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THE  
CHURCHMAN

AUGUST, 1891.

ART. I.—MODERN PESSIMISM.

THAT Pessimism is a marked feature of modern thought is evident enough. The republication in popular form of the works of its apostles in Germany, and the actual existence of a Pessimist breviary and hymn-book as aids to the melancholy reflections and sombre meditations of its votaries in that country; the universal popularity of such recognised bards of Pessimism as Lenau and Leopardi, singing their sad dirges amidst the sunny scenes of Italy or in the neighbourhood of the smiling towns and villages of Austria, which one would think should suggest brighter views of life, show that not only in the land of profound thinkers, but elsewhere the same mode in thought and feeling for the moment prevails. At home there are poets and philosophers of native growth giving vent to Pessimistic views and sentiments, apart from the fact that translations and volumes of excerpts from foreign Pessimistic literature must be enjoying a good sale, judging by their rapid increase in recent years. We have the mellow, melodious moanings of Matthew Arnold, yearning over faiths once loved now lost, as, for example, the following lines from "Dover Beach":

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

We have also the more resonant wails of Swinburne's earlier muse in such passages as the following :

Before the beginning of years  
 There came to the making of man  
 Time, with a gift of tears ;  
 Grief, with a glass that ran ;  
 Pleasure, with pain for leaven ;  
 Summer, with flowers that fell ;  
 Remembrance fallen from heaven,  
 And madness risen from hell ;  
 Strength, without hands to smite ;  
 Love that endures for a breath ;  
 Night, the shadow of light ;  
 And life, the shadow of death.

The novelists give expression to the same predominant mode, and the daily and weekly press dwell on such themes as our "Blue-rose Melancholy" and the weariness which comes from the "Monotone in Modern Life." George Eliot, who called herself a Meliorist, is really a Pessimist in the *denouement* of most, if not all, of her novels—most of all in the "Scenes of Clerical Life." The authors of "Mehalah" and "The Modern Antigone"; Count Tolstoi in his stories, turned into English and read with avidity; and, to mention one more novel, published in the United States, "John Ward, Preacher," are in their ground-tone profoundly sad; and there could not be a more signal proof than this of a Pessimistic wave, passing over the modern mind at home and abroad. The voice of Cassandra, heard a few years ago from the lips of the author of "Enigmas of Life," now closed in death, and the "Essays of Religion" by J. S. Mill, as well as the more recent work of Mr. Mallock, "Is Life Worth Living?" all adopt a tone of despondency in their endeavour to solve the problem of life, and to give an answer to the all-absorbing question of the day, whether the universe, after all, is not the result of a great blunder, or "an act of blind folly." Pessimism and Scepticism, going hand-in-hand, have both been called the malady of the nineteenth century; but, as we shall show further on, they appear together at given epochs of history corresponding to the one we live in. Such modes of thought become fashionable in literary cliques, among "superior" cultured persons; and since they are apt to become even substitutes for religion, they demand careful consideration. Pessimistic mysticism, affecting moral asceticism, the "ethics of pain," are popular in England just now; whence then, let us ask, this peculiar attitude of mind, this temperamental habit of viewing things, which, like some intellectual epidemic, has made its appearance among us? In tracing its source we may be able to diagnose the unhealthy condition of things giving rise to it, and also measure the height of our contemporary ideals. For the Pessimist, who complains of things as they are, has a higher ideal of what they ought to be; the

facts on which he frames his hypothesis form a dark picture of the age in which he lives. He may exaggerate, and we are bound to allow for parallax in making our own deductions, and from him learn at least to correct our own false Optimism in showing what is false or overstated in his Pessimistic views.

