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CONTEMPORARY THOUGHT AND THINKERS



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CONTEMPORARY THOUGHT AND THINKERS

SELECTED FROM THE *SPECTATOR*

BY

RICHARD HOLT HUTTON M.A. (LONDON)
FELLOW OF UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, LONDON

IN TWO VOLUMES—VOL. II

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CONTENTS

		PAGE
1.	DR. MARTINEAU ON PROFESSOR TYNDALL. 1874.	1
2.	DR. MARTINEAU. 1885	11
3.	DR. MARTINEAU'S TYPES OF ETHICAL THEORY. 1885	19
4.	DR. MARTINEAU'S "STUDY OF RELIGION." 1888 .	46
5.	THE LATE F. D. MAURICE. 1884 . . .	80
6.	WALTER BAGEHOT. 1877	96
7.	MR. RUSKIN ON WORDSWORTH. 1880 . . .	106
8.	MR. RUSKIN ON NATURE AND MIRACLE. 1873 .	114
9.	WORDSWORTH THE MAN. 1880	121
10.	DEAN STANLEY. 1881	129
11.	WILLIAM RATHBONE GREG. 1881 . . .	137
12.	CHARLES DARWIN. 1882 (April 22nd) . . .	145
13.	RECLUSES AND THE WORLD. 1882 . . .	153
14.	PROFESSOR SHAIRP'S "ASPECTS OF POETRY." 1882	159
15.	POETRY AND PESSIMISM. 1882	174
16.	THE LATE LORD HOUGHTON'S POEMS. 1876 .	182
17.	THE LATE LORD HOUGHTON. 1885 . . .	190
18.	TENNYSON'S POEM ON "DESPAIR." 1881 . .	197
19.	"LOCKSLEY HALL" IN YOUTH AND AGE. 1886 .	204
20.	WILLIAM GEORGE WARD. 1882	213

PAGE

21. Dean Church's "Bacon." 1884 . . . 221
22. Dean Church on the Psalms. 1885 . . 232
23. Dean Church. 1890 239
24. Dean Church's "Oxford Movement." 1891 . 246
25. The Theology of "Robert Elsmere." 1888 . 263
26. Cardinal Newman. 1890 270
27. Sir Walter Scott in Adversity. 1890 . . 279
28. Bishop Thirlwall. 1874 and 1875 . . . 288
29. Archbishop Magee. 1891 (May 9th) . . . 297
30. The Conscience of Animals. 1876 . . . 304
31. Sir John Lubbock on "The Little Busy Bee." 1874 315
32. The "Sociology" of Ants. 1879 . . . 322
33. Sir John Lubbock on Ants. 1877 . . . 331
34. Insect Conservatism. 1880 340
35. Ants as Farmers. 1881 348
36. Ants and their Polity. 1881 356
37. Sir John Lubbock on the Study of Wasps. 1881 363
38. Sir John Lubbock on the Duty of Happiness. 1886 372

I

DR. MARTINEAU ON PROFESSOR TYNDALL

1874

THE ablest criticism which Professor Tyndall's eloquent but not altogether lucid lecture on the meaning and proper limits of the Materialistic hypothesis, has, so far as I know, drawn as yet from any philosophical thinker, is a lecture just published by Dr. Martineau, on "Religion as affected by Modern Materialism,"[1] delivered to Manchester New College, on its opening for the present session. There are, indeed, one or two affirmations in the earlier part of the lecture which seem not only questionable, but gravely misleading, as, for instance, that "Religion first reaches its true ground when, leaving the problem of what has happened, it takes its stand on what for ever *is*,"—for this seems to imply, even accepting the slight qualification in the sentence which follows, that if history and science showed us constant degradation instead of constant evolution of higher forms, and filled us with anticipations from which reasonable hope,—hope, that is, measured by experience,—was utterly excluded, the Religion of the soul would just as certainly assert the supremacy of righteous-

[1] Williams and Norgate.

ness and the love of God, as it does now with the united voices of revelation and experience to help it out. Nor do I sympathise with the implied regret which Dr. Martineau expresses, in his few prefatory sentences, for being obliged, for once, to be in "the wrong camp,"—in other words, to take the side of the theologian against the side of the physicist. It is true that theology, in its blindness and its arrogance, has committed many sins in discouraging and frowning down humble, simple, and honest physical investigations; and no doubt, if that were all, there would be a presumption against the attitude which theology takes in dealing with physical investigation. But it is quite as true that physical investigation has often been arrogant and ignorant in its attacks on theology, and has, perhaps, done fully as much harm by rudely shaking half-cultivated religious faith to its very basis, as ever theology did by gloomy bigotry and hard repression. To which side the balance of culpable offence inclines will be decided differently by every one, according to his estimate of the relative degree of falsehood in the position of a mind scared away from innocent and noble science by a gloomy theology, and of a mind rendered dubious and ashamed of its religious faith by a flippant scientific creed. But, at all events in the present day, and amongst intellectually cultivated people, it takes, I think, more courage to make a stand against the presumptuous modesty of the philosophy of nescience, than against the narrow bigotry of theological restriction.

But when Dr. Martineau comes to close quarters with Professor Tyndall, he shows no reluctance to deal plainly and steadily with that great physicist's rather ambiguous premisses and his wholly untenable

conclusion. And both Dr. Martineau's analysis of the large assumptions involved in the atomic philosophy of life favoured by Professor Tyndall,—assumptions which virtually amount to wrapping up in the premisses all that is wanted in the conclusions,—and also his criticism on the generous allowance made by Professor Tyndall for other elements in human nature, besides the knowing faculties, are equally masterly. I shall limit myself to the latter part of the discussion,—partly because I have in other papers said a good deal on the weak points of the Materialistic philosophy, partly because the geniality of the concluding part of Professor Tyndall's address at Belfast was certainly very persuasive, and yet, in my belief, he there awarded, with great show of cordiality and respect, to the religious faculties of human nature, nothing but the shells of the oyster of which he had just assigned the whole nutritive part to the faculty of scientific investigation.

Professor Tyndall's position in relation to religion is a strange one. It is enunciated in one or two different forms, which I will here cite. Men of science, he says, "fail to touch that immovable basis of the religious sentiment in the nature of man. To yield this sentiment reasonable satisfaction is the problem of problems at the present hour. And grotesque in relation to scientific culture as many of the religions of the world have been and are,—dangerous, nay, destructive to the dearest privileges of freemen as some of them undoubtedly have been and would, if they could, be again,—it will be wise to recognise them as the forms of a force, mischievous if permitted to intrude on the regions of *knowledge*, over which it holds no command, but capable of

being guided to noble issues in the region of *emotion*, which is its proper and elevated sphere." At the conclusion of his lecture, Professor Tyndall put his view thus:—So long, he says, as the human mind broods over the mystery of our origin "without intolerance or bigotry of any kind, but with the enlightened recognition that ultimate fixity of conception is here unattainable, and that each succeeding age must be held free to fashion the mystery in accordance with its own needs,—then, casting aside all the restrictions of Materialism, I would affirm this to be a field for the noblest exercise of what, in contrast with the knowing faculties, may be called the *creative* faculties of men. 'Fill thy heart with it,' said Goethe, 'and then name it as thou wilt.' Goethe himself did this in untranslatable language. Wordsworth did it in words known to all Englishmen, and which may be regarded as a forecast and religious vitalisation of the latest and deepest scientific truth,"—and then Professor Tyndall quotes the well-known lines written near Tintern Abbey, about

> "a sense sublime
> Of something far more deeply interfused
> Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
> And the round ocean, and the living air,
> And the blue sky, and in the mind of man:
> A motion and a spirit that impels
> All thinking things, all objects of all thoughts,
> And rolls through all things."

A more confused condition of mind than these two passages indicate in Professor Tyndall as to the true sphere of religion, it would not be easy to portray. In the first, religion is presented as having no busi-

ness in the region of knowledge at all, but as having a noble calling in relation to the shaping of emotions. In the second, the sphere of religion is said to be positively 'creative,' and we are told that its business is to shape 'the mystery' from which man has emerged, at will, according to our *needs*,—on condition it takes full care to admit that those needs do not in all probability correspond to the mysterious fact, but change with every mind that ponders over it. But then, finally, Professor Tyndall produces, as the noblest expression of religion, what he regards as a "vitalisation of the latest and deepest scientific truth." What, then, does he really regard as the sphere of religion? The free engendering of noble emotions towards the Unknown? or a free invention or creation of *theories* about the Unknown, which would suit our momentary needs, if only these theories were true, which we must take care to remember they cannot be? or an effort so to interpret and grasp the Known as to indulge towards it suitable emotions of delight and awe? All these views of the matter seem to me to lie in Professor Tyndall's mind, though they are completely different from each other, and only the last seems worthy of him. What can be more sentimental than to cherish emotions the object of which is unknowable, with the mere idea of elevating oneself? "The lifting of the life," says Professor Tyndall, "is the essential point." Yes, but what *is* "lifting" the life? It is, no doubt, lifting the life to encourage a stronger enthusiasm for truth, but if that is what Professor Tyndall means, then the religious sphere and the sphere of knowledge are so far from being apart, that they are identical, though the one relates to the joy in knowledge and the

craving for it, and the other to the mastery of it. But then, if this be so, how is religion creative at all? Instead of fashioning "the mystery" at will and according to our "needs," what religion, taken in this sense, demands of us is to fashion the mystery only in accordance with what we discover, and to adapt our needs to our knowledge. That would appear to be Professor Tyndall's own view, when he panegyrises Wordsworth for having "vitalised" the "latest and deepest scientific truth." To vitalise the latest and deepest scientific truth is surely very different from shaping the mystery of origin according to our deepest cravings, and then indulging ourselves in emotions towards this imaginary and ever-changing phantom, as if it were something real. Professor Tyndall either means that religion consists in trying to realise the full meaning of scientific truth, to feel loyal and grateful to it, and exultant in its progress,—in which case, he utterly discredits his own view of religion as a "creative" faculty, sentences her to be the mere handmaid of science, and forbids all false ebullitions of unjustified emotion towards the great enigma; or else he enjoins upon us simply to "lift" ourselves by the help of religion, without telling us whither or by what means we are to be lifted, setting us a problem at least as puzzling as that suggested by the friend who spoke to him of the difficulty of raising yourself up by your own waistband.

Now, if Professor Tyndall really adheres to the conception of religion which makes it an effort to grasp the *spirit* of scientific teaching, and to foster loyal and earnest feelings towards science, he has clearly no right to speak of the religious faculties of man as a great and independent constituent of his

being. On the contrary, all the excellence of such religion vanishes, if it does not follow, absolutely and minutely, as the shadow follows the direction of the light, the faculties of knowledge. But if he really means to assign it a "creative" sphere, or a sphere of freely-shaped "emotion," then he exposes himself at once to Dr. Martineau's close and admirable criticism :—

"Hence arises, I think, an inevitable contradiction between the scientific hypothesis and the personal characteristics of a high-souled disciple of the modern negative doctrine. For his supreme affections no adequate Object and no corresponding Source is offered in the universe: if they look back for their cradle, they see through the forest the cabin of the savage or the lair of the brute ; if they look forward for their justifying Reality and end, they fling vain arms aloft and embrace a vacancy. They cannot defend, yet cannot relinquish, their own enthusiasm : they bear him forward upon heroic lines that sweep wide of his own theory ; and transcending their own reputed origin and environment, they float upon vapours and are empty, self-poised by their own heat."

Or again, take this very fine delineation of the struggle which a noble mind, finding itself in possession of emotions which are utterly at variance with the general tendencies of "the mystery" out of which they were born, will undergo between the disposition to construe that mystery, falsely indeed, but according to its own moral "needs," and the disposition to bring its sentimental and hollow emotions into better keeping with the stern tendencies of "the mystery" itself :—

"On the hypothesis of a Mindless universe, such is the fatal breach between the highest inward life of man and his picture of the outer world. All that is sub-

jectively noblest turns out to be the objectively hollowest; and the ideal, whether in life and character, or in the beauty of the earth and heaven, which he had taken to be the secret meaning of the Real, is repudiated by it, and floats through space as a homeless outcast. Even in this its desolation a devoted disciple will say, 'I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest;' but how heavy the cross which he will have to bear! Religion, under such conditions, is a defiance of inexorable material laws in favour of a better which they have created, but cannot sustain,—a reaction of man against Nature, which he has transcended,—a withdrawal of the self which a resistless force pushes to the front,—a preservation of the weak whom Necessity crushes, a sympathy with sufferings which life relentlessly sets up,—a recognition of authoritative Duty which cannot be. Or will you perhaps insist that, in this contrariety between thought and fact, Religion must take the other side, discharge the *θεῖα ὀνείρατα* as illusory, and in her homage hold fast to the solid world? This might perhaps, in some sense, be, if you only gave us a world which it was possible to respect. But, by a curious, though intelligible affinity, the modern doctrine allies itself with an unflinching pessimism; it plays the cynic to the universe,—penetrates behind its grand and gracious airs, and detects its manifold blunders and impostures: what skill it has it cannot help; and the only faults and horrors that are *not* in it are those which are too bad to live. Human life, which is the summit that has been won, is pronounced but a poor affair at best; and the scene which spreads below and around is but as a battlefield at nightfall, with a few victors taking their faint shout away, and leaving the plain crowded with wounds and vocal with agony. Existence itself, insists Hartmann, is an evil, in proportion as its range is larger and you know it more, and that of cultivated men is worst of all; and the constitution of the world (so stupidly does it work) would be an unpardonable crime, did it issue from a power that knew what it

was about. How can these malcontents find any *Religion* in obeying such a power? Can they approach it with contumely at one moment, and with devotion at the next? If they think so ill of Nature, there can be no *reverence* in their service of her laws; on the contrary, they abandon what they revere to bend before what they revile. To this humiliation the more magnanimous spirits will never stoop; they will find some excuse for still clinging to the ideal forms they cannot verify; will go apart with them with a high-toned love which stops short of faith, but is full of faithfulness; will linger near the springs of poetry and art, and there forget awhile the disenchanted Actual; and will wonder perhaps whether this half-consecrated ground may not suffice, when the temples are gone, to give an asylum to the worshippers. Such loyalty of heart towards the harmonies that *ought* to prevail, with disaffection towards the discords that *do* prevail, may indeed lift the character of a man to an elevation half-divine; and in his presence, Nature, were she not blind, might start to see that she had produced a god. But for all that, she is not going to succumb to him; she can call up her lower brood to suppress him, or monsters to chain him to her rock. He contends with the lower forces, believing them to be the stronger, and fights his losing battle against hordes of inferiors, ever swarming to overwhelm what is too good for the world. Such religion as remains to him is a religion of despair,—a pathetic defiance of an eternal baser power. And if there be anything tragic in earth or heaven, it is the proud desolation of a mind which has to regard itself as Highest, to know itself the seat of some love and justice and devotion to the good, and to look upon the system of the Universe as cruel, ugly, stupid, and mean."

Professor Tyndall should turn his mind to these considerations, and not content himself with telling us, as he did his Belfast audience, in his own airy

manner, that the sphere of emotion, of creative thought, of the "vitalisation" of science, is still open to religion, even after you have admitted that the origin of things and the principle of the world's order is an insoluble mystery, on which no two generations can ever be expected to think alike. I fear that in that magnificent manner of his he made religion a present of a very barren kingdom. And if he really believes that the religious faculties of men are so deep-rooted as to demand an eternal satisfaction, perhaps he would do most to give them that satisfaction, by so revising his theory as to make room for a *knowable* object of reverence, loyalty, and love.

II

DR. MARTINEAU

1885

DR. MARTINEAU,—who has this week retired from his duties as Principal of Manchester New College, after a laborious career, which has now passed the fourscore years which are said to make the strength of man "labour and sorrow," though they certainly do not effect this in his case,—has been one of those brilliant teachers whom, if he had lectured in the University of Edinburgh, or of Cambridge, or of Oxford, or of Paris, or of Vienna, or of Heidelberg, or of Berlin, thinkers would have travelled thousands of miles to attend. As a matter of fact, he has been engaged, as Callicles said of Socrates, and as Dr. Martineau said of himself on Wednesday, when referring to the famous passage in Plato's *Gorgias*, in discoursing to "two or three boys in a corner," from a mind saturated with learning, kindled by genius, and curiously combining the subtlety of a great psychologist with an almost strategical apprehension and methodical projection of the moral and intellectual field which it was his duty to survey. The late Sir William Hamilton once described the late Professor De Morgan as "curiously deficient in

architectonic power." If it had ever come in his way to describe and criticise Dr. Martineau, he might perhaps have found fault with him for something like an excess of that of which he attributed a deficiency to the great mathematician. If there be any fault on either side, for instance, in the book I have reviewed at length, which has recently been issued from the Clarendon Press on *Types of Ethical Theory*, it is certainly on the side of too elaborate and scientific a mapping out of the province with which he had to deal. The reader who only glances at the index is as likely to be alarmed by reading of "Idio-psychological" and "Hetero-psychological Ethics," as students of Hamilton were by the multitude of distinctions between Monists, Natural Dualists, Cosmothetic Idealists, etc., with which his pages abounded. Amongst those who take pleasure in mapping human systems of thought almost for the sake of the maps themselves, Dr. Martineau may rank almost with Sir William Hamilton, though he does not devote so great an amount of effort to the task of classifying exhaustively the whole field of truth and error, as the great Edinburgh thinker. Still, he is certainly one of those who take real pleasure even in arranging correctly the many varieties of human speculative effort.

What I have said on that subject, however, only comes to this, that Dr. Martineau is one of those who loves to command from afar the possible and actual divergences of human thought, and while he is working in one part of the field, to apprehend distinctly the relation which that part bears to the remainder. If that were all, Dr. Martineau would never have been the great teacher he is. For the

number of those thinkers who have had in them a real passion for wide classification and survey has not been small. But Dr. Martineau has combined this faculty of wide survey with a singular subtlety in interpreting the intellectual and spiritual significance of human experience, and a singularly lofty strenuousness in pressing home that significance on other minds. He is the impersonation of "that severe, that earnest air," which Matthew Arnold tells us truly that mere Nature does not understand, and must even disavow:—

> "There is no effort on my brow,
> I do not strive, I do not weep;
> I rush with the swift spheres and glow
> In joy, and when I will, I sleep.
> Yet that severe, that earnest air,
> I saw, I felt it once, but where?"

That "severe, that earnest air," is felt in everything which Dr. Martineau says or writes. An ascetic he is not, in his ethical theory; but there is something of the glow of the ascetic in his pictures of duty. Indeed, there is a depth of sympathy in his delineation of the stoic's idol "hewn from the granite masses of spiritual strength" which you can hardly find in his picture of any other doctrine which he rejects. Those who know his sermons will find in them a vein of displeasure against the utilitarian or "hedonistic" theory of life far deeper even than his philosophical refutation of that theory would warrant. He insists that men who think themselves best when they are happiest, are "infected with the fever of self." He delights to show that it is those on whose gratitude God has the greatest claims who are most disposed, and that

precisely in virtue of those claims, "to judge harshly of his government." "Where," he asks, in one of the finest passages which our modern pulpit has produced, where is it that God, in his searching of the hearts of his children, "hears the tones of deepest love, and sees on the uplifted face the light of the most heartfelt gratitude? Not where his gifts are most profuse, but where they seem most meagre; not where the suppliant's worship glides forth from the cushion of luxury through lips satiated with plenty and rounded by health; not within the halls of successful ambition, or even the dwellings of unbroken domestic peace; but where the outcast, flying from persecution, kneels in the evening on the rock whereon he sleeps; by the fresh grave, where, as the earth is opened, Heaven in answer opens too; by the pillow of the wasted sufferer, where the sunken eye, denied sleep, converses with a silent star, and the hollow voice enumerates in low prayer, the scanty list of comforts, and the shortened tale of hopes." The theory that virtue, or even beauty of character, either generates, or is generated by, an affluence of enjoyments, is one wholly at variance, not merely with Dr. Martineau's ethical convictions, but with the deepest grain of his character. He is not an ascetic, because he does not believe in the regenerating power of self-inflicted suffering; but he does embody in all his writings that deep belief in a morality above Nature, and able even to renounce Nature, of which Matthew Arnold has given us Nature's own view in the lines,—

> "'Ah! child,' she cries, 'that strife divine,
> Whence was it, for it is not mine?'"

The strenuousness, the arduous endeavour, the exalted sense at once of the infinite difficulty of the higher moral tasks and of the infinite generosity of help by which they are rendered possible, pervade almost all Dr. Martineau's writings, till one could fancy that Mr. Arnold had had Dr. Martineau in his mind in the lines which were, we suspect, actually inspired by memories of his father.

As an ethical teacher, Bishop Butler has had no more original and brilliant follower than Dr. Martineau. Bishop Butler's doctrine that passive impressions grow less and less efficient with repetition, while active habits grow more and more efficient, is one that Dr. Martineau has illustrated with great variety of power and pushed further than Butler himself. Perhaps nothing more solid has been added of late years to the principles of ethics than his analysis of sentimentality, and his teaching that, while the direct affections inspired by human character have the highest claims upon us, the wish to feel affections which we do not feel, is relatively a thoroughly spurious desire, which has no such claim upon us at all. Action, he insists, as Butler had insisted, "is the proper school of affection; and Christianity values not the pure heart as the tool for producing serviceable deeds, but the good deeds as at once the expression and the nourishment of that greatest of possessions, a good mind." "Indeed, no one can have a true idea of right, until he does it; any genuine reverence for it, till he does it often and with cost; any peace ineffable in it, till he does it always and with alacrity."

Doubtless, however, Dr. Martineau's teaching has been at once strongest and most subtle in exposing the various expedients by which intellectual theorists

have tried to persuade men that their will is an illusion, and that they are really the mere creatures woven from an eternal web of evolution. Throughout the almost interminable controversy between the devotees of causality on the one hand, and the believers in true volition on the other, he has travelled with a patience and a candour, a power of appreciating the full strength of his opponents, and a power of confronting them with the actual asseverations of consciousness, which no philosophical teacher in any age has surpassed. As an illustration of his thoroughness, I may adduce the fact that in dealing with the argument that the perfect prescience of God seems to many thinkers to imply the absolute determinateness of all future events, since according to their view there can be no knowledge of that which is not already determinate, Dr. Martineau has not shrunk from saying that, even if foreknowledge and freedom could be absolutely proved to be mutually contradictory,—which is not to be admitted,—we should be bound rather to insist on what consciousness asserts, namely, our real power of anti-impulsive effort, our real power of resisting the spontaneous drift of our own nature, than to surrender that positive assertion of our consciousness, in deference to an abstract conviction concerning the character of the divine omniscience which, after all, cannot be known to us at first-hand. Moreover, he has shown that divine providence in the highest sense might exist without absolute foreknowledge, since providence, so far from being confined to the cases of absolute prescience, might range over all the possible alternatives of human free-will, and provide for all alike. I only refer to this deep matter here by way of showing how thoroughly, and with what profound

candour, Dr. Martineau has treated some of the favourite dilemmas of necessarian psychologists and divines.

Take Dr. Martineau's teaching as a whole, and I should call it by far the ablest vindication of the philosophy implicitly assumed in Christianity which our age has produced, though it has resulted in his case in his acceptance of the Christian faith under one of the least powerful and least effective of its actual forms,—a spiritual and Christian type of Theism. In philosophy Dr. Martineau is to the roots of his being Christian. In exegetical criticism, and in his excessive sympathy with the practical scepticism of science on the subject of physical miracle, he finds the separating film dividing him from the theological creed by which, for nearly all the centuries of her life, the Christian Church has been penetrated. He leads others to conclusions into which he cannot follow them, and occasionally watches, with a mingled feeling of sympathy and wonder, the conquests made by revelation over the minds which his own teaching had prepared to receive it. He watches, too, with less sympathy, and perhaps also less wonder, the not unfrequent passing-over to agnosticism of those who have felt the force of his sceptical criticism more keenly than they have felt the force of his spiritual philosophy.

Mr. Watt's great portrait of Dr. Martineau, exhibited some years ago in the Academy,—an embodiment of melancholy wonder and almost ghostly speculation,—is, no doubt, in some respects, a caricature. It does not give any adequate impression of Dr. Martineau's keen and penetrating vision which almost suggests the glance of a commander in the field, and which perfectly expresses the well-marked

definition of his aims,—and it does not even suggest the lucidity of his method and that capacity for a firm engineering of the possibilities of life, by which he has been distinguished. Mr. Watt's wonderful portrait, striking as it is, is too much the portrait of a dreamer. Dr. Martineau has dreamt his dreams like other men, and they have been loftier than those of other men. But his foot has always been firmly planted on the real earth; and few men have known better than he that without realism idealism is impotent, just as without idealism realism itself is only a shifting cloud of dust.

