outside world by the impenetrable fogs and mists of the Pacific, and living with only the knowledge and in the spirit of past centuries, would be too much for a devoted realist to forgive; but to the ordinary novel-reader, who seeks merely to be amused, the ludicrousness of the predicament into which the matter-of-fact passengers of the *Excelsior* are thrown when arrested by the Commandante of the Presidio as revolutionists, is too delightful to admit of cavil. Perhaps, too, an ardent admirer of the commonplace in art might take objection to the figure of Señor Perkins, whose singular ambitions and queer conceits count for so much both in the machinery of the tale and in the amusement which it affords. But a just and deliberate estimate of the story in all its aspects must admit that Señor Perkins could not be spared, and further, that nothing in the book could be materially changed without its being spoiled. It might be, on a general level, closer to life, but it would not be Mr. Harte, nor would it be nearly so good a novel out of which to get amusement and entertainment.

What merit there is in the 'Thirteen Stories of the Far West' told by Mr. Heermans lies in quite other directions; but the fact that they have very little merit of any sort might as well be said first as last. They are written in the rollicking, careless, "reportorial" style which may deceive some readers into the notion that the writer has caught the "true Western flavor." From a literary standpoint they are quite worthless, and it is only the fact that now and then the author gives to his work a touch of truth about the Far West which endows them with any value whatever. But as for any real conception of the aspects of civilization on our great prairies, or anything like a firm grasp and understanding of the manifestations which show the growth of a sectional character, both there and in the mountain towns still further west, Mr. Heermans has not shown that he possesses these qualities.

It is impossible, after reading 'Mr. Incoul's Misadventure,' to lay the book down without a sense of disappointment, a dissatisfied feeling as if one had been cheated out of one's dues as a novel-reader. Just why this should be is hard to say, because the story has all the outward semblance of a novel. There are but few characters, it is true, but they are quite lifelike; there is a sufficient, though simple plot, which is only strained in order to be striking; while the style might be called a hard finish, it is so terse, so straightforward, and so perfectly adapted to conveying the writer's meaning. But, notwithstanding the logical consecutiveness of the incidents, the resulting tragedy does not force upon one, as all genuine tragedies must do, the realization that it was inevitable. Perhaps one feels disappointed with the story because it is developed rather on the lines of what Sidney Lanier calls the novelist's omniscience than on the natural lines of growth and character. The impression that every incident, every sentence, is merely the arbitrary choice of the author, is unavoidable. One sees beyond a doubt that Mr. Saltus had the entire conception quite complete and well defined in his imagination before he began writing; and while this method has been recommended to young writers by more than one successful novelist, we know that Hawthorne and Thackeray wrote differ-

ently, and that 'Uncle Tom's Cabin' "wrote itself." Mr. Saltus's literary training and habits of mind serve to increase this impression of arbitrary choice and cool calculation of effects and artistic values. He is the author of a work on the 'Anatomy of Negation,' and has been called "a scientific pessimist"—until one's mind refuses to be deceived into taking the story for anything more than the ingenious calculation of a trained intellect. Yet it purports to be a study of passion.

The author of 'Daddy Dave' explains in her preface that the main if not the only incentive in preparing the book for the press was to pay a tribute of affection to a faithful and beloved family servant. This may do well enough; but on no other grounds is the existence of the sketch justifiable for a moment. It is fragmentary and unfinished to the last degree, and affords one more example of the truth that realities do not of themselves either create interest or make a narrative seem natural. In view of the broader and all-important questions which were settled by our civil war, too, one cannot avoid a slight feeling of impatience with the sentimental regret in which the author indulges, notwithstanding her reiterated protestations of resignation and acquiescence.

Mrs. Bertron, however, writes her novel for its own sake. It is true that it is not a great novel, or even an unusually good one; but one must admire the evident enthusiasm and earnestness of it. The interest is not concentrated enough to sustain itself evenly or sufficiently throughout, and one believes that if the author had attempted less, she would have accomplished more. Yet she need have no reason to feel discouraged, for there are many points in 'Edith' which indicate the ability as well as determination to do good work.

In order to realize how entirely modern are the forms of literature embraced by the novel, it is only necessary to call to mind the number of stories which take up in one shape or another the study of some phase of religion, and consider it abstractly—merely, that is, as the growth of an institution. Mr. Tourgee, who, it is safe to surmise, will never write a novel without touching on some movement or development of the body politic, has attempted a very mild and inexhaustive study of the origin of Mormonism in his tale of 'Button's Inn.' The few pages of his preface, however, really contain more on this subject than all the rest of the book, and without these perhaps many readers would have failed to see in the Mormon chapters anything more than their bearing on the story. For the story of itself really has a genuine and wholesome interest, and one follows the fortunes of Dotty Button and her two worthy, generous lovers with a feeling which grows to be personal and warm-hearted. The success in life of the hero is not phenomenal nor undeserved, and there is no one who has the true American spirit that

will think any the less of him for attempting and achieving it. In fact, the modern spirit all over the world considers a man who does not want money as materially defective, and would vote Plutarch's words in praise of Coriolanus, that "it is the higher accomplishment to use money well than arms; but not to need it is more noble than to use it," entirely obsolete.

What Plutarch would have thought of 'The Great Bank Robbery' is more of a mystery than the robbery itself was to the detectives. Not that the story is particularly remarkable, as detective stories go, but that the whole class of literature to which it belongs is, in its conception of life and the relations of mankind, so entirely modern. Mr. Julian Hawthorne is fitted to make the best out of such material, and it is not often that one will meet with more clever, telling work than his opening chapters here. It is not until he gets in the midst of affairs, when facts and art refuse to go together without straining, that the true aspect of the effort as a concession to popularity becomes apparent. It is not much to say of such a tale that it is absorbingly interesting, for the same may be said of almost every story of a similar nature. Yet when that is said, all is said, and perhaps the continually rushed and overworked Americans should be thankful for anything that can break the tedium of a railway journey.

