

The last number of the *Ala. University Monthly* is unusually good, even for it.

We acknowledge the receipt of a copy of the *Alumni Journal*, Illinois Wesleyan University. We are much pleased with it.

The Hesperian Society, of Herschel College, has lately sold its library for \$950, proceeds being applied to the building of a fine new yacht.—*Collegian*.

There is an unmistakable evidence of intellectual advancement for you!

The *Archangel*, from Oregon, continues to be as full of vitality as ever. We are always glad to receive it.

The *McKendree Repository* pays the HESPERIAN a very pretty compliment, which we can sincerely return by saying, that the *Repository* is one of the most welcome visitors to our sanctum. But, my friend, you have paid us an other compliment, unconsciously, perhaps, in the same issue, which we value more highly. If you will please take notice of the remarkable similarity between the introduction to your Criticism on Exchanges, in your November issue, and the introduction to our "Notes on Exchanges," in our October issue, you will find another proof that the ideas of great minds run in the same channel. This will doubtless be mutually satisfactory to both you and us.

The *High School* is improving rapidly in literary merit.

The *University Review* for November is unusually interesting.

The Pritchett School *Institute*, has more solid matter in the November issue, than the former.

The *Chronicle* criticises a paragraph from our article on "Incentives to Political Life," in a manner unworthy of a paper of its standing; for if we get the idea meant to be conveyed by the editor's ridicule, he would have found, had he been candid enough to read the whole article, before making his conclusion, that the whole spirit of the piece was to censure the very idea for which he takes us to task. There is too much such hap-hazard criticising done by college papers, simply to fill space, when wit, or sense is lacking.

Our friend Evans is making a lively paper of the *Lowell Register*, which makes its appearance on our table regularly. The *Register* wants us to tell what kind of a thing is a "tony church." We did speak of a "tony congregation," and might, on a pinch, give some sort of an idea of what was meant thereby. But we really dare not venture far into the discussion of theological questions. Besides, Ide, you know you are not any more familiar with "meeting" things than ourselves, and would not comprehend a definition should we offer one. So, pray excuse us, pard.

ELEMENTS OF PREJUDICE IN RELIGIOUS DISCUSSION.

Wherefore exists this irrepressible conflict between Religion and Science? Why have the dogmas of Creed and the dogmas of Theory ever been waging stubborn and uncharitable war? Whence this bitter prejudice, this enmity, this contempt on the one hand, and abhorrence on the other? Is Religion all truth and Science all error, or is Science all truth, and Religion all evil—abominable superstition, weakness and priestcraft? Is the conflict which exists, a contest between truth and truth, which is absurd, or, more probable, between truth and error, or,

more reasonable still, between error and error? Between human prejudice and the spurious conceptions of the finite mind, foisted upon the spirit of truth, the manifestation of the Infinite Intelligence, contained in either? For the essential element of error is discord and chaos.

Perhaps there has never been a thinking mind, Pagan, Mahometan, or Sceptic, Christian fanatic, or absolute Atheist, which, in spite of self, or prejudice or will, has not been conscious of trying to solve these questions, and thereby, virtually, confessing that there is a grave question to be solved. Clearly, if the last question proposed can be answered affirmatively, all the others will really have been answered, and it will be comparatively easy to detect the elements of prejudice in discussion and belief, in reference to this matter. It is not, however, the bold presumption of this article to attempt to elaborate a systematic investigation of the existence of that absolute infinite First Principle of things—to enquire logically whether there is really a great Mystery, to which ultimate religious and scientific ideas all lead, and to which they all bear unimpeachable testimony. This truth may safely be taken for granted, on *a priori* and *prima facie* evidence, referring for the direct argument to those philosophers who have been able to discuss the subject thoroughly. But it is our purpose to point out a few of the elements of bias, observable by all in the common occurrences and experiences of life, which have blinded the eye of judgment, in both science and religion, and prevented it from discerning the fundamental verity upon which each is based, and rendering them almost insensible, that they are natural sisters, born of the same parent, the consciousness of the Infinite, and destined for harmony, loving coadjutors, and the conservators of the happiness of all moral beings—not for strife and hatred. The arguments which will here be presented are such, as the diligent, though humble, disciple of Herbert Spencer and Sir William Hamilton will recognize as truths.

1. What, then, are some of the *a priori* reasons for believing that the ultimate idea of all forms of religions, or explanations of Being, Existence, First Cause, are identical with the ultimate idea, or explanation of Nature, Being, Life, Forms of Matter, offered by science?

(a) The first witness we may summon is consciousness. Every individual is absolutely unable to rid himself of the conviction, the consciousness, that there is something which is unknowable, unthinkable; a something which transcends Conception, and which lies back, and constitutes the cause of every phenomenon in things, and is shadowed forth by all the noumena arising in the intuition, call it God, or First Cause, the Absolute, the Infinite, the One, or the Many, as you please. He is equally conscious that he possesses the faculty of being conscious of such an Existence.

(b) Again the three theories—for generally there are but three—of accounting for the origin of the Universe all lead to the same result. Atheism, which teaches that the Universe is self-existent; Pantheism, which teaches that it is self-created; Theism, which teaches that it was created by some external agency, some deity—all ultimately lead to contradiction, all are absolutely beyond the boundaries of thought and conception, as

Spencer and Hamilton have shown by irresistible logic.