III

DR. MARTINEAU'S TYPES OF ETHICAL THEORY [1]

1885

THIS is unquestionably one of the most powerful of those not too numerous books which the rare philosophical genius of English thinkers has produced. Mainly historical as it is in its structure, it is the history of ethical systems as treated by one who has a fixed standard of his own by which to judge and estimate the philosophy of others. Dr. Martineau's account of the greater ethical systems is so happy in its choice of the strongest types, and so vivid, as well as so learned and subtle in picturing them, that it is impossible to read what he tells us of any of these great thinkers without feeling the deepest interest both in the system delineated and in the mind of the critic who is showing us so brilliantly, while he describes another, where and why the thought of that other succeeds or fails in satisfying himself. I doubt whether another book on Ethics so original as this has been published since Bishop Butler published his *Three Sermons on Human Nature;* and certainly, to my knowledge, no book has ever been published in

[1] *Types of Ethical Theory*, by James Martineau, D.D., LL.D. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

the English language indicating the same deep study of the history of Ethics, the same brilliant and keen insight into the turning-points of ethical problems, and the same large command of philosophical method. Dr. Martineau combines the thoroughness and laboriousness of Teutonic scholarship with the lucidity, the precision, and often the vivacity of French exposition. And if his book is not widely read in England, it will only be a proof how little depth there is in the English interest in philosophical pursuits. Doubtless, to those whose interest in Ethics is, in the narrower sense, *moral*, this book must, of course, appear a very hard one, for Dr. Martineau is never content to separate the ethical portion of any great thinker's system from the general structure of it, and to deal with it apart. He is not satisfied without giving us a picture of the whole field of which the ethical theory too often forms a very subordinate department; and as that whole field is, in some cases,—especially those of Plato and Spinoza,—sprinkled freely with somewhat severe abstractions, the mere moralist bent on finding a clear discrimination of the dictates of conscience and of their significance, will find himself at times encountering stiff theories in which he will take but little interest, and which will seem to him very remote from the object of his search. But it is not at all as a mere moralist that Dr. Martineau writes. He writes rather as a philosophical thinker of the first order,—one of the very highest order of those who have dealt with this class of subjects in the modern world,—and yet as one who sees in the question whether there is or is not a true law of moral obligation, the test question of all philosophy, the question on which depends the resolution of the further and deeper doubt whether

the human intellect be chiefly a fertile source of more or less inadequately veiled illusions, or an organ for the apprehension of genuine truth. Viewed from this point of view, of course the search for a true ethical theory becomes inseparable from the search for a true general philosophy; and it would have been quite as impossible for Dr. Martineau to have separated the ethical theory of such thinkers as Plato, Spinoza, or Comte from their general system, as it would be for a mathematician to discuss a treatise on navigation without any reference to the general principles of spherical magnitude and measurement. When the reason why a thinker goes astray in his Ethics is not to be found in his Ethics, so much as in his general philosophical assumptions, it is, of course, essential for a true critic to exhibit these general philosophical assumptions with force and accuracy, in order that the root of ethical error may be exhibited with force and accuracy too. In the whole of the first volume, Dr. Martineau is dealing with systems of this kind, systems, as he calls them, of an essentially "unpsychological" character—systems, that is, not beginning in a study of the human character, but in general assumptions concerning the universe at large, of which man himself is treated as a subordinate and dependent part. Dr. Martineau's first volume, then, deals with systems of Ethics which are not in their root ethical, which do not direct themselves straight to the question—What do we *mean* by right and wrong, and what are the conditions upon which alone the ideas universally attached to right and wrong can be justified and accepted as a sure and safe guidance? but which assume some creed as to the constitution of all things, which predetermines for man what his nature and moral constitution *must be*, instead of in-

vestigating directly what it is. These systems Dr. Martineau calls unpsychological, because they do not begin at the place which, from man's point of view at all events, is the safest, namely, what we know about ourselves, but rather affect to determine what we *might* infer with certainty as to our own thoughts and principles of action, derivatively from what we are supposed to know (much less certainly) as to the origin or no-origin of things in general. In an admirable passage of his Introduction, Dr. Martineau shows us how essential to the right answering of the question concerning the principle of moral obligation, is the point of view from which you put it. If you regard the moral law, and the relation of the human character to that law, as simply an outcome of some greater power, whether that power be divine, or natural, or neither divine nor natural, but in its essence, though not in its method, unknowable by us, it is highly improbable that you can derive any true ethical principle from such assumptions. For such thinkers aim at determining, not what Ethics is, but what the origin of all things, Ethics included, is, and that is much too ambitious a mode of approach to lead up to the true answer. These "unpsychological" systems either derive everything in man from what is outside man, or dispense with man as an independent factor in the universe altogether. For the most part, they treat his sense of power as a pure illusion, and either completely overshadow him by supernatural or natural control, or else regard the whole idea of power as a misleading idea, the source of a vast number of other misleading ideas which have placed man in a fancy world of his own, and led him after all sorts of mischievous will-o'-the wisps into fens and bogs where truth is not :—

"What these objects are that constitute the scene around him [man], may be expressed in two words,—Nature and God;—understanding by the former the totality of perceptible phenomena; and by the latter, the eternal ground and cause whose essence they express. These two are the companions that no one can ever quit, change as he may his place, his age, his society; they fill the very path of time on which he travels, and the fields of space into which he looks; and the questions what they are, and what exactly they have to do with him, cannot but affect the decision of what he ought to be. Whether you will first address yourselves to *them*, or will rather make your commencement with *him*, may seem a matter of small moment, inasmuch as all three must be relatively surveyed; but in fact it makes the greatest difference,—the whole difference between the most opposite schools of opinion, between an objective and a subjective genesis of doctrine, between ancient and modern philosophy. If you give priority to the study of nature and God, and resort to them as your nearest given objects, you are certain to regard them as the better known, and to carry the conceptions you gain about them into the remaining field as your interpreters and guides: you will explain the human mind by their analogy, and expect in it a mere extension of their being. If, on the other hand, you permit the human mind to take the lead of these objects in your inquiry, the order of inference will naturally be reversed; and with the feeling that it is the better known, you will rather believe what the soul says of them, than what they have to say about the soul. In both instances, no doubt, they stand related to man as macrocosm to microcosm; and we may be asked, 'What matters it whether we think of man as a finite epitome of the universe, or of the universe as the infinite counterpart of man?' In the last resort, the difference, I believe, will be found to consist in this, that when self-consciousness is resorted to as the primary oracle, an assurance is obtained, and is carried out into the scheme of things, of a free preferential power;

but when the external whole is the first interrogated, it affords no means of detecting such a power, but, exhibiting to the eye of observation a course of necessary evolution, tempts our thought to force the same type of development upon the human soul. In the one case we obtain a volitional theory of nature; in the other, a naturalistic theory of volition; and on the resulting schemes of morals the great difference is impressed, that according to the respective modes of procedure, the doctrine of proper responsibility is admitted or denied. Thus then we obtain our first distinction of method, deducing it simply from the opposite lines of direction which the order of investigation may take. Ethics may pursue their course and construct their body of doctrine either from the moral sentiments outwards into the system of the world; or from the system of the world inwards to the moral sentiments. The former method may be called the *Psychologic;* the latter we will for the present oppose to it by the mere negative designation of the *Unpsychologic.*"

This sufficiently describes the reason for considering such metaphysical systems as Plato's and Spinoza's "unpsychological," for both are reasoned out from assumptions which are far less certain than the moral elements of our nature, to conclusions which contradict the moral assumptions of our nature; both treat man as one of the manifestations of some anterior existence, without any independent significance in himself. But there is a further distinction between these two unpsychologic systems, which certainly marks one of them,—that of Spinoza,—as even more completely inconsistent with any principle that we could call ethical, than the other. In the system of Plato, that which is beyond the universe, that of which the universe is a manifestation, is assumed to be infinitely greater than the universe. The universe is not regarded by Plato as expressing the fulness of the

Platonic ideas, nor the fulness of Plato's God. The universe, as we know it, is a mere *specimen* of the wealth of the realities and the energies and the purposes behind it. In other words, the universe, as we see it, is nothing when compared with that which it partially manifests. This is why Plato's system is called *Transcendental*, as distinguished from Spinoza's, in which the universe is identified with God and God with the universe,—in which there is no intention which overlaps action, no purpose which overarches existence, so that God is the universe, and the universe is God, or at least, they are only to be distinguished by the very fine discrimination between *natura naturans* and *natura naturata*. Now, it is clear, that no doctrine which regards God as wholly expressed in the universe, as it is, can accept what we may call a divine *character*, as distinguished from the world which it has created. Accordingly, Spinoza tells us that God has no feelings, no intellect, no love, no aversion; that it is only in man,—only in the *natura naturata*,—that the *natura naturans* attains to anything like what we mean by character. The result of this assumption even on the view taken of the character of man himself, is obvious. Of course, if man is the work of a power,—if power it can be called,—without self-knowledge until man comes into creation, that self-knowledge itself must be treated as the creature of the blind necessity which determined it, and cannot be trusted for a moment, when it supposes itself to be free. A finite character which is the outcome of some infinite tendency, neither intellect nor feeling, neither love nor purpose, will never be able to turn round on the infinite blank in which it originated and assert its freedom. Hence, Spinoza's Pantheism is even less in keeping with any view of

Ethics that could attribute a real moral power to man, than Plato's Transcendentalism, which does, at least, ascribe the origin of man to the manifestation of a being of infinite goodness and infinite power, and infinitely beyond what the world has manifested.

When Dr. Martineau comes to the delineation of the third great type of unpsychological systems of Ethics, which he calls the physical, he selects Comte as his most typical thinker; not because Comte is materialist,—to him materialism hardly has a meaning,—but because Comte represents best the modern thinkers who get rid of the problem of moral obligation by simply denying altogether the existence of the conditions of moral obligation, and treating the universe as a painted veil, behind which it is simply impossible with any good result to search. Plato held that the universe manifests some great and infinitely good power; Spinoza held that it manifests what it manifests, that it could in no wise be other than it is, but that what it is, is at least as much intellectual as physical, and perhaps even in some respects more intellectual than physical. Comte held that beyond appearances we have no business to look, and that almost all our errors in understanding appearances have been due to discerning something else behind appearances which we call realities, whereas the true realities consist in the appearances, and all that we call the realities beneath the appearances are unrealities which utterly mislead us. So far does he push this, that he treats man as a being altogether without true individuality. Finding on the surface so much that is complex in him, and treating the sense of personality, which is beneath the surface, as a misleading figment, he is obliged to tell us that the sense of self is a dangerous illusion, and that we are

not egos at all, but only "synergies" of a number of distinct faculties :—

"'Man is eminently multiple,' says Comte; using this phrase to denote, not the variety of capacities committed to the same indivisible agent, but the many organs of which now this group, and now that, may successively wake into energy and constitute the agent for the time being. Yet it cannot be denied that, to every one, doubt is impossible of the simple persistency of his personal essence through all his changes of mood and character. The question at issue is, therefore, what is the order of true relation under which we are to conceive the true recognised facts, the *personal unity* and the *facultative plurality* of the human being. The psychologist accepts and trusts the report of natural consciousness, and believes that the one individual manifests the many phenomena. Comte reverses the conception, and from the concurrence of many independent functions derives an illusory feeling of individuality. Asked to explain the mode of its origin, he can only assure us that it is merely the '*sympathy*' or the '*synergy*' of the several faculties,—words which account for nothing; for that several organs should *feel in combination*, or should *act in combination*, can never teach us that there is *no combination at all*. If each organ has its own feeling (and else there is no sympathy), how can the simultaneous existence of a number be nevertheless *not a number* but only *one?* And, amid continual change of the particular organs subscribing to make up an act or state, how can the resultant unity, the conscious self, remain the same? The thief who, under the excitement of acquisitiveness, secretiveness, and destructiveness, breaks open my house, shoots my servants, and carries off my plate, owes his individuality to the 'synergy' of these select endowments. Someawakening conversion brings into action his latent conscientiousness, benevolence, and veneration, and, struck with remorse, he makes confession and reparation. But the factors of his personality are now a different

set of powers, and the product of their synergy cannot therefore be the same: the man who stole is not the man who repents: the crime he bewails was the crime of another; his compunction is vicarious; and the postulates of all natural contrition are false. Every attempt to conceive of the personal essence of the human being as a mere confluence of independent streams of activity must end in such absurd and mischievous results; and incur the disadvantage of contradicting the fundamental deposition of all our consciousness, without even the compensation of a plausible explanation of its origin."

It will be clear at once to the reader that a system of which this view—thus brilliantly criticised by Dr. Martineau—is the key-note, plunges deeper into scepticism in relation to any possible Ethics than even Plato's or Spinoza's, since it breaks up altogether the individual to whom the problem of duty is presented. And yet, so inconsistent are human thinkers, Dr. Martineau shows, with his usual sympathetic insight, how much there is of moral nobility in Comte's system, in spite of this fundamental principle which violently denies to man any inner life at all.

Passing now from the non-psychological to the psychological systems, Dr. Martineau agrees, of course, with all the greater moralists, that what is approved and condemned by the moral faculty, is not the external action but the spring of action. And he differs from Mr. Sidgwick's supposition that we pass moral judgment on the actions of *others* before we pass them on ourselves, maintaining, and with a force for which it will hardly be possible for any thinker to find a satisfactory reply, that we cannot pass moral judgments on any one, except in virtue of the principles by which we either actually

measure, or have recognised that we ought to measure, ourselves. As Dr. Martineau points out, the convincing proof that it is so, is that if we discover that we have misjudged the *motive*, though not the *action* of another, our moral judgment immediately changes with the discovery; while, on the contrary, if an act of our own, done from unworthy motives, nevertheless turns out so well as to elicit approbation from others, that will make no difference in our self-condemnation. In other words, we judge the actions of others as we should judge our own, on the hypothesis that we have interpreted rightly the state of mind from which they proceeded; and yet we judge our own quite differently from the manner in which others judge them, where we *know* the state of mind from which they proceeded, while others misjudge it. If this be admitted, how is it possible to assert more explicitly that all our moral judgments are exclusively supplied by our own consciences, and are such as we should pass on ourselves if we had acted as we suppose those others to have acted?

Again, Dr. Martineau shows that we do not call an action wrong unless we are conscious of a competition between two different springs of action, and conscious of preferring the worse. This results in the following canon of right and wrong:—"Every action is right, which in presence of a lower principle follows a higher; every action is wrong, which in presence of a higher principle follows a lower." Hence, Dr. Martineau's view of the main function of moral philosophy is that it should draw out the comparative order of the ultimate springs of action,—none of which is *intrinsically* evil, or, if taken alone, and without the competition of a rival, other than natural,—and that it should so estimate both the

simple and compound springs of action as to explain the ethical differences between one character and another, and between the various claims of all on the moral reverence or disapprobation of mankind. Now, admitting as I do, that this accounts for the general tenor of our moral judgments, I find one serious difficulty in accepting this moral canon as complete; and, besides this, I would suggest one modification of *form* to bring it, as I think, more accurately into agreement with actual experience.

The serious difficulty is this. Dr. Martineau's canon seems to me to make no sufficient difference between decisions for which we feel that we ought to be, but are not, good enough, and decisions which it degrades us not to take,—between decisions which affect us with no sense of *guilt*, though they may show us that we are poor creatures, and decisions which we know to be sinful. Suppose that a man is hesitating whether he shall follow the promptings of benevolence and go to live a hard and dingy life in the East of London, instead of surrounding himself with peace and beauty in the country, it is clear, I suppose, that if he accepts the latter and easier destiny, knowing himself to be strong enough for the former, he does wrong, under Dr. Martineau's canon. But can you say that he commits a sin, in the sense in which it would be a sin for him to betray a trust under even the strongest temptation? It seems to me that Dr. Martineau's canon, while it explains the general difference between the highest conduct and conduct which is not the highest, hardly explains the difference between conduct that is definitely sinful, and conduct that is only wanting in the highest elements. Under Dr. Martineau's canon, it would seem to be just as wrong for a man who recognised

in himself a definite capacity and fitness for a great but difficult and self-sacrificing life, to shrink back from that life, as it would under the shelter of excuses of a more or less respectable character, to keep back the truth when he was pledged to tell the truth. Yet surely we think the latter a very definite sin, and the former only a confession of pardonable weakness. This is my main difficulty in accepting as adequate Dr. Martineau's moral canon.

My second suggestion is one that only affects the form of Dr. Martineau's canon. I am fully convinced that, so far as Dr. Martineau insists on the necessarily alternative character of the motive presented to us before any decision which we deliberately term moral or immoral, he is absolutely right. Nor do I doubt that he is substantially right when he maintains that what is necessarily *implied* in every such decision is the adhesion either to some higher spring of action to the exclusion of a lower, or to some lower spring of action to the exclusion of a higher, as the characteristic of the decision. But whether that is, psychologically speaking, the precise *form* in which the principle of conscience is most naturally expressed, I have some doubts. My doubt is whether the primary moral judgment be not rather, *in form*, a judgment comparing the *character* which proceeds on the higher principle with the character which proceeds on the lower, so far as the occasion draws these characters out, instead of one comparing merely the spring of action to which effect is given by the higher character to the spring of action to which effect is given by the lower. The difference is this:—A child, suppose, has a struggle in its own mind between its own hunger and the

claim of some still hungrier and less happy child to the food at its command. Now, how does the struggle present itself in that child's mind? Is it thus,—'Has pity more claim on me than my desire for food?' Or is it thus:—'Should not I be selfish if I let the other and hungrier child go without food that I may eat?' In other words, 'Would not so-and-so,'—probably a companion or a parent, or any one who suggests to the child the image it most reverences,—'think first of the stranger's hunger and next only of his own? Nay, does not *my own* better nature prompt me to think first of his needs and next only of my cravings?' I do not believe that 'right' and 'wrong' are ideas primarily attached to *actions*, but to *persons*. It is the thought of a *character*,—whether one's own or another's,—in which pity is preferred to appetite, that brings home the sense of obligation, and not (in form) the thought of the superiority of the principle of pity itself. The point I raise, however, is not entirely a question of form; for it often involves a difference in the resulting moral judgment. Suppose, what often happens, that the reference to the question how another,—another who represents for the moment the moral standard of the person subjected to temptation,—would act, should bring within the horizon of the questioner's thought a character penetrated by higher principles than *either* of those previously in conflict, then the knowledge that the character referred to would take a higher view altogether of the situation, may transform the whole aspect of the crisis, and elevate a third principle of action, different from either of the others, to the place of obligation. All I wish to insist on is, that primarily, right and wrong are adjectives attaching, not to actions, but to

the persons who perform the actions; it is they who are right or wrong in what they do, rather than the thing done which is right or wrong; and next, I insist that the judgment of conscience is passed on the *character* which yields itself to the higher or lower spring of action, not on the spring of action itself. The only reason I think the question important is that I hold the conscience to have a larger grasp than Dr. Martineau attributes to it, since if it gains a glimpse of any character which would under the circumstances of the case act from some higher principle than any of those which are at the moment struggling for the mastery, the whole moral issue may be thereby enlarged and lifted into a new field. In a word, I should say that conscience consists in the intuitive discernment of the higher attitude of character as a whole, in relation to the moral emergency of the moment, rather than in the intuitive discernment of the higher spring of action. The latter is no doubt involved *in* the former. But the former may go a good deal beyond the latter, and at all events the intuitive judgment directly concerns the former rather than the latter. It is not till the *person* who is pitiful is compared with the person who is selfish, or the person who is faithful and sincere in spite of danger, is compared with the person who is faithless and insincere in order to shelter himself from danger, that the conscience says definitively 'this one is right and that one wrong.' The practical difference between this view and Dr. Martineau's is this,—that in ordinary moral judgments it is seldom that so *few* only as two rival springs of action can be compared, though two at least must be. And the fact that a living character is judged,—and not a mere "spring of action,"—

tends to enlarge the moral field of view, and to cause us to weigh in the moral scales other actual or possible springs of action which may and often do alter the whole complexion of the case.

However, I must not dwell on a minute and somewhat trivial difference from Dr. Martineau, when my object is to call attention to the large and rich analysis of those ethical discriminations of which his treatment is so admirable. What can be abler or more powerful than the following reply to Bentham's assertion that all systems which rest upon a supposed specific moral faculty rest on a mere *ipse dixit* of the thinker's mind, and therefore on "a phantom of pretensions, which being but the shadow of one's self, the self may shift away"?—

"Bentham denounces all appeals to a moral faculty as sheer *ipse dixitism*,—a fraud by which incompetent philosophers would palm their own tastes and fancies upon mankind. And Paley, it is well known, ridicules as futile a moral authority which a man can disregard if he chooses, and which leaves it his own affair to give the obedience or pocket the consequences. Now, if nothing more were meant by these statements than that the presumed authority is simply felt in the individual consciousness, and is recognised only because it is so felt, we should admit them at once. It is exclusively on this 'subjective' report that we own and assert the moral claim; and if other credentials are demanded, we cannot give them, but must be content to maintain the sufficiency of these. The depositions of consciousness on this matter are all we have; but they are quite adequate to the weight they undertake to bear. If it be meant, that because the authority first turns up in my own consciousness, it is manufactured there, and carries with it no weight but that of personal whim,—the mere accident of individuality,—I cannot accept the inference. It certainly stands

in direct contradiction to the very nature of the consciousness itself, which distinctly announces a law over me not of my own making, and would be quite false, were there nothing present but a controversy between my own caprices. How can that be a mere self-assertion of my own will, to which my own will is the first to bend in homage, if not to move in obedience? Bentham describes the 'moral-sense man' as a sort of bully, intent on browbeating men into accepting the verdict he wants them to pronounce. But it is apparently forgotten that he wields against others no power that has not already prevailed with himself; and how we are to apply to his inner controversies the picture, drawn with such humorous exasperation, of his aggression upon the independence of his fellows, it is embarrassing to imagine. Does he manage himself by putting on domineering airs towards his own inclinations, and approaching them with some spurious baton of police, which is but a painted stick of his own fancy? Does he like to slap his own likings in the face, and amuse himself with despotisms of which he is himself the first victim? And if the moral sentiment be no more than a case of *sic volo, sic jubeo*, how is it that, by repeal of the volition, there is still no escape from the command? The power that creates law is adequate to alter law; and the sense of authority which we set up for ourselves we could assuredly put down for ourselves. Yet, as we are well aware, we can pretend to no such prerogative with respect to the claims of the moral consciousness: try as we may, we cannot turn lower into higher, or by enactment establish the obligations of perfidy. There is something here manifestly beyond the play of opinionative despotism. 'The notion of "rightness,"' says Mr. Sidgwick, 'is essentially positive,' 'and in the recognition of conduct as "right" is involved an authoritative prescription to do it.' Perhaps, however, it may be admitted that the sense of authority is an adequate ground of obligation for myself who feel it; but it may be maintained that it must have no further application in the criticism and estimate

of others. That honour is nobler than fraud *for me* is, in this case, no reason for supposing it to be so with others; this arrangement of the scale may possibly be contingent on some personal peculiarity—on its being my scale and not yours; and may be altered by removing into another mind. The higher excellence does not then belong to the principle of honour, as such, so as to go with it wherever it goes; but only to the accidental form which it has in one person and has not in another. Probably the simple statement of this interpretation of the 'subjective' doctrine is sufficient refutation of it. It no less contradicts the very nature of the moral feeling than the former view; the authority which reveals itself within us reports itself, not only as underived from our will, but as independent of our idiosyncrasies altogether. It is an integral function of the spring of action that wields it against all inferior members of the scale; is inseparable thence even in idea: transplant the impulse whithersoever you will, in no mind can it have conscious presence and free opportunity without its relative authority reappearing with it. That authority is not an outward sceptre that may be dropped from its grasp, or laid aside like the insignia of a monarch travelling in foreign lands; but the natural language and symbol of its very life and meaning, the loss of which would be the death of its identity."

And, again, what can be more powerful than the chapter on "Merit and Demerit," with its masterly reply to Mr. Leslie Stephen's very unsatisfactory mode of explaining merit and demerit by analysing away the possibility of either? Dr. Martineau holds that merit and demerit attach only to voluntary action,—right or wrong,—and in greater degree according as the voluntary right action was more difficult or the voluntary wrong action was more easy to reject:—

"Far from admitting the measure of merit on which I have insisted, Mr. Stephen reverses it; declaring that the man is most meritorious who has most virtue; and that consequently, if we assume that a certain task has to be performed, the man who performs it most easily is the most virtuous. Yet he admits that a good action proves merit so far as it implies difficulty to the average man. To reconcile these statements, he falls back upon the distinction between the outward and the inward: if the difficulty be in the severity of the external conjuncture, it heightens the merit of the internal conquest over it. If the difficulty arises from the internal intensity of the passion which obstructs the right, so that a tremendous effort is needed to give virtue the victory, it detracts from the merit. This I cannot admit: it shows, no doubt, that the habit of virtue is at present weak and precarious; but it also shows a vast strength of virtuous will in dealing with the momentary problem of duty; and is precisely the noble element which elevates into heroism the initial stages of every conversion from negligent to devoted life. The confusion arises from the false identification of degrees of merit with degrees of virtue. One who *has the greatest struggle to make* in order to achieve the task of duty is undoubtedly *inferior in virtue* to the man who throws it off with case; but one who *makes the struggle*, however great, has higher merit in the act than the man to whom it costs nothing. It undoubtedly follows from this method of award that if, in the intensity of the struggle, the will succumbs instead of triumphs, the *demerit* is less than it would have been, under surrender to a less vehement foe; and Mr. Stephen urges this consequence as conclusive against our doctrine: 'We are thus led,' he says, 'to excuse a man for the qualities which make him wicked; 'true, he committed a murder; but he was so spiteful that he could not help it:' or, 'he was exceedingly kind; but he is so good-natured that it cost him no effort:' obviously such reasoning is absurd.' It is absurd, however, only on the naturalistic assumption,

that virtue (like ἀρετὴ) is *the best state of each spring of action*, and that *merit is identical with virtue or proportioned to it:* in that case, every deviation from the best state, every want of equilibrium in the desires, though it be purely constitutional, detracts alike from a man's virtue and from his merit, not only impairing the perfection of the character he has, but exposing him to reproach for having it. But if, refusing thus to identify the natural and the moral, we assume that, over and above the character as it now comes from the past, there is a living personal power of victoriously siding with any of the suggestions which it brings, then it is not absurd to say, that that power may be meritoriously exercised from end to end of the ascent of virtue; and that he who still pants in the stifling air and toils through the mire of its low beginnings, may deserve as well as one who, perhaps born upon an Alp, looks down upon him from serener heights, and has no longer dangers to surmount. Does not the education of every family proceed upon this principle? Would you not give more credit to a timid child that told the truth against himself, than to the bold and frank who could conceal nothing if he would? to the lie-a-bed girl who sets herself never to be late, and never is, than to her sister who can no more sleep after six o'clock than the cock after dawn? to the passionate boy who forces himself, under provocation, to shut his lips and sit still, than to his meek brother who never had a flush upon his cheek, or a hot word upon his tongue? The simple fact is, that the conceptions of 'merit' and of 'responsibility' are strictly relative to the assumption or consciousness of Free-will; and only in the light of this assumption do they admit of any consistent interpretation."

There is nothing in Dr. Martineau's book more powerful,—nothing, perhaps, quite so powerful,—as its discussion of the evolutionary form given to the utilitarian ethics by Spencer and Darwin, and his

proof that you cannot get out of any crystallisation of habit or persistency or repetition in time, the authority which will transform a purely utilitarian end into a sense of moral obligation. The passage in which Dr. Martineau insists that the evolution of organic life, take it how you will, gives you something new that was not implicitly contained in the antecedent form, and something that will guide you to fresh truth to which you had no guide before,—so that it is impossible, with any kind of fidelity to the evolutionary idea, to assume that you have *explained* the latest and fullest issues of organic development by referring them back to those initial forms which preceded them,—is one of the most striking in the records of modern philosophy:—

"When an animal consciously takes a step of evolution, it emerges from a dull indistinctness into states no longer indissolubly blended. The unity splits into a plurality, the members of which are not alike, and among them are some (or at least one) never present before; else there would be no differentiation. *New* feelings or perceptions, then, have appeared and been added to the creature's history. There is *more* in them, then, than there was in the previous undifferenced consciousness. Has this increment, should you say, the nature of *illusion*, or of emergence from illusion? Suppose, for example, that, as a naturalist has suggested, the play of sunbeams upon a mass of jelly on the sea-shore has brought together its diffused life-feeling into a more specially tingling point on the surface, and set it up as henceforth responsive to the irritation of light; and that from this moment it commences an education which, carried on in it and in some æons of successors, terminates in the production of an eye; and follow the story of the advance, stage by stage. When, from the dull sense which distinguished the jelly from the water of the shore, the

photistic thrill disengages itself as something other than the rest, it will not be denied that this is a *perceptive gain, i.e.*, an accession not only to the creature's *sensory store*, but to his *life-relations with reality*. Next, the time will come when the organ thus started on its history finds the unity of its *light-feeling* give way; when examined, millenniums further on, in some amphibian now basking on the grassy sedge, then floundering in the ochrey stream, it is first in a green, then in a yellow bath. Is, then, this dual perception truer or less true than its single predecessor? are the links of the later nature with the real world closer or less closer than of the earlier? There can be but one answer. Carry the test yet one step further. It is far from improbable that colour-blind persons, who are far more numerous than is commonly supposed, are the surviving representatives of what was once the normal constitution of the human eye, and that the spectrum of science is a comparatively modern apparition. If, then, our literature went back far enough, we should find, in our oldest libraries, books of *two-coloured optics* to set over against the *three-coloured* doctrine of Young and Helmholtz and Clerk Maxwell. It is not possible to doubt which would teach the truer lesson: refer the question to the colour-blind themselves; and they will surrender all claim for their own constituents. In every instance, then, the *new* elements contributed by evolution are *true* elements; and the measure of their increment of truth is the extent of their departure, by way of difference, from the datum whence they start."

