

many of their own supporters making extremely wry faces over a measure so opposed to ordinary English ideas. They hoped thus to undo the alliance between the tenant farmers and the Nationalists which the Land League had created. They removed the motive, the practical grievance, which that alliance had rested on, and trusted that nationalism would relapse into its previous weakness.

To a great extent they have succeeded. There can be little doubt, in spite of the disturbances cabled from Ireland, that the great mass of the tenant farmers will take advantage of the Act and pay their rents so far as they can. They will recognize, probably they have recognized already, that no further concessions can at present be expected from the British Parliament, so that the wise course is to make the most of the Act. Thus the Land League will lose much of the active support it has had. But there remain, still unappeased, and not likely to be appeased, the Nationalists, many of whom looked on the land agitation as only an engine in the contest for independence. Fearing to lose all of what they had gained, they of course do their best to keep the excitement alive, to deter farmers from applying to the Land Court, to minimize the advantages which that court offers. It is the easier to do this because during the past two years a habit of lawlessness has grown up in which there is something attractive. There is a fascination in the act of conspiracy. It quickens the pulse and begets a sense of power—power all the dearer because it is secret. The Land League courts, and the people who (probably in many cases without the sanction of the Land League courts) carried on the land war by shooting at agents, or maiming cattle, or beating tenants who had paid their rents, cannot be expected to give up their practices at once, especially as the most active men among them are Nationalists, who dread nothing so much as the contentment of Ireland and a good feeling between her and Great Britain, since that would make their cause hopeless.

"But then," some one asks, "why do not those tenant farmers who are going to use the Land Act repudiate the Land League courts and the outrages one reads of?" They have got what they wanted, or nearly all of it; "why do they not show their gratitude by helping to reëstablish order?" The truth is, that gratitude counts for little in politics anywhere; and all the less in this particular case because the people think that it was English fear, not English goodwill, that gave them the Land Act. Besides, they have for more than a century been in the habit of regarding the Government (whether Liberal or Tory makes no difference), the law and its ministers, as their natural enemies. They have been carrying on a sort of guerrilla warfare against landlords—that is to say, against the exercise of those full legal rights which the law gave the landlord, but which their sentiment disapproved. An act done in the course of this warfare, even if the law calls it a crime, appeared to them in the light rather of an act of war, a sort of irregular foray on the enemy, than of an offense against the peace and good order of society. Hence, even those who took no active part in what are called agrarian outrages did not exert themselves to check them, would not give evidence, would not as jurymen find a verdict of guilty—not to add, that they would possibly

risk their own lives by doing so. This old habit is not to be got rid of at once, and it makes the great difficulty which those who govern Ireland have to reckon with. It is quite sufficient to account for the continuance of disorders in Ireland now, and it may last for years to come. Nothing seems likely to extinguish it but the growth of a feeling among the people that the law is on their side, and that outrages on individuals are threats to themselves.

If the Land Act succeeds, if rents are reduced, and are paid regularly, and if a large number of farmers become land-owners, the Irish peasant may become, probably will become, as firm a supporter of the rights of property as the French peasant is. All this must take time. Confidence is a plant of slow growth; so too is material prosperity in an old country without remarkable physical resources; and it may be long before either the contentment of the peasants, or a sense of the commercial advantages which English connection gives, or even the bestowal of a better and more popular system of local self-government, allays that desire for national independence which is strong enough to keep the people restless, yet apparently never strong enough (unless when backed by some material interest) to unite them in its cause.

George Eliot and Emerson.

ON the horizon of almost every mind there rise at times the spectral clouds of Doubt and Disbelief. The timid turn away and try to forget, or shiver in uncertain apprehension: the brave man pushes to close grips with the terror, to find if it be fact or phantom, or if perchance it be even a disguised friend.