The main reason of the prevalence of Pessimism at this time is the sense of disappointed hopes. Our boasts of progress, and the anticipations raised by believers in the "age of progress" at the beginning of this century, have been falsified by experience. We take up a pamphlet by a well-known Continental writer, entitled "The Disgrace of Modern Culture": and find that one of the principal charges against the latter is that demoralization and suicide follow in its wake. We take up a recent number of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, and in a pictorial view of English morals, with diagrams to show the rise and fall of the greater and lesser forms of crime and offences against the law, we find a sad tale told of the evils consequent on "the high tension of modern life," such as demoralization and demoralization, the accompaniments of despair and distress, in an age proud of material developments. Again, in skimming over an article on "The Pessimist View of Work," in the *Spectator* of November 30, 1889, we find the growth of Socialism attributed to the social discontent "with toil as the permanent condition of existence," aggravated and abetted by the over-sensitive sympathy of the labourer's friends, indulgence in pity being a note of our modern life. In a French Socialist review we see the same idea expressed, only in a different form. It is the contrast between the Utopian dreams of a hundred years ago and the reality now that has engendered desponding views of life and mind in the present day.

In a long and weary uphill journey, or in a tedious sea-voyage, there are times of rest and retrospect which often lead to sad reflections. The traveller, like the three Englishmen in Mr. Haggard's story of "King Solomon's Mines," begins to doubt whether the amount of toil and patience required to reach the ultimate goal of our journey is not too high a price paid for the actual attainment. The system being lowered by fatigue, and the judgment warped by anticipatory disappointment, there follows a morbid condition of mind which is really the outcome of physical exhaustion. It is the same with whole bodies of men at given resting-points of human history. A reaction sets in after a season of exciting activity accompanied by great effort and expectation, when, as the result of growing luxury and material indulgence, there follows a season of uneasy craving for more on the part of the fortunate when satiety has produced insatiable desire, and of disappointment

among the unfortunate in proportion to the vastness of the promises which have remained unfulfilled; and this produces weary disinclination to go on. Some mere lookers-on catch this Pessimistic temper by sympathy. Thus, over-refined and artistic minds, like John Ruskin, deplore the loss of taste for the beautiful in the pursuit of practical ends in these days of steam and factories. Others, like Thomas Carlyle, watching with a reformer's kindling wrath the process of materialistic degradation and moral disintegration, speak in a Pessimistic vein, protesting against the actual state of things, and uttering sad and surly vaticinations in "Latter-Day Pamphlets." "Progress halts with palsied feet," and its worshippers are neither able to relapse into ease and relaxation, nor are they willing to push on with the old belief in the possibilities of the future.<sup>1</sup>

Similar conditions produced the sombre philosophy of Hegesias, who taught in the lecture-rooms of Alexandria, then at the height of its commercial and cultured eminence, total abstinence from life's enjoyments as the only escape from bitter disappointments. This procured for him the title of *πεισιθάνατος*; for he "helped so many to self-destruction by his Pessimistic eloquence on the evils of life that his lecture-room had to be closed." Then, as now, the spirit of morbid self-introspection which marks seasons of reflection after a subsidence of restless activity had produced sad misgivings leading to Pessimistic despair, which was accompanied by the sceptical despair of ever arriving at truth. The agnostic stoicism of M. Aurelius presents a similar aspect, and both it and its rival Epicurean quietism reappear in our own day in the materialistic spiritualism and fatalistic pantheism which in such Pessimists as Von Hartmann terminate in the final goal of negation of life, when, after all our un-availing efforts to lessen its evils and illusions,

The aching craze to live ends, and life glides—  
Lifeless—to nameless quiet, nameless joy,  
Blessed Nirvana—sinless, stirless rest—  
That change which never changes.<sup>2</sup>

The poets and philosophers are the best exponents of contemporary thought and life. They reflect the age they live in, though, no doubt, their inmost thoughts and personal

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<sup>1</sup> Some, too, like Mark Pattison, with minds over-refined by culture and unsupported by deep religious convictions, being leaders of thought, spread the infection. "I am growing," he says in his "Memoirs," p. 307, "brooding, melancholy, taciturn, and finally pessimist."