Or, again, take Dr. Martineau's discussion of Mr. Spencer's theory that the apparently intuitive character of mathematical axioms is due solely to the immense number of inherited sensibilities for space-measurement which the nervous system has accumulated in our ancestors from generation to generation, and transmitted to us for fresh verification:—

"Take another case of supposed evolution, supplied by Mr. Spencer himself, still in the sphere of perception. 'I believe,' he says, 'the intuition of Space possessed by any living individual to have arisen from organised and consolidated experiences of all antecedent individuals who bequeathed to him their slowly developed nervous organisation;' and 'I believe that this intuition, requiring only to be made definite and complete by personal experiences, has practically become a form of thought, apparently quite independent of experience.' Compare, then, the first state of this experiential series with the last. It begins, we are assured, with the successive sensations of touch, combined with those of muscular feeling, during the movement of a finger or a hand, from end to end of an edge or surface. The series is now less, now more protracted; its muscular components are different, according as the movement is of lateral, of pushing, or of lifting muscles; and these and other varieties, rendered familiar by frequent recurrence, become distinguished in experience, and with the advance of language, draw to themselves names. What are these names? We have samples of them in 'long' and 'short,' 'up' and 'down,' 'before' and 'behind,' 'broad' and 'narrow,' 'straight' and 'curved,' 'square' and 'circular.' But are these then really the names of the experiences which are the only assigned data? Is it the *sensations* that are square or circular, broad or narrow, up or down? Not so: these are terms that cannot be applied to states of consciousness. Perhaps, however, they will fit this or that *set* of them, though no single state? No: this will not help us; for, feelings dispose themselves in one of two possible arrangements, viz., together, or one following another; and both of these are relations in *Time;* whereas our list of names gives no specifications of time. It is useless to tell me that my synchronous feeling of the two ends of a box between my hands, or that my memory of the muscular sensations in passing my finger from end to end, *is the box's length;* these states are in me, and not in it;

and when reflected on, as they must be in order to be named, are a part of my *self-knowledge*, and not of *other knowledge*. Where then is, I do not say the *intuition* of space, but even the least inchoate rudiment of any geometrical idea, any inkling of any externality at all, any removal out of the limits of the mere time-order of our own feelings and ideas, *i.e.*, of *Number*, in successive or simultaneous arrangement? But Number is not Space. It matters not how many ages and organisms are expended in grinding down and refining and recompounding these materials: they will never turn out either plenum or vacuum enough for a hat to put your head in. If there is nothing to depend upon but 'accumulation and consolidation' of such 'experiences,' the internal history, however enriched, must remain without external counterpart."

It is easy to conceive how a view of evolution which insists so strongly on the reality of the additions made at every step in the upward ascent of organisation, treats the new points of departure at which first, consciousness, and afterwards, volition, appears upon the scene. As Dr. Martineau aptly puts it, there are stages at which entirely new engines of development make their appearance. No juggling can transform material phenomena into phenomena of consciousness; and as Dr. Martineau shows us, the ablest of those who in a former age would have called themselves sheer Materialists, are now compelled to be advocates of the theory of what Haeckel calls an "atomic soul"—in other words, are inclined to endow molecules with rudimentary minds. The "atomic soul" is, of course, identical with what the late Professor Clifford used to speak of as the "mind-stuff" inherent in even inorganic structures; but it matters not whether you call it an "atomic

soul" or "mind-stuff," or anything else,—the fact remains that you have to assume something of the existence of which there is absolutely no evidence, in order to make the appearance of consciousness in the midst of the material world anything but a portent, and the appearance of volition—which breaks the chain of continuous and uniform development,—anything but a positive miracle. Dr. Martineau insists, in the following powerful passage, that it is just as impossible to find the germs of our moral judgments in what is unmoral, as to find the germs of mathematical judgments in the blind sensations of irrational brains :—

"It is plain from this survey of the process of evolution, that we have just as much reason for trusting the sense of Right, with the postulate of objective authority which it carries, as for believing in the components of the rainbow or the infinitude of Space. These ideas are all acquisitions, in the sense that there was a time when they were not to be found in the creatures from which we descend. They are all evolved, in the sense that, gradually and one by one, they cropped up into consciousness amid the crowd of feelings which they entered as strangers. They are all original, or *sui generis*, in the sense that they are intrinsically dissimilar to the predecessors with which they mingle, so that by no rational scrutiny could you, out of the contents of these predecessors, invent and preconceive them, any more than you can predict the psychology of a million years hence. Whence then the strange anxiety to get rid of this originality, and assimilate again what you had registered as a differentiation? You say that, when you undress the 'moral intuition' and lay aside fold after fold of its disguise, you find nothing at last but naked pleasure and utility; then how is it that no foresight, with largest command of psychologic clothes, would enable you to

invert the experiment and dress up these nudities into the august form of Duty? To say that the conscience is but the compressed contents of an inherited calculus of the agreeable and the serviceable, is no better than for one who had been colour-blind to insist that the red which he has gained is nothing but his familiar green with some queer mask. It cannot be denied that the sense of right has earned its separate name, by appearing to those who have it and speak of it to one another essentially different from the desire of pleasure, from the perception of related means and ends, and from coercive fear. Why not, therefore, frankly leave it its proper place as a new differentiation of voluntary activity? Why pretend, against all fact, that it is homogeneous with self-interest; instead of accepting it as the key to a moral order of cognition and system of relations, supplementing the previous sentient and intellectual and affectional experience? Unless we so accept it, we are driven to the unsatisfactory task of *explaining away* the characteristics of our nature which are admitted to lie on its meridian of culmination; of plucking off the mask of Divine authority from duty, and of human freedom from responsibility; of cancelling obligation except in the vaguer sense, 'If you want to walk you are "bound" to move your legs;' of interpreting altruistic claims as transfigured self-concern; and of reducing moral law from ultimate to instrumental, so that whatever of higher tone and more ideal aspect is superinduced upon the sentient and instinctive foundation comes to be regarded as a species of rhetorical exaggeration and æsthetic witchery, by which we are *tricked* into serving one another and forgetting our self-love. For my part, I object to be led blindfold, through the cunning of nature, into sham sacrifices and heroisms, even though they should land me in a real heaven; much more, when I find that they replace me among 'appetising' creatures, with only the added knowledge that I am a dupe into the bargain. Better far to trust the veracity of nature,

and accept the independent reality of the moral relations it discloses as loyally as those laid open by the perceptive and intellectual evolution. The idea of a *higher* is as much entitled to be believed, as that of an *outer*: the *right*, as the true; and both are distinct from the *pleasant*."

There is no portion of Dr. Martineau's book that will make a deeper impression on the history of philosophy than that which deals with the newest form of the utilitarian theory—that form of it which appeals to the effect of the accumulations of experience in the race, to eke out the insufficiency of the ordinary utilitarian theory of morals.

IV

DR. MARTINEAU'S "STUDY OF RELIGION"[1]

1888

THIS, like the *Types of Ethical Theory*, is the book not only of a man of remarkable genius, but of a man of remarkable genius who has devoted himself through a long life to one subject, and has had the singular good fortune to gain steadily up to the present day not only in the richness of the materials which he has amassed for treating that subject, but in the power and judgment which enable him to treat it well. Not but what I think that here and there Dr. Martineau has indulged himself in digressions which, interesting as they are, are a little calculated to divert the mind of his readers from the main subject of his book. Indeed, there is more than one section which I could wish to see removed to appendices, so as to leave the broad track of the writer's thought the more plainly marked from the opening to the close. Dr. Martineau's subject is *A Study of Religion: its Sources and Contents;* but before he touches this subject, he has to deal with

[1] *A Study of Religion: its Sources and Contents.* By James Martineau, D.D., LL.D., late Principal of Manchester New College, London. 2 vols. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

the preliminary objection that there are no sources, properly speaking, at all, for judging of the Being from whom we derive our inward and outward world and our physical and moral constitution; that we are shut up virtually within ourselves, and are absolutely incompetent to judge of anything but ourselves, if even we are fit to judge of so much as that. In dealing with this subject as only Dr. Martineau could deal with it, he now and then expatiates too elaborately on philosophical systems which are not distinct enough in principle from those with which he has already dealt in a masterly fashion, to deserve separate discussion. For example, was it worth while to give to Schopenhauer's theory, differing as it does from Kant's only for the worse, and taking up the extraordinary position that the cause of the universe is a great fountain of animal instinct (which he calls "will") destitute of consciousness, though it produces all the consequences which we usually attribute to intention and foresight, so considerable a space in a book which is not meant to be critical except where some formidable objection of the most serious kind is brought against what its author regards as the true account of the creative power? Again, are not the discussions on Professor Laurie's strange theory of perception, and Professor Royce's still odder disquisition on "the religious aspect of philosophy," obviously "top-hamper" which hardly belongs to the main structure of the book's thought, and which could have been more suitably packed away in notes?

What Dr. Martineau has to deal with, so far as the power or powerlessness of man to draw any trustworthy inference as to the nature of the Creator is denied, is the ground on which this denial is

founded. He has to show that we have minds which at all events assert their own capacity to penetrate straight to realities outside ourselves, and which impose a fiction upon us if they have no such capacity; and he has to explain why there is no good reason for doubting that capacity which is not equally good for doubting our capacity to know ourselves. This is the preliminary part of Dr. Martineau's subject, and he deals with it with all the force and mastery of a mind which has considered the subject from every point of view. Perhaps, however, this part of the subject might have been so far separated from the other as to disengage the still more impressive treatment of the religious problem properly so called (as distinguished from the metaphysical problem), from a class of discussions to which a great many persons will certainly think themselves unequal, though they will not think themselves at all unequal to entering into the very striking and powerful discussion of the various aspects of the "argument from design," and of the ethical argument which connects our human wills and consciences with the will of the Creator.

I will deal first with Dr. Martineau's treatment of the preliminary question, whether or not we have minds which can get out of those prisons which the various idealists have constructed for them,—prisons which Dr. Martineau very happily compares to the magic pentagon in which Faust had unintentionally imprisoned Mephistopheles when he entered his cell as a black poodle,—a magic line which, though it needs "but a breath to blow it away, we cannot pass." Dr. Martineau first points out that, with regard at least to the external world, or what is usually understood by the external world, we are

furnished with special faculties for apprehending it and mastering all its relations, without even the advantage of a large experience. He discusses and defends Kant's view of the origin of our mathematical knowledge; but supplements it by maintaining that the faculty for mathematical construction which is given us by our intuition into the idea of space, so far from being subjective only, as Kant maintained, is a key to reality, and leads us straight to a knowledge of external facts. He shows, in a very striking passage (vol. i. pp. 76-79), that there is no reason in the world for distrusting the natural belief that our space intuition is guiding us rightly, and not wrongly, in constructing the world of objective reality. "That our cognitive faculties," he says, "should be constituted in accordance with *things as they are*, is no more surprising than that the instinct of animals should adapt their actions to *things as they are to be;* and much less surprising than would be a constitution of them conformable to *things as they are not.*" And yet idealists who throw contempt on the notion that our minds should ever tell us the truth about the universe outside themselves, really, of course, mean that in all probability they tell us falsehoods about it; that it is a million to one that the universe as it is, if there be such a universe at all, is *not* like the universe as our faculties represent it to us. Yet, as Dr. Martineau says in another place, we have just as good reason for doubting that we know ourselves truly, or what the philosophers call phenomena, or anything else, truly, as for doubting that what our faculties tell us concerning external realities is true; for we know ourselves only in the very act in which we know something which is not ourselves, and if we do not know the

object truly, why do we assume that we know the subject which is grasped only in connection with the object, any more truly? And as for the doctrine that man is the measure of all things, and therefore that we can see nothing except so far as our own natures enable us to see it,—*i.e.*, with the subjective colouring which that nature gives it,—Dr. Martineau replies with equal force and point, that this doctrine, which is supposed to warn us against supposing that we know anything beyond appearances,—phenomena,—applies just as forcibly to our knowledge of phenomena as it does to our knowledge of the realities beneath the phenomena. "It should moreover be observed that, whatever efficacy the law of relativity may be supposed to have as a caution against an illusory pretence of knowledge must, in its application, tell impartially on the whole field claimed by the human intellect. It subjects our sensible apprehensions to precisely the same insecurity as our postulates of thought; so that our readings of phenomena have not the least advantage over our underlying ontological beliefs. It is commonly assumed that only metaphysical and theological entities are affected by this law; and that while it despatches them into the limbo of vanity, it instals the Scientific conceptions in possession of the field which they vacate; accordingly, its praises are celebrated in a tone of triumph by the writers who resolve the all of things into successions and clusters of change. This assumption is, however, absolutely baseless. If I am at the mercy of my own intellectual constitution when I trust my idea of *Space*, of *Substance*, or of *Cause*, and of my moral constitution when I accept the reality of *Obligation*, I am no less at the mercy of my percipient constitution when I

register as facts *the forms, the weights, the features, the movements* of the physical world" (vol. i. pp. 120, 121). In other words, the law of relativity either denies us all kinds of knowledge equally, or denies us none, providing only that we remember that human intelligence is itself limited, and can only take in that which it is competent to apprehend. It is, however, just as competent to apprehend that which is outside us as that which is inside us, and, in truth, never does apprehend the one without at the same time apprehending something of the other.

There remains the question whether, when it is admitted that we can reach realities outside ourselves, and are not imprisoned in our own minds, it is possible for us to discern an Infinite Being without being by the very force of his infinitude merged in him. This is the question discussed in the very impressive chapter on "The Relative Validity of Theism and Pantheism," which saves for us the personality and righteousness of God by saving for us the independent personality and the possible righteousness of man, either of which must for human beings vanish if the other either dwindles to nothing or so dilates as to absorb its correlative. Dr. Martineau's solution of this question, like his solution of the great controversy which, from St. Paul's time downwards, has raged between the asserters of the divine fore-knowledge and the asserters of human freedom, will be found original in a very high degree. He holds that *because* God is infinite, you cannot deny him the right so to limit his own infinitude as to render human personality and human freedom possible. Nay, he speaks of the voluntary self-limitation of God's omniscience in relation to the acts of human freedom which he refuses to control,

as the true solution of the age-long controversy between free-will and a divine fore-knowledge which could only mean virtual predestination. If you deny him the power of limiting himself for this end, so far from asserting his true infinitude, you are virtually denying it and paring it away. Confining, he says, our attention to man, "we have actually treated him as a separate cause, and so have apparently accepted a limit to the infinitude of God. Is there any reconciliation of these contradictory aspects of personality? There is none if you assume that Infinite Will can never abstain from appropriating all its causality, or divest itself of a portion in order to fit up another and resembling nature. But surely one who assumes this has already committed the fault which he charges, and discovered something to which his 'rigorous infinitude' is incompetent! If we drop this assumption then our allowance of independence is itself the result of our dependence: it is *conceded* to us by the author of our being, and though entrusted for a while with a certain free play of causality, is referable in the ultimate resort to the supreme cause: it is included in what he *has caused*, though excepted from what he *is causing*. It takes, therefore, nothing from his infinitude but what he himself renounces; and what is thus relinquished is potentially retained. The Self-abnegation of infinity is but a form of self-assertion, and the only form in which it can reveal itself."

Dr. Martineau has never written anything that is more effective for its purpose and more comprehensive in its grasp of modern criticisms and objections, than his treatment of the "argument from design" under the light of the newest knowledge. The

whole of the latter part of his first volume is as masterly a piece of writing as our day has produced; nor can any one deny that he has come to his task with the fullest preparation not only in the form of a complete mastery of the Darwinian principles which have exerted so great an influence on the course of modern philosophy, but also in the form of a thorough study of the philosophy of Lange and Hartmann, and those modern German systems which have attempted to bring up the methods of sceptical thought to the standards of modern science. Dr. Martineau's view evidently is that the newer science and the newer philosophy, so far from having in the least degree undermined the grounds of Paley's argument in the *Natural Theology*, have really placed it on a broader and firmer basis than ever. And I should be surprised to learn that any one of real impartiality and knowledge had studied Dr. Martineau's volumes carefully without coming to the same conclusion. Let me take first Dr. Martineau's statement of Lange's objections, and his very powerful reply to it. Lange had stated his argument thus:—

"'We can no longer doubt,' says Lange, 'that Nature proceeds in a way which in no way resembles human design; indeed, that her most essential means, if estimated by the rule of the human understanding, must be regarded as equivalent to the blindest accident. On this point, no further proof is to be looked for; facts speak so plainly, and with such unbroken accord in the various provinces of Nature, that no view of the world is longer admissible which is at variance with these facts and their irresistible significance. If a man, in order to shoot a hare, fired off millions of gun-barrels in all random directions upon a great moor; if, in order to get into a shut room, he brought ten thousand keys at haphazard, and tried

them all; if, in order to obtain a house, he built a city, and abandoned the superfluous houses to wind and weather,—no one, I suppose, would call such action an example of design, and much less should we suppose that in this procedure there lay any higher wisdom, recondite reasons, and superior skill.'"

To this Dr. Martineau replies, first, that the modern thinkers who, with Lange, reject contumeliously the argument from design, do not usually admit that the mode in which Nature works towards her ends are, properly speaking, fortuitous, and yet they want to get both the advantage of the fortuity so far as it is fatal to design, and of the determinate linking of means to ends so far as that rescues their philosophy from the absurdities of a theory of chance. For example, Professor Huxley has declared,—"I apprehend that the foundation of the theory of natural selection is the fact that living bodies tend incessantly to vary. This variation is neither indefinite nor fortuitous, nor does it take place in all directions in the strict sense of these words," and by guarding himself in this way, Professor Huxley hopes to get all the benefit of an almost illimitably tentative system for the refutation of the Design argument, and yet to avoid the intrinsic irrationality of the Chance doctrine as an explanation of the well-knit frame of Nature. Dr. Martineau replies that the tentative explanation of the universe, even within Professor Huxley's limits, will not be applicable at all in any sense in which Lange's description of that tentative system can be accepted as faithful:—

"Now the position which I will take up in answer to Lange is this: I will not dispute the Darwinian record of natural history; yet shall decline to accept the descrip-

tion of it given in Lange's parables. The contrast between Nature's way of working out an end and Man's is said to consist in this, that, for want of any guiding idea, Nature makes millions of failures for one hit, whilst man follows his preconception straight to the mark. Take then any end which has at last been reached by Nature, say, the setting up of human kind: where are the millions of failures from the midst of which this success has emerged? With what facts, actual or supposed, of the earth's history are they identical? Are the real steps of evolution that have now advanced to man, the intermediaries between the Ascidian and Shakespeare, to be regarded as missing shots? That can hardly be, since they are the very means that have conducted to the end, and have *not* failed. Must we then turn to the other lines of pedigree, the variations which have resulted in the salmon, the pheasant, the elephant, the dog, the ape, and treat these as failures, because issuing in something other than human? This would assume that living beings can have no worth except as means for the ulterior production of man; whereas every surviving race contains and realises its own end, whether or not it plays a part in subsequently winning ours. Perhaps then we should search the cemeteries of Nature for the vestiges of her mistakes, and class all extinct species as abortive, simply because they lost their footing in the world. Such a sentence, however, would condemn many of the probable progenitors of the existing kinds, whose very presence vindicates their ancestors' archaic place in Nature. Nor is there any reason for setting up *present* survivorship as a test of success against *past;* for all alike are but leaseholders on this planet; and the fossiliferous rocks assign to the extinct races as large a share of geologic time as those which are now living can reasonably claim. We must then, it seems, go beyond the whole natural history record, past and present, to find these alleged miscarriages of the producing power, and seek them in some hypothetical region prefixed to the known flora and fauna of

the globe; and must excuse the non-appearance of these blundered forms, partly by 'the imperfection of the geologic record,' partly by their perishable character. On these terms, they pass into wholly imaginary beings, postulated by a theory, but unattested by a single fact; and there we may leave them. Unless everything is to be condemned as abortive which, in leading to an ulterior nature, at present stops short of it, though carrying in it its own minor end, there is not the slightest resemblance between the real process of the organic world and the senseless actions with which Lange compares it. Take the maximum of what he calls *failure* in Nature, and what does it amount to? Simply this: that a variation of organ, occurring once, does not repeat itself, but, like a personal peculiarity,—a mole-spot or a white lock of hair,—disappears with the individual; while other variations, chiming in with the present conditions of life, gain more or less persistence, and some embody themselves in permanent novelties of race. In all but the extreme case, we have here nothing but vitalities, longer or shorter; the extreme case, if useless, is harmless; and when regarded not in itself alone, but as part of a general provision for starting everywhere new possibilities of advance and enabling them to try their strength, its inutility at a particular conjuncture dissolves itself away in the beneficent intention of the comprehensive law. Evolution, rightly interpreted, sustains rather than contradicts Aristotle's principle that 'Nature makes nothing in vain.'"

Take, again, Dr. Martineau's treatment of the well-known argument which Tennyson has embodied in *In Memoriam*, where the poet says that, observing how of a very large number of seeds Nature brings but one to bear, he "falters where he firmly trod," and "lifts lame hands of faith," and "gropes" and "gathers dust and chaff,"—and, in a word, "faintly

trusts" the larger hope. What can be more impressive than this treatment of the subject in Dr. Martineau's book?—

"It is a mistake to treat as a failure every germ that misses its development into an adult specimen of its kind. This is no doubt the *internal* end towards which its own constitution tends. But it is not a solitary unrelated object, set up for itself alone; and over and above its internal end, it has *external* subserviencies to the needs of surrounding forms of life. Every grain of wheat is a seed, capable of raising a new plant; but who would be offended at the miscarriage by which it finds its way into a loaf of bread? Does this frustrate, or does it execute, the purpose of Nature? It is plain that the provinces of the organic world constitute a scheme of interdependencies, and that the measure of each is taken, not by any rule of self-sufficiency, but by reference to the equilibrium of the whole. The subsistence of animals hangs, directly or indirectly, on the vegetable kingdom, and is simply contingent on the surplus of seeds and fruits beyond the requisites for reproduction; so that the 'waste' of the plant-world is the economy of the sentient. The same law runs through the various groups of carnivorous creatures: each lives upon the surplus of some prolific race below, and for the life that is sacrificed there is substituted other that is saved. Whatever may be said, *from considerations of humanity*, against the system of *prey* (and of this we shall treat hereafter), it thus escapes the charge of breach of promise; for, of two ends that are combined in the same nature, it disappoints the one only to fulfil the other. Nor should we entirely disregard yet a further end which is incidentally realised by this method, viz. the investiture of the world with a glorious exuberance, furnishing it as a majestic palace with endless galleries of art and beauty, instead of as a cheap boarding-school, with bare benches and scant meals. How much of the splendour and significance of Nature depends upon

its fulness,—upon the irrepressible rush of life into every open inlet and over every surface newly spread! Would you have the teeming elements less hospitable? The waters you could not keep empty, unless you boiled them; or the air silent, unless you froze it; or the rock naked, unless, like Hannibal, you dosed it with vinegar: invisible candidates for growth and movement and voice will steal in and soon crowd the most guarded solitude. The gardener may be vexed with the indefatigable weeds upon his trim beds; but were the wild plants fewer and less persevering, where would be the careless hedge-bank and the mossy wall? He may vow vengeance upon the nests that harbour the pilferers of his fruits; but who would purchase the richest table at the cost of an air less musical? On sultry days we are sometimes provoked by the vivacity of creation; but he who would indulge his languid mood, and cannot throw his heart into the jubilee of the strong sunshine, should certainly not go abroad when summer is at full tide. Nature will be jealous, if, when pretending to seek her haunts, you after all want only to retire into yourself. When you bask in your boat upon the lake to compose a sonnet or work out a problem, she startles you with gleams of silver and golden scales that open the perspective of the waters on which you float. When, like Phædrus, you carry a book under your cloak as you stroll by the Ilissus, and think to master it, cooling your feet in the brook and your head under the shade of a tall plane, you soon find, unless a Socrates is there to steady you, your philosophy chirruped away by the grasshopper, and your reverie exploded by the flash of the dragon-fly, with a thousand other peremptory hints to quit your own interior, and mingle with the gladness of the world. When the greedy axe has performed its massacre and left only the graveyard of a forest, and the tangle of brushwood has been consumed by fire, the industry of Nature begins again: new families of plants, never suspected to be there, seize upon their chance, and spring into the vacated place,

quickly followed by the old ones, waking again into life at the competition. It is this vital elasticity of Nature that gives to even her untracked solitudes the double interest of a picture and a history; and were its tension slackened, her communion with our inner life would lose its vivid charm, and her voices would speak to us in muffled tones."

Dr. Martineau is equally vigorous in his criticism on Darwin's law that unfavourable variations disappear because they are unfavourable to the stability of a race, while favourable variations persist and establish themselves. There is something, as he remarks, very singular in a law which first requires the principle of hereditary transmission to be broken through in all directions in order to get the requisite number of variations, and then puts the favourable variations,—directly they are hit upon,—at once under the protection of the law of hereditary transmission, and ossifies them into a permanent habit of the organism. "In order to get advantages for an organism, you break the law" [of hereditary transmission]; "in order to keep them, you enforce it." Dr. Martineau insists that this accidental variation and the persistency which it is supposed to acquire constitute no explanation at all of the more important animal instincts which are absolutely essential to the existence of any type. Take the case of the many and very complex instincts which induce the mother to leave the eggs of her unborn progeny exactly in the place where the insects when developed will find their proper food. Nobody even maintains that the insect-mother knows what that food should be, and is strictly provident in the matter. The theory hostile to design has to maintain that she plants some of her eggs by accident in a favourable

place, and that, too, without any knowledge of what she is doing. Why, then, should her offspring inherit the tendency to go to the same kind of localities? The mother herself gains nothing by it. On the non-theistic theory, it is a pure lucky hit if she selects the right medium. Can her offspring inherit the art of making a lucky hit? Of course, if they do not, the offspring will perish, and why not? Yet, as a matter of fact, we see the most wonderful and minute adaptation between the habits of the mother and the wants of the offspring in all these cases; the eggs which will be hatched in one month being planted precisely in those trees whose leaves will come out just before the eggs are hatched, while those which are hatched a month later are deposited in trees whose young leaves will come out a month later. Can anything be more incredible than that a habit of this kind, by which the mother does not profit at all, should be established by mere fortuitous persistence of the tendency to lay eggs in the only spots where the insect, when hatched, can find nourishment? I cannot forbear extracting the following admirable criticism of Dr. Martineau's on Darwin's explanation of the curious habit of the English cuckoo of devolving her duties on a foster-mother of a different species:—

"In this deduction everything is derived from a perfectly transient act, a mere random dash of spontaneity; it is not assumed that any sort of immediate good is felt to accrue from it, which could move the animal to try it again; yet at the next step we find this action treated as a *habit*: it could become such only by an unaccountable and constant recurrence of the original accident. Even then it is a mere acquired and superficial way of movement, not modifying, like a congenital organ, the

structure and constitution of the creature: it is moreover an *individual* peculiarity, which cannot be looked for in a second instance; so that to suppose the descent to another generation of such a freak is to put an excessive strain upon the doctrine of inheritance. It is well known that our great naturalist explains on this principle the strange habit which distinguishes the English cuckoo from the American, namely of depositing its eggs to be hatched in the nests of other birds. He supposes that this was originally done by some blundering British mother that had lost her way and had got into the wrong house; and that, from similar dreaminess about locality, other birds now and then were betrayed into the same awkward liberty with a stranger's domestic arrangements. Some accidental advantage having accrued from this mistake, either to the bird herself or to the progeny she had put out to nurse, they enjoyed a more favourable chance in the struggle for life, survived in preference to their rivals, became the species, and communicated to it the eccentric blunder of their ancestor. If a casual slip, or trick of fancy, can be stereotyped and transmitted, and entered on the books at last as a law of nature, it certainly puts all awkward people under a more serious responsibility than they had suspected. A gentleman, knocking at the wrong door for a dinner engagement, and shown into the drawing-room, might become the founder of a new race with whom it would be a moral axiom to entertain everybody's guest but your own."