It is profoundly interesting to study those lives in which the tendency to religious disbelief has been conscientiously accepted and lived out. The result of such observation is not always what we should expect. For instance, there has lately died in England a man who gave up all belief in God and immortality, yet who was, his friends tell us, of pure life and lovable character, and who carried his disbelief with buoyancy of spirit, and every appearance of happiness. On his tomb is the inscription: "I was not, and I was conceived: I lived and did a little work: I am not, and grieve not." We are not told whether this summing up of his story was from Professor Clifford's own hand; but it might well have been, for it expresses his belief and temper.

In the November number of *THE CENTURY*, there was given a personal sketch of George Eliot, which showed the far different effect upon her mind of convictions like Professor Clifford's. Mr. Myers's delicate and sympathetic presentation of her character, from the standpoint of loyal and reverent friendship, confirmed the impression given by her books, that the renunciation of belief in God and immortality wrought in her a profound and abiding sadness. Her unshaken fidelity to duty, amid the shadows that lay upon her spirit and upon the universe, affects us as most heroic and pathetic. The use to which she put that great pain, in drawing from it a finer sympathy and service to the fellow-beings whom she saw as orphans with her in a fatherless universe, is a supreme example of how the bitterest personal experience may be made to bear sweet fruit. But still, to her just and truth-loving mind, the world appeared a sadder place than it was in

the light of the old faith. She did not profess, like Professor Clifford, and like Harriet Martineau, to find no real loss in giving up the hope of a future life, with its disclosure of a light in which earth's miseries and mysteries shall all be reconciled as parts of a supreme good.

This confession, visible between all the lines of her later work, of a great sadness consequent on the loss of a spiritual faith and hope, seems to us to indicate the sanity and truth of her genius and character. Given those premises—no God and no hereafter—and there can rightly be but one conclusion, a profound gloom investing human destiny. Such words as those of Professor Clifford fall on the mind with a sense of bravado and unreality. He may have been happy in the enthusiasm with which he preached his new creed, yet one hardly envies such happiness. It was impossible to a nature with the deeper insight and wider sympathy which belonged to George Eliot. Rightly said Marcus Aurelius: "It is well to die, if there be gods; and it is sad to live, if there be none." It is the latter alternative to which the philosophy based solely on material science compels those who faithfully follow its teaching. "God we have none," then, most surely, "sad is it to live!" How inevitably the two things are bound together was shown by the life of this greatest Englishwoman of our time. For she had the gifts that best might win joy and comfort—fidelity to conscience, domestic happiness, intellectual power, friends, success,—all were hers. Hers was the great endowment of a noble sympathy with mankind, and a keen susceptibility to beauty and grandeur. Yet, led by the philosophy which she accepted and the intellectual associations amid which her life was cast, to disbelieve in God and immortality, she thereupon found the universe a sad place, lightened by courage and mutual tenderness, yet sad to the very heart. Honor to the brave soul that followed so faithfully its thought of truth, and, finding the conclusion bitter, would not call it sweet!

But, looking upon that conclusion, thus fully wrought out, thus shown in vivid reality, the mind draws back with a profound instinct of denial. It says: The world is good, life is good, the inmost meaning of the universe is something blessed and divine. That, we incline to say, is the deepest thing we feel and the surest thing we know. That is the impression which comes home to the healthiest minds. That is the voice which the ineffable beauty of nature speaks to the soul. That is the suggestion of the majestic order in which creation marches. That is the message of the teachers who outrank all the pedants of the schools,—the message of human life at its deepest and highest, of love and labor, of fatherhood and motherhood, of conquered temptation, of aspiration and prayer, of all that brave hearts endure and loving hearts feel. Life is blessed and divine; its very shadows hint at the sun which they obscure, its meaning is better than our best thought, and shall hereafter be disclosed to us. And any intellectual theory which in its outworking destroys this serene confidence impresses us as untrustworthy. No matter how ingenious its arguments: its roots do not strike down to the inmost truth and reality.

