

tendency, if not to socialism, yet to a marked discontent with existing economic conditions, resembling what is now perceptible among the younger clergy in Britain.

As respects what may be called the every-day religious life and usages of the United States, there are differences from those of England or Scotland which it is easy to feel but hard to define or describe. There is rather less conventionalism or constraint in speaking of religious experiences, less of a formal separation between the church and the world, less disposition to treat the clergy as a caste and expect them to conform to a standard not prescribed for the layman,¹ less reticence about sacred things, perhaps less sense of the refinement with which sacred things ought to be surrounded. The letting by auction of sittings in a popular church, though I think very rare, excites less disapproval than it would in Europe. Some fashionable churches are supplied with sofas, carpets, and the other comforts of a drawing-room; a well-trained choir is provided, and the congregation would not think of spoiling the performance by joining in the singing. The social side of church life is more fully developed than in Protestant Europe. A congregation, particularly among the Methodists, Baptists, and Congregationalists, is the centre of a group of societies, literary and recreative as well as religious and philanthropic, which not only stimulate charitable work, but bring the poorer and richer members into friendly relations with one another, and form a large part of the social enjoyments of the young people, keeping them out of harm's way, and giving them a means of forming acquaintances. Often a sort of informal evening party, called a "sociable," is given once a month, at which all ages and classes meet on an easy footing.² Religion seems to associate itself better with the interests of the young

¹ Although total abstinence is much more generally expected from a clergyman than it would be in Great Britain. In most denominations, including Baptists and Methodists, Congregationalists and Presbyterians, it is practically universal among the clergy.

² Even dances may be given, but not by all denominations. When some years ago a Presbyterian congregation in a great Western city was giving a "reception" in honour of the opening of its new Church Building—prosperous churches always have a building with a set of rooms for meetings—the sexton (as he is called in America), who had come from a Protestant Episcopal church in the East, observed, as he surveyed the spacious hall, "What a pity you are not Episcopalians; you might have given a ball in this room!"

in America, and to have come within the last forty years to wear a less forbidding countenance than it has generally done in Britain, or at least among English Nonconformists and in the churches of Scotland.

A still more peculiar feature of the American churches is the propensity to what may be called Revivalism which some of them, and especially the Methodist churches, show. That exciting preaching and those external demonstrations of feeling which have occasionally appeared in Britain, have long been chronic there, appearing chiefly in the form of the camp-meeting, a gathering of people usually in the woods or on the seashore, where open-air preaching goes on perhaps for days together. One hears many stories about these camp-meetings, not always to their credit, which agree at least in this, that they exercise a powerful even if transient influence upon the humbler classes who flock to them. In the West they have been serviceable in evangelizing districts where few regular churches had yet been established. In the East and South it is now chiefly among the humbler classes, and of course still more among the negroes, that they flourish. All denominations are more prone to emotionalism in religion, and have less reserve in displaying it, than in England or Scotland. I remember in 1870 to have been a passenger by one of the splendid steamers which ply along the Sound between New York and Fall River. A Unitarian Congress was being held in New York, and a company of New England Unitarians were going to attend it. Now New England Unitarians are of all Americans perhaps the most staid and sober in their thoughts and habits, the least inclined to a demonstrative expression of their faith. This company, however, installed itself round the piano in the great saloon of the vessel and sang hymns, hymns full of effusion, for nearly two hours, many of the other passengers joining, and all looking on with sympathy. Our English party assumed at first that the singers belonged to some Methodist body, in which case there would have been nothing to remark except the attitude of the bystanders. But they were Unitarians.

European travellers have in one point greatly exaggerated the differences between their own continent and the United States. They have represented the latter as pre-eminently a

land of strange sects and abnormal religious developments. Such sects and developments there certainly are, but they play no greater part in the whole life of the nation than similar sects do in Germany and England, far less than the various dissenting communities do in Russia. The Mormons have drawn the eyes of the world because they have attempted to form a sort of religious commonwealth, and have revived one ancient practice which modern ethics condemn, and which severe congressional legislation has now almost stamped out. But the Mormon church is chiefly recruited from Europe; one finds few native Americans in Salt Lake City, and those few from among the poor whites of the South.¹ The Shakers are an interesting and well-conducted folk, but there are very few of them, and they decrease — there were in 1890 only 1728 persons in their fifteen communities; while of the other communistic religious bodies one hears more in Europe than in America. Here and there some strange little sect emerges and lives for a few years;² but in a country seething with religious emotion, and whose conditions seem to tempt to new departures and experiments of all kinds, the philosophic traveller may rather wonder that men have stood so generally upon the old paths.