Is not that the *reductio ad absurdum* of the theory of fortuitous variation?

When Dr. Martineau comes to connect the Cause of the Universe with the moral Ruler of the human mind, he comes, of course, to the most difficult part of his subject. He has, however, no difficulty in showing that man at least, and in his own personal life,

recognises the double power,—the power of the universal will which meets him as Cause in all the natural laws of Creation, and the power of the moral yoke which is fastened upon his own individual will, to keep him loyal to all the higher springs of action whenever they compete with the lower for his allegiance, and to punish him with remorse and self-abasement whenever he is disloyal to the moral law within him. And besides this recognition of double powers controlling him which man cannot but connect together,—so interlaced are the branches of each with the other in actual life,—Dr. Martineau shows that in a variety of ways the laws of the universe are so constructed as to paralyse revolt against the moral law so soon as that revolt reaches a certain acme of defiance, while they add continually to the weight and effectiveness of purpose wielded by those who are faithful to it. In short, not only does God manifest himself as Will in the dynamics of the universe, and as moral Will in the guidance of human purpose and the judgment upon human sin, but he takes care that all revolts against this moral authority shall have in them the seeds of their own decay. He sets all revolt at cross-purposes with itself, and multiplies the force of all faithful and self-denying reverence. Still, when Dr. Martineau comes to compare the world of Nature and the world of human history, with the world as we should conceive it with a divine ruler of infinite holiness and infinite power in the supreme place, he admits that we must be very much staggered at the contrast. For, first of all, Nature seems full of indifference to the suffering of its multitudes of sentient creatures; and next, the history of man seems penetrated through and through by episodes in

which the righteous have been overborne by the unrighteous; and humility and piety have been trodden under the heel of unscrupulous and selfish ambition. Touching first the troubles and pains of the sentient world, Dr. Martineau points out that in laying down the laws of any system of finite life that is to be subject to general laws at all,—and without such general laws there could be no education of the kind which seems to be the highest of the Creator's designs,—it is impossible to include all that might be desired for one end in framing what is intended to secure a different end:—

"I cannot deny that the phenomena of disease among the lower animals are perplexing facts, which at present admit of no satisfactory explanation. Why, in one season, the cattle should be smitten with a spreading malady, which they must be slain in order to arrest; and, in another, the grouse pine away into skeletons and strew the moors with their dead: why, when the body's natural term approaches, the failing organs should be susceptible of so many forms of painful decay, so that, if all that are at the last stage were brought together, the scene would be like a battlefield at evening when the fight was done,—I do not find that any wisest thinker is able to tell. But neither do I know that we should expect to tell; for these are precisely the phenomena in which the known marks of intention fail, which are evidently *not the ends* for which the organs are constructed, which even constitute the disappointment of those ends: for which accordingly it is as unreasonable to seek a 'Wherefore,' as to ask the runner why he falls, or the boatman why he shoots Niagara. They are present, it is plain, *in spite of* the normal purpose of the structure they disturb; relatively to which they must be regarded as *undesigned* imperfections, however they may be embraced within some larger project in whose paramount good their

partial evils vanish. Do you ask, what business have 'imperfections' in the work of an infinite Being? Has he not power to bar them out? Yes, I reply, if he lives out of his boundless freedom and, from moment to moment, acts unpledged, conducting all things by the miscellany of incalculable miracles, there is nothing to hinder his Will from entering 'where it listeth,' and all things will be 'possible to him.' But, if once he commits his Will to any determinate method, and for the realisation of his ends selects and institutes a scheme of instrumental rules, he thereby shuts the door on a thousand things that might have been before; he has defined his cosmical equation, and only those results can be worked out from it which are compatible with the values of its roots. If the square of the distance gives the ratio of decreasing gravitation, the universe must forego the effects which would arise from the rule of the cube. If, for two transparent media, the index of relative refraction is made constant, the phenomena are excluded which would arise were it variable. Every legislative volition narrows the range of events previously open, and substitutes necessity for contingency; and a group or system of laws, in providing for the occurrence of one set of phenomena, relinquishes the conditions of another. It is vain therefore to appeal to the almightiness of God, unless you mean to throw away the relations of any established universe, and pass into his unconditioned infinitude: in the Cosmos, he has abnegated it; and there is a limit for what you may demand from it as within its compass. The limits, it is true, which are assigned to its play are *self-imposed*: but, in order to any determinate action at all, *some* limits had to be assigned: and, unless you can show that to a different scheme better possibilities and a less mixed good would have attached themselves, a tone of complaint which can only be justified by such comparative criticism, is out of place. Most of the sufferings now under our notice arise from some troubled relation between the animal organism and the scene in which it

is placed: ungenial seasons, desolating winds and floods, an atmosphere charged with germs of disease, a frost that creeps into the heart of the old, a marsh vapour that spreads the fever-bed for the young, are the visitations that make a wreck of life. And these are the occasional results of that scheme of physical laws which, while preparing the theatre of animal existence and favouring its development, yet goes beyond it and steps from world to world, negotiating for other interests also, and contemplating more enduring good. In launching a power commissioned to a million ends, still more in adjusting together twenty different lines of power, whose crossing and confluence is to work out these ends, it is surely conceivable that the Creator's Will, while subjecting his means to steady rules, may realise some elements of his design less absolutely than if they had stood alone. To every finite method (and to create is to enter the sphere of the finite), this partial disability, this unequal approximation to the ideally perfect, inevitably clings: if it is made inflexible, it must sometimes start a conflict between its universal means and its partial ends: if it is left fluid, it is no longer a method at all. The problems how much should be yielded of one design to serve another, and at what cost of purpose persistence and exactitude of rule should be secured, can be surveyed and solved only by a Mind that commands the whole field of the actual and the possible. They are entirely beyond the reach of any calculus of ours."

Dr. Martineau might, we think, have pushed the argument of this fine passage a good deal further, especially in relation to the law of evolution on which so much stress is now laid. The notion that the Creator's attitude towards all the suffering in the world should be the same as man's usually is,—namely, desire to relieve it and *nothing else*,—assumes, of course, that the Creator cannot see its ultimate

purpose any better than man. Even *we* are not justified, and do not feel ourselves justified, in relieving suffering which we believe to be either in any high sense disciplinary or curative. We do not at once clear away all the difficulties and troubles,—though they may be serious,—of our children's first conflict with life, in the playground or the school, nor even do we yield to the restless dislike of the horse or the dog to be broken into the duties for which we intend him. We look beyond the immediate suffering to the better end which it is intended to produce. And we must assume, therefore, that the Creator who sees the whole ground-plan of Creation, though he pities the innocent suffering of every sentient creature in it, will not remove it so long as it is essential to the laws of development which he has ordained for the life of the universe. Now, if it be certain, as Dr. Martineau shows when he comes to deal with the beneficent effects of human suffering, that in the higher stages of development suffering answers a very noble purpose, does it not seem probable that the universe could not have been made suitable for the scene of man's moral education, without planting even in the lower races, out of whose organisation we are now told that our own bodily life is developed, those liabilities to suffering as well as those passions which tend to the infliction of suffering, which, when they reappear on the stage of human life, are so full of moral significance to us? If, as now seems probable, the biology and physiology of animal life is all on one plan, may it not be of the very essence of that plan that we should see in the life beneath us rehearsals, as it were, of those pangs and passions and cruelties and tragedies which only begin to have their explanation so soon as they

appear in a world in which piety and penitence and remorse have begun to play great parts upon the scene? I, at all events, cannot imagine any true principle of evolution which does not plant in the life below, the germs of those problems which are to haunt the life above. And though, of course, the agnostic may say, 'So much the worse for Evolution, —a perfectly wise Creator would have adopted a higher plan, not needing the appearance of pain until the moral faculty which could educe good from pain had also appeared,' yet it seems to me at least a considerable attenuation of the difficulty to discover that the pain of lower creatures is necessary, if the higher organisations are to be evolved from theirs, while to those higher organisations pain is not only an essential stimulus, but often also a glorifying and exalting influence. And this is what Dr. Martineau truly enough contends:—

"Ease and prosperity may supply a sufficient school for the respectable *commoners* in character: but 'without suffering is no man *ennobled*.' Every highest form of excellence, personal, relative, spiritual, rises from this dark ground, and emerges into its freedom by the conquest of some severe necessity. In what Elysium could you find the sweet patience and silent self-control of which every nurse can testify? or the fortitude in right, which the rack cannot crush or the dungeon wear out? or the courage of the prophet, to fling his divine word before the wrath of princes and the mocking of the people? I know it is said, that these would be superfluous virtues there, their worth being wholly relative to the evils which they minimise. But is this true? Is the soul which has never been subdued to patience, braced to fortitude, fired with heroic enthusiasm, as harmonious, as strong, as large and free, as that which has been schooled in martyrdom?

No, the least part of these conquests is in their immediate mastery of the besetting ill: they add a cubit to the moral stature: they clear the vision: they refine the thought: they animate the will: so that there is not a duty, however simple, that does not win from them a fresh grace, or a mood, however common, to which they do not give a richer tone. And if to our own chastening we must acknowledge this personal debt, it is equally certain that the sufferings of others speak with an indispensable appeal to our affections, and wake us into a disinterestedness else impossible. Not that we are without sympathy with happy lives also; but as they need nothing from us, they are only a pleasant spectacle, and do not stir us from our passiveness, and the affection remains superficial for want of striking root in effort of the will: for, until you serve and strive, you cannot truly love. It is in the presence of sorrow and privation that we most forget ourselves: and in many a home the crippled child or the disabled father has trained to tenderness and considerateness the habits which would else have been self-seeking and frivolous."

Miss Cobbe, in a recent article in the *Contemporary Review*, which maintained that we cannot construe the character of God from external creation at all, that God's purposes are no more to be found in the laws of Creation than they were to be found by Elijah in the fire and the whirlwind, though they were to be found by him in "the still, small voice" of conscience, has represented the so-called Darwinian law of conflict for existence as if it embodied in the very structure of Creation a remorseless and almost cruel indifference to the suffering of sentient beings. That seems to me a great exaggeration of the facts which have suggested the law of Natural Selection. There is, so far as I can see, no more cruelty in the retreat and extinction of one species before another,

than there is in the succumbing of an individual member of one species which continues to hold its ground as a species, to the individual member of another species which yet gains no way as a species over its competitor. As Dr. Martineau says in this book:—

"The variable and unequal strain, which constitutes the motive power of animal existence, is seen upon the largest scale in what is called the 'struggle for life' between races needing the same field, and nearly matched in their claims for its possession. Both the good and the evil of the law of want seem here to be most conspicuous. On the one hand, the way in which every advantage gained, in organism or instinct, secures its permanent hold and enriches the earth with higher forms, strikingly marks the pressure of Nature towards the ulterior perfection, and betrays the ideal aim that works beneath her physical procedure. And, on the other hand, the cost at which the victors win their race, the baffling of the slow, the perishing of the weak, sink into the heart of the generous observer, and make him complain that Nature is pitiless, and heeds not any suffering that enhances the glory of her works. This very complaint, however, is in itself a homage to the worth of life, and no pessimist could urge it without answering himself. Is it a *cruel* feature in the competition for existence that the halt and feeble lose their footing on the world, and are exiled from life? Is it an evil which they thus incur? Then the life which they miss must be a good; and it is a hardship *not* to find and keep a place within its teeming fields. If animal existence be not worth having, why invite our compassion for those that lose it? Even on the opposite assumption, that, in spite of drawbacks, it is better to be alive, this plaintive plea for the beaten armies of Nature has its ground more in imagination than in reality. The creatures that cannot compete, that are more ugly, or more awkward,

or less swift or strong, than their rivals, do but suffer the fate of any dwindling minority, which may accomplish its ultimate vanishing without any great discomfort to its members, taken one by one. The extinct races whose only representatives are in our geological museums have suffered no agonies in their generic death, but have been quite unconscious of their interesting rarity ere they disappeared: and the last Dodo of New Zealand had no cause to envy the first."

The Maoris who dwindle before the Europeans of New Zealand, appear to dwindle without more pain to themselves than affects the same number of Europeans dying in the same period of time. Indeed, the life of the successful race may have far more of restless pang and convulsion in it, than the life of the feebler race which dwindles more from an overshadowed vitality than from active misery.

One of the most powerful sections of this part of Dr. Martineau's argument is that which deals with the pessimist's doctrine that the triumphs of brute force in human history have been of a kind to refute the belief that a righteous will presides over the world's story. Dr. Martineau holds that the very reverse is true, and has reviewed the subject in a section of his book which, for terseness and vigour, leaves even many other parts of it in the shade.

The latter part of Dr. Martineau's second volume is occupied first with the controversy on human free-will, and then with the indications that death is not the close of man's career. On each of these subjects he speaks with the mastery of a singularly powerful as well as a singularly subtle mind, though there are one or two omissions, as it seems to me, in the treat-

ment of the earlier subject, of portions of the subject, the discussion of which would have further strengthened his already very strong position. The immense importance of this determinist controversy, so far as it bears on the existence of God, seems to be this,—that while determinism is not inconsistent with either the belief in God or the negation of God, human free-will can hardly be believed at all without belief in a personal Creator. That any mere development of material or unconscious life should lead to the existence of a being who can liberate himself in any degree from the control of the forces which had brought him into being, is so utterly incredible that one cannot conceive a sincere believer in human free-will who could doubt for a moment that that will must have owed its origin to a personal God, and not to a mere evolution of physical force. That the mere outcome of a long procession of natural forces should be able to break its own chains and select freely between two alternatives, is as incredible as that a projectile should suddenly be able to arrest its own downward flight, and soar once more into the air. Dr. Martineau does not put it in this way, yet it seems most important to put it so, for though, of course, the determinist view is not inconsistent with theism, and has usually been held as confidently by theists as by agnostics, the free-will view, if established as Dr. Martineau seems to me to have established it, is absolutely final against the notion that human freedom could be the offspring and product of material necessity. For the rest, the discussion of this great subject, into the intricacies of which it would be impossible in such a review as this to follow Dr. Martineau, is conducted with the utmost lucidity and force; but it appears to me that

Dr. Martineau has not given the answer he might to the assertions of those psychologists who deny that we have any means of knowing how far human volitions may take their origin from some source beneath the field of consciousness, the antecedents of which we have no more means of discerning than the somnambulist has of discerning the origin of his own procedure as a sleep-walker. I should have said that the late Dr. W. G. Ward's admirable essays on this controversy [1] fill up a gap here to which it would have been well to draw attention. Nevertheless, that singularly acute and able psychologist's treatment of the subject is not once referred to by Dr. Martineau. Dr. W. G. Ward maintained that if we know anything of ourselves, we know in critical moments to what the total drift of our nature,—barring some great effort of "anti-impulsive" volition,—would carry us, as well at least as the ferryman knows whither the current of a powerful stream,—barring the strong effort of his arms in rowing,—would carry the ferry-boat. And further, Dr. Ward held that we know, whenever we do pull against the stream, and land ourselves where but for our own strong efforts we could not have landed, that our efforts were not *caused*, were not brought into being, by the reasons or motives which supplied us with our intellectual or moral ground of action, but were caused simply by ourselves. This is the only side of the discussion on which Dr. Martineau might, as I think, have still further fortified his position if he had drawn upon the stores of one of the greatest of his contemporaries. I will only add that no more

[1] *Essays on the Philosophy of Theism.* By William George Ward, D.D. With an Introduction by Wilfrid Ward. 2 vols. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, and Co.

striking contribution could have been made to the literature of this question than Dr. Martineau's very remarkable quotation of Diderot's defence of free-will in the *Encyclopédie*, together with the same writer's attack upon it in his letter to Baron Grimm in 1756. Dr. Martineau does not seem able to determine which of the two passages was latest written; but I should suppose that it must have been the determinist letter to Baron Grimm. Nothing could be more impressive than to find the same writer urging in one year that determinism abolishes vice and virtue, and throws contempt on the sentiment of duty and on the language of praise and blame, and in another, probably later year, but yet not one far removed from the first, that this very fact that determinism blots out all meaning from the words "duty," "praise," and "blame," is precisely the beauty of the determinist philosophy, and the very feature of it which recommends it to true philosophic thinkers. The passages quoted from Diderot between pages 318 and 320 of Dr. Martineau's second volume seem to me to give the essence of the determinist controversy in a nutshell, as well as to show the clearness of Diderot's intellect, both when he rejected and when he held determinism.

Dr. Martineau's treatment of the subject of death is marked by that grave and cautious sobriety which marks the difference between the popular and the scientific thinker. He avails himself of the admissions of the men of science to establish that, as they are utterly unable to explain how physiological change gives rise to conscious thought, and do not even pretend to assert that it does give rise to it,—so they must not pretend to argue that when life, in its physiological sense, ceases, the thought which

they have never been able to connect with it, ceases also :—

"Comparing the deflection of a magnetic needle by an electrical current with the sequence of consciousness on a state of the brain, he [Professor Tyndall] says: 'the cases differ in this, that the passage from the current to the needle, if not demonstrable, is thinkable, and that we entertain no doubt as to the final mechanical solution of the problem. But the passage from the physics of the brain to the corresponding facts of consciousness is unthinkable. Granted that a definite thought, and a definite molecular action in the brain, occur simultaneously: we do not possess the intellectual organ, nor apparently any rudiment of the organ, which would enable us to pass, by a process of reasoning, from the one to the other. They appear together, but we do not know why. Were our minds and senses so expanded, strengthened, and illuminated, as to enable us to see and feel the very molecules of the brain; were we capable of following all their motions, all their groupings, all their electrical discharges, if such there be; and were we intimately acquainted with the corresponding states of thought and feeling,—we should be as far as ever from the solution of the problem "How are these physical processes connected with the facts of consciousness?" The chasm between the two classes would still remain intellectually impassable.' Under these conditions, I presume it will be physiologically correct to say that, in the supposed molecular motions, their groupings, their electrical discharges, we have the *function* of the brain: they are the actions it is fitted to perform, precisely as the chemical resolution of food is the business of the stomach, and the burning of carbon that of the lungs, and the contraction of fibre that of the muscles, and the conducting of stimulus that of the nerves. The organ then finds its function in a class of phenomena separated by 'a chasm intellectually impassable' from consciousness and will:

with what sense then or consistency are we to charge it with these also as a part of its business? They are confessedly but co-existences turning up in a different and unapproachable world, not only unlinked as yet with their physical concomitants, but, we are assured, intrinsically and for ever incapable of being brought into intelligible relation with them. If the organic and the mental phenomena lie thus apart, how can any legitimate inference carry us from the one to the other? If we could not say, 'Given the first, the second must follow,' how can we say, 'Take away the first, and the second cannot be'? If no one can discern their connection to be necessary, who can affirm their disconnection to be impossible? If the structure, when seen through and through to its minutest changes, brings us no nearer to consciousness, the cessation of these changes takes us no further from it. It is a mistake therefore to imagine that the mere organic history covers the whole field of this problem, and by its termination demonstrates consciousness to be extinct: we are not entitled to say more than that the signs and evidences of consciousness have vanished; but beyond or behind the 'physics of the brain' there is another world, of invisible phenomena, whose relations to the former are unknown, and on the possibilities of which we are not qualified to pronounce" (vol. ii. pp. 331-32).

And in a subsequent page Dr. Martineau says:—"If the union of the 'physics of the brain' with the trains of thought be so profound a mystery, their separation can hardly be regarded as out of possibility: if the one is barely credible, the other ought not to be incredible." Going a little further, he appeals to a very striking analogy between physical and mental beginning, as suggesting that what once commences, far from being bound to come to an end, may, in the absence of any counteracting agency,

endure to all time:—"Within the limits of organic life, whose history consists of a cycle of chemical changes, it is true that birth is the invariable precursor of a series leading to death; but beyond this range it cannot be shown that either mechanical or mental genesis must run its course and come to an end. What indeed does Newton's first law declare, but that a particle once set in motion in empty space will continue to move in a straight line with uniform velocity for ever, unless some external force supervenes? And if we can think of the law of gravitation" [? first law of motion] "as having been given to the material of the universe, surely we are not on that account compelled by any logical necessity to anticipate its cessation: nothing can less carry the marks of a temporary character, or be more easily conceived to be eternal. Nor can I see that it is otherwise with the case of intellectual and moral natures. If, at a certain stage in the development of the cosmos, the Supreme Mind set up at a given centre a personal subject of thought and will like his own, with adequate assignment of causality, what is to prevent this from being a freehold in perpetuity, and to reduce it to a terminable loan? Why may not the communicated Divine nature endure as long as the uncommunicated Source on which it lives?" (vol. ii. pp. 354-55) And again, in replying to the strange assertion of the Pantheists that every finite personality is a sort of encroachment on the Infinite, and cannot, therefore, be supposed to endure eternally, Dr. Martineau says:—"If it be metaphysically impossible for a finite subject to co-exist in antithesis to the infinite, it is not an impossibility that begins with death; it must have place now as much as then, and then

no more than now. Yet here we are, holding the very relation supposed to contradict itself; conscious of ourselves, conscious of God: and if the wonder has not been too great to arise, what harder conditions forbid it to abide? Once at least have we been disengaged from the infinite, and emerged from non-existence. In comparison with this, is it not a small thing to emerge from Death? For there is now, at all events, the ready-made Ego, the established unit of formed character and practised powers, instead of blank nothingness, a mere zero of potentiality: there is no need to provide both field and agent: let the field be reopened, and the agent is there," (vol. ii. pp. 362-63).

So much as regards the supposed *a priori* impossibility of "emerging from death." When Dr. Martineau goes on to argue that the stamp of a being who is to survive death is written upon human history, literature, and, above all, on our moral experience, he writes with a restrained power that must impress even the most sceptical reader. The argument founded on the moral experience of man is too long to quote and too closely connected to break, and I must content myself, therefore, with this fine passage on the disproportion between the intellectual faculties of man and the very short career which is reserved for them here:—

"The ideal faculty, as a perpetual vision of higher possibilities, is perfectly intelligible, if the realisation lies before it; though it visits the heart with a 'noble discontent,' the light upon the future balances the shadow on the present. But it is utterly unintelligible, if, like Plato's interior eye-light when the lids are closed, it spends itself in weaving dreams; so that every creative genius must live, either in a fool's paradise, or, if dis-

enchanted of its illusions, in sadness unrelieved. If it is said that the possibilities unfulfilled for the individual who conceives them may prove true forecasts for the race, we must still ask whether a race, however progressive, can be credited with success, every generation of which is haunted by the consciousness of failure. Minds cannot be used up as mere material for foreign or collective purposes; each carries its own end, and only in approaching this falls into consonance with others, and reduces the distance to the goal of all. Who can believe that the Everlasting Mind fulfils its end by disappointing every other? and that each age is to spend itself in lamenting its inheritance from another and its own shortcoming? Is the eternal design of Perfection to be gained by the frustrated aspirations of countless ephemeral generations? Or, to the rule that 'one soweth and another reapeth,' is there not the compensating sequel, 'he that soweth and he that reapeth shall rejoice *together*'? I will only add, ere I turn away from the consideration of the intellectual powers, that, in spite of their dependence on organic media of action, there is clear evidence of their being adequate to indefinitely more than the present term of life allows them to accomplish. The student of Nature, or the servant of Art, is indeed obliged to put a limit to his aims and be content with small achievements: but what is it that arrests his attempts? Simply the consciousness expressed in the maxim, 'Ars longa, vita brevis;' not that he could go no further and do no more; but only that he has a short loan of time and tools, and must reckon his piece-work by his hours. The very fact that he sees what he must relinquish, and resigns it with regret, shows that he could conquer it, if he had the chance; and it is precisely at the end of life, that, from the vantage-ground of a lofty elevation and a large survey, he most intently turns to the horizon and best discerns the outline of the promised land on which his eyes are about to close. I do not know that there is anything in nature (unless indeed it be the reputed

blotting-out of suns in the stellar heavens) which can be compared in wastefulness with the extinction of great minds: their gathered resources, their matured skill, their luminous insight, their unfailing tact, are not like instincts that can be handed down; they are absolutely personal and inalienable; grand conditions of future power, unavailable for the race, and perfect for an ulterior growth of the individual. If that growth is not to be, the most brilliant genius bursts and vanishes as a firework in the night. A mind of balanced and finished faculties is a production at once of infinite delicacy and of most enduring constitution; lodged in a fast perishing organism, it is like a perfect set of astronomical instruments, misplaced in an observatory shaken by earthquakes or caving in with decay. The lenses are true, the mirrors without a speck, the movements smooth, the micrometer exact; what shall the Master do but save the precious system, refined with so much care, and build for it a new house that shall be founded on a rock?" (vol. ii. pp. 376-78)

I cannot part from this book without expressing my profound conviction that it will be one of the books to which thinkers will refer long after this and many future generations have passed away; that it will rank with the great works of Berkeley, Butler, and Cardinal Newman, amongst the most enduring efforts of English philosophical thought, and together with the author's previous work on ethics, even found an ethical and religious school not less original and probably more enduring, because laid upon deeper foundations, than that which Kant founded in Germany by his *Criticism of the Practical Reason.*

V

THE LATE F. D. MAURICE[1]

1884

"There are some persons," said Mr. Maurice in a letter written in 1849, "who need to have their own identity impressed upon them by a series of facts which positively assure them that the child and boy of yesterday is the man of to-day. I have known very thoughtful men—John Sterling was one—who never thoroughly realised this truth, but seemed to themselves like a number of different men. As they dropped their old shell or coat, it was as if they dropped their own existence. I would not have it so, but would earnestly pray that my days might be linked 'each to each in natural piety,' in spite of all the schisms which sin has made in them." Certainly, that prayer was granted, unless indeed it was one which needed no granting, because it only reflected and expressed the law of the nature given to him by God from his very birth. There never was, perhaps, a great and good man who was so completely the same from his earliest to

[1] *The Life of Frederick Denison Maurice, chiefly told in his own Letters.* Edited by his Son, Frederick Maurice. With Portraits. 2 vols. London: Macmillan and Co.

his latest day, as the subject of this very remarkable memoir. Nor has there, perhaps, ever been a more fit and striking monument raised to a great name than the two volumes before us. If there be a fault in the book, it is that it only too faithfully represents the noble and pathetic monotone of Maurice's life. There was in that life a singular blending of something like the burden of a Gregorian chant with the simplest and most homely naturalness. Perhaps the only statement made by Colonel Maurice in this marvellously faithful and striking memoir with which I should disagree, is the remark (vol. ii. p. 69) that there is much more truth in Dean Stanley's assertion that "every incident in the history of Europe and the world, and every wave of thought which passed over them, produced their impression and left their mark upon" Mr. Maurice's mind and spirit, than there is in the counter-statement made by others, that it was his principal characteristic "to be entirely uninfluenced by other men." I should say that never was there a man who studied the events and characters which came within his ken more patiently and with a more ardent desire to learn from them and understand them; that never was there one who did apprehend them better, so far as the leading convictions and general bias of his own character enabled him to enter into them; but that never was there a character so little altered by the events and persons with whom he came into contact, from the opening of his life to its close. He was almost the same in 1850, when he was a man in the prime of life, that he was in 1825, after leaving Cambridge; he was the same in 1870, just before his death, that he was in 1850, in the prime of his life. Not that Maurice did not learn from

experience. He learnt much in tact, in self-control, in insight. But all he learnt from experience, all he learnt from the lives and characters of others, was how to pour his own higher convictions more vividly and effectually into them, not how to change one of those higher convictions, nor how to add one of any importance to those with which he was overflowing at the very outset of life. No more patient and laborious student of facts ever lived than Maurice;—none who felt more reverence for the teaching of facts, more anxiety to distinguish between their superficial drift and their inner meaning. On secondary subjects, the teaching of events altered his own practical mind. For example, he changed his opinion as to the practical advisability of enforcing Subscription to the Articles on the Undergraduates of Oxford and on the Clergy of the Church; and he was at the close of his life quite prepared to give up the use of the Athanasian Creed in the Services of the Church, ardently as he still held by that creed. Apparently he even modified his dislike to the form of government known as democracy, at the close of his life,—and saw that the forms of democracy might be combined with a profound reverence for that higher law which the people are bound to obey. But these are the only exceptions,—and they are very slight exceptions,—to the statement that Mr. Maurice's mind was ruled by the same class of convictions, expressed in almost the same form, at the close of his life, by which it was ruled when he first devoted himself to the Church's service. All the wealth of his subsequent experience and learning produced hardly any effect, except that of giving those convictions deeper roots and a richer medium of expression. His mind and character

grew, but they grew, like an oak, in the very shape that was impressed upon the acorn. If this book wearies any one, it will be only because the letters, of whatever subject they treat, are all sonorous expressions of the same character, and the same unchanging faith. There were certain kinds of thought—Bishop Colenso's Scriptural criticisms, for example—which simply troubled Mr. Maurice,—which he could not assimilate, which made him unhappy, but with which he did not see his way to deal. Fortunately for us, his intellect was rich enough, his character great enough, his magnanimity ample enough, to enable him to make far more of the chief subjects with which he had to deal than almost any other of his contemporaries, so that the few subjects with which he dealt less effectively were of comparatively small importance. I only mention them here to illustrate what I mean by saying that he was not materially affected even by events and influences which seemed likely to make inroads on his deepest convictions. All that he could assimilate he did assimilate, and it greatly enriched his nature and his intellect. What was foreign to him, when it clamoured for notice from him, made him very unhappy, and yet he hardly took it in; nor did it eventually alter either the attitude of his mind, or the proportions of his thought. He was so much disturbed by Bishop Colenso's assault on the Pentateuch that he pressed the resignation of his own living, simply in order that he might clear himself from any suspicion of selfish motive in protesting against the destructive criticism of an old and loyal friend; and he withdrew his resignation only because he found that it would injure that friend. A wilder act of chivalry was never projected

by any knight-errant. Indeed, this piece of knight-errantry was the measure of Mr. Maurice's despair at finding the faith which was so dominant in himself apparently failing a friend from whom he had heard the echo of many of his own highest convictions. But the pain and dismay passed and left him, just as the same pain and dismay at Sterling's scepticism had, in an earlier period of his life, passed and left him, essentially unchanged,—delivering the same deep convictions with the same impressive air of authority, and with the same deep personal humility as before. His life was a sort of chaunt, rich, deep, awestruck, passionately humble, from beginning to end.