<sup>2</sup> "The Light of Asia; or, The Great Renunciation," by Edwin Arnold, C.S.I., Book VI. In this work the Pessimistic creed of Eastern and Western mysticism combined are beautifully reflected.

experiences colour the tincture of their writings. The poets especially "teach in song" "what they have learned in sorrow." We will turn to a typical Pessimist poet, Giacomo Leopardi, whose poems are representative, and whose Pessimistic views expressed therein are undoubtedly genuine. He was born near the notorious Loreto, the son of Count Monaldo Leopardi, June 29, 1789. His incurable illness which afflicted him from childhood; the sadness of his early life in a family torn asunder by divisions—the past and the future struggled here like Jacob and Esau before their birth; unsympathetic surroundings; disappointments of the lover, and the patriot weeping over an Italy which to him was the "Niobe of nations"—all this combined to embitter his existence, and produced that morbid disrelish of life and inordinate longing for death which is the ground-tone of all his poetic utterances. Like Byron and Clough, like Heine and Lenau, Hämmerling and Leconte de Lisle, he wrote the most gloomy of his poems in early youth, before the ripeness of experience and the maturity of age had toned him down, and produced a gentler acquiescence in the facts of life. Cheerful literature and the serenity of resigned submission come later on, as the result of seasoned discipline and seasoned sorrow, changing by degrees into the solid, though solemn, joy of those who overcome. By the confession even of his opponents, Leopardi was a pure and noble soul. Unlike some other Pessimists, his mind was not unhinged, though it had lost its healthy balance in being swayed by subjective feelings which inclined to gloomy views of life. "Every day I take more delight in discovering the misery of men and things, and, as I touch them with my hand, to feel the cold shudder coming over me at the sight of the unhappy and dreadful mystery of life." His pathetic lyrics re-echo the distress of his own soul, sick with the sorrow of the world. His muse, as someone puts it, only knows the sadder strains—a stranger to joyous notes—and this because in his own life there is no break in the long chain of his sufferings. Hence the cry—

The nothing, the nothing, is all we possess;  
It sits o'er our cradle, it broods o'er our grave.

Or again—

Nought but wretchedness is our existence,  
The only refuge in this sea of suffering  
Which remains is death.

And so we find the compiler of the Pessimist hymn-book selecting for its closing page Leopardi's apostrophe to Death—Death, that is, as the brother of Sleep, not "as the boundless realm of unending change," being throughout represented as

the only precious gift among the gifts of tears bestowed by fate on the sons of men. Yet, by a strange inconsistency, Leopardi, like Schopenhauer, the philosopher of Pessimism, to escape death by the cholera, fled from one city to another, though he had said to one of his friends that if the choice was held out to him to enjoy the bliss and power of Cæsar or Alexander on the one hand, or to be released by death from the burden of life on the other, he would, without an instant's reflection, select the latter. But whilst we have here an instance of "temperamental" Pessimism, we may also see in Leopardi's "cruel melancholy" the reflection of his own surroundings, and the physiognomy of the times in which he lived. It is the Italy of that day, lacerated and in the throes of national despair, which the throbbing soul of the poet, vibrating with over-sensitive sympathy, expresses, and in so doing meets with the responsive sorrow of those who feel what he expressed. In the same way the finest passages of Tennyson's "In Memoriam" or "The Two Voices" reflect the passing phase of modern scepticism in this country, the hopelessness of the cry "behind the veil" in the agnostic unbelievers in revealed truth. Accordingly, we find one of the most popular writers among sceptics, Mr. S. Laing, in his "Problems of the Future," endeavouring—though, as we think, ineffectually—to show that the growth of scepticism, so far from producing melancholy thoughts, ought to make man cheerful rather than the reverse. This attempt to deny the connection of Pessimism and scepticism, however, is rendered abortive by the teachings of the history of human thought in the past and our experience of it in the present. It is but natural that in the absence of a "better hope" men should grow hopeless.

In November, 1818, three celebrated Pessimists crossed one another's paths in Venice—Byron, Leopardi and Schopenhauer. Of the Pessimism of Byron we will not speak here, since the Byronic mood has passed away from England, and contemporary English Pessimism is of a more serious nature. Therefore we turn to Schopenhauer, a popular series of whose writings for English readers, edited by Mr. T. B. Saunders, is in course of publication, three of them having reached a second edition already. This is a sign of the growing popularity of the author in this country, and it is important to our subject, as his works form the groundwork of modern Pessimistic literature in Europe. We select him as a typical Pessimist philosopher.