We have already seen that Christianity has in the United States maintained, so far as externals go, its authority and dignity, planting its houses of worship all over the country and raising enormous revenues from its adherents. Such a position of apparent influence might, however, rest upon ancient habit and convention, and imply no dominion over the souls of men. The Roman Empire in the days of Augustus was covered from end to end with superb temples to many gods; the priests were numerous and wealthy, and enjoyed

¹ There is a non-polygamous Mormon church, rejecting Brigham Young and his successors in Utah, which returns itself to the census of 1890 as having 21,773 members. Some Southern States punish the preaching of Mormonism.

² Near Walla Walla in the State of Washington I came across a curious sect formed by a Welshman who fell into trances and delivered revelations. He had two sons, and asserted one of them to be an incarnation of Christ, and the other of St. John the Baptist, and gathered about fifty disciples, whom he endeavoured to form into a society having all things in common. However, both the children died; and in 1881 most of his disciples had deserted him. Probably such phenomena are not uncommon; there is a good deal of proneness to superstition among the less educated Westerns, especially the immigrants from Europe. They lead a solitary life in the midst of a vast nature.

the protection of the State; processions retained their pomp, and sacrifices drew crowds of admiring worshippers. But the old religions had lost their hold on the belief of the educated and on the conscience of all classes. If therefore we desire to know what place Christianity really fills in America, and how far it gives stability to the commonwealth, we must inquire how far it governs the life and moulds the mind of the country.

Such an inquiry may address itself to two points. It may examine into the influence which religion has on the conduct of the people, on their moral standard and the way they conform themselves thereto. And it may ask how far religion touches and gilds the imagination of the people, redeeming their lives from commonness, and bathing their souls in "the light that never was on sea or land."

In works of active beneficence no country has surpassed, perhaps none has equalled, the United States. Not only are the sums collected for all sorts of philanthropic purposes larger relatively to the wealth of America than in any European country, but the amount of personal interest shown in good works and personal effort devoted to them seems to a European visitor to exceed what he knows at home. How much of this interest and effort would be given were no religious motive present it is impossible to say. Not all, but I think nearly all of it, is in fact given by religious people, and, as they themselves suppose, under a religious impulse. This religious impulse is less frequently than in England a sectarian impulse, for all Protestants, and to some extent Roman Catholics also, are wont to join hands for most works of benevolence.

The ethical standard of the average man is of course the Christian standard, modified to some slight extent by the circumstances of American life, which have been different from those of Protestant Europe. The average man has not thought of any other standard, and religious teaching, though it has become less definite and less dogmatic, is still to him the source whence he believes himself to have drawn his ideas of duty and conduct. In Puritan days there must have been some little conscious and much more unconscious hypocrisy, the profession of religion being universal, and the exactitude

of practice required by opinion, and even by law, being above what ordinary human nature seems capable of attaining. The fault of antinomianism which used to be charged on high Calvinists is now sometimes charged on those who become, under the influence of revivals, extreme emotionalists in religion. But taking the native Americans as a whole, no people seems to-day less open to the charge of pharisaism or hypocrisy. They are perhaps rather more prone to the opposite error of good-natured indulgence to offences of which they are not themselves guilty.

That there is less crime among native Americans than among the foreign born is a point not to be greatly pressed, for it may be partly due to the fact that the latter are the poorer and more ignorant part of the population. If, however, we take matters which do not fall within the scope of penal law, the general impression of those who have lived long both in Protestant Europe and in America seems to be that as respects veracity, temperance, the purity of domestic life,¹ tenderness to children and the weak, and general kindness of behaviour, the native Americans stand rather higher than either the English or the Germans.² And those whose opinion I am quoting seem generally, though not universally, disposed to think that the influence of religious belief, which may survive in its effect upon the character when a man has dropped his connection with any religious body, counts for a good deal in this, and is a more consciously present and active force than in the two countries I have referred to.

If we ask how far religion exerts a stimulating influence on the thought and imagination of a nation, we are met by the difficulty of determining what is the condition of mankind

¹ The great frequency of divorce in some States—there are spots where the proportion of divorces to marriages is 1 to 7—does not appear to betoken immorality, but to be due to the extreme facility with which the law allows one or both of a married pair to indulge their caprice. Divorce is said to be less frequent in proportion among the middle and upper than among the humbler classes, and is, speaking generally, more frequent the further West one goes. It is increasing everywhere; but it increases also in those European countries which permit it. I have collected materials for an account of the laws and their working, but am unable to insert that account in the present edition.