And it was this in more senses than one. No man, as I have said, ever was more anxious to use words in their simplest, most straightforward, most obvious sense. No man was ever more indignant at the pretensions of journalists and others to speak for a class, when they really only expressed the convictions of an individual. No man was ever more explicit in making people understand that what he said, he said only for himself, that he expressed nothing in the world but the faith, or the hope, or the opinion, or the surmise, as the case might be, of a single and very humble mind. Yet, as a matter of fact, no man's thoughts ever fell more into the forms of a kind of litany than Mr. Maurice's. You can hardly interpret him fairly if you treat all his avowals of "shameful" failure, of humiliating inferiority to everybody with whom he acted, of suspected dishonesty lurking at the root of his best thoughts, of "hard and proud words," used when he ought to have been gentle and forbearing, as if they were strictly individual confessions limited to

individual memories. They were, as I believe, nothing of the kind. They were the confessions befitting a kind of litany, poured forth in the name of human nature, the weakness and sinfulness of which he felt most keenly, most individually, most painfully, but which he felt at least as much in the character of the representative of a race by the infirmities of which he was overwhelmed, as on his own account. For example, in one letter he writes: —"I wish to confess the sins of the time as my own. Ah, how needful do I feel it, for the sins of others produce such sin in me, and stir up my unsanctified nature so terribly." And that passage reveals the secret of the matter. Maurice's confessions of profound unworthiness are as simple and genuine as confessions can be, but they are confessions at least as much due to his consciousness of being able to enter to the full into all the evil of the social life to which he belonged, as to any experience that would be called strictly individual. In one who does not catch the wonderful depth of his social nature, his curiously profound sense of shame at noticing that the evil of others produced a sort of reverberation in his own heart, his constant chaunt of self-depreciation looks unreal. When, however, you catch that he feels,—as all the deeper religious natures have always felt, —a sort of self-reproachful complicity in every sinful tendency of his age, you feel that the litany in which he expresses his shame though most genuine, nay, most piercing in its genuineness, is not so much morbid self-depreciation as a deep sense of the cruel burden of social infirmity and social sin, which he laid down, on behalf of all men in whose infirmities and sins he could perceive echoes of his own, at the feet of his Saviour. Thus, in one of his

books, after criticising what is wrong in others, he adds:—"If I have any occasion to speak against them, I will add that I do not hold them to be worse men than I am, and that I am satisfied they have a better and nobler spirit in them, which is aspiring to the true God, and rendering probably, a more acceptable homage to him than I render. I will say this, because I hold it to be true, and because I ought to say it," though he expects to be charged with hypocrisy for saying it. That means, what I believe to be the exact truth, that Mr. Maurice's many and strong expressions of inferiority to all the rest of the world were really as much due to the sense of shame and confusion with which the perception of other men's weaknesses and sins came home to him, when he recognised kindred feelings in his own nature, as to the urgency of those feelings in his own individual experience. His confessions must be taken as the outpourings of the conscience of a race rather than as the outpouring of the conscience of a mere individual, or they will seem artificial and unreal. Once catch the perfect simplicity with which he pours out the humiliation of the heart of man, rather than the humiliation of the heart of an individual man,—though, of course, it is the experience of the individual man which justifies him in that confession,—and you see how truthful and genuine it is, and how wonderful was the ardour with which Maurice entered into the social tendencies of his day.

Seldom have the faith and reverence of one mind been so thoroughly understood and so powerfully delineated as those of Frederick Denison Maurice have been understood and delineated by his son. The book is quite a unique piece of biography.

You are made to realise from beginning to end Maurice's constant recognition that human faith can never measure God; that divine revelation is a condescension of the infinite Love to us, not an intuition of ours into the secrets of Infinitude; that divine light is its own evidence, and that without the humility of a willing learner, it is sure to be turned into darkness; that to submit freely to the influence of God over the heart gives a sort of strength which no mere opinion, however tenacious, can lend even for a moment; and you have all this, and all that was cognate to it, expressed in every variety of form in his own language, in extracts happily chosen from his letters, and as happily illustrated, wherever there is any room for misunderstanding, from his more elaborate works. You are allowed, too, to see quite frankly where Maurice's own light failed him. For example, he always held the language that the whole race has been and is redeemed by Christ once and for ever. Hence, in his correspondence with Mr. Kingsley (vol. ii. pp. 272-74), he admits that the Baptismal Service which speaks of the infant as "made" the child of God in baptism — instead of simply being *declared* so—is not entirely satisfactory to him; and he explains it away after a fashion, as it seems to me, not at all different from similar explanations in Tract 90. Again, Colonel Maurice gives us, as I think, quite frankly the origin of a certain very gross misunderstanding of his father, with which, however, when he meets with that misunderstanding in Principal Shairp's account of Mr. MacLeod Campbell's conversation, he is greatly shocked. Mr. MacLeod Campbell's statement was that, according to Maurice and his friends, there is nothing real in the nature of things, answering to this sense of guilt. The sense of

guilt becomes a mistake, which further knowledge reverses. All sin is thus reduced to ignorance." Doubtless this is a gross misunderstanding of the general tenor of Maurice's writings, where the sense of guilt is profoundly, deeply, oppressively apparent from beginning to end. But surely there was much in his language at times to excuse the misunderstanding. If the only difference between sin and righteousness is that men living in sin do not recognise their accomplished redemption, while men living in faith do, the sin would appear to be a sin of ignorance rather than of will. And in exact agreement with this view, Maurice says in a remarkable letter to Miss Barton (vol. i. p. 233), that he wishes to treat evil "as though it were not, for in very truth, it is a falsehood. It has no reality, and why should not we treat it as having none?" If Mr. MacLeod Campbell had come upon that sentence alone,—and there are a good many partially analogous statements to be found here and there in Maurice's writings,—surely he might be excused for supposing that Maurice regarded sin as a purely negative and unreal affair. For my own part, I have never been able to reconcile Maurice's profound and deep sense of the awful reality of sin,—expressed hundreds or thousands of times in these volumes,—with his language as to the absolute completeness of redemption even as regards those who have not been rescued from a life of sin; nor with his language here and there,—language which I believe he holds in common with the Roman Church,—as to the purely negative and unreal character of sin. But it is Colonel Maurice's great merit that he conceals nothing. He weaves together with great art, and in a fashion that must have cost continuous labour

carried on through a very great portion of the twelve years since his father's death, passages of Maurice's letters revealing his thoughts and hopes as to all the main events of his life, inward and outward, and interpreting them, when they need interpretation, by the light of his own deep insight into his father's works and his own profound reverence for his father's character.

One happy feature of this admirable biography is the condensation of the leading feature of each chapter in the passages prefixed to it by the editor, —passages not rarely drawn from Mr. Maurice's own writings, though more often from the writings of others. These, with the terse running headings of the pages, constitute a sort of epitome of the life, and certainly lend additional significance to the story, instead of distracting attention from it. I do not hesitate to say that any one already familiar with the life and writings of Maurice will find a very vivid outline—an artistic etching, one might call it —of his career in these mottoes and page-headings even taken alone, and that they materially help the reader to catch more effectually the focus of interest in the extended narrative. And they are all the more welcome that what I have ventured to term the litany-like monotone of Maurice's letters receives, by the help of these hints and generalising suggestions of his son, its true connection with the analogies of other lives and times. To illustrate my meaning, I would ask the readers of this book to turn to the headings of chapter v. volume ii., in which the story of Mr. Maurice's expulsion from King's College for his doctrine on the subject of eternal punishments is related, and to observe the

headings along the pages, with their lively suggestiveness. "I give and demand change for phrases," is the heading of one page, which draws the attention of the reader to Maurice's dislike to conventionalisms of language which have lost their meaning, and to his resolve to make himself and his friends consider precisely what they mean by the words they use. "Attack of F. D. M.'s cholera of resignations," is another heading, which chronicles one of those numerous attempts to resign positions of authority by which Maurice was always signalising his belief that he was, in God's hands, of infinitely more use when employed in suffering some humiliation, than in any other earthly occupation. "If it be put, 'Jelf objects to you,' I go gladly," is the heading of another page, immediately followed by this still more characteristic heading, "Jelf's phrases force me to fight." Dr. Jelf, I may explain, was the Principal of King's College, who was so much scandalised by Maurice's emphatic distinction between 'eternal' and 'everlasting,' that he regarded Maurice's resignation as essential to save the College from the imputation of infidelity. To hold that any divine quality was in itself more significant than could be expressed in terms of mere duration, was, in the eyes of the orthodox of those days, a sure sign of failing faith in Christ. It must have required great insight and no little humour to summarise the story of these letters as Colonel Maurice has summarised it, and I think that he has succeeded uniformly in drawing the attention of his readers to the essential point of the text itself.

This remark reminds me that nothing is more notable in this Life than the melancholy and sometimes rather bitter humour which it reveals, even at

the heart of Maurice's most sweet and genial nature. To Mr. Kingsley, Maurice describes himself (vol. ii. p. 261) as "a hard Puritan, almost incapable of enjoyment, though, on principle, justifying enjoyment as God's gift to his creatures,"—a caricature of himself, I need hardly say, but a caricature founded in truth, so far as the central melancholy was concerned. Yet like most men of melancholy turn in their heart of hearts, there was the frequent flash of a smile in the midst of his gravest thought, a smile that lights up the context and makes its intense earnestness all the more striking. Thus, in a letter to the lady to whom he was engaged, in which he earnestly deprecates the notion, so fashionable in the last century, of moulding a wife to suit his own ideal, he says :—"God forbid that I should have anything to do with any one who was my handiwork. If he had been judicious, Pygmalion would sooner have fallen in love with the work of some other artist, even if it were only of stone, than with his own." And again, laughing at his own cloudiness of style, and referring, of course, to Polonius's willingness to see in the shape of the cloud whatever Hamlet wished him to see, he remarks of his introduction to Law's answer to Mandeville,—"I wished, without alluding to Sewell's book, to undermine as far as I could all the maxims on which it rests, and to show what kind of Rationalism I conceived to be not only compatible with Christianity, but essential to it. *But I suppose few will see the whale, even if they look at the cloud.*" Again, it would be difficult, I fancy, to compress more sad satire into a single sentence than is contained in that in which Maurice quietly remarks that Dr. Jelf has proved Christianity to be a religion of mercy, by showing that "the phrases about salvation

are to the phrases about damnation as 57 to 8,—the Bible being a great betting-book, in which the odds on the favourite are marked as at Doncaster or Newmarket." One can see, through the whole course of these letters, that with all his profound tenderness of nature, Maurice's satirical vein would have been active enough, if he had not severely reprehended himself for the mood in which satire oftenest emerges. There is keen satire against himself, in this delightful passage of a letter to Mr. Ludlow, on his position as President of the Co-operative Council: —"A little boy, whose elder brother had set him up on a great heap of stools, to act Gamaliel, whilst he sat at his feet as Paul, when the stools came down and he fell on his head, cried out, 'I won't be 'Maliel any more!' I have often made the same resolution, having as little right as the little boy to my insecure position, and tumbling as awkwardly."

The chapter on "Home Life and Personal Characteristics" (chapter viii. in the second volume) is full of charm, and gives us a picture of Maurice in his own home which increases tenfold the fascination of his writings :—

"That of which," writes Colonel Maurice, "it is hardest to give any adequate impression, is the 'stealth' of his doing good in all kinds of little ways, all day long, in the small details of daily life. If anything went wrong, he was sure, by some ingenious process or other, to make out that he himself was the only person to blame for it. Always he was contriving to leave an impression favourable to one member of the household of some act which another was disposed to resent, or he was arranging some special kindness of his own, the whole credit of which he contrived to leave to some one else. It was the continual tendency to take the heaviest load on his own shoulders,

and to assign the lightest to others, all the while pretending, and really persuading himself, that he was not doing his fair share, that one knows not how to illustrate, because it happened always and in everything." "An acquaintance whom he did not know to be present, records how one pouring wet day, when my father was sitting in a crowded omnibus, some old applewoman came to the door looking for a seat, and how my father, an old man at the time, instantly got out on to the roof. It is certain that he would have done so at any time, but he would also have carefully demonstrated, if any one had detected him in the act, that there were excellent reasons why it was the most natural thing in the world that he should get out into the rain, rather than some much younger man, who had no notion of doing so."

Here, again, is a lively and vivid picture of Maurice's fervour in composition :—

"It was a very great relief to him to compose his books by dictation, and to avoid the labour of mechanical writing. His usual manner of dictation was to sit with a pillow on his knees, hugged tightly in his arms, or to walk up and down the room still clutching the pillow, or suddenly sitting down, or standing before the fire, with the pillow still on his knees or under his left arm, to seize a poker and violently attack the fire, then to walk away from it to the furthest end of the room, return, and poke violently at the fire, not unfrequently, in complete unconsciousness of what he was doing, poking the whole contents of the fireplace through the bars into the fender. The habit of holding the pillow whenever he was engaged in excited talk, dates from such early days, that one of his undergraduate Cambridge friends used to say that a black horse-hair pillow, which he then had, always followed him about of itself. My mother, in the Guy's days, used to call such an one his 'black wife.' All the while he poured forth a continuous stream of words."

Such traits would be interesting in any man, but they are more than interesting when they give the finishing touches to the picture of one who lived to witness to a great truth. That truth can hardly be more succinctly expressed than in this passage of a letter written in 1852 :—

"You remember probably a saying of Dr. Arnold's that the Early Church was utterly wrong and foolish in making the nature of God, which is so far out of our reach, the ground of its belief and confession ; whereas some doctrine directly concerning our own human life ought to be the uniting bond. A more plausible statement was never made, nor, I think, one more directly at variance with experience, reason, and Scripture. Experience shows us that confused and partial notions about God have been the root of all the divisions, superstitions, plagues of the world. Our highest human reason asks for the knowledge of God as the ground of itself, as that which is to deliver us from the notions, conceits, and imperfect apprehensions which belong to us as individuals. Scripture is either the gradual unveiling of God, or it is nothing. On the other hand, all experience testifies that what Dr. Arnold would call the religious truths that concern our souls are apprehended by us as *individuals* (*e.g.*, our personal evil, our need of a justifier, the fact of justification), and that wherever they are made the grounds of *fellowship*, they lose their meaning and acquire a new and false character. Reason says that what refers to each man (as *each*) cannot be the foundation for humanity to rest upon ; Scripture is addressed to nations, to Churches, to man. Here, then, is my justification of the old Church, or, rather, of that which the history of the Church shows not to have been its work at all, but the necessity of its existence. Because it was for man, and had a gospel coming from God to man, its creeds were declarations of His nature ; they could be nothing else."

There you have the kernel of the truth concerning revelation for the diffusion of which Maurice lived and worked from his twenty-fifth year to his death. It is, I believe, a great and living truth, and one which this biography will enable the world to apprehend even better than his books alone, without the commentary of his Life, would ever have enabled the world to apprehend it.

The book is a finished biography in the best sense, concerned solely about the subject of it, and not about the writer. It is illustrated by two fine engravings from pictures by Lawrence and by Dickinson, the one earlier, the other later; both vivid and characteristic, though the engraving of Mr. Dickinson's picture gives to our eyes the effect of Mr. Maurice's expression a little *overblown*. Finally, there is a very full and admirable index, which greatly increases the usefulness of the Life.

VI

WALTER BAGEHOT

1877

THE sudden death of the Editor of the *Economist*, in the fulness of his powers, has been thought of, and will continue to be thought of, in relation to the public life of Englishmen, chiefly as the sudden loss of a cool, sagacious, wise, and unusually independent element in the formation of the economical and financial opinion of the world to which he belonged. And that assuredly it is. If Mr. Bagehot's mind, as a factor in political opinion of any kind, had a defect, that defect was the very unusual one of its too complete independence of the influence of the thought around him. He had what Dr. Newman has called "intellectual detachment" in as high a degree probably as any man of his generation,—so high that he sometimes found it all but impossible to understand the force of the ordinary currents of feeling around him, and consequently at times allowed too much and at times also too little for those external influences of which he rather guessed than gauged the strength. But those who knew Mr. Bagehot well will probably find it hard to remember in him the economist at all. Much of his time as he

devoted to these subjects, and greatly as he influenced the opinion of his day upon them, it will remain very difficult for his personal friends to think chiefly of economical subjects when they remember him. And even those who have studied none of his writings except those devoted to these subjects, will in some degree be able to understand how this may be. For what he introduced into these as into all subjects on which he wrote at all, was life, animation, the real view of a man who had mastered the abstract theory indeed, and attached to it the first importance, but who cared chiefly to consider its bearing on the facts of the world of business, and the manner in which it blended with and modified the transactions of living men. No one can have read the financial and economical papers of Mr. Bagehot for many years without seeing that the various kinds of City men, the merchant, the stockbroker, the banker, were all living figures to him, and that he loved to dissect, with that realistic humour of which he was a master, the relative bearing of their disturbing passions and conventions on that instinct of gain which forms the sole basis of economical reasoning.

And it was the life, humour, and animation looking out of the glance of those large and brilliant black eyes, and often presenting a curious contrast with the supposed dryness of the subjects with which Mr. Bagehot so frequently dealt, that made him what he was to his friends. In spite of his detached, cool, solitary intellect, he was the most buoyant of men, the loss of whom is like the loss of sunlight to his friends' dimmer lives. As a young man, his nonsense was the most enjoyable of all nonsense, for with all its extravagance, it had strong and piercing

discrimination for its chief ground; but while always following the lead of some true perception, he lashed out in all directions into caricature of his meaning with all the animation of high spirits and a bold imagination. He was a dashing rider, too, and a fresh wind was felt blowing through his earlier literary efforts, as though he had been thinking in the saddle,—an effect wanting in his later essays, where you see chiefly the calm analysis of a lucid observer. What animation there is, for example, in this description of Shakespeare!—"The reverential nature of Englishmen has carefully preserved what they thought the great excellence of their poet,—that he made a fortune. . . . It was a great thing that he, the son of the wool-comber, the poacher, the good-for-nothing, the vagabond (for so, we fear, the phrase went in Shakespeare's youth), should return upon the old scene a substantial man, a person of capital, a freeholder, a gentleman to be respected, and over whom even a burgess could not affect the least superiority. The great pleasure in life is doing what people say you can't do. Why did Mr. Disraeli take the duties of Chancellor of the Exchequer with so much relish? Because people said he was a novelist, an *ad captandum* man . . . who could not add up. No doubt it pleased his inmost soul to do the work of the red-tape people better than those who could do nothing else. And so with Shakespeare,—it pleased him to be respected by those whom he had respected with boyish reverence,—but who had rejected the imaginative man,—on their own ground and in their own subject, by the only title which they would regard, in a word, as a moneyed man. We seem to see him eyeing the burgesses with good-humoured fellowship, and genial

though suppressed and half-conscious contempt, drawing out their old stories, acquiescing in their foolish notions, with everything in his head and easy sayings upon his tongue, a full mind and a deep dark eye that played upon an easy scene—now in fanciful solitude, now in cheerful society, now occupied with deep thoughts, now and equally so with trivial recreations, forgetting the dramatist in the man of substance, and the poet in the happy companion; beloved and even respected, with a hope for every one and a smile for all." Mr. Bagehot's own success as a banker and economist certainly pleased him not a little, and for the same reason. As a boy he was thought a metaphysical dreamer by those who did not know him well. And he was always laughing at himself because he could not make figures "add up." Nevertheless, after a year or two's study of law, and after being called to the Bar, he exchanged the law for the counting-house, with some tinge probably of the same motive which he here attributes to Shakespeare. Certainly much of the pleasure of his great success—and a great success it was; for the leading men of both Liberal and Conservative Governments consulted him eagerly on financial questions, and often followed his advice—consisted in the thought that he had attained that success in the most practical and apparently the least dreamy of all pursuits, in spite of an imagination that ranged into the highest subjects, and at one time gained him the reputation of incapacity for practical life.

Again, what vividness is there in this description of the historian Gibbon. "Grave, tranquil, decorous pageantry is a part, as it were, of the essence of the last age. There is nothing more characteristic of

Gibbon. A kind of pomp pervades him. He is never out of livery. He ever selects for narration the themes which look most like a levée. Grave chamberlains seem to stand throughout; life is a vast ceremony, the historian at once the dignitary and the scribe. . . . [Nevertheless] the manner of 'The Decline and Fall' is almost the last which should be recommended for strict imitation. It is not a style in which you can tell the truth. . . . The petty order of sublunary matters, the common gross existence of ordinary people, the necessary littlenesses of necessary life, are little suited to his sublime narrative." And again, "The truth clearly is, that Gibbon had arrived at the conclusion that he was the sort of person a populace kill. People wonder a great deal why very many of the victims of the French Revolution were particularly selected; the Marquis de Custine especially cannot divine why they executed his father. The historians cannot show that they committed any particular crime. The marquises and marchionesses seem very inoffensive. The fact is, they were killed for being polite. The world felt itself unworthy of it. There were so many bows, such regular smiles, such calm, supreme condescension,—could a mob be asked to stand it? Have we not all known a precise, formal, patronising old gentleman,—bland, imposing, something like Gibbon? Have we not suffered from his dignified attentions? If we had been on the Committee of Public Safety, can we doubt what would have been the fate of that man? Just so, wrath and envy destroyed in France an upper-class world." This was taken partly from his own observation. Mr. Bagehot was in France at the time of the *Coup d'État* of 1851, and very vividly he described the

impression which the revolutionary passion of the Reds made upon him. "Of late," he wrote to a friend, "I have been devoting my entire attention to the science of barricades, which I found amusing. They have systematised it in a way which is pleasing to the cultivated intellect. We had only one good day's fighting, and I naturally kept out of cannon-shot. But I took a quiet walk over the barricades in the morning, and superintended the construction of three with as much keenness as if I had been clerk of the works. You've seen lots, of course, at Berlin, but I should not think those Germans were up to a real Montagnard, who is the most horrible being to the eye I ever saw,—sallow, sincere, sour fanaticism, with grizzled moustaches, and a strong wish to shoot you rather than not. The Montagnards are a scarce commodity, the real race,—only three or four, if so many, to a barricade. The rest are mere shop-boys and gamins, who get knocked about by the Fraternité fanatics, if they put the stones wrong, or don't upset the cabs to an inch." "Till the Revolution came, I had no end of trouble to find conversation, but now they'll talk against everybody, and against the President like mad,—and they talk immensely well, and the language is like a razor, capital if you are skilful, but sure to cut you if you aren't. A fellow can talk German in crude forms, and I don't see it sounds any worse, but this stuff is horrid unless you get it *quite* right. A French lady made a striking remark to me:—'C'est une Révolution qui a sauvé la France. Tous mes amis sont mis en prison.' She was immensely delighted that such a pleasing way of saving her country had been found." Mr. Bagehot's stay in France, short as it was, confirmed him in his pro-

found English reserve; and also in his lively dread of that ready-made, neat-looking theory which, even to his mind, added so much to the attractiveness of French literature, while it squared so ill with the complexity of actual life. Yet his admiration for the effectiveness and perspicuity of French style was almost unlimited, though he regarded the French audacity of generalisation as a grave warning, not as a seductive example. Perhaps his familiarity with it taught him that disposition to scoff at mere literature, and that deep belief in the educating power of all large mercantile life, which he was always expressing, sometimes with humorous exaggeration, sometimes with earnest conviction. "You see," he once wrote to a friend, "I have hunting, banking, ships, publishers, an article, and a Christmas to do, all at once, and it is my opinion they will all get muddled. A muddle will *print*, however, though it won't add up,—*which is the real advantage of literature.*"

It is of course difficult to decide, as it is difficult to answer all hypothetical questions, whether Mr. Bagehot would have succeeded if he had ever got into Parliament,—as in 1866 he was within eight votes of doing for Bridgewater. It is certain enough that dozens of vastly inferior men have at various times succeeded in making a great Parliamentary and political reputation. But it does not follow that because he was a man of much higher and wider intellectual range than many of them, he would have succeeded too. As I have said, his mind was not a mind which got merged in his work and duties. It was a mind which he kept singularly detached from them, and this was one of the great obstacles to his popularity. He was a thorough Liberal so far as a

steady belief in the educational advantages of popular institutions, and especially of wide and directly practical discussions, could make him a Liberal, but he had no sympathy with the "enthusiasms" of the Liberal party, and was, in a humorous way, almost proud of belonging to a county which, as he used to say, "would not subscribe a thousand pounds to be represented by an archangel." "I hate the Liberal enthusiasts," he once wrote to a friend. "I feel inclined to say, 'Go home, Sir, and take a dose of salts, and see if it won't clean it all out of you.' Nature did not mean me for a popular candidate." Clearly not; and even if he had got over that stage of the business, I am not sure that Mr. Bagehot did not a little too distinctly realise the wide chasm between his views and those of the popular party to which he must have belonged, to have exercised a perfectly natural and therefore a powerful influence over political opinion. He was a Liberal of the middle party, and always approved Liberal Governments resting on the Liberal-Conservatives, and Conservative Governments resting on the Conservative-Liberals, rather than Governments of energy, enthusiasm, and action. Yet Mr. Bagehot was a Liberal from conviction, not from prepossession. His book on the British Constitution—much the ablest, indeed the only book on the real working of that Constitution, and one which has been eagerly welcomed in Germany and France as quite a new light on the true meaning of the British political system—shows that intellectually he would have preferred a Conservative republic to a Constitutional monarchy, if it had but had the same magic hold on the British people. He did not like the many unreal fictions of constitutional monarchy, nor did

he esteem highly the prepossessions in which national fidelity to a hereditary dynasty is rooted. Nevertheless, he steadily maintained that mankind being what it is, the position of a constitutional monarch, if used by a wise and patient sovereign, is one of the most powerful, and one conferring power of the most enviable kind, that exists in the world. He would have liked to be one.