Thus all forms of religious belief, from the grossest Fetichism to Christianity, and, as can be shown, all notions of science of what the nature of the Potentiality, expressed by all phenomena, is, from the crude and vague conceptions of Thales and Heraclitus, to those of Herschel and Tyndall, are equally erroneous and unthinkable, but each predicates in reality, an ultimate truth, the same fact. That fact is, that there is something to be explained, but a something which can never be explained. This the Atheist and the Pantheist, by denying the existence of any creative force outside of matter itself, proves no less clearly than the Monotheist, who claims that all such potency exists in some external agency. For, after all, if the Universe is self-existent, self-created, or created by an external something, how came it so? If there is a First Cause, a creating God, he is a Cause or Creator, only in relation to the thing caused or created. The Cause and the Caused are correlatives—there is a relation existing between them. If a relation, they mutually limit one another: Hence, the First Cause is not infinite—is not a first cause at all. For how came this relation? We must conceive of it as caused by something, if caused at all. This something would be superior and prior to the First Cause. Again this second First Cause must have its relation, and this cause and relation, their cause and so on in infinite series.

Here we find ourselves lost in a boundless ocean of mystery; no amount of research or sailing will ever find its limits—it has none. Is it not enough for us that we are conscious of a Power beyond our ken? Is not that Existence, which is inconceivable, superior and more worthy of reverence, than a being which is conceivable, and can be represented in thought with form and attributes?

2. It has been seen from the foregoing, that however grotesque or ignoble the form which finite conception has forced Religion or Science to assume, yet, as Mr. Spencer says, there has been found in each "A soul of goodness in things evil" and "A soul of truth in things erroneous." Since each is based on an identical ultimate truth, why this conflict? Why does human intellect do violence to itself, its own consciousness, and labor to create antagonism, and stir up discord, where none exists?

(a) The first element of discord appears to be this: Each contending party abandons, to some extent, its legitimate field of action, and encroaches upon the province of the other. In so far as either is thus guilty, is it degraded and infidel to itself. The scientific element and the religious element of the mind are only different modes of intellectual action. "There must ever remain, therefore, two antithetical modes of mental action. Throughout all future time, as now the human mind may occupy itself, not only with ascertained phenomena and their relations, but also with that unascertained something which phenomena and their relations imply." The first, the scientific element, has to do, legitimately, only with the laws of phenomena, the modes through which the Absolute manifests itself. The second the religious element, predicates the existence of a power back of all phenomena the unknowable Mystery.

The great error of which Religion is

guilty, is the unceasing effort to drag down the Infinite within the narrow scope of human conception. Anthropomorphism, the attempt to represent the Infinite First Cause in sensible forms, and as possessed of attributes like human beings, or, at least, that human beings can apprehend, however pure and holy, has been the chief means of self-degradation, and has excited the contempt of logic and reason. The blocks and stones of Fetichism, the innumerable sensuous, even sensual, ideals of Hindoo, Egyptian, or Grecian Polytheism, the Manitou of the Indian, the Jehovah of Monotheism, all are mere caricatures of the Infinite, more or less crude, or debasing, according to the development of the subject. In short, as Mr. Spencer has observed, *the vice of Religion, the pretext for strife, is, that it is essentially irreligious.*

Here, also, Science has decidedly the advantage; she is more consistent, inasmuch as she predicates more nearly than Religion itself, the unconditioned First Principle, without attributes, divine or human. In other words, Science is more sincerely religious than Religion itself. Certainly that religion which shall predicate absolutely nothing of the Creator, save the consciousness of His existence—when the proper time shall come, when the average human intellect shall be developed sufficiently to grasp so abstract a conception—will be grander and more worthy, than any system of Monotheism. It has been necessary, in the past, to assign attributes and form to the Eternal, in order to satisfy man's finite conception. The conception has grown immensely more refined and more abstract, but perhaps the time is not even yet, when the conception of an unconditioned First Cause can be affirmed, with safety, by the masses.

While Science, by keeping more nearly within her proper sphere, has the advantage, she is not entirely guiltless of contributing to this element of prejudice. While she justly condemns Religion for her irreligion, she has been guilty of the same offence. Whenever she transcends the investigation of the laws and modes of phenomena, and attempts to assign conditions to the Potentiality of which phenomena are the expression, she is guilty of irreligion, of anthropomorphism. She may safely define the laws of Heat, Light, Life, Magnetism or Electricity; but when she attempts to show that the ultimate Force, of which each phenomenon is a manifestation, is a different force in each, or to tell what the force is, then Science is encroaching on the domain of Nescience, of Religion.

(b) Lack of candor in reasoning is the second element of discord. The mortal dread on the part of one, to submit her dogmas and beliefs to the test of rigorous, logical criticism, and the tendency on the part of the other—conscious of her honesty of purpose, and the certainty of her truths—to ignore entirely the religious element of the intellect, and scoff at everything savoring of the supersensible, or supernatural, which Faith based upon the unshaken consciousness of eternal Existence, affirms, are each reprehensible spirits. Here, too, Science has the advantage; for time, persecution, and criticism, only strengthen her walls, and more firmly establish her principles. While Religion has always, after a bitter and tenacious struggle, been forced to yield. One by one she has laid aside her ideals, to adopt new ones, more general and abstract. Nearer