Ourselves and the Universe. By J. BRIERLEY, B.A. ("J. B." of *The Christian World*). 12mo, pp. 340. New York: Thomas Whittaker. Price, cloth, $1.50.

These studies in life and religion are a companion volume with *Studies of the Soul*, by the same author, noticed in Editorial Discussions in this number. The title given to this volume means that the essays it contains aim to set the facts and experiences of religion in the framework of that new Universe which modern research has opened to us, in accordance with the conviction that religious teaching must henceforth be a cosmic teaching. This central idea pervades the book, speaking distinctly in the very first essay, which is entitled "A Roomier Universe." Man has not yet fully adjusted his conceptions to the vaster cosmos which astronomy has opened to view. See Tennyson's poem "Vastness." Hear Carlyle, when a friend called his attention to the brilliant night-sky as "a glorious sight," exclaiming with a shudder, "Man, it's just dreadful!" Though not yet fully acclimatized to immensity, man is feeling his way about in his enormous habitation, and after a while his spirit will be not only at home in it but gloriously free and exultant. It is immensely reassuring to realize that to the uttermost verge of these vast spaces we find not only everywhere the presence of a Mind, but of the *same* Mind. And if the universe, through all its extent, knows but one

Master of the House, who is already known to us, there is enough in that to thaw out the chill of strangeness and to make the cosmic spaces to their uttermost reach friendly and homelike. Furthermore, the greater the universe, the greater its Maker. And if God in these later ages has astonished us by the revelation of his mighty workings on the material side of the universe, what surprises may he not have in store for us on the side which is spiritual? If his power is expressed in that wondrous stream of worlds, the Milky Way, what is the Love that is proportioned to such a Power, and what marvels may we not expect from it? And majestic as is the realm of the stars, there are roomier realms for the soul. Christ teaches that worldliness is provincialism, it is absurdly limited. He brings us tidings from a larger world on which he proposes straightway to launch us. His proposition is that we should

> Here on this bank in some way live the life
> Beyond the bridge.

The parochial view finds its end in the gaining of sensual pleasures, of wealth and worldly honors. Christ proclaims this to be the pastime of babes, and suggests that we take up pursuits worthy of manhood. He speaks as the citizen and emissary of a larger universe to whose vaster and more splendid careers he invites us. He set us an example by taking suffering and trial, and affront and ignominy, as moments simply in a constant spiritual ascent, as factors and instruments for making visible on earth the invisible things of the Kingdom of God. The essay on "The Divine Indifference" gives reasons why we should "bear without resentment the divine reserve," and feel assured that this mysterious universe has a kindly significance: more than this, that those who penetrate to its spiritual center find there a clear sky and angels' food. To him that overcometh the demons of doubt and fear is given to eat of hidden manna. The Jesuits have been credited with proprietorship of the doctrine that the end justifies the means; but a Ritualist Oxford don of the nineteenth century said, "Make yourself clear that you are justified in deception and then lie like a trooper." A French writer has said, "Beware of a religion which *substitutes* itself for everything; that makes monks. Seek a religion which *penetrates* everything; that makes Christians." To shut up our religion to the narrow ground of a few elementary ideas is to put it in charge of a kitchen-garden when its true rôle is to govern a universe. Those who think law is only harsh are shown some truth in the statement that it is full of grace; that in its operations, its conditions, its promises, its performances, it suggests everywhere what we understand by Gospel. A man proposes to learn swimming or cycling. He finds himself immediately in contact with certain laws. They say to him, "Believe, obey, and according to your faith it shall be unto you." The neophyte, if he be nervous, imagines that while other men in this matter may be under grace, he is certainly singled out for reproba-

tion. The laws by which a man may keep at the top of the water or in easy equilibrium on a bicycle, have assuredly, his fears suggest, a statute of limitations which shuts him out. Let him trust and see. He learns finally that in place of reprobation, of favoritism, of limitation, the law says, "Whosoever will." To all and sundry, to rich and poor, to gentle and simple, to wise and foolish, to good and bad, it offers without restriction all its largess of service, provided only it is trusted and obeyed. . . . What a significant eulogium was that pronounced by the skeptic Gibbon on the mystic William Law, who was tutor in Gibbon's father's house at Putney: "In our family William Law left the reputation of a man who believed all that he professed, and practiced all that he enjoined." . . . "Art thou Brother Francis of Assisi?" said a peasant once to a saint. "Yes," was the answer. "Well, try to be as good as all think thee to be, because many have great faith in thee, and therefore I admonish thee to be nothing less than people hope of thee." Our chief debt to our fellows is the obligation to be good, to live the highest life we know. A childlike, God-loving soul, that begins its life afresh every morning, whose history is that of a perpetual soaring, is the most refreshing, heart-healing thing that exists. Beneath the world's cynicism lives the consciousness that its chief treasure, its rarest product, its pearl of price, is the saint's supernatural life. When humanity sees this plant growing in the wilderness it takes heart in its journeying, knowing it is not forsaken of God. . . . The religion of the old Stoics had a gray sky over it, and a north wind blowing. It was bracing, or stiffening, but the scene lacked sunshine. Just here it is that the Christian sanctity so far surpasses the Stoic sanctity. It gives a *positive* for the pagan *negative*. [See notice of *Harper's Monthly* in Summary of Reviews, in this number.] It offers a home in the invisible such as we search for in vain in Epictetus, or Seneca, or Marcus Aurelius. They have hardened themselves into a noble scorn of pain and loss, but they have not that fine sense of harborage far up in the shelter of the Will of God which enabled our Baxter to sing:

No walls or bars can keep Thee out,
None can confine a holy soul;
The streets of heaven it walks about,
None can its liberty control.

This spirit which makes the soul, in old Tauler's words, "so grounded in God that it is dissolved in the inmost of the Divine nature," is far more than a defiance of the world's disabilities. Its note is not Stoic defiance, but delight. The soul revels in having attained at last to life's inmost secret, and being launched at last on a career which answers its deepest aspiration and calls forth all its powers. . . . Religion and amusement: the two things are here together on this God's earth of ours; have been here from the beginning, and we have not yet found the formula which unites or sensibly relates

them to each other. Piety still looks askance at merriment and knows not what terms it ought to make with it. Singular it is that, in a world which has never been without philosophers, there should have been all along confusion so utter on a theme so vital. Cicero introduces the question of the significance only to dismiss it as insoluble. Christian thinkers discuss amusements from all manner of standpoints, but generally end by leaving their subject in the air. The old Puritans, frowning on laughter and all amusements, invited such raillery as this:

> These in a zeal to express how much they do
> The organs hate, have silenced bagpipes too;
> And harmless Maypoles all are railed upon,
> As if they were the towers of Babylon.

The mediæval Church, with all its faults, understood one side of human nature better, and saw a truth the Puritan could not see, namely, that God has given gayety a place in the cosmic scheme, and laughter lies at the inmost heart of things. Nature's handiwork completes itself always with a smile. Sunshine is not only light and warmth; it is festivity. The young of all animals salute life with gay gambolings. Their glee is Nature's theology, asserting against all comers that the world is a good world and a wholesome. An acute thinker has declared this psychological law: "The more a man is capable of entire and profound seriousness the more heartily can he laugh." The prime function of religion is to supply that inner reconciliation and peace without which no true merriment is possible. The soul cannot laugh its own laugh till God has filled it and all is well overhead. Such is a taste of the richness of Brierley's two volumes of essays. Their copious affluence of illustrative matter makes them a mine of helpful suggestions, of themes and treatment, for the minister in his study and his pulpit. And they are set to the lines and dimensions of modern thought.