Schopenhauer's centenary was celebrated in Frankfort on February 22, 1888. In his case, too, as in Leopardi's, personal predilections influenced the views he formed of life. Such were congenital proclivities to madness—one of his

uncles died an idiot; a disposition to morose suspicion and gloomy brooding which alienated from him a mother's heart—a mother, it must be added, too much herself inclined to light-heartedness; and an unbending sternness which he inherited from his father. Virtually compelled into a mercantile career by this parent, which he left in disgust, on being released by his father's death, to turn to literature; disappointed in this career, and not meeting with the recognition due to his genius for some years; confirmed in his dark view of things in the solitary life he led uncheered by family joys or friendly intercourse—he settled down into a sad and severe Pessimist. Here, too, the keystone on which his system rests, namely, that the primal principle of all things is the will, and that the will to live throughout the realm of nature is the prime source of all our trouble and care, and that consequently the negation of the will or the desire to live is the only efficacious way of getting rid of the evils of existence, release from misery in the utter nothingness of Nirvanâh, is the result of his own subjective experience. He felt in himself that indomitable will-force which formed the groundwork of his character, and which in his case also proved the source of his failure. His self-willed personality and self-imposed rigour prevented him from adapting himself to his environment, and estranged those whom it was his policy to conciliate. The *principium individuationis*, which he condemns so mercilessly as the manifestation of will, was powerfully enough developed in himself, and it is to his credit that he noted the marked features and evil tendencies of the growing individualism in his own day, though his exposure of it was premature, hence the discredit of his writings then and their popularity now. The strongly-marked features and furrowed lines of his countenance in the statue erected to his honour in Germany two years ago, the masculine massiveness of that face, severe in its rugged firmness, the grand eye and fine head expressive of dominant intelligence, give full expression to this force of the individual will. Such a man, with such a disposition, naturally became the powerful exponent of that Pessimism which in modern times is so often traceable to excessive individualism, to the exposure of which Schopenhauer devoted his power of scathing criticism. That Individualism is the parent of Pessimism is a truth brought out very clearly in one of the Essays in Philosophical Criticism edited by Andrew Seth and R. B. Haldane in 1883, entitled "Pessimism and the Religious Consciousness": "We may admit," remarks the writer, the Rev. T. B. Kilpatrick, "with him" (*i.e.*, with Kant, whom Schopenhauer followed), "that very assertion of the individual in his exclusive individuality



only increases his misery, that hope lies only in the stoppage of all self-assertion, in the prompt cessation of this 'luckless episode in the blissful repose of nothing . . . . The presence of Pessimism in modern thought is the demand for the reconstruction of modern life.' 'The world which Pessimism describes to us is a world in fragments; its evil is its fragmentary character. Its first necessity, therefore, is a principle of synthesis.' Comtism suggests a synthesis, as the writer points out, but in form which is incomplete, *i.e.*, in humanity as "an organic and self-developing unity." It is incomplete because it fails to bridge over the chasm between man and nature, and because it fails to reconcile those conflicts between the forces of nature and humanity, individually or collectively, which are the sources of so much suffering, "unless there be found a principle of synthesis which shall bind not simply man to man, and man to the world and to God, in the closeness of completed reconciliation, in the unity of life and hope, which become fuller and surer through pain and sorrow and death," the problem is left unsolved.

It must not be supposed, however, that Schopenhauer, misanthropical as he was in his self-centred contempt of men and things, was wanting in the quality of mercy. On the contrary, he insists most strongly on the principle of an all-embracing pity, expressed in the precept of Hindoo theosophy: "Tat Twam Asi," *i.e.*, "See another's woe in thine own," which forms the groundwork of his ethics, whilst in his teaching of utter self-abnegation and self-extinction he approaches, and confessedly so, the maxims of Christ.