² This can not be said as regards commercial uprightness, in which respect the United States stand certainly on no higher level than England and Germany, and possibly below France and Scandinavia.

where no such influence is present. There has never been a civilized nation without a religion; and though many highly civilized individual men live without one, they are so obviously the children of a state of sentiment and thought in which religion has been a powerful factor, that no one can conjecture what a race of men would be like who had during several generations believed themselves to be the highest beings in the universe, or at least entirely out of relation to any other higher being, and to be therewithal destined to no kind of existence after death. Some may hold that respect for public opinion, sympathy, an interest in the future of mankind, would do for such a people what religion has done in the past; or that they might even be, as Lucretius expected, the happier for the extinction of possible supernatural terrors. Others may hold that life would seem narrow and insignificant, and that the wings of imagination would droop, in a universe felt to be void. All that need be here said is that a people with comparatively little around it in the way of historic memories and associations to touch its emotion, a people whose energy is chiefly absorbed in commerce and the development of the material resources of its territory, a people consumed by a feverish activity that gives little opportunity for reflection or for the contemplation of nature, seems most of all to need to have its horizon widened, its sense of awe and mystery touched, by whatever calls it away from the busy world of sight and sound into the stillness of faith and meditation. A perusal of the literature which the ordinary American of the educated farming and working class reads, and a study of the kind of literature which those Americans who are least coloured by European influences produce, lead me to think that the Bible and Christian theology altogether do more in the way of forming the imaginative background to an average American view of the world of man and nature than they do in modern Protestant Europe.

No one is so thoughtless as not to sometimes ask himself what would befall mankind if the solid fabric of belief on which their morality has hitherto rested, or at least been deemed by them to rest, were suddenly to break up and vanish under the influence of new views of nature, as the ice-fields split and melt when they have floated down into a warmer sea. Moral-

ity with religion for its sanction has hitherto been the basis of social polity, except under military despotisms: would morality be so far weakened as to make social polity unstable? and if so, would a reign of violence return? In Europe this question does not seem urgent, because in Europe the physical force of armed men which maintains order is usually conspicuous, and because obedience to authority is everywhere in Europe matter of ancient habit, having come down little impaired from ages when men obeyed without asking for a reason. But in America, the whole system of government seems to rest not on armed force, but on the will of the numerical majority, a majority most of whom might well think that its overthrow would be for them a gain. So sometimes, standing in the midst of a great American city, and watching the throngs of eager figures streaming hither and thither, marking the sharp contrasts of poverty and wealth, an increasing mass of wretchedness and an increasing display of luxury, knowing that before long a hundred millions of men will be living between ocean and ocean under this one government — a government which their own hands have made, and which they feel to be the work of their own hands — one is startled by the thought of what might befall this huge yet delicate fabric of laws and commerce and social institutions were the foundation it has rested on to crumble away. Suppose that all these men ceased to believe that there was any power above them, any future before them, anything in heaven or earth but what their senses told them of; suppose that their consciousness of individual force and responsibility, already dwarfed by the overwhelming power of the multitude, and the fatalistic submission it engenders, were further weakened by the feeling that their swiftly fleeting life was rounded by a perpetual sleep —

*Soles occidere et redire possunt:
Nobis, quum semel occidit brevis lux
Nox est perpetua una dormienda.*

Would the moral code stand unshaken, and with it the reverence for law, the sense of duty towards the community, and even towards the generations yet to come? Would men say "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die"? Or would

custom, and sympathy, and a perception of the advantages which stable government offers to the citizens as a whole, and which orderly self-restraint offers to each one, replace supernatural sanctions, and hold in check the violence of masses and the self-indulgent impulses of the individual? History, if she cannot give a complete answer to this question, tells us that hitherto civilized society has rested on religion, and that free government has prospered best among religious peoples.

America is no doubt the country in which intellectual movements work most swiftly upon the masses, and the country in which the loss of faith in the invisible might produce the completest revolution, because it is the country where men have been least wont to revere anything in the visible world. Yet America seems as unlikely to drift from her ancient moorings as any country of the Old World. It was religious zeal and the religious conscience which led to the founding of the New England colonies two centuries and a half ago — those colonies whose spirit has in such a large measure passed into the whole nation. Religion and conscience have been a constantly active force in the American commonwealth ever since, not, indeed, strong enough to avert many moral and political evils, yet at the worst times inspiring a minority with a courage and ardour by which moral and political evils have been held at bay, and in the long run generally overcome.

It is an old saying that monarchies live by honour and republics by virtue. The more democratic republics become, the more the masses grow conscious of their own power, the more do they need to live, not only by patriotism, but by reverence and self-control, and the more essential to their well-being are those sources whence reverence and self-control flow.