In geometry, that science which Plato made the type of our spiritual knowledge,—its truths being most certain, yet wholly independent of sense-evi-

dence,—there is one way of demonstrating some particular truth which is called *reductio ad absurdum*. It consists in assuming that the point in question is not true; in arguing from that basis, and reaching from it as a necessary conclusion some statement so absurd that the mind revolts from it and thereupon discredits the assumption which led to an incredible result. In a like way, a life like George Eliot's may be taken as a sort of *reductio ad absurdum* of the philosophy she accepted. We listen to its clever arguments, we grant them plausible, perhaps we find no flaw. But put them to the working proof. Make them the lens through which a great soul looks at human life, and lo! the whole world is seen wrapped in the lurid hue of a sadness without hope! We reject the lens, we dismiss the philosophy. We trust the great intuitions of humanity, moving on like a majestic river, in which to-day's doubts and denials will hereafter show as a moment's backward eddy.

Mr. Myers quotes from George Eliot this notable utterance:

"I gather a sort of strength from the certainty that there must be limits or negations in my own moral powers and life experience, which may screen from me many possibilities of blessedness for our suffering human nature."

There is more than humility in this. The world is never without its men of spiritual vision,—a kind of insight into reality essentially different from George Eliot's keen analysis of human nature. It is a genius of higher order than hers; it is telescopic, reaching the heavens, where hers was microscopic, revealing the things of earth. Mr. Myers names George Eliot, Carlyle, and Ruskin as three prophets. But we have in Emerson a greater prophet than any of the three; healthy where Carlyle was dyspeptic; serene and all-viewing where Ruskin is partial and passionate; a seer where George Eliot was an analyst. She knew the thought of her day and generation, and was mastered by it: he knows it, and masters it. No one is freer than he from bondage to tradition. No one sees more clearly the meanings of science. He is so free from all false or exaggerated fervors that to many he seems cold. In him the brilliant rays of color—of insight, passion, tenderness, imagination, worship, love—seem to blend in the clear white light of truth. And his sincere message rings always with a jubilant tone of faith, and hope, and joy. In everything he sees divinity,—the token and the very presence of God. For him, life pours from every urn a wine of exquisite joy, which never intoxicates, but yields a celestial vigor. With the heavens opening above and about him, he yet keeps his feet always on the firm ground of familiar fact. His poems are inspirations of serene joy. The present is to him so full that he will scarcely dwell on the future. Yet, in his "Threnody," born of a great sorrow, we have the foretaste, and almost the present sense, of eternity. How nobly, in "Social Aims," he writes of Immortality. He goes deeper than any conviction about man's futurity, to that absolute trust in all-ruling good which is the heart of spiritual faith. "I think all sound minds rest on a certain preliminary conviction, namely, that if it be best that conscious personal life shall continue, it will continue; if not best, then it will not." And from that citadel of the soul, how lofty a glance he throws upon the future:

—“Whatever it be which the great Providence prepares for us, it must be something large and generous, and in the great style of his works. The future must be up to the style of our faculties,—of memory, of hope, of imagination, of reason.” This is like what is said in the “Threnody,” in a passage whose tenderness matches its moral energy and inspiration:

“—*What is excellent
As God lives, is permanent;
Hearts are dust, hearts' loves remain,
Heart's love will meet thee again.*
Revere the Maker; fetch thine eye
Up to his style, and manners of the sky.
Not of adamant and gold
Built he heaven stark and cold;
No, but a nest of bending reeds,
Flowering grass, and scented weeds:

Or like a traveler's fleeing tent,
Or bow above the tempest bent;
Built of tears and sacred flames;
And virtue reaching to its aims;
Built of furtherance and pursuing,
Not of spent deeds, but of doing.”