Mr. Bagehot had a keen delight in following the methods of modern scientific investigation, and his remarkable book on *Physics and Politics* sufficiently shows how strong a hold Mr. Darwin's theories of the elimination of inefficient competitors in the struggle for life, and Sir Henry Maine's studies on the relation of ancient customs to law, had got of his mind. He held that the doctrine of evolution and natural selection gave a far higher conception of the Creator than the old doctrine of mechanical design, but, nevertheless, he never took the materialistic view of evolution. One of his early essays, written while at college, on some of the many points of the Kantian philosophy which he then loved to discuss, concluded with a remarkable sentence, which would probably have fairly expressed, even at the close of his life, his profound belief in God and his partial sympathy with the agnostic view that we are, in great measure, incapable of apprehending more than very dimly his mind or purposes:—"Gazing after the infinite essence, we are like men watching through the drifting clouds for a glimpse of the true heavens on a drear November day; layer after layer passes from our view, but still the same immovable gray rack remains." Yet he held to the last that the religious instincts have their own significance, and a significance with which scientific

reasoning cannot and will not ultimately interfere; and the haunting sense which he often strongly expressed of the eternal continuity of personal life doubtless also remained with him to the end.

Not very many perhaps, outside Mr. Bagehot's own inner circle, will carry about with them that hidden pain, that burden of emptiness, inseparable from an image which has hitherto been one full of the suggestions of life and power when that life and power are no longer to be found,—for Mr. Bagehot was intimately known only to the few. But those who do, will hardly find again in this world a store of intellectual sympathy of so high a stamp, so wide in its range and so full of original and fresh suggestion, a judgment to lean on so real and so sincere, or a friend so frank and constant, with so vivid and tenacious a memory for the happy associations of a common past, and so generous in recognising the independent value of divergent convictions in the less pliant present.

VII

MR. RUSKIN ON WORDSWORTH

1880

MR. RUSKIN'S criticism on Wordsworth in the vagrant-minded article misnamed "Fiction—Fair and Foul," which appears in the August number of the *Nineteenth Century*, is a curious illustration of the unexpectedness of human things. The last thing one would have suspected would have been Mr. Ruskin's very strong sympathy with the authors of *Rejected Addresses*, in relation to Wordsworth. The thing one would have been quite certain of would have been that Mr. Ruskin would have appreciated to the utmost—perhaps over-appreciated—the spiritual side of Wordsworth. The criticism itself belies both these expectations. The strength of Mr. Ruskin's criticism is the kind of strength I should have expected from a mere man of the world. The weakness of Mr. Ruskin's criticism is the weakness I should have expected from a mere man of the world. He sees what is feeble in Wordsworth, as a mere man of the world would see it. He sees what is pretty, as a mere man of the world would see it. He fails to see what is grand, just as a mere man

of the world would fail to see it. The criticism is, in short, the criticism of a clever Philistine, rather than the criticism of the most delicate and eloquent writer on the beauty of Nature and Art that England has ever known. Mr. Ruskin's view of Wordsworth is just the commonplace, superficial view of the man who laughs (not without reason) at Wordsworth's *simplesse,* who admires with sincerity, his purity, innocence, and elevation, but who thinks him, on the whole, a very third-rate poet, of whose unacknowledged peers,—"mute, inglorious" Wordsworths of fully equal power,—a great number are probably sleeping in English churchyards, differing from the one who has made himself famous "only in caring less to hear themselves talk." That is about the least intelligent criticism which has ever dropped from Mr. Ruskin, not excepting even his criticisms on economic subjects. It is a criticism such as in relation to a poet, and a poet dealing chiefly with the spiritual side of Nature, I could hardly have supposed it possible for Mr. Ruskin to write—a dull, conventional criticism, the criticism of a man whose ears had heard what his mind had not taken in. I should hardly have expected Mr. Ruskin—a great master of irony though he be—to lay his finger so unerringly as he does on the weak point of Wordsworth's sublime ode on the "Intimations of Immortality," when he speaks of him,—quite falsely, by the way,—as "content with intimations of immortality such as may be in skipping of lambs and laughter of children." But then, though he shows how little he understands the ode, in speaking of Wordsworth as content with such intimations, he undoubtedly does touch the weak chord in what, but for that weak chord, would be one of the greatest

of all monuments of human genius. The "young lambs" that "bound to the tabor's sound" are certainly very much out of place in that ode, and suggest the young lambs of the stage, much more than the young lambs of the Cumbrian mountain-side. But any one to whom Wordsworth's great ode is the very core of that body of poetry which makes up the best part of his imaginative life, will be as much astonished to find Mr. Ruskin speaking of it so blindly and unmeaningly as he does, even though he does lay his finger on the one blot, as to see the commonplace acuteness with which Mr. Ruskin discerns that blot. The very thing which it is simply stupid for any one who has ever entered into the "Ode on the Intimations of Immortality" to say, is what Mr. Ruskin does say,—that Wordsworth was *content* "with intimations of immortality such as may be in skipping of lambs and laughter of children." The very pivot of the ode, the very drift of all its noblest thought, is that he is not content with it; that it is not this at all which fills him with the conviction of immortality, but something much more potent and more startling,—the certainty stamped upon his mind that these things are the superficial shows of life, that they vanish away beneath a searching gaze, and betray the eternal spirit working within them:—

> "O joy that in our embers
> Is something that doth live,
> That nature yet remembers
> What was so fugitive!
> The thought of our past years in me doth breed
> Perpetual benediction; not indeed
> For that which is most worthy to be blest,
> Delight and liberty, the simple creed

Of childhood, whether busy or at rest,
With new-fledged hope still fluttering in his breast;
Not for these I raise
The song of thanks and praise,
But for those obstinate questionings
Of sense and outward things,
Fallings from us, vanishings;
Blank misgivings of a creature
Moving about in worlds not realised,
High instincts before which our mortal nature
Did tremble like a guilty thing surprised:
But for these first affections,
These shadowy recollections,
Which, be they what they may,
Are yet the fountain light of all our day,
Are yet a master light of all our seeing;
Uphold us, cherish, and have power to make
Our noisy years seem moments in the being
Of the eternal Silence: truths that wake
To perish never;
Which neither listlessness, nor mad endeavour,
Nor Man, nor Boy,
Nor all that is at enmity with joy,
Can utterly abolish or destroy!
Hence, in a season of calm weather,
Though inland far we be,
Our Souls have sight of that immortal sea
Which brought us hither,
Can in a moment travel thither,
And see the children sport upon the shore,
And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore."

It is impossible for a poet to express more clearly that it is neither the joy of nature, nor of childhood, on which he relies as an intimation of immortality, but the working of that overwhelming, and if you please, bewildering spiritual life in us which assails

the mind with asseverations of the unreality and unsubstantiality of all these natural joys and signs, while at the same time, and in the very same act in which it declares this unreality, it forces upon us the spiritual basis of the universe, that ultimate divine substance of which these transitory signs and emblems are but the light indications, just as bubbles springing to the surface of a lake indicate the imprisoned breath of life beneath. Mr. Ruskin could hardly have paid this great ode the compliment of mastering its mere grammatical meaning. The very point of the ode is that only when the poet begins to feel nature, and all that is loveliest in nature, vanishing from him, and the fair surface of existence dissolving at the fiery touch of the spirit, does he recognise thoroughly the spiritual foundation and spiritual end of life, the mighty magic of the universe, and rest in the conviction that,

> "Though nothing can bring back the hour
> Of splendour in the grass, of glory in the flower,
> We will grieve not,—rather find
> Strength in what remains behind.
> In the primal sympathy
> Which, having been, must ever be;
> In the soothing thoughts that spring
> Out of human suffering;
> In the faith that looks through death;
> In years that bring the philosophic mind."

Mr. Ruskin's judgment that Wordsworth is "aerial only, not ethereal," that he is "incurious to see in the hands the print of the nails," that "he is gifted (in this singularly) with vivid sense of natural beauty, and a pretty turn for reflections not always acute, but as far as they go, medicinal to the fever

of the restless and corrupted life around him," is not like one of Mr. Ruskin's judgments at all; it is distinctly the judgment of a dull man, which Mr. Ruskin has never before pretended to be. It is true that Wordsworth treats the pangs and miseries of human life with a passion that is hardly earthly, but no one feels them more profoundly than he:—

"Amid the groves, under the shadowy hills,
The generations are prepared; the pangs,
The internal pangs, are ready; the dread strife
Of poor humanity's afflicted will
Struggling in vain with ruthless destiny."

No poet of any day has sunk a sounding-line deeper than Wordsworth into the fathomless secret of the mystery of suffering that is in no sense retributive:—

"I thought of Chatterton, the marvellous boy,
The sleepless soul that perished in his pride;
Of him who walked in glory and in joy,
Following his plough upon the mountain side;
By our own spirits are we deified:
We Poets in our youth begin in gladness,
But thereof come in the end despondency and madness."

And as for Wordsworth's "vivid sense of natural beauty," and his "pretty turn for reflections not always acute," Mr. Ruskin could hardly miss the mark more carefully. Wordsworth's sense of natural beauty was not particularly vivid, though his sense of the wonder and awe in the contemplation of natural beauty was something beyond what any poet ever felt before or since. You will hardly find three "pretty" poems in his writings, though you may find several namby-pamby ones. When he was successful at all he rose far above "prettiness;"

when he was most unsuccessful he often sank beneath it. His mind, as he himself described it, was one of those,—

> "That feed upon infinity, that brood
> Over the dark abyss."

His favourite themes were :—

> "Sorrow that is not sorrow but delight,
> And miserable love that is not pain
> To hear of, for the glory that redounds
> Therefrom to human kind and what we are."

He tells us in the "Prelude" that, by nature and genius,

> "I too exclusively esteemed *that* love
> And sought *that* beauty which, as Milton says,
> Hath terror in it."

He tells us how in his early youth,—

> "Huge and mighty forms that do not live
> Like living men, moved slowly through the mind
> By day, and were a trouble to my dreams."

And this is the stamp impressed upon all his greater poetry, a stamp of elemental strength and grandeur, that singled out the permanent in the transient, that discovered the light in darkness, that felt the strength in weakness, the joy in suffering, the life in death. Mr. Ruskin writes of Wordsworth as if he had not really read him, or having read him, he had retained only the picture of a wild-flower here and there, and had missed all the hardy spiritual flights, the meditative rapture, the lonely intrepidity, which make the world of Wordsworth one peculiar to himself.

Mr. Ruskin's criticism on Wordsworth is like the description of Shakespeare as 'a very clever man who wrote those funny things about fairies and weavers and witches,' or the description of Tennyson as the poet who wrote 'those pretty verses about the skipping-rope and the walk to the mail-coach.' I have often found Mr. Ruskin perverse before, but never before found him trying to prove that what is really strong and deep is weak and shallow. If he had taken the trouble to read Mr. Aubrey de Vere's fine essays in *The Month* on "The Genius and Passion of Wordsworth," I do not think that he would have ventured to write this rather flippant and very obtuse criticism.

VIII

MR. RUSKIN ON NATURE AND MIRACLE

1873

MR. RUSKIN, in a curious and (as is usual with him) delicately-written paper on "The Nature and Authority of Miracle," in the current number of the *Contemporary Review*, makes some rather scornful remarks on the parade with which, in the present day, men insist on the discovery of the laws of nature and their inviolability, as if no one had ever heard of a law of nature before at all. Mr. Ruskin himself thinks it almost impossible to determine what is a law of nature and what is a miracle; he thinks it "contrary to modesty, whether in a religious or a scientific point of view, to regard *any*thing as miraculous." "I know so little," he says, "and this little I know is so inexplicable, that I dare not say anything is wonderful because it is strange to me, and not wonderful because it is familiar." "If a second Joshua to-morrow commanded the sun to stand still, and it obeyed him, and he therefore claimed credit as a miracle-worker, I am afraid I should answer, 'What? a miracle that the sun stands still? Not at all. I was always expecting it would. The only wonder to me was its going on.'" I should

have supposed that if this really represents in any degree Mr. Ruskin's state of mind,—if he is really prepared to be rather more surprised at the ordinary order of nature than at deviations from that order,—if he thinks it impossible to distinguish law from miracle, or, indeed, to say whether all is law, or all is miracle, or some things law and others miracle,—he would have been prepared to argue that miracle has no distinguishable nature and no assignable authority of its own at all. It is very difficult to say what is the nature of a thing of the very existence of which you are altogether dubious; and it is still more difficult to understand how you can find any trace of authority in purely conjectural events. If it could be seriously believed that the rising of a man from the dead were as likely as not to be due to a law of nature, and decay and death from old age were as likely as not to be due to specific miracle, then it is surely clear enough that miracle could have neither a definite nature assigned to it, nor a definite authority;—not a definite nature, because nature means specific qualities which here you cannot assign;—nor a definite authority, because authority means guidance of some kind, intellectual or moral, and you cannot be guided except in some definite path of thought or action,—whereas it is as easy to find guidance in the nonsense line, "Nought is everything, and everything is nought," as in something in nature unknown which you may at pleasure regard as miracle or not, with an even chance of being right whichever way you take it.

It is, however, tolerably evident that Mr. Ruskin does not intend his paradoxical denial that anything whatever has a right to the name of either law or miracle, to be taken quite literally. If he did, it

would be mere trifling for him to go on to maintain, as he does, that though miracles may have very little *missionary* power, very little right to convince men of the truth of the faith preached in connection with them, they may have a great deal of *pastoral* influence,—that is, a great deal of power to convince men that God is really making himself manifest,—that is, establishing a new moral relation with men, by their aid. I assume that what he does mean to imply by the paradoxical statements I have quoted above, is this, that what is constantly, permanently before us, may be much more truly wonderful, when you come to know more about its origin, than even the great surprises of miracle; and that miracle, even though it does establish a new and direct relation between the spiritual source of power and some inferior creature, need not, when its meaning is understood, be so truly wonderful, so difficult to understand in all its bearings, as the permanent order of nature. Of course this may be true enough; indeed it may be put very simply. The existence of God *must* be far more inconceivable, far more incomprehensible to us than any particular act of God, miraculous or otherwise, given for our comfort and guidance. Yet the existence of God is the constant, permanent condition of any act of his; so that there is something far more wonderful than any miracle in the perfectly unmiraculous condition of miracle. And that, or something like that, is, I suppose, what Mr. Ruskin may have been aiming at in his very paradoxical statement that you cannot have the least security that there is such a thing as miracle at all, and yet that you may learn a great deal by it. I imagine that he first uses 'miracle' in one sense, and then in another; first to

express intrinsic wonderfulness, then to express the kind of event which persuades men rightly or wrongly,—and on the whole rightly, though often wrongly,—that an overruling Person is interrupting the constancy of ordinary phenomena, "in order to establish a particular relation with inferior creatures."

The point of Mr. Ruskin's essay, however, lies in his contention that "an energy may be natural without being normal, and Divine without being constant;" that a Pastoral miracle may result "from a power as natural as any other, though not so perpetual;" that "it is perhaps as much the virtue of a Spirit to be inconstant as of a poison to be sure," and that as "our own energies are inconstant almost in proportion to their nobleness," so the spirit which bloweth where it listeth, is not necessarily to be conceived as always putting forth the same sort of influences over men's minds. To put Mr. Ruskin's meaning, or what I suppose to be his meaning, into other words, I suppose him to intend that we are getting too much accustomed in the present day to identify only the permanent aspects of life with God, and to forget that it is often *rare* events which give us the key to what is ordinary, and flashes of momentary light which give us the most impressive glimpses of our true relation to the universe in which we live. The emphasis laid on 'laws of nature' and on the natural sciences in our own day, is, Mr. Ruskin evidently thinks, absurdly exaggerated. Let the constancy of nature be what it will, it is not the constancy of nature, but the intuitions of spiritual genius, which most help us to understand that constancy. Just as, though "we breathe with regularity, and can calculate on the strength

necessary for common tasks," "the record of our best work, and of our happiest moments, is always one of success which we did not expect, and of enthusiasm which we could not prolong," so "the historical record of miracle is always one of inconstant power." Hence, argues Mr. Ruskin, it is not the uniform forces, but the rare ones, which may be expected to open up the relation between the personal ruler of the universe and his inferior creatures. It may be a mark of the divinest influence that it comes in brief and intermittent gusts. What is superhuman need not be supernatural. Superhuman influences are thus rare, and ethereal, and luminous, but it does not follow that there is anything supernatural in such superhumanness. It may be quite natural for God's spirit, as for man's, to be "inconstant" in its influence. That which we call miracle, and which we justly call miracle in the sense that it truly establishes a new relation between God and his inferior creatures, may be necessarily rare, but for that very reason the more divine. It may be,—to repeat once more Mr. Ruskin's aphorism,—"as much the virtue of a Spirit to be inconstant as of a poison to be sure."

There is a sense in which I believe this to be profoundly true. Of course to speak of God in himself as being anything but constant would be to deny God altogether; but it is quite conceivable, and I believe quite true, that man cannot learn even what is constant except by the help of variations, or by what is inconstant; that laws of nature taken alone do not teach us half as much even of themselves as real or seeming exceptions to those laws; that the full meaning of uniformity is only learnt through change, of life through death, of duty

through sin, and of nature through miracle. The best thinkers tell us that we could not even be conscious of a likeness till after we had become conscious of difference; that it is the change which awakens us to the perception of similarity, the variation which suggests the law. So it is by no means surprising that what we call spiritual influence should be inconstant, and that there should be centuries when, to use the phraseology of the Book of Samuel, "the Word of the Lord is precious" when there is "no open vision." It is not of course that there is any spiritual parsimony in God, but that it is only through the comparative rarity of the gleams of light, through their contrast to common experience, that they teach us the true lesson of that common experience. If they were much more frequent—we being what we are—we should lose the meaning of the lesson through that frequency; just as in countries where life is excessively precarious, death does not enhance half so much as in other countries the value of life. In a land where everyone was original, originality would lose its power, and perhaps become a great danger; its value being to explain the limitations of ordinary habit, not to dissolve ordinary habit. So spiritual influence is the divine comment on ordinary human wants and desires, and miracle the divine comment on law;—neither of which would have the same value, if the subject of the comment were not worked into the very substance of our minds before the comment came. Miracle teaches the divine meaning of permanent law; and owes all its impressiveness to the comparative fixity and permanence of the phenomena which it interrupts. Miracle forces upon us personality, but would not force it

upon us unless it were so exceptional in its mode of occurrence as to open a new mental relation between us and the Author of Nature. It is a mistake to take the uniformity of the laws of Nature as the measure of God's purposes, just as it is a mistake to take the every-day habits even of a human being as the measure of his aims. You cannot tell what they really mean—they are too wide for interpretation—till you get some light on them from the occasions on which the man himself breaks through them, and you see the reasons he assigns for doing so. And so with the laws of Nature,—they are far too big for moral interpretation, too vast for our survey, till at some one point we see the reason why they are modified, and, then, that first really tells us the reason why they were ever fixed. It is not that miracle is half as wide as Nature; on the contrary, it is just because it is so much narrower, that it lets the gleam of the personal Spirit shine through it, and so throws a light on the whole structure. And so, too, what Mr. Ruskin truly calls the highest and rarest moments in the individual human soul, are not half as wide a subject of study as the whole system of monotonous habit and character on which they shed so much light. The reason they do shed so much light upon it is just the contrary,—that these moments puncture, as it were, the systematised unconscious life of man at individual points, and there show the light of the spirit pouring through as at a minute pin-hole; and the very sharp definition and limitation of the beam of light gives us a thousand times as much insight into the spiritual world behind, as if you had had a great network of crossing rays entering in confused pencils from a hundred points at once.

IX

WORDSWORTH THE MAN

1880

In the exquisite little sketch which Mr. Myers has given of Wordsworth, in Mr. John Morley's series of *Men of Letters*,[1] —as a piece of English at least, the gem, I venture to say, of the whole series,—the only thing which, in the perfect candour and singularly chastened truthfulness of the essay, I am disposed to think has been a little inadequately rendered, is the effect of personal force which Wordsworth produced upon all who were competent to understand him at all. Mr. Myers has told us what De Quincey had preconceived Wordsworth, from a knowledge of his poetry; namely, that he "prefigured the image of Wordsworth," to what he called his own "planet-struck eyes," as one before which his faculties would quail, as before "Elijah or St. Paul." But in his explanation how this profound homage to Wordsworth was possible on the part of such a master of the secrets of literature as De Quincey, Mr. Myers, though he dwells very justly and appropriately on Wordsworth's claim to be in a sense the poet of a new revelation, hardly attaches enough importance,

[1] Macmillan and Co.

I think, to the general intensity and rugged power of the man. He has not quoted the impression formed of Wordsworth by a much harder and less impressionable man than De Quincey, and one not at all disposed to receive humbly Wordsworth's "revelation." Hazlitt, perhaps the most cynical critic who ever had an omnivorous appetite for what was good in literature, however unique its kind, early formed a very strong impression of Wordsworth's power, and has left a sketch of him as he was in his earliest poetic epoch,—that is, about the age of twenty-five years, for Wordsworth ripened late, and was hardly a poet at all till he was a mature man. "He answered in some degree," says Hazlitt, "to his friend's [Coleridge's] description of him, but was more gaunt and Don Quixote-like. He was quaintly dressed (according to the costume of that unconstrained period), in a brown fustian jacket and striped pantaloons. There was something of a roll or lounge in his gait, not unlike his own Peter Bell. There was a severe, worn pressure of thought about his temples, a fire in his eye (as if he saw something in objects more than the outward appearance), an intense, high, narrow forehead, a Roman nose, cheeks furrowed by strong purpose and feeling, a convulsive inclination to laughter about the mouth a good deal at variance with the solemn, stately expression of the rest of the face. Chantrey's bust wants the marking traits, but he was teazed into making it regular and heavy. Haydon's head of him, introduced into the *Entrance of Christ into Jerusalem*, is the most like the drooping weight of thought and expression. He sat down and talked very naturally and freely, with a mixture of clear, gushing accents in his voice, a deep, guttural intonation, and a strong

mixture of the northern burr, like the crust on wine." That, coming from Hazlitt, describes a man of no ordinary power; for it must be remembered that Hazlitt was by no means a disciple of Wordsworth's, though he was a great admirer. He hated Wordsworth for having given up his first Radicalism. He referred all Wordsworth's finest poetry to his egotism, and asserted that Wordsworth's strength was virtually due to "excess of weakness." Nevertheless, when he was describing him as he had first seen him, Hazlitt was far too intelligent a critic to describe a man in whom weakness was the key to strength. On the contrary, he described the "severe, worn pressure of thought about his temples," and "the fire in his eye," as of one who "saw something in objects beyond their outward appearance." And everything we know of Wordsworth confirms this. His mother, who died when he was but eight years old, said that the only one of her children about whose future life she was anxious was William, and that he would be remarkable either for good or for evil. And Wordsworth himself explains this by saying that he was of a "stiff, moody, and violent temper," and once as a child had gone into one of his grandfather's rooms to find a foil with which to destroy himself, because he thought he had been unjustly punished. When abroad at the time of the French Revolution, though not at all a perfect master of the French language, he seriously thought of offering himself as a Girondist leader, and was only prevented by his English friends stopping his allowance, so that he had to return home to find the means of living. Even after his return, his mind long dwelt with the most brooding melancholy on the future of the Revolution, of which he had formed such passionate hopes. For

months and even years he says that the French collapse haunted him so that his nights were full of horrible dreams. He dreamt of dungeons, massacres, and guillotines. He dreamt long speeches which he was pleading before unjust tribunals on behalf of accused patriots. He dreamt of treachery, desertion, and that last sense of utter desolation, when the last strength ebbs even from the soul of the dreamer. After this he fell into the state in which nothing is credited without the most ample and formal demonstration, nothing held true unless it is warranted by the senses. But even at this time, moody and fitful as Wordsworth's life had been—Mr. Myers says that even at a later period he might not unfairly have been taken for "a rough and somewhat stubborn young man, who in nearly thirty years of life had seemed alternately to idle without grace, and to study without advantage,"—he was in no sense the mere egotist Hazlitt wanted to make of him. His sister compared her two brothers thus:—"Christopher is steady and sincere in his attachments. William has both these virtues in an eminent degree, and a sort of violence of affection, if I may so term it, which demonstrates itself every moment of the day, when the objects of his affection are present with him, in a thousand almost imperceptible attentions to their wishes, in a sort of restless watchfulness which I know not how to describe, a tenderness that never sleeps, and at the same time such a delicacy of manner as I have observed in few men." And this passionate tenderness he showed in many relations of life. When his brother, the captain of the East Indiaman, went down with his ship off the Bill of Portland, Wordsworth's grief and suffering were far beyond the measure of ordinary men. Mr.

De Vere says that nearly forty years after Wordsworth had lost two of his children, "he described the details of their illnesses with an exactness and an impetuosity of troubled excitement such as might have been expected if the bereavement had taken place but a few weeks before."

This is not the picture of an egotist. Nor do I suppose that any complaint would ever have been made of Wordsworth's egotism if it had been limited to that fitfulness, occasional gustiness, or even moodiness of mind to which, in some form or other, almost every great poet has been subject, and which, in many cases at least, has contributed rather to enhance than to diminish a poet's fame. Wordsworth's picture of himself, quoted by Mr. Myers, in the lines written in Thomson's *Castle of Indolence*, is not a picture which would ever have made him unpopular :—

"Full many a time, upon a stormy night,
His voice came to us from the neighbouring height :
Oft did we see him driving full in view
At mid-day when the sun was shining bright ;
What ill was on him, what he had to do,
A mighty wonder bred among our quiet crew.

Ah ! piteous sight it was to see this Man
When he came back to us a withered flower,—
Or like a sinful creature, pale and wan,
Down would he sit ; and without strength or power
Look at the common grass from hour to hour :
And oftentimes, how long I fear to say,
Where apple-trees in blossom made a bower,
Retired in that sunshiny shade he lay ;
And, like a naked Indian, slept himself away.

Great wonder to our gentle tribe it was
Whenever from our valley he withdrew;
For happier soul no living creature has
Than he had, being here the long day through.
Some thought he was a lover, and did woo;
Some thought far worse of him, and judged him wrong;
But Verse was what he had been wedded to;
And his own mind did like a tempest strong
Come to him thus, and drove the weary wight along."

