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**OBSERVATIONS.****Through Nature to God.**

To one perplexed by the interminable discussions of materialistic scientists and sincere but unscientific theologians, the small book of Mr. John Fiske's, "Through Nature to God," is a treasure, a rock after much floundering through a marsh. "The fool hath said in his heart there is no God." Mr. Fiske demonstrates from proofs outside of the Bible that this is just as true as it ever was. While he believes that "the foundation of morality is to give up pretending to believe that for which there is no evidence," he demonstrates satisfactorily the everlasting reality of religion.

Mr. Fiske's own discovery of the influence of the prolonged helpless period of human babies in the development of civilization is a link in the continuous evolution of human beings. The willingness of some philosophers to call God and to think of him as a force or an energy is repudiated by this Cambridge philosopher who had a clear spiritual insight, and a recognized sonship in the power to see and interpret truths of nature, truths of the spirit and of history. In the days of Isaiah he would have been a prophet and have done a prophet's work. In these days he was a Cambridge professor and lectured to Harvard undergraduates, Isaiah was a student of his race and of the peoples surrounding the Jews. He could read what was going to happen, as we read a book. He saw life not in small fragments but large. He followed the dim trail of Jewish history, preserved in oral traditions, back to its source, and he foretold the future from the past. Not by necromancy and not by special revelation did he prophesy to the people.

By the light of an illuminated, vast intellect he read nature, history and philosophy and delivered the interpretations faithfully to the people. And for the last fifty years John Fiske has marked the course of history, has been an apostle of evolution and has faithfully delivered to his people what was revealed to him.

With a supernatural memory which, in itself, was a reference library and needed not the printed page to verify quotations, John Fiske's habit was to concentrate all that he had learned and the tremendous thinking capacity of his mind upon a single subject. The illumination which was the result was sometimes startling. Those who have not read his history of Virginia, know about the colonization of that part of the country only dimly.

But since the great prophets no one has written about the relations of God to man and about man's right to ascribe his own spiritual possessions to God as the father, so convincingly as John Fiske. A master of English, which if he had nothing to say would still shine by its own light, he establishes the fact not exactly of an anthropomorphic god, but of a responsive god, of justice, truth, pity and love. He proves that whatever we possess of justice, love, pity or truth, we have in virtue of his gift to us, as a father gives of his attributes to his children. Therefore primordial man who made a god, to us grotesque and cruel, had started up the steep, long path which we are yet not half way up. And this first aspiration of the man who was but yesterday a brute, is one of the strongest proofs of the "reality of a quasi-human god, of an unseen world, in which human beings continue to exist after death, and of the ethical aspects of human life, as related in a special and intimate sense to this unseen world.

The final chapter of "Through Nature to God," is a splendid summary and conclusion of the knowledge, interpretation and premises of all the other chapters. "Life is the continuous adjustment of inner relations to outer relations." Then, according to evolution, the world to man has gone on enlarging from the time when what was to be man was but a green scum on a stagnant pool, to now, when "he comprehends the stellar universe during countless aeons of existence." Then each little plant that made up the green scum adjusted itself to very simple conditions. To the scum-plant the world was but sunshine that withered one up and dampness that kept one alive, with an occasional cloud that shut off the sun, and the cloud had the shape of a pterodactyl or of a plesiosaurus. Now man adjusts himself to a world so complex that it includes the stars. At the first dawn of human life the crude soul stretched itself upward. John Fiske says:

"Now if the relation thus estab-

lished in the morning twilight of man's existence, between the human soul and a world invisible and immaterial, is a relation of which only its subjective term is real and the objective term is non-existent, then I say it is something utterly without precedent in the whole history of creation. All the analogies of evolution, so far as we have yet been able to decipher them, are overwhelming against any such supposition. To suppose that during countless ages, from the sea weed up to man, the progress of life was achieved through adjustments to external relatives, but that then the method was all at once changed and throughout a vast province of evolution the end was secured through adjustments to external non-realities, is to do sheer violence to logic and to common sense. Or, to vary the form of statement, since every adjustment whereby any creature sustains life, may be called a true step, and every maladjustment whereby life is wrecked may be called a false step; if we are asked to believe that Nature, after having throughout the whole round of her inferior products, achieved results through the accumulation of all true steps and pitiless rejection of all false steps, suddenly changed her method, and in the case of her highest product began achieving results through the accumulation of false steps; I say we are entitled to resent such a suggestion as an insult to our understandings. All the analogies of nature fairly shout against the assumption of such a breach of continuity between the evolution of man and all previous evolution. The lesson of evolution is that through all these weary ages the human soul has not been cherishing in religion a delusive phantom, but in spite of seemingly endless groping and stumbling it has been rising to the recognition of its essential kinship with the ever-living God. Of all the implications of the doctrine of evolution with regard to man, I believe the very deepest and strongest to be that which asserts the Everlasting Reality of Religion.

**The Uses of a Prophet.**

Every once in a while, in Bible times, at nearly regular intervals, a new prophet arose. Philosophy and history have established the continuity of history. Once in a cycle, ever since the last Bible prophet was dust, a new prophet begins to teach the people. The good ones, the true ones do not claim to be prophets. They walk in the ranks with the rest of the human procession. They claim no toll from mankind for their gift and practice of prophecy. They are not borne on litters. They wear no robes, neither mitre, chasuble nor mantle. And these later prophets do not claim special revelations. The modern prophet writes or speaks quite simply, and from his place in the ranks. It is certain that the man who claims

anointment or inspiration is a charlatan like Dowie. John Fiske was always simple and childlike and modest. At fifty-nine when he died he was a library, a library that was producing more books while using the whole stock all the time in the new product. If prophets were useful in the nomadic period of society, why not now, when the groups are so much more complex, and religion is crowded by so many subjects? God has never shut himself in a Book. He is there, too; but in nature, history and the hearts of living men he is more evident. Otherwise religion were a dead language interesting as a relic of man but not potent as a means of communication between men. From living lips the message of God to man must ever be interpreted. The living prophet must use the new knowledge of today to prove the old revelation. From Moses to John Fiske the succession is perfect. Moses was sent of God; so was John Fiske. His reading of the nature of God and his relations to man are as vital to the safe journey of this stage of the procession of man as Moses' message to the Israelites in their long wanderings through the wilderness. Moses spoke a simpler and more direct message and he had an earthly office of great honor, and he commanded an awe-struck people. John Fiske held no office. Some of the men who walked near him in the ranks heard what he said and a few scholars learned in languages and science marked him, but the common people have not yet heard his most spiritual lesson from a man whose business was not preaching but the search for truth. But through regular preachers his logic and interpretation will finally reach, not his own generation, but the one following. It is thus that Darwin's discovery is now its use over all the world. Although John Fiske may not reap the glory himself, if God be glorified, like all true prophets, he will be content.

**Patent Insides.**

Many of the farmers subscribe only for the county paper printed in the nearest town. The country papers of Nebraska are remarkably well edited. The editorial matter is generally, however, very limited. The contents of the papers consist of local news, a column or a column and a half of editorial matter, the condensed telegraphic news of the week, not very fresh, and patent insides, or stories and essays furnished by a syndicate. Now the farmers themselves may not read the syndicate matter, but it is the only new reading matter that comes into the house, and the farmers' wives and children read the inside pages with touching eagerness and credulity. It is a pity that the men and women who prepare this material for the syndicate have no photograph of the maidens, youths and exhausted farm-drudges, who, when Sunday or the infrequent moment of reading