

AGNOSTICISM AND OTHER ESSAYS

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Agnosticism and other essays by Edgar Fawcett & Robert G. Ingersoll

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EDGAR FAWCETT & ROBERT G. INGERSOLL

**AGNOSTICISM AND
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BY

EDGAR FAWCETT

WITH A PROLOGUE BY

ROBERT G. INGERSOLL

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The greatest cause to a man
is a form of faith which
produces many inquiry"
Roman

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Unquestioned faith in our
by thought is a sentiment
only worthy of a savage

All are parts of one stupor
Whom. Whose body, what
And God the soul"
P...

*a power of ultimately a wider
than other man can attain
to achieve in some degree in all*

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in all!

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*Religious take their terms
I was once the Mahometan
and other creeds were used*

" 'Heaven help us!' said the old religion; the new one, from its very lack of that faith, will teach us all the more to help one another."

—GEORGE ELIOT'S LETTERS.

ROBERT G. INGERSOLL'S PRO-
LOGUE.

I.

EDGAR FAWCETT.

EDGAR FAWCETT—a great poet, a metaphysician and logician—has been for years engaged in exploring that strange world wherein are supposed to be the springs of human action. He has sought for something back of motives, reasons, fancies, passions, prejudices, and the countless tides and tendencies that constitute the life of man.

He has found some of the limitations of mind, and knows that beginning at that luminous centre called consciousness, a few short steps bring us to the prison wall where vision fails and all light dies. Beyond this wall the eternal darkness broods. This gloom is "the other world" of the

supernaturalist. With him, real vision begins where the sight fails. He reverses the order of nature. Facts become illusions, and illusions the only realities. He believes that the cause of the image, the reality, is behind the mirror.

A few centuries ago the priests said to their followers : The other world is above you ; it is just beyond where you see. Afterwards the astronomer with his telescope looked, and asked the priests : Where is the world of which you speak ? And the priests replied : It has receded—it is just beyond where you see.

I As long as there is "a beyond" there is room for the priests' world. Theology is the geography of this beyond.

Between the Christian and the Agnostic there is the difference of assertion and question—between "There is a God" and "Is there a God?" The Agnostic has the arrogance to admit his ignorance, while the Christian from the depths of humility impudently insists that he knows.

Mr. Fawcett has shown that at the root of religion lies the coiled serpent of fear, and that ceremony, prayer, and worship are ways and means to gain the assistance or soften the heart of a supposed deity.

He also shows that as man advances in knowledge he loses confidence in the watchfulness of Providence and in the efficacy of prayer. †

II.

SCIENCE.

THE savage is certain of those things that cannot be known. He is acquainted with origin and destiny, and knows everything except that which is useful. The civilized man, having outgrown the ignorance, the arrogance, and the provincialism of savagery, abandons the vain search for final causes, for the nature and origin of things.

In nearly every department of science man is allowed to investigate, and the discovery of a new fact is welcomed, unless it threatens some creed.

Of course there can be no advance in a religion established by infinite wisdom. The only progress possible is in the comprehension of this religion.

For many generations what is known under a vast number of disguises and behind many masks as the Christian religion has been propagated and preserved by