That is a perfectly true picture no doubt, and gives us a better conception of the hidden fire in Wordsworth than anything else which his poems contain. But it is not moodiness, still less is it fire, which gains for a poet the reputation of egotism, and Wordsworth certainly has gained that reputation more than any great English poet who ever lived. What has given Wordsworth the reputation of an egotist, and made that part of the world which does not care for his poetry depreciate him as a man, is the peculiarly inward turn which his mind took, so that, instead of multiplying his points of relation with the world at large, as a poetic temperament usually does multiply them, Wordsworth's genius appeared rather to shut him up in himself, and to separate him by the most separating medium in the world,—a totally alien method of regarding things, from that of the wondering and observing world. Other great poets have generally had a much higher command than the rest of mankind of those same feelings and thoughts and fancies, of which all of us have some command. But it was hardly so with Wordsworth. That he had the deepest human sympathies and affections, we have seen, and that he had the keenest and most hungry eye for all that

was beautiful in nature, we know too; but his poetic mode of treating his own feelings, whether those due to human beings or those due to nature, was altogether alien to the method of the mass of mankind. Instead of finding direct expression for the feeling, whatever it was, his inward genius led him to resist its immediate drift, to put it at a distance from him, to muse upon it, to see whether, if it were painful, more profit could not be made of it by enduring, submitting to, and reflecting upon the pain, than by expressing it; and if it were joyful, whether more could not be made of it by husbanding and deferring the joy, than by exhausting it. He was warned by some inward instinct always to restrain emotion, however strong and stormy, till he could find a peaceful and lucid reflection of it in the mirror of a quiet mind. His mind, like Michael's, was "keen, intense, and frugal," but his temperament was far, indeed, from cool. He told a friend that he had never written love poetry because he dared not—it would have been too passionate. The truth is that his nature and genius were averse to direct expression. They made him wait till he could gain a reflex image of feeling in the deep, cool wells of thought. And this habit of his was so strange to the world that it set the world against him; and when the world was set against him, he set himself, of course, against the world; and being well aware of his own genius, became a little too much absorbed in its ideas, and a little too deaf to other ideas which were outside the interests of his life. Mr. Myers accounts for a good part of Wordsworth's stiffness by his unpopularity. "The sense of humour is apt to be the first grace which is lost under persecution; and much of Wordsworth's heaviness and

stiff exposition of commonplaces is to be traced to a feeling which he could scarcely avoid, that all day long he had lifted up his voice to a perverse and gainsaying generation." But I doubt the explanation. If Wordsworth had had humour, persecution would hardly have robbed him of the humour. I doubt much if he ever had much. The thing that looks most like it is his picture in the first edition of *Peter Bell* of

> "a party in a parlour,
> Crammed just as they on earth were crammed;
> Some sipping punch, some sipping tea,
> But as you by their faces see,
> All silent, and all damned."

But even that picture is rather the picture of a realist than the picture of a humourist. Wordsworth was a "prophet of Nature," and as a prophet of Nature he had, like the prophets of God, a certain rapture of his own which rendered him insensible to humour. As the country-side said of him, he went "booing about,"—that is, half chanting to himself the thoughts which Nature and God put into his heart, and he had little or no room for that fine elasticity in passing from one mood to another which is of the essence of all humour. He was a man of high passion, though he never let the world see it except in the reflex form of rapturous meditation. He was a man of deep affections, though he forbade to joy and sorrow their most natural outlets. For he was, above all, a man of deep reserves, a man of "keen, intense, and frugal" nature, who had little part in the ordinary excitements and enjoyments of the world, and was therefore also one in whose excitements and enjoyments the world could find little beyond food for amazement.

X

DEAN STANLEY

1881

THE death of the Dean of Westminster is not so much the loss of an ecclesiastic, as the disappearance of a whole region of life, which none but himself is likely ever to supply,—the region, I mean, in which all that is really beautiful and noble in the world received a generous and delicate spiritual appreciation, without the smallest regard to any of those strait ecclesiastical or dogmatic conditions usually required for spiritual appreciation. In Dean Stanley the human sympathies were very bright and deep, while the grasp of abstract truth was comparatively feeble. Long ago, in one of his earliest, and, as I think, one of his happiest, works, the *Sermons on the Apostolic Age*, Dean Stanley, then Canon of Canterbury, wrote as follows concerning a kind of character and influence—to which divines are usually the very last to do justice :—"How often are we obliged to acknowledge the great usefulness of books which are yet without the tone and feeling which we generally expect from religious men. How often have we heard of persons who, having been by circumstances separated from the religious world, with hardly even a religious expression on their lips, have yet been so

earnestly employed in works of honesty, or justice, or benevolence, that we cannot but think of them as having been engaged in the work of God." If one could lay down in one single sentence Dr. Stanley's one special function as an English divine, it would be contained in the assertion that he, with all his pure and delicate religious feeling, took care that the Church should never ignore, or forget to consecrate by her spiritual reverence, the non-ecclesiastical aspects of good men's lives. No man had deeper religious feeling than Dr. Stanley, in spite of that almost singular indifference to specific symbols of faith which occasionally persuaded the world into the illusion that his own faith was rather nominal than real; and no man with so deep a religious feeling was so quick in seizing on those sterling qualities which had least of a religious air, and throwing upon them the illumination of his own religious spirit. Even when dealing with ecclesiastical subjects, Dean Stanley was sure to single out for special commemoration what was most remote from the theological associations with which it was bound up, and to let what Mr. Disraeli once happily termed his "picturesque sensibility" play specially on the least apparently religious aspects of the religious character. Notice how, even in the portrait of his father, he insists on that father's keen sympathy with what had the least of an ecclesiastical air in it; how he delights in the Bishop's sympathy with the life of the Navy; how he insists on his father's delicate eye as a naturalist; how he exults in his father's indifference to clerical opinion, in his having subscribed to the publication of a worthy Unitarian's volume of sermons, and advocated a relaxation of clerical subscription in the House of Lords. It is the same in

the Dean's sketch of his mother. Her thoughts, he says, "will not be deemed less instructive because, like her husband's activity, her own spiritual insight belonged to that larger sphere of religion, which is above and beyond the passing controversies of the day." And notice, too, how carefully he sustains by her diary this criticism on his mother's character. One of the earliest extracts from her diary registers the following observation:—"I am tormented by a sort of involuntary sympathy with the opinions of the people I am with, so that their opinion, though it does not alter mine, positively makes it unsatisfactory to me." The Dean himself inherited this temperament from his mother, as well as her swift glance into what was beautiful. He always wrote as if the opinions of the world at large, however little they altered his own, rendered his own unsatisfactory to him by the very fact of their deviation from his own. And what was true of opinions, was quite as true,—of course, within the limits of a very refined Christian feeling,—of modes of thought and life. The very fact that the great mass of men did not enter into the clerical attitude of mind, rendered that attitude of mind so unsatisfactory to him, that he can hardly be said to have known what, in any predominant sense, it was at all. His aims as a clergyman were directed chiefly to throwing an additional light and significance on the thoughts of men who are not clergymen, or, when clergymen, on that part of their lives which go beyond the professional sphere. Nonconformity, for instance, had a special attraction for him, just because it was Nonconformity, though he himself was no Nonconformist. Statesmen and men and women of literature attracted his religious sympathies more than divines.

Poor men and children fascinated him more than his own brethren. In Convocation he always spoke as representing the piety of the non-clerical world, and often astounded his audience by so speaking,—as much indeed as his father had astounded the House of Lords by pleading the necessity for a relaxation of the dogmatic subscription required from the Clergy. Dean Stanley was one of the small number,—perhaps it is not desirable that that number should be very large,—who rather live their own lives in order that they may appreciate more truly the life of the age, than of those who enter into the life of the age in order that they may the more truly live their own. Perhaps the only kind of life with which the Dean had no great capacity of sympathy, certainly into which he had no greater insight than his keen historical sense gave him, was that of the theologian and the priest, as such. And this was just his chief value for the English Church,—that without any personal leaning to theology or the functions of the priest, he regarded theologians and priests, though looking at them from the position of a colleague, much as any accomplished lay historian, of equally strong religious feeling and "picturesque sensibility," would have regarded them. And yet, perfectly adapted as such a position might seem for making enemies of his own Order, he never made a personal enemy. In this, too, imitating the example of his father, he gained a special friend in him who was most offended by his appointment to the Deanery of Westminster, for he discerned fully the depth of human piety in the present Bishop of Lincoln[1] through the semi-opaque medium of that excellent man's rather stiff and technical churchmanship. Dean

[1] Bishop Wordsworth.

Stanley, though no theologian, and heartily opposed to all strictly sacerdotal theories of the Church, was so thoroughly Christian in the whole temper of his life and aims, that he never could fail to recognise,—sometimes even with generous exaggeration,—what was good in a personal opponent, and to recognise it all the more vividly and keenly, on the very ground of his being an opponent. And so it happened that, though in a certain sense the whole sacerdotal caste, at least all those who insisted tenaciously on their sacerdotal character, were his antagonists, there was not one among them to whom he was not ready and eager to render, not merely the most hearty justice, but the most generous and fascinating kindness. What Mr. Arnold translates the "sweet reasonableness" of Christ was, perhaps, more perfectly embodied in the Dean of Westminster than in any other conspicuous man of our age.

I have said that Dean Stanley was no theologian, and, indeed, had no real hold at all of the significance of abstract thought—no grasp of what I may call the backbone of mental and moral creeds—though he could often appreciate finely the fruits which such creeds bore in actual life, without being aware that it was those systems which had borne them. Indeed, his true liberality of nature, his positive inability to ignore what was good in one whose general beliefs he either could not share, or positively condemned, was in some measure due to this comparative insignificance of all merely intellectual discussions in his mind. He could not, if he would, have merged the man in the thinker; he could not, if he would, have judged the tree of belief by anything but its fruits, and its fruits in the largest sense of the term. And amongst these fruits, he could

not, for the life of him, help reckoning almost everything that added to the richness and variety of life, —so that when he came to estimate the value of institutions, he found himself according the most liberal sympathy to every institution which had ennobled the civilisation of any epoch, which had sheltered men of genius and power, which had given a more historic colour to the past, or which had transmitted to the present day germs of great vitality and promise. He had the keenest possible eye for historic effect, which was quite as much at the root of his great comprehensiveness, as his large sympathies with individual goodness and greatness. But what strikes one as a little strange in a man of such a temperament as this, is his gallantry as a champion. This, no doubt, was due in great measure to the influence impressed upon him by Dr. Arnold, who tried to make, and more or less made, Christian soldiers of all his favourite pupils. Dean Stanley had not much, I think, naturally of the instinct of battle in him. Few men of such large, vital sympathies as his, and such small power of caring for abstract principles. are natural warriors. But Dr. Arnold, who had far less in him than his pupil of the impulse to take history as he found it, and far more of the character of a champion of abstract principles, made more or less of a combatant of all those who received his influence in full,—and in Dr. Stanley that influence had the result of making him a most gallant champion for every form of liberty in the Church, excepting only liberty to ritualise, which somehow the Dean never could get himself to advocate, though he took no active part, I believe, in the opposition to it. The consequence was, that as an ecclesiastical champion, he was almost always at the head of a mere forlorn-

hope—a position that rather inspirited than depressed him. He was never rendered even uneasy by the hostility of the caste against whom he fought, unless by chance it happened that he was not distinctly fighting for comprehension, but for something which might by possibility be turned into a contracting influence; otherwise, he regarded the clerical hosts against him as so many evidences of the excellence of his cause, and fought on with all the more cheery indifference. Seldom, indeed, has such a gallant knight-errant in ecclesiastical matters been so utterly without a dogmatic inspiration as Dean Stanley. There have been hundreds who, like Archdeacon Denison, would fight to the death for a dogma, to one who, like the late Dean of Westminster, would fight to the death in order to relax in all directions the binding force of dogmatic decisions. In truth, he discerned clearly enough how often dogmatic belief chokes religious life; but he was nearly incapable of understanding the equally important truth, how often dogmatic belief strengthens and ennobles the life which is honestly lived by its guidance.

In the account of his mother, the late Dean of Westminster quotes more than one remark on herself which has a singular applicability to her son. When a girl of only twenty, though already for two years a wife, she writes of herself, "There is something quite *bizarre* in my pleasures. I cannot account for them to myself in the slightest degree; they turn on such slender threads." And it was the same rapid power of seizing the gleaming threads of life, however transient, both past and present, which gave to the Dean of Westminster a great part of his singular literary charm. Probably he did not in any full sense enjoy the earlier and more studious part of his

life, as he enjoyed the richer years which intervened between his marriage and his wife's death; but his literary sympathies were as bright and delicate, both at the opening, and in the rather sad close of his life, as they were during the years when his heart and life were fullest. It will, perhaps, alleviate some of the inevitable public sorrow for his death, to know with full certainty, as the beautiful verses which have been just published will assure us all, that for Dean Stanley death had become a change to be warmly desired, not one to be seriously feared. And the same lines will show how near was his delicate sensibility to the verge of genuine poetic power. It is not often that when the professional life of a Church dignitary passes away, it leaves the public with the same sense of having lost something rare and sweet, rather than something good and venerable but also slightly formal.

With Dr. Stanley a charm has passed away from the great historic Abbey which not another man in the nation can supply. There may easily be greater divines and more thrilling preachers in the pulpit at Westminster, though no one ever heard the Dean without feeling the eloquence of his piety and the tenderness of his charity. But there will hardly be again that perfect combination of historic feeling for the past and delicate insight into the present, which made one almost regard Edward the Confessor himself as near to the heart of Dr. Stanley, even though you could never think of the latter without thinking also of numberless men, women, and children, among "the toiling millions of men" of the present generation, on whose lives his delicate kindness had cast many a gleam of beauty, blended almost equally of human and of spiritual joy.

XI

WILLIAM RATHBONE GREG

1881

By the death of Mr. W. R. Greg, the literary world has lost one of its most distinctive writers, and the political world one of its shrewdest critics. Though I have often differed very widely from him, not even those who agreed most warmly with the conclusions advocated by his powerful pen can recognise more cordially the striking qualities which gained for Mr. Greg at once a unique place among English journalists, and a very great influence in relation to the economical, moral, and even theological controversies of the day. What gave Mr. Greg his peculiar position among journalists, was the singular lucidity and incisiveness with which he expressed and expounded that aspect of the difficulties and dangers with which he dealt, appealing most strongly to the imagination of practical men, and especially of practical men belonging to the upper section of the middle class. For the miseries of the working class Mr Greg's pity was profound and almost passionate, but his moral and intellectual sympathy was not with them, and was often inaccessible from their points of view. Again, as to style, Mr. Greg was never in any

depreciatory sense rhetorical; for verbiage of any kind he had no taste. But he was a keen logician, and took what I may call almost a rhetorical pleasure in plunging cold steel into the heart of what he regarded as a mischievous fallacy. And this he did after a fashion which especially went home to practical men. His intellectual logic was keen enough, but still keener was the logic which the late Emperor of the French called "the logic of facts." Mr. Greg loved to look facts fairly in the face, to realise as vividly as he could exactly what they meant, before he even cared to consider whether they were capable of any agreeable or even tolerable interpretation. To some extent, this was due to his early experience as a manufacturer, which gave him a habit of boldly facing the situation, whatever it was, and which compelled him to realise what merely literary men do not always realise, that names and numbers, when they are accurate, stand for an array of real things, for formidable forces, and not merely for the impressions which they are calculated to make on the understandings of others. It was this keen sense of the logic of facts which gave to Mr. Greg's political writing so much of its peculiar trenchancy, and something, perhaps, of that occasional flavour of unscrupulousness which from time to time excited distrust. Read his remarkable articles in the *Economist*, of 1851 and 1852, on the *Coup d'État*, its causes, and its consequences to the French people, and you will understand at once the *bite* of his exposition. It was the exposition of a man who looked even more sharply and assiduously at what most people wish to ignore, than he looked at what most people eagerly catch at. Indeed, if Mr. Greg's "logic of facts" was defective at all, it was generally

in this direction, that he laid too much weight on "the rocks ahead," on the unpleasant side of the account, and was apt to speak and think as if the only thing at all worth looking at were the view from which the popular mind turned instinctively away. Thus, in reviewing the *Coup d'État*, Mr. Greg dealt somewhat remorselessly with English prejudices. He pointed out how clear it was that Louis Napoleon, even in his violence, had the support of France; how the Assembly suppressed by him had almost invited its own suppression by its blunders, and its attempt to overrule the future; and how much better it was that a strong policy should be applied to such a situation, than any hesitating or vacillating policy. No writer of the day forced Englishmen to look so closely at those French facts which were most disagreeable to them, as Mr. Greg. And this was always his way. Often, I think, he came to a wrong conclusion. But whether he came to a wrong conclusion or the reverse, the facts of the case as he stated them were always significant and important, sometimes decisive, and were very seldom so well and trenchantly stated by any other contemporary writer. He made you feel the edge of your difficulty, even when you differed most seriously with him, as no one else could do. And that alone is one of the greatest services which a writer can perform for his readers.

Many, however, who never really knew Mr. Greg as a political writer at all, know him and appreciate him highly, as a critic of theology, ethics, and literature; in a word, for his *Creed of Christendom*, his *Enigmas of Life*, and for such fine essays as those in the new volume which appeared on the very day when the world heard of his death,—such essays, I

mean, as that on Harriet Martineau, and that on the mischievous blunders of dogmatically conscientious men, which he happily named, "Verify your Compass." I need not say that on these subjects my own conclusions differ very widely from Mr. Greg's, who, indeed, always seemed to me to exaggerate greatly the force of the historical difficulties which he found in revelation, and to attenuate the force of the moral and spiritual grounds for faith in revelation. But differing from him or agreeing with him, no one can deny the rare qualities of discrimination and true eloquence which Mr. Greg brought to these high themes. The volume on the *Enigmas of Life* especially gave powerful expression to the floating thoughts of thousands of minds, anxious for faith, and yet unable to secure anything that could be said to be more than a tremulous hope. In this region, too, there was a delicacy in his personal observation and delineation which is hardly to be found in his political essays. Take, for instance, the fine passage in his new volume in which he questions the uniformity,—the equal intensity,—of the desire for immortality at different stages of human life:—

"In youth, when all our sentiments are most vivacious and dogmatic, most of us not only cling to it [belief in a future life] as an intellectual creed, but are accustomed to say and feel that, without it as a solace and a hope to rest upon, this world would be stripped of its deepest fascinations. It is from minds of this age, whose vigour is unimpaired and whose relish for the joys of earth is most expansive, that the most glowing delineations of heaven usually proceed, and on whom the thirst for felicity and knowledge, which can be slaked at no earthly fountains, has the most exciting power. Then comes the

busy turmoil of our mid-career, when the present curtains off the future from our thoughts, and when a renewed existence in a different scene is recalled to our fancy chiefly in crises of bereavement. And finally, is it not the case that in our fading years—when something of the languor and placidity of age is creeping over us, just when futurity is coming consciously and rapidly more near, and when one might naturally expect it to occupy us more incessantly and with more anxious and searching glances—we think of it less frequently, believe in it less confidently, desire it less eagerly, than in our youth? . . . We are tired, some of us, with unending and unprofitable toil; we are satiated, others of us, with such ample pleasures as earth can yield us; we have had enough of ambition, alike in its successes and its failures; the joys and blessings of human affection, on which, whatever their crises and vicissitudes, no righteous or truthful man will cast a slur, are yet so blended with pains which partake of their intensity; the thirst for knowledge is not slaked, indeed, but the capacity for the labour by which alone it can be gained has consciously died out; the appetite for life, in short, is gone, the frame is worn and the faculties exhausted; and—possibly this is the key to the phenomenon we are examining—*age* CANNOT, from the very law of its nature, *conceive itself endowed with the bounding energies of youth*, and without that vigour both of exertion and desire, renewed existence can offer no inspiring charms. Our being upon earth has been enriched by vivid interests and precious joys, and we are deeply grateful for the gift; but we are wearied with one life, and feel scarcely qualified to enter on the claims, even though balanced by the felicities and glories, of another. It may be the fatigue which comes with age—fatigue of the fancy, as well as of the frame; but somehow, what we yearn for most instinctively at last is *rest*, and the peace which we can imagine the easiest, because we know it best, is that of sleep."

I should myself have said that the desire for rest, here so finely delineated, is not at any time the mere desire for the cessation of fatigue; that all true rest means the consciousness of a growing renewal of the powers exhausted by fatigue, and that the shrinking with which old age regards the heavy burdens of life is not in the least a quailing of the mind, but solely a yearning of the body for what it needs more and more every day, and yet gains less and less,—true renovation. The desire for rest is the desire for more life, though in disguise,—the belief that more life is, under some great change of conditions, actually before us. But however this may be, no one who reads that fine passage can wonder at the fascination which Mr. Greg's essays have exerted over the imaginations of practical men. There is in his treatment of spiritual themes, not only a solid hold on fact, but a distinctness and brightness of outline, a courageous facing of the main issue, and a delicacy in the handling of moral experience, which at once assure the reader that whatever the defects of his author may be, they are the defects of a man with his whole courage and heart in his subject, and a keen eye steadily kept upon it. With all his trenchancy and clearness of touch, there was no lack in Mr. Greg of that sort of sensibility which responds to the impressions of mystery. The *Enigmas of Life* are full of a profound sense of mystery; and careful though Mr. Greg was to beware of yielding to his hopes, I should be surprised to hear that many men or women had risen up from the perusal of that book less inclined to believe in a spiritual world and a spiritual future for man, than they were when they sat down to it. Trenchant, no doubt, Mr. Greg was, in hewing away

what he thought impediments to a purely rational view; but even after he had effected his clearances, his readers were very apt to find that he still more or less recognised the claim to belief of that which he had cleared away. For instance, in the new volume of *Essays*, after arguing for many pages against the view that our Lord's expectation and prophecy that his faith would expand till it filled the world, was inexplicable without assuming for him supernatural knowledge, and after maintaining that it might not have been justified at all but for the unforeseen conversion of St. Paul, Mr. Greg concludes with his usual desire to "verify his own compass," wherever he can suspect himself of being wrong, by saying that as an "evidence of Christianity," our Lord's prophecy of the rapid spread of his own religion, in spite of his own death and departure from the earth, "should be signalised, perhaps, as rather untenable, than essentially unsound." That seems to me a striking example of Mr. Greg's courage in admitting that his reasons have, after all, not finally convinced himself; and there is no admission that is a better proof of candour, and of delicacy in discriminating the precise shade of your own convictions, than such an admission as this. Indeed, Mr. Greg's popularity as a writer was due chiefly, no doubt, to that singular union of unsparing trenchancy of logic with delicacy and almost tenderness, in the delineation of religious feeling, which presents one of the rarest combinations in our modern literature. His pen was mordant and loved to smite, but it loved also to preserve the very form and colour of all real thoughts, even though he found them pertinaciously growing again where he had ruthlessly rooted them up before. Few hands so powerful for destruc-

tion have ever been so tender and gentle in treating what he had once supposed himself to have destroyed. Mr. Greg had none of the vanity which cannot endure to think that his work in life may have been to some extent misapplied. And freedom from vanity of that kind implies moral qualities of a rare order.

XII

CHARLES DARWIN

1882 (April 22nd)

By the death of Charles Darwin, which occurred on Wednesday, England has lost the most original, as well as far the most celebrated, of modern men of science,—the one man whom European Science would, with one voice, probably agree to consider as the most eminent scientific writer and thinker of the present century. No man of our century has changed so vitally the scientific beliefs of our day, and not the scientific beliefs only, but, whether rightly or wrongly,—we should ourselves say more wrongly than rightly,—those deeper beliefs which must always be more or less affected by the scientific hypotheses most closely connected with them. No scientific man of our century has covered so large a field of research, has surveyed it with so fair, so wide, so patient, as well as so acute an insight, has paid so careful an attention to all the objections to which his own theories are exposed, and exhibited so rare a candour in withdrawing anything in his conclusions which, on a subsequent investigation, he has discovered to be ill-founded. So far as the field of physical hypotheses to which he has chiefly limited

himself is concerned, every one who knows Mr. Darwin's works will admit that he has not only been a most brilliant, original, and successful student of the secrets of Nature, but a most humble, cautious, and wise theoriser, one who knew as well when the materials of his speculations and generalisations were exhausted, as when they justified him in drawing an inference; one who was as prompt to deprecate the extension of his own inferences to the unexplored country lying beyond the limits of his observation, as he was to see the weakness of the objections by which his carefully-grounded generalisations were often met. Mr. Darwin was not only the most brilliant, but the most moderate and judicious of all the great naturalists of his day. Of none other could it be so truly said that a pure love of truth,—truth as man can alone grasp it, with all its mortifying limits and abrupt chasms,—truth even when it is not neatly rounded off,—truth irregular and clumsy, and with those great hiatuses which, sprinkled as they are, over the map of it, are almost exasperating to the imaginative man,—completely ruled his mind. The minute care with which he collected facts, whether they suited his own hypothesis or not, the anxious patience with which he classified them, the large sagacity with which he often reconciled what looked like the most irreconcilable suggestions, were none of them, perhaps, so remarkable as the striking genius which Mr. Darwin betrayed in divining the direction in which he ought to look for the telling facts of the case; but though not so remarkable in an intellectual point of view, the strictness, and faithfulness, and perfect equanimity with which he welcomed what was unfavourable to his prepossessions as well as what was favourable, were the

noblest characteristics of his scientific mind. A man even of Mr. Darwin's genius, whose eye had been less keen to see what did not suit him than what did, could never have done the half of what he did for science, or set so high an example of the fidelity and humility of human thought. It is characteristic enough of him that his latest book,—the book on *Earth-worms*,—probably never struck him even as in any way suggesting an anti-climax, after the great subjects which had previously occupied him,—the Origin of Species, and the Descent of Man. From the influence of rhetorical or artistic effect in speculative attempts to force the secrets of Nature, his mind was quite free. It would never have occurred to him that any one real extension of our knowledge of Nature was in any sense inferior to any other. Whatever really added to that knowledge, he prized in proportion to the addition made; and hence he may be said to have felt a sort of impartial sympathy with all the agencies of Nature, from the very lowest to the very highest, so far as his own methods of physical observation were equally applicable to them. I do not think that when he ventured into the region of psychology,—as he did in the book on the *Descent of Man*,—his usual methods of observation were equally applicable; and there, in my opinion, he went astray. But up to that point, the impartiality of his glance was fully as remarkable as its marvellous acumen and the unwearied diligence with which he accumulated the facts necessary to test his hypotheses.