Emerson's “Threnody,” Tennyson's “In Memoriam,”—these are but new versions of mankind's eternal gospel; from the grave itself is born the great assurance of something above and beyond death. It is through the noblest life here that the life hereafter is revealed. “Not,” says Emerson, “by literature or theology, but only by rare integrity, by a man permeated and perfumed with airs of heaven,—with manliest or womanliest enduring love,—can the vision be clear, to a use the most sublime.”

COMMUNICATIONS.

The Exhibition of American Wood-Engraving.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE CENTURY:

SIR: The late exhibition of American wood-engraving at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (the first of real importance held in this country), was a most interesting one, embracing, as it did, three well-filled rooms, and containing specimens of the work of the past and present. Here the public had an opportunity of judging for themselves, by actual comparison, of the merits of different engravers and of different methods. Proofs of all varieties of wood-engraving were shown, from the conventional cutting of the old-fashioned wood-drawing—slick, clean, and pretty—to the wildest and most independent efforts of the “new school” of painters and engravers. Almost every engraver of note had, at least, a few specimens, and a great number of the younger men were well represented. I cannot give a complete review of the exhibition, but will mention some of its most salient features.

One lingered longest and with most pleasure over the collections of T. Cole and W. B. Closson, not only for their own exquisite workmanship, but for the splendid originals which they had so carefully rendered. W. J. Linton's block of “The Raft,” after George Harvey, was a masterly treatment of a large subject, and worthy of all praise. His head after Titian seemed to be a new departure for Linton. J. G. Smithwick's “Drumming out a Tory,” after Reinhart, calls for special comment for skillful and brilliant handling, and his proof after Boughton's “Autumn” is a proof any one might covet. J. P. Davis's “Eager for the Fray,” after Shirlaw, is a representative example of his best workmanship. Fred. Juengling's exhibit, arranged in chronological order, was full of interest, beginning, as it did, with a rendering of a conventional wood-drawing for the “Fireside Companion,” 1870, and ending with a large block after a painting by R. Swain Gifford, 1880. His best effort was the head of “The Professor,” for which he received honorable mention in the *Salon* Exhibition of 1881. French's well-chosen specimens after Abbey, Pyle, and others were delicate and refined. Marsh's “Moths” one can never see too often, but one

missed some of his beautiful proofs after Mrs. Foote, Lathrop, and others. Kruell's collection of masterly portraits was headed by “Dean Stanley”; for his engraving of flesh and use of white line he is unequaled. King's specimens of tint-work after James Beard's drawings showed remarkable skill, especially in the way of mechanical execution. J. H. E. Whitney's wood-cut copies of etchings attracted much attention; the dry point and line effect of his head of “Jo,” after Whistler, is one of the most remarkable things ever done on the block. Miss Powell's cut of “At the Piano,” after Whistler's painting, was a very successful effort. Thomas Johnson's portrait of the mother of President Garfield showed great strength and directness.

These are only a few of the great number who merit special praise, if space permitted, among whom were Andrew, Miss Barber, Dana, Heinemann, Hellawell, Kingsley, Speer, and many others.

The delicate “Winifred Dysart,” by Closson, after George Fuller's painting, and “Autumn Afternoon in the Berkshire Hills,” after Thayer, and the “First Communion,” after Bastien Lepage, both engraved by Cole, should put an end forever to all controversies as to superiority of old methods over new ones. These proofs show a delicacy and subtlety of expression never before attained in wood-cuts, as well as a quality of line never yet excelled.

After a careful survey of the whole exhibition, one gives a sigh of regret that such excellent engraving has, in so many cases, gone to waste on weakly pretty, and often petty drawings. It would seem, indeed, that reform in the future must come through the artist, rather than the engraver, who now seems able to accomplish any task set before him far better than ever before in the history of the art.

The late exhibit also confirms the opinion already expressed in SCRIBNER, that the American school have won their laurels as that of the best engravers in the world by their subtle and delicate rendering of small and medium-sized blocks. As far as large blocks go, we still have, with rare exceptions, little to show in comparison with the splendid work done by the English and French schools.

A. W. D.