His follower, Von Hartmann, professes a more cheerful Pessimistic creed, living and writing as he does under more favourable conditions in the national revival of Germany. The world, according to his theory, is the product of unconscious will and intelligence, and being the worst of worlds, the best thing that could happen would be to return to unconscious non-existence. He believes in the cheerful effort all must make to persuade mankind generally by means of disillusionizing them, and in impressing them with the conviction that all is vanity and vexation of spirit, that since happiness here or hereafter for the individual or the race is impossible to arm humanity with all the knowledge of modern culture for the purpose of enabling them to make a united and intelligent effort to work out their own deliverance by means of self-annihilation.

My view of the world (he says, in one of those self-revelations which have become popular of late with great writers) is serious and severe, even tragical, in its conception, but by no means melancholy, bitter, or disappointing. In it, as in every tragedy, there is a dull background in

perspective ; yet there are not wanting the brightly-tinted colours in the foreground of the picture standing out against these dark shadows. In it the prominent feature is the yearning after peace which is peculiar to every human heart capable of deep feeling ; but it directs the individual longing for it to the grave, and the universal soul longing after it to be satisfied in the dim distance of the last day. At the same time, it discourages every inclination to weariness among those who work while it is day as premature and unbecoming, as only suitable to the season of rest. It has its root in all the ramifications of manly energy, creative effort, vigour of action ; it is thus far on the side of historical activity as understood among the moderns in the West, and differs from the passive quietism of the East, that of the Hindoos in particular. Its conception of the misery and unspeakable wretchedness of life is sharply drawn, and no attempt is made to gloss them over. But the knowledge so obtained is only to serve as a spur to redoubled energy, and is, therefore, diametrically opposed to that kind of feminine and feeble sentimentality which broods over the world's sorrow, and never gets further than passive sympathy, but is rather apt to luxuriate in the over-sensitive emotionalism of its own lamentations and the sickliness of its own hyperæsthetic sensibilities.

To this view of life and its duties, and what our present aim in the "world process" ought to be, as expressed in his writings, a warm admirer attributes their success, which is certainly remarkable. Like Schopenhauer, Von Hartmann claims affinity in thought with Christianity, and professes to recall Christians from the error of false optimism which are irreconcilable with the teachings of Christ.

We may, then, at this stage inquire—(1) How far do these Pessimistic views of life and death, as a release from it, bear any resemblance to similar sentiments in Christian writings inspired or uninspired ? (2) What is the value of Pessimism in its critical estimates, and how far are its views on individual and social happiness in the present and remoter future true or false when regarded in the light of reason and religion ?

No careful and unprejudiced reader of Ecclesiastes or the Books of Jeremiah and Job, and no student of the New Testament, can doubt that the Scriptures dwell with emphasis on the sad aspects of human life. Both the utterances of mediæval mystics and Puritan divines are full of it. Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress" starts from the City of Destruction ; Howe's "Living Temple" is raised on the ruins of man's fallen nature. What can be more sad than Pascal's "Thoughts" on the misery of man, the contradictions of the human mind ? There is Pessimism in those saintly cynics of the Middle Ages—the Flagellants and others trying to crucify the flesh in fear of the "Day of wrath, that dreadful day," which the hymns of that time faithfully reflect. Modern hymns, like the one beginning "The world is very evil," express similar thoughts, and books of devotion, ancient and modern,

express the sadness of saintly reflections on the nothingness of terrestrial things "in the dark and gloomy day." But there is this difference between such forms of devout Christian Pessimism and those of ancient or modern "Esoteric Buddhism": Christian Pessimism does not give way to despair and desponding fatalism or cynical quietism, to quote the words of a modern Jewish philosopher in a discussion by way of dialogue on this very subject; the words are addressed to the scientist and agnostic:

Christian resignation has in it nothing of bitterness, disgust, or anger. It renounces freely—nay, cheerfully—the boons withheld by an all-wise Providence, but it is ready at any moment gratefully to accept those which its beneficence may be disposed to grant. But I wonder that you, to whom nature's law is supreme, do not see that it is in direct contradiction to your Pessimism; for nature teaches that every creature strives not only after self-preservation, but after enjoyment; or, as one of your favourite poets says: "Was lebt soll sich erfreuen?" Why, then, do you so persistently revolt against her benign ordinances?<sup>1</sup>