As one might easily judge from the title, 'Jill and Jack' is a light, superficially written novel. It is hastily constructed, sufficiently amusing inasmuch as it is short, and built on a plot improbable enough to be striking in spite of its triteness. The love-affair of Jill and Jack is quaintly pleasant from the self-deceit which they both practise; but that of Gaston and Miss Morton, which really furnishes the mechanism of the story, is too heavily loaded therewith to be either natural or entertaining.

A more delightful satire than the first paper of Mr. Benjamin's collection of a yachtman's facts and fancies is, of necessity, rare. The hero of the tale, who is a Scotchman and a member of Parliament, is shipwrecked on a tropical island. After four years of solitude a Boston lady, who had become a citizen of New York, is sent by fate to be his companion. For a long time they live on terms of the merest acquaintanceship, communicating chiefly by means of notes. When they have finally fallen in love in the most approved fashion, they philosophically lay aside their scruples, and, changing from Episcopalians to Presbyterians, they are married according to the laws of their respective States by declaration—notwithstanding the fact that she has turned out to be his deceased wife's sister. In Parliament he had often spoken against the bills to allow such marriages. In order to secure their children from the danger of dying without the rite of bap-

tism, they at last become Baptists, when they feel that they can safely postpone the rite until the children are grown. Nothing else in the book compares with this tale, which, with a single exception, is the only one that has not already been printed in the magazines.

For a thoroughly depressing novel 'A Game of Chance' is to be recommended. A more vivid portrayal of the ugliness of respectable poverty, or a more complete collection of unworthy characters, would be, in every respect, undesirable. While the picture of Charley Melrose and his unlovely family may be a true enough one in its way, it serves no good purpose in being painted. Poverty is not necessarily degrading; nor is it true that every one who is poor, yet who is capable of appreciating the benefits of wealth, is continually longing after the fleshpots, and resisting but faintly the temptation to speculate and rob.

BOOKS OF THE WEEK.

- Abbott, W. J. Blue Jackets of 1812: A History of the Naval Battles of the Second War with Great Britain. To which is Prefixed an Account of the French War of 1789. Illustrated. Dodd, Mead & Co. \$3.
- Baldwin, J. Elementary Psychology and Education: A Text-Book for High Schools. D. Appleton & Co. \$1.
- Ballads of Romance and History. Illustrated. Boston: D. Lothrop Co. \$2.50.
- Bamford, Mary E. The Look-About Club and the Curious Live Things They Found. Boston: D. Lothrop Co. \$1.50.
- Bocock, K. Tax the Area: A Solution of the Land Problem. J. W. Lovell Co. 20 cents.
- Brooks, E. S. The Story of the American Indian. Boston: D. Lothrop Co. \$2.50.
- Browning, R. Lyrics, Idyls, and Romances. From his Poetic and Dramatic Works. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co. \$1.
- Bruce, W. Old Homestead Poems. Illustrated. Harper & Brothers.
- Eyner, E. L. Damen's Ghost. Boston: Ticknor & Co. 50 cents.
- Campbell, A. Captain Macdonald's Daughter. A Novel. Harper & Brothers.
- Crawford, S. W. The Genesis of the Civil War: The Story of Sumter. 1860-1861.
- Ebers, G. Richard Lepsius: A Biography. Wm. S. Gottsberger.
- Ford, H. The Theory and Practice of Archery. New ed. Revised by W. Butt. Longmans, Green & Co.
- Foreman, A. Big Wages and How to Earn Them. Harper & Brothers.
- Foster, W. Reports of Decisions Rendered by the Supreme Court of the Hawaiian Islands. Vol. V. Honolulu: Gazette Co.
- Fouqué, La Motte. Sitram and his Companions. Aslauga's Knight. Cassell & Co. 10 cents.
- Frey, A. R. Sobriquets and Nicknames. Boston: Ticknor & Co. \$3.
- Froebel, F. The Education of Man. (International Education Series. Vol. V.) D. Appleton & Co. \$1.50.
- Gilkes, A. H. Boys and Masters: A Story of School Life. 2d ed. Longmans, Green & Co. \$1.25.
- Harper's Young People. 1887. Harper & Brothers.
- Harrison, W. J. A History of Photography. Scovill Manufacturing Co. \$1.
- Hawthorne, J. An American Penman. From the Diary of Inspector Byrnes. Cassell & Co. \$1.
- Holmes, Margaret. Recitations for Christmas. Indianapolis: Charles A. Bates. 25 cents.
- Jamison, Mrs. C. V. The Story of an Enthusiast, told by Himself. Boston: Ticknor & Co. \$1.50.
- Johannot, J. Stories of Our Country. D. Appleton & Co.
- Keller, O. Thiere des Classischen Alterthums in Cultur-geschichtlicher Beziehung. Innsbruck: Wagner'schen Universitäts-Buchhandlung.
- Kluge, Prof. F. Etymologisches Wörterbuch der Deutschen Sprache. 4th ed. Strassburg: K. J. Trübner.
- Lashbury, Mary A. Twelve Times One. Illustrations of Child Life. Worthington Co. \$1.75.
- Laughlin, J. L. The Elements of Political Economy. D. Appleton & Co. \$1.50.
- Laughton, J. K. Studies in Naval History: Biographies. Longmans, Green & Co. \$3.50.
- Lea, H. C. History of the Inquisition of the Middle Ages. In 3 vols. Vol. I. Harper & Brothers. \$3.
- Low, W. N. Magyar Songs: or, Selections from Modern Hungarian Poets. Samisch & Goldmann.

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