

sary to influence. And, in taking up Mr. Frederick Harrison's doctrine of "posthumous activities"—that one must take a deep and conscientious concern for the consequences of his deeds to those who come after him, since this life is all—it was well to put the matter boldly:

Let us try to apply the principle to that sound mass of every-day English virtue which is, after all, the very air we breathe—the daily dutifulness, the purity, the truthfulness, the loving-kindness of our homes, the beautiful patience to be witnessed beside a thousand sick-beds. Were we to ask the simple-hearted men and meek women who exemplify these virtues whether they ever think of the excellent "posthumous activities" which they will exert on their surviving acquaintances, would they not be utterly bewildered? The clergyman (or let us have the Comtist philosopher) who will go through a workhouse ward, or round the cottages of a village, and offer such a suggestion as a topic of encouragement, would, I think, effect a very small measure of reformation.

No; "that terribly large section of our race who are commonplace, narrow-minded, and small of heart" need some more vital plea than this before the religion of humanity shall fill the earth with beatitude. From this essay the transition is easy to that on "Pessimism, and One of its Professors," wherein the character and teachings of Schopenhauer are skillfully coördinated. But Miss Cobbe is, on the whole, inclined to look upon this phase of modern disbelief with cheerfulness. She traces its origin in noble souls to "the growth of a finer sense of pity for human woes, and the inclusion of the lower animals in the scope of our sympathies":

As it is by no means altogether a bad sign of the times that there is a keener consciousness afloat of the extent to which pain and wrong prevail in the world, so neither is it by any means an indication of a bad disposition when a man takes a dark view of human nature and of life.

And is there not more than one grain of truth in the assertion that, "as it is a prosperous age which has developed Pessimism, so it is almost always prosperous people who are Pessimists"?

The other essays in this volume bearing directly on religious topics include an allegory on immortality and a fanciful sketch, "The Peak in Darien," in which the visions of the dying are constructed into an argument for a future life. The author, however, sturdily denies any inclination toward "spiritualism." The essay on "The Fitness of Women for the Ministry of Religion" will be likely to satisfy the adherents of neither side. Interesting is the comparison between masculine and feminine folly:

The Man-fool dimly perceives he is a fool, and holds his tongue accordingly. . . . A Woman-fool, on the contrary, usually does not find out, till she is old and ugly and the habit of silly chatter is irretrievably settled, that she is a fool at all;—

a new statement of Mrs. Poyser's saying that "women *are* fools; Providence made them to match the men." Miss Cobbe does not object to women as ministers if they are qualified intellectually and by natural incli-

nation; but she insists strenuously upon the "sifting process" of "a good theological college course."

The remaining essays, which are quite as entertaining in their way as those we have considered, deal with "Hygieolatry," a lively tilt at the health mania; "Zoöphily," a characteristic plea against vivisection; and a painful enumeration of the evils of "Sacrificial Medicine."

MISS COBBE'S ESSAYS.*

WHATEVER one may think of Miss Cobbe's abilities as a logician, one is sure to find her honest and outspoken; brave in argument; earnest and womanly in views pertaining to religion, morality, and social well-being; active in assault upon what she regards as erroneous doctrine; unyielding in defence of what she sees as the truth. Her fresh and stimulating style is a mental tonic; her very dogmatism awakens, not repulsion, but tolerance and even admiration. We could imagine ourselves reading and enjoying, while dissenting *in toto* from, her premises and conclusions; and a conviction of this sort, we take it, is the final test in controversial literature. But there is much in this octave of essays with which we not only agree, but which we heartily endorse. They treat, as the author says, of "some of the darker problems of the time," although not all have so somber a purpose; all, however, are united by a common bond of helpfulness as "inquiries touching concerns of the soul and body."

The introductory essay on "Magnanimous Atheism" is an able review of what the author foresees as the practical effects of the Positivist creed, and states the whole matter firmly, candidly, without equivocation. Much that Miss Cobbe says here has been urged before, but we do not remember that it has ever been said in a better or more convincing way. In several directions, moreover, she touches new phases of the question, and brings out new and impressive truths. It was worth while, for instance, pointing out that agnostics belong in the main to an exceptional type of human nature, and, appealing to the higher faculties of man, appeal least to those whom it is most neces-

* The Peak in Darien. An Octave of Essays. By Frances Power Cobbe. Geo. H. Ellis. \$1.50.