And again:

Sage and saint, "rational departure" and devout martyrdom, virtue and piety, fortitude and holiness—these contrasts express the chief distinctions between Stoic and Christian.<sup>2</sup>

As to the estimates of happiness weighed on the scales of Pessimistic criticism, the amount of pleasure and pain to be got out of life, who can strike the balance with anything approaching to accuracy? Who could appraise, to take the case of an ordinary clergyman in a quiet parish, the exact value of all the mutations of joy and sorrow experienced in the performance of his daily functions in contact with the members of his own household and the people of his parish, the countless oscillations from pleasure to pain in multifarious states of mind and heart as affected by physical conditions and intellectual environment? Where is the common measure which could apply to all these varying relations so as to reckon up the quotient of pleasure and pain in a single day? This would be, indeed a difficult calculation in single and compound fractions of human happiness. Think of extending it over the whole experience of human life! Readers of Sir John Lubbock's charming volumes on the "Pleasures of Life" will recollect how many compensating joys there are mentioned there outweighing the sorrows of life. Besides, as Von Hartmann himself acknowledges, there is the ethical value of sorrow and suffering and the joy arising therefrom to those who overcome. He scouts the idea of blessedness in the performance of painful duty. For holiness,

<sup>1</sup> "Path and Goal," by M. M. Kalisch, p. 420.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 129.

not happiness, is to be our being's end and aim. But holiness, as understood by him—the wholeness of sympathetic pity—is complete freedom from every selfish tendency which excludes any belief in the attainment of ultimate good for ourselves or others. What is the finality of such perfection? The bliss of total extinction—that is true happiness, according to Hartmann. And so we are striving after happiness all the while. We are exhorted to renounce happiness in order to find repose. Rest is the final reward of self-renunciation its outcome, at least, in the kind intention of the unconscious purpose in the universe. But, as the author of "Opposites," an interesting volume on questions of the day, puts it pointedly, the Christian promise of "the times of the restitution of all things is a somewhat less cruel" (and less irrational, we might add) "verdict than that which prophesies an evolution of ever-increasing severity, to be borne by bodies ever growing more and more highly organized to feel the exquisiteness of the pain; and the end of it all, total extinction."<sup>1</sup>

Viewed in *specie ceternitatis*, suffering and sorrow lose their bitter sting, and the Christian becomes joyful in tribulation. "I am crucified with Christ," and the "world is crucified with me" is one aspect of Christian life; "nevertheless I live, and the life I now live I live by faith in the Son of God," etc., is another. "In the world ye shall have tribulation." So far Pessimism and Christianism are alike. But "*Be of good cheer*, I have overcome the world," says the triumphant Redeemer, made perfect through suffering, and again: "Lift up your eyes, for your redemption draweth nigh." According to the great high-priest of Modern Pessimism, the evolutionary process serves only to intensify conscious suffering, and the development of culture only tends to increase the faculty of enduring sorrow and suffering, until at last the "deliverance of the Absolute from his transcendental misery is accomplished by means of the immanent torment of the world evolution."

Such is the "Ultimatum of Pessimism." But though the hope of social happiness is excluded, we are yet exhorted to sweeten the cup of bitterness to our fellow mortals, and social amelioration is recommended as a matter of duty. If it were true what a Socialist admirer of Schopenhauer wrote on the last page of a memoir of the latter, published two years ago, that social conditions determine the fate of humanity, then, indeed, with the removal of the causes, we would remove

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<sup>1</sup> "Opposites: A Series of Essays on the Unpopular sides of Popular Questions," by Lewis Thornton, 1890, p. 254.

human misery, and with it put an end to Pessimism itself as a philosophy of human life. But, as we are reminded in a recent number of an able French Socialist review, Pessimism is a "scepticism of the will." The motor force is wanting here for great efforts to improve society. Egotism, ill-will, and pity are the three chief motors prompting human action, according to Schopenhauer. Are these sufficient for the purpose? What the feelings of the professed Meliorist are in such efforts we may gather from the following lines quoted from the "Spanish Gipsy," where George Eliot makes the heroine Fedalma, referring to her own self-sacrificing efforts for the tribe she belongs to, speak thus :

But if I cannot plant resolve in hope,  
 It will stand firm on certainty of woe—  
 I choose the ill that is most like to end  
 With my poor being. Hopes have precarious life ;  
 They are oft blighted, withered, snapped, sheared off  
 In vigorous growth, and turned to rottenness.  
 But faithfulness can feed on suffering,  
 And knows no disappointment.

Compare with this the hopeful utterance in "Ferishtah's Fancies," written by one in whom the Gospel message, which is that of good news to man, and has not falsified its promise since of rendering the world better than it found it, has not lost its invigorating influence :

Loving ! what claim to love has work of mine ?  
 Concede my life were emptied of its gains  
 To furnish frets and fill work's strict confine,  
 Who works so for the world's sake—he complains  
 With cause when hate, not love, rewards his pains.  
*I looked beyond the world for truth and beauty ;*  
 Sought, found, and did my duty.

Which of these has the better part ?

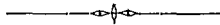
To sum up ! Pessimism, as a life's philosophy, is a system of pathology ; Christianity a system of therapeutics. The former lays bare the sores of humanity ; the latter heals them. Both are full

Of pity for the sickness of this world.

The one kills the patient gently ; the other mercifully restores him and tenderly to a healthier life. Pessimism, in its merciless diagnosis of human suffering and guilt, sees only the evil in man's present existence, and in so doing, when it does not exaggerate, holds up the mirror to an age too fond of self-laudation. It was the account of man's fall which, Schopenhauer tells us, reconciled him with the Old Testament. Here, too, he believed to find a justification for his utter contempt of men and women. So, too, he quotes the text that "the wages of sin is death," as expressing his own doctrine, that

annihilation is the final reward of those whose guilt has been the inordinate desire to live. And he quotes a number of passages from the Bible, the Fathers, and religious mystics, ancient and modern, with a view to show that Christianity inculcates both self-effacing quietism and asceticism. But all this in utter forgetfulness of other passages which call on the Christian to rejoice, and such as 1 Cor. vii. 30, where the attitude of mind depressed by the "present distress" is that of temporary, not permanent, acquiescence in the evil which is in this present world. And even here the recommendation to utter self-forgetfulness wears a double face. The Christians in times of persecution were to "weep as though *they wept not*," as well as "to rejoice as though *they rejoiced not*." That pain in itself is not to be preferred—that its value consists solely in its elevating and purging effects—is plain enough from Heb. xii. 11. What Pessimism as a modern and passing mode of thought has done for Christian Europe is this: It serves as a bridge from a self-satisfied materialism and superficial optimism to a humbler view of our own attainments in this "age of progress." This acquired self-knowledge and self-abasement are apt to produce a greater readiness to accept the comforts and consolations of religion, and thus to reach a stage higher in the progress of religious thought. In an age when worldliness and unhealthy absorption in worldly pursuits endangers the pursuit of holiness, it produces that kind of home-sickness which longs for the better country. It impresses on Christian men and women in the most effective manner that truth which needs to be pressed home with such powerful illustration, which the literature of Pessimism furnishes with appalling profusion, that "if in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable."

M. KAUFMANN.



## ART. II.—THE ROUND TOWERS OF IRELAND.

THERE is no country in the world, perhaps, which possesses more interesting ecclesiastical remains than Ireland; and this is not to be wondered at, inasmuch as Ireland in early ages was renowned for its schools of learning, its famous monasteries, its devoted clergy, and its great missionary successes. We meet with the ruins of old churches and abbeys everywhere, some of them in excellent preservation and beautiful in their dress of "living green." In Ireland the traces of the old religious life of the people have been least obliterated, and therefore nowhere else can the early workings