Every one knows that Mr. Darwin's great discovery was the vast organic effect which is produced on every organisation in existence, by the constant pressure upon it of the conditions which tend to

render its perpetuation and multiplication difficult,—whether these arise from the competition of organisms of the same kind for the elements needful to its food and growth, or from the aggression of organisms of a different kind which feed upon it, or merely from the parsimony of Nature in lending it sustenance. All these hostile conditions tend to lessen or extinguish a species, and thereby tend to give a very marked advantage to any variety of the species by which it is favourably distinguished from the average specimens. If a variety of a particular plant, for instance, possesses some slight advantage over the main species in appropriating those elements in the soil which feed it best, it will flourish at the expense of its competitors, and will multiply more rapidly, while they either multiply more slowly, or even dwindle away. Or again, such a variety may be less attractive to the creatures which feed upon it than the ordinary type—and if so, it will gain a similar advantage over the ordinary species in any country in which the creatures which feed upon it are numerous and voracious; or again, a variety of such a plant may spring up which flourishes on less food, or less heat, or under less favourable circumstances of shelter, than the ordinary type—and if so, in this comparative unexactingness of its nature, it will gain an advantage over the ordinary kind which is of more luxurious nature and can only flourish under more complex and favourable conditions. This was Mr. Darwin's great principle. But his wonderful genius lay in his singular power to apply that principle to the discussion of the various modes in which variations of this kind affect the constitution of plants and animals, and mould them in the direction of least resistance to the various hostile conditions brought

to bear upon them. Consider only the singular wealth and acuteness of that reading and observation of which a paragraph like the following is, in precisely the same and no other sense, a specimen, as that in which a pebble from the beach is a specimen of the beach from which it was picked up :—

"Many of our orchidaceous plants absolutely require the visits of moths to remove their pollen-masses and thus to fertilise them. I have also reason to believe that humble-bees are indispensable to the fertilisation of the heartsease (Viola tricolor), for other bees do not visit this flower. From experiments which I have lately tried, I have found that the visits of bees are necessary for the fertilisation of some kinds of clover; but humble-bees alone visit the red clover (Trifolium pratense), as other bees cannot reach the nectar. Hence I have very little doubt, that if the whole genus of humble-bees became extinct or very rare in England, the heartsease and red clover would become very rare, or wholly disappear. The number of humble-bees in any district depends in a great degree on the number of field-mice, which destroy their combs and nests; and Mr. H. Newman, who has long attended to the habits of humble-bees, believes that 'more than two-thirds of them are thus destroyed all over England.' Now, the number of mice is largely dependent, as every one knows, on the number of cats; and Mr. Newman says, 'Near villages and small towns I have found the nests of humble-bees more numerous than elsewhere, which I attribute to the number of cats that destroy the mice.' Hence it is quite credible that the presence of a feline animal in large numbers in a district might determine, through the intervention first of mice and then of bees, the frequency of certain flowers in that district!"

But the power of Darwin lay in the singular width

of grasp, which enabled him to include in one survey all the evidence which could be gleaned in all the different departments of natural science, so as to demonstrate the steady effect of the pressure which Nature or Man brings to bear upon every species of plants and animals, in steadily altering organic forms so as to graduate the differences between one species and another, till he accumulated the proof, not, indeed, that all existing species have sprung from either one or only a very few different types, but, at all events, that this is one of the most important, if not the most important, cause which has generated ultimate variety out of original resemblance; and that it is quite impossible, at present, to assign the limits to the *amount* of variation which this true cause may be found adequate to explain.

The ingenuity of imagination and wealth of resource with which Mr. Darwin illustrated this principle in his various great books, are quite beyond my power adequately to illustrate. Most of his books are, indeed, almost as striking to the untaught, general reader, as they are to the trained biologist himself. Mr. Darwin's style is so clear, and his natural history is so vivid, that any man can follow the links of his more remarkable chains of reasoning. Indeed, the second volume of his *Descent of Man* is far more interesting than most good novels. We read of that accomplished German bullfinch which attracted so much delighted attention from twenty linnets and canaries; of the zebra who would have nothing to say to the ass till it was painted so as to resemble a zebra; of the silver pheasant which, directly his fine plumage was spoiled, had to yield the upper hand to a more dandified rival; of the carefully-decorated gardens of the Bower Birds; and

of the gradual formation of the ball-and-socket plumage on the peacock's tail, with all the combined delight which is given by receiving at the same time fresh knowledge of the ways of animals, and fresh knowledge of the laws of physical development.

What Mr. Darwin does not seem to me to have treated with anything like the subtlety and depth with which he investigated the laws of organic change, is the psychology of human nature, though even here he had sagacity enough to put his finger on the right spot, though he failed to enter into the moral phenomena which he rightly held to contain the essence of the problem. He was so anxious to show that the moral life of man is but an evolution from the moral life of the lower animals, that he tried to explain that evolution in a false sense, as if the higher phase involves nothing that is not to be found in the lower phase. Thus he accumulated for us stories of courageous sympathetic actions on the part of the higher brutes, like that of the great baboon which ventured boldly among the dogs to rescue a little baboon whose life was endangered; and then tried to show that we could get an "ought" and "a conscience" out of mere victorious sympathy. "The imperious word *ought*," he wrote, "seems merely to imply the consciousness of the existence of a persistent instinct, either innate or partly acquired." But that is a mere leap in the dark. There can be no more persistent instinct than self-love, yet the imperious word "ought" is hardly ever suggested by the persistency of self-love, even when it comes into collision with much less persistent instincts,—say, for example, compassion. Mr. Darwin was quite right when he put his finger on the collision of rival motives as the birth of ethical sentiment; but

he was quite wrong in assigning the imperiousness of the word "ought" to the supposed greater *persistency* of the motive which gives birth to obligation. It is very often indeed much the least persistent motive which wields the talisman of ethical obligation.

But though I cannot see in Mr. Darwin a thinker nearly so great in the region of psychology as I do in the region of natural history, and though I regret the apparent deficiency in his mind on the side of the supernatural, I fully recognise the theistic character of his general view of the Universe. That Mr. Darwin had no place in his theory of the universe for a special Providence, or for individual relations between man and God, I am aware; but that he regarded the creative force as originally material, and not intellectual, I wholly deny. It seems to me plainly written in all his great works that, for him, the origin of Nature is in mind, and not the origin of mind in Nature. Thus far, at least, the great man we have lost had no sympathy with those amongst his own followers who would have it that the logic of Darwinism leads us far beyond Darwin, into a creative force that is as blind and ignorant itself, as it is fertile in mental surprises and wonderful geometrical or algebraic achievements. If Plato held that God is the great Geometer, Darwin certainly held that God is the great fountain of plastic art and biological method.

XIII

RECLUSES AND THE WORLD

1882

THE great naturalist and thinker, Charles Darwin, who was buried on Wednesday in Westminster Abbey, owed no small part of his vast influence over European thought to his comparatively secluded life at Down, succeeding, as it did, to that five years' voyage which, however little room it may have afforded for absolute solitude, must certainly have produced many of the same results, in submitting his mind during long nights and long days of forced inaction, to the full weight of those thoughts on the conditions which modify and even revolutionise the organisms of Nature, with which the great spectacles of the various scenes which he visited had evidently filled him. When reviewing his five years' voyage, Mr. Darwin said : — " In calling up the images of the past, I find that the plains of Patagonia frequently cross before my eyes ; yet those plains are pronounced by all wretched and useless. They can be described only by negative characters, without habitations, without water, without trees, without mountains ; they support merely a few dwarf plants. Why,

then, and the case is not peculiar to myself, have these arid wastes taken so firm a hold on my memory? Why have not the still more level, the greener and more fertile Pampas, which are serviceable to mankind, produced an equal impression?" Mr. Darwin did not himself answer the question, and perhaps at the time could not have answered it; but I suspect that we can answer it for him, that his own book, interpreted by his later writings, suggests the answer, because it shows that the phenomena of those arid and desert plains had impressed most powerfully on him the great problem of which he ultimately gave the solution. In speaking of the geology of Patagonia, in an earlier portion of the same book, he says, after describing vividly the plains, "as they rise like steps, one behind the other,"—"An examination of the geology of La Plata and Patagonia leads to the belief that all the features of the land result from slow and gradual changes," and after mentioning the number of extinct species of which you find the fossil remains on these lifeless plains, he goes on to argue that the same causes which so often make a species rare are precisely the causes which ultimately extinguish it. "To admit that species generally become rare before they become extinct,—to feel no surprise at the comparative rarity of one species with another, and yet to call in some extraordinary agent, and to marvel greatly when a species ceases to exist, appears to me much the same as to admit that sickness in the individual is the prelude to death,—to feel no surprise at sickness,—but when the sick man dies, to consider and believe that he died through violence." It is clear, then, that the interest associated with the plains of Patagonia was,

in a great degree, the imaginative interest excited in Mr. Darwin's mind by seeing vividly the burial-place of so many species, and realising that the same causes which lead to the extinction of one species must lead also to the comparative advantage of others. Doubtless during that long voyage Mr. Darwin continued to brood over the scenes of desolation and death which, more powerfully than any others, suggested to him the clue of his subsequent discovery. And if there was seclusion enough on that long voyage to preoccupy completely Mr. Darwin's scientific imagination with that great problem, and haunt him with the scenes which most vividly suggested it, there was seclusion enough to give birth to the great ideas which the quiet life at Down enabled him to develop.

It was just the same with the great thinker whom Mr. Froude has commemorated for us. But for the life at Craigenputtoch, *Sartor Resartus* could never have been written; nor, indeed, would the general conception of *The French Revolution* ever have been thought out. It was in the dreams and reveries of that wild moorland that Carlyle's genius was matured. Again, what poet has had so great an influence over the minds of those whom he has influenced at all, as Wordsworth? And does not the influence of Wordsworth date from that great Hegira when "it came to pass," as Mr. Bagehot puts it, "that William Wordsworth went up into the hills," there to meditate freely on those few but living thoughts and images which made his poems live for ever in the hearts of his disciples. Take the case of another man of probably greater spiritual influence than any of the three we have as yet named,—Cardinal Newman. He himself tells

us how one of the great Oxford authorities,—Bishop Coplestone,—saluted him, in one of his habitually lonely walks at Oxford, with the sentence, "Never less alone than when alone;" and he himself also tells us how his long musings in the lonely fishing boats of the Mediterranean, and in sickness among strangers in Sicily, blew up into living flame the smothered fire of his slow-lit genius.

Englishmen too often forget that that which for the average man is the dull, and, perhaps, even the stupefying life of seclusion, is the very condition under which great genius is nursed into its highest intensity. To be really dominated by great thoughts, you must have lived in them, and lived in them till they assumed a hundred different aspects which they are only capable of assuming for one who has applied them to all those circumstances of his life and reading to which they are really applicable. Thought never becomes a passion until you have brooded over it, till it flashes new light for you on a hundred half-familiar things, which, familiar as they were, you never really understood till you regarded them by the light of this thought. And till thought becomes a passion, it hardly ever becomes a power. The true reason why the thoughts of men influence them so little, is that they just pass over the mind like wind over the grass, and never really saturate it. It takes solitude to get yourself saturated by any thought, and to the great majority of men even solitude will not effect it, but only lower their thinking power to the congealing point. Nevertheless, as Mr. Darwin saw in relation to the growth and decay of species, the very condition which kills out a weak thinking power, feeds and elevates to the glowing point a

strong thinking power. Lord Beaconsfield always said, and said truly enough, that men were ruled not by their interests, but by passion and imagination. Till the life of a thought becomes identical with the life of an emotion, it will never really dominate the minds of men. And so far as I can judge by history, this result is never attained for thought, without long, solitary brooding over it, till it becomes the master-key of the mind which conceived it. "The passions of a man," says a striking preacher of the day (Mr. Scott Holland), "are themselves intelligent; they move under the motives of reason." That, no doubt, is more or less true of all men; but of men of genius, it is also true that their ideas are themselves passions, that they move with the tidal strength of passion, and, therefore, carry all before them. And I could hardly define better what I conceive to be the difference between a man of genius and a man of no genius, than by saying that with men of genius the thoughts behave more like passions than thoughts, and yet are, to all intents and purposes, thoughts still; while with ordinary men, thoughts mould and modify passions, but never live the life of passion.

Doubtless, the reason why solitude is so necessary to give to great thoughts the sway of great passions, is precisely the same as the reason why a tree which is lopped of its redundant foliage sends out roots only the deeper and stronger for the pruning. Hardy minds which cannot find outward distractions, grow inwards; and this very often even though, if they had outward distractions, they would expend themselves in those distractions. It takes, however, some exceptional affinity for the life of thought, to render it possible at all that thought

should grow into a passion. Isolate some men with their thoughts, and their thoughts simply dry up altogether. Isolate others with their thoughts, and the thoughts take living forms, with which their whole being gradually becomes identified. This is only another way of saying that solitude tends in every considerable thinker to turn the life of thought into the life of real action; to him, thought becomes action, and therefore also passion, for effective action breeds passion quite as truly as passion breeds action;—indeed, no passions are higher than those which spring out of a man's knowledge that his thoughts are giving him a new hold over the life within and outside him, and are substituting for a dim and hesitating tradition, the talisman of a new vision, the spell of a new clue to the ways either of nature or of man.

XIV

PROFESSOR SHAIRP'S "ASPECTS OF POETRY"[1]

1882

IT is impossible not to compare these lectures with those of Professor Shairp's predecessor, Mr. Matthew Arnold. In many respects they suffer, but in a few they certainly gain, by the comparison. Mr. Arnold is an artist, as well as a critic. He published his Oxford lectures at rather rare intervals, and he polished highly what he published. He took care that no lecture should be published without bearing the mark of some very definite and usually piquant idea, which was exuberantly illustrated, and pressed home with a curious mixture of humour and delicacy. Mr. Shairp makes no effort of this kind. His essays make no pretensions to be elaborate works of art in themselves. They are the simple overflowings of a full and a refined mind, saturated with poetical feeling and lucid thought on the various topics which such a Professorship as his suggests. What he has to say he says in pure and delightful English, and often with very great point and effect, though

[1] *Aspects of Poetry, being Lectures delivered at Oxford.* By John Campbell Shairp, LL.D. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

without the almost sculpturesque unity of impression which Mr. Arnold's lectures on translating Homer, on Heine, and on the Celtic genius, produced upon their readers. Mr. Shairp talks to us as an accomplished man, with a great store of central heat in him, and a passionate love for poetry, would talk of the various aspects of his favourite study. Mr. Arnold made his lectures works of art, and as works of art they retain their hold on the memory rather for the fine chiselling of the ideas they contain, than for the adequacy of their treatment of the subjects with which they are connected. Hence, Mr. Shairp's lectures gain as well as lose in the comparison. They are more natural as lectures, and seem to contain more of that which we expect of them than Mr. Arnold's, though they are not individually as rememberable. They do more, I think, to enhance the charm of the poets with whom they deal than Mr. Arnold's essays did. They do less to signalise particular aspects of those poets, and to present them in unexpected lights. They are less artistic, less finished, more human, and, on the whole, more eloquent. Many of Mr. Shairp's lectures go straight to the heart. And when you look at the range of his poetic enthusiasm, which is as keen for Burns as it is for Cardinal Newman, for Sir Walter Scott as for Virgil, one can see at once that in this delightful volume there is no stint of critical insight. Wordsworth, no doubt, is Mr. Shairp's poet of poets; and few understand Wordsworth as he understands him. But it is impossible to rise from this volume without feeling the charm of the external poetry of Scott with a new vividness, as well as without entering into the spell of the interior poetry of Wordsworth with a new intelligence.

It might appear that Mr. Shairp is not at all inclined to limit the sphere of poetry too much, when he says in his first lecture on its true province:—"I should rather say that the whole range of existence, or any part of it, when imaginatively apprehended, seized on the side of its human interest, may be transfigured into poetry. There is nothing that exists, except things ignoble and mean, in which the true poet may not find himself at home." But is there not here a qualification which Mr. Shairp himself would on consideration hardly retain? Has not a great deal of true poetry been spent on things "ignoble and mean," where the poetry has consisted in the flash of light by which the ignobility and meanness have been brought out? What is, in its fashion, truer poetry than Shakespeare's picture of Caliban,—a conception of the essentially mean and ignoble, if ever there were one? Nay, more, the mere pallor of life,—the emptiness of our life of its proper interests,—may be a fit enough subject for poetry, if it is described by one who has in him a passionate feeling of what the significance of life ought really to be. What can be truer poetry than Henry Vaughan's lament over the nothingness of his own life?—

"I see them walking in an air of glory
Whose light doth trample on my days;
My days, which are at best but dull and hoary,
Mere glimmering and decays!"

This picture of the nothingness of life as he lives it, compared with what he conceives the true life to be, is marvellous in its beauty, and yet no one can say that it is not the very painting of that nothingness, as conceived by one whose higher nature suggested what the true life should be, that forms the very charm

of the verse. But though I take exception to Mr. Shairp's language here, I am quite sure that I do but interpret the real meaning of his thought, and that he would not only admit, but maintain, that the vision of things mean and ignoble, if so presented as to make you see more clearly their intrinsic meanness and ignobility, or the vision of feelings dim and faint, if so presented as to make you feel keenly their dimness and faintness against a background of light and warmth, is within the true province of poetry, and is, indeed, often essential to the better realisation of the light and life behind. Indeed, Professor Shairp does indicate this, in the course of the same lecture; for he tells us, in a passage as terse as it is true, that the truest art is achieved in forgetfulness of art, by aiming at something altogether above art:—

"Poets who do not recognise the highest moral ideal known to man, do, by that very act, cut themselves off from the highest artistic effect. It is another exemplification of that great law of ethics which compasses all human action, 'whereby the abandonment of a lower end in obedience to a higher aim is made the very condition of securing the lower one.' For just as the pleasure-seeker is not the pleasure-finder, so he who aims only at artistic effect, by that very act misses it. To reach the highest art, we must forget art, and aim beyond it. Other gifts being equal, the poet, who has been enabled to apprehend the highest moral conception, has in that gained for himself a great poetic vantage-ground."

And unquestionably one of the most effective ways in which the highest moral conceptions are impressed upon us, is by the delineation of something altogether mean and ignoble, as seen by the light of those conceptions. It is by virtue of a philippic against that

in themselves which they despise, that many a poet has sounded the highest note which it was ever given him to reach. There is a sonnet of Hartley Coleridge's which has been called "The Unpardonable Sin," and the beauty of which consists in the vividness with which the unfulfilled desire to do something evil,—something worse than the will has been by fate permitted to do,—is painted, and in the abhorrence which that state of mind (evidently familiar to the poet, as things which one abhors are too often familiar), excites in one who knew it well. There we have a perfect instance of a poet's finding himself at home in something ignoble, and yet gleaning from that very familiarity with it, as seen against the sky-line of his higher nature, the subject for an exquisite poem.

But I could go farther than this, and maintain that what is ignoble and mean may be made the subject of what is genuine though repulsive poetry, even when there is no sky-line of higher faith and feeling exhibited behind it. Professor Shairp himself admits that Byron never reached his highest point as a poet, until his genius mirrored itself fully in *Don Juan;* and who can say that the marvellous power of *Don Juan* is not exhibited in the free and potent strokes with which what is evil, ignoble, and mean is drawn, even when nothing, by way of comment appears in connection with it, except, perhaps, the scoffing laughter of the poet? And so, too, in Burns's "Jolly Beggars," it seems to me that Burns touched nearly the highest point of his creative genius, though nothing, except the large licence of the roving vagabond's life, is concentrated into it, and rendered with an almost passionate wealth of vigour and sympathy. It cannot be doubted, I think,

that the picture of what is ignoble and mean,—even when painted with the lavishness of positive sympathy, as it is in the cases we have just mentioned,—may be made the subject of a true poem; but then, when this is the case, there must be implicitly contained some hint, such as the cynical laughter of Byron affords, or such as the licentious *abandon* of Shakespeare's scenes of dissipation, and the vagabond rollick of Burns's beggars, give us, that here you see man as he is when he deliberately throws off the yoke of the moral law, and dashes into the wilderness of mere licentious pleasure. Poetry, when it paints subjects of this kind, is undoubtedly not doing its highest work. But it is doing a poetical work all the same, if it is only sufficiently true to nature to make you see clearly that here men's passions have got the bit between their teeth, and are rushing away into the world of "sand and thorns." And this all true poets, even when they spend their poetic power on evil subjects, do make you feel with great intensity.

There is a question taken up once and again in these interesting lectures which may serve as the thread for what I have to say of the few detached criticisms which we desire to signalise in Mr. Shairp's lectures,—which are the criticisms on Shelley, Scott, Carlyle, and Cardinal Newman. That question is the relation of poetry to the verse in which it is usually embodied. In the lecture on "Criticism and Creation," there are the following striking remarks on the relation of the imagination to modern thought, and especially its relation to modern prose and poetry:—

"So far is it from being true that reason has put out imagination, that perhaps there never was a time when reason so imperatively calls imagination to her aid, and

when imagination entered so largely into all literary and even into scientific products. Imaginative thought, which formerly expressed itself but rarely except in verse, now enters into almost every form of prose except the barely statistical. Indeed the boundary-lines between prose and poetry have become obliterated, as those between prose and verse have become more than ever rigid. Consider how wide is the range of thought over which imagination now travels, how vast is the work it is called upon to do. Even in the most rigorous sciences it is present, whenever any discoverer would pass beyond the frontiers of the known, and encroach on the unknown, by some wise question, some penetrating guess, which he labours afterwards by analysis to verify. This is what they call the scientific imagination. Again, what is it that enables the geologist, from the contortions of strata, a few scratchings on rock-surfaces, and embedded fossils here and there, to venture into 'the dark backward abysm of time,' and reconstruct and repeople extinct continents? What but a great fetch of imaginative power? Again, history, which a former age wrote or tried to write with imagination rigorously suppressed, has of late rediscovered what Herodotus and Tacitus knew, that unless a true historic imagination is present to breathe on the facts supplied by antiquary and chronicler, a dead past cannot be made to live again. A dim and perilous way doubtless it is, leading by many a side-path down to error and illusion, but one which must be trod by the genuine historian who would make the pale shadows of the past live. It is the same with every form of modern criticism—with the investigations into the origins of language, of society, and of religion. These studies are impossible without an ever-present power of imagination, both to suggest hypotheses and to vivify the facts which research has supplied. It thus has come to pass that, in the growing subdivision of mental labour, imagination is not only not discredited, but is more than ever in demand. So far from imagination receding, like the Red Indian, before the advance of

criticism and civilisation, the truth is that expanding knowledge opens ever new fields for its operation. Just as we see the produce of our coal and iron mines used nowadays for a hundred industries, to which no one dreamt of applying them a century ago, so imagination enters to-day into all our knowledge, in ways undreamt of till now. More and more it is felt that, till the fire of imagination has passed over our knowledge, and brought it into contact with heart and spirit, it is not really living knowledge, but only dead material. You say, perhaps, if imagination is now employed in almost every field of knowledge, does any remain over to express itself in poetry or metrical language? is any place left for what we used to know as poetry proper—thought metrically expressed? I grant that the old limits between prose and poetry tend to disappear. If poetry be the highest, most impassioned thoughts conveyed in the most perfect melody of words, we have many prose writers who, when at their best, are truly poets. Every one will recall passages of Jeremy Taylor's writings, which are, in the truest sense, not oratory, but poetry. Again, of how many in our time is this true? You can all lay your finger on splendid descriptions of nature by Mr. Ruskin, which leave all sober prose behind, and flood the soul with imagery and music like the finest poetry."

That is very finely observed and expressed, and every one who thinks the matter over carefully must quite agree with Professor Shairp that the imagination enters more deeply into very many pursuits than it used to do, and, indeed, touches not a few with a passing gleam of poetic emotion. It is not only Jeremy Taylor or Mr. Ruskin who makes us aware of this. There are passages in the public addresses of Professor Tyndall, and many in the recently-published volume of the late Mr. W. R. Greg, which, in the pathos and the awe with which

they touch the dim and dubious vision of a higher world and another life, pass in Mr. Shairp's sense the boundary-line between prose and poetry. Still, I should be very unwilling to admit that rhythm alone, without that singleness of effect to which rhythm and rhyme are merely subordinate, constitutes the chief distinction between poetry and prose. Admit, if you will, that there exists what has a right to be called genuinely poetical prose, yet I should, nevertheless, distinguish it from poetry in this,—that as it does not require the same high pressure of feeling to produce it, as it admits much superfluous remark which verse, properly so called, would exclude, it can never have the same finish, the same distinct framework, the same wholeness of effect, which characterise true poetry. For example, Professor Shairp gives us a very fine lecture upon Shelley, the only fault of which is, perhaps, that he hardly rates high enough, though he rates extremely high, the unearthly beauty of some of Shelley's lyrics. But after paying a very genuine tribute to them, he concludes what he has to say in a strain which does justice to the wonderful workmanship of their form, even while the peculiar limitation of their substance is the subject of something like complaint :—

"They are very limited in their range of influence. They cannot reach the hearts of all men. They fascinate only some of the educated, and that probably only while they are young. The time comes when these pass out of that peculiar sphere of thought, and find little interest in such poetry. Probably the rare exquisiteness of their workmanship will always preserve Shelley's lyrics, even after the world has lost, as we may hope it will lose, sympathy with their substance. But better, stronger more vital far are those lyrics which lay hold on the

permanent, unchanging emotions of man—those emotions which all healthy natures have felt, and always will feel, and which no new deposit of thought or of civilisation can ever bury out of sight."

But is it not this "exquisite workmanship" which constitutes the distinguishing feature of a poem, as contrasted with any work in prose? Is it not certain that the framework, the measured tread, the continuous return of the metre into itself, the resemblances and contrasts brought out by the rhyme, where rhyme is admitted, the cadences of metrical change where such cadences are the equivalents of rhyme, all combine to make a whole in the imagination which prose, however rhythmical or musical, is unable to achieve? Take Shelley, with all his spiritual shadowiness, his "witch of Atlas"-like unreality, and notice how the reiterated throb of his lyrical feeling,—the wail of his Æolian harp,—transmutes his ideas and feelings into something separate, distinct, rememberable, where the form seems essential to their very meaning, so that no passage of prose, however harmonious, can even attempt to render the same drift,—

"Ah, Sister, Desolation is a delicate thing!
It walks not on the earth, it floats not on the air,
But treads with killing footstep and fans with silent wing
The tender hopes which in their hearts the best and gentlest bear;
Who, soothed to false repose by the fanning plumes above,
And the music-stirring motions of its soft and busy feet,
Dream visions of aerial joy, and call the monster, Love,
And wake, and find the shadow Pain, as he whom now we greet."

Compare that with Carlyle's description of Marie Antoinette in the death-agony, which Professor Shairp gives us in his fine lecture on Carlyle as a prose poet :—

"Beautiful Highborn, thou wert so foully hurled low! For, if thy being came to thee out of old Hapsburg Dynasties, came it not also (like my own) out of Heaven? . . . Oh, is there a man's heart that thinks, without pity, of those long months and years of slow-wasting ignominy; —of thy Birth, soft cradled in imperial Schönbrunn, the winds of heaven not to visit thy face too roughly, thy foot to light on softness, thy eye on splendour ; and then of thy Death, or hundred deaths, to which the guillotine and Fouquier-Tinville's judgment-bar was but the merciful end? Look *there*, O man born of woman! The bloom of that fair face is wasted, the hair is gray with care ; the brightness of those eyes is quenched, their lids hang drooping ; the face is stony, pale, as of one living in death. Mean weeds (which her own hand has mended) attire the Queen of the World. The death hurdle, where thou sittest, pale, motionless, which only curses environ, must stop : a people, drunk with vengeance, will drink it again in full draught : far as eye reaches, a multitudinous sea of maniac heads ; the air deaf with their triumph-yell! The Living-dead must shudder with yet one other pang : her startled blood yet again suffuses with the hue of agony that pale face, which she hides with her hands. There is, then, no heart to say, God pity thee?"

Both these passages are as full of imagination of very different kinds, as they can be, but the former is a poem, and the latter is only a bit of poetical prose, cut out, more or less arbitrarily, from the grand Carlylese etching of the French Revolution. And the essence of the difference is that the thoughts in Shelley's song are so harmonised and

incorporated with the music, that they are thereby constituted a separate thing, as a flower in the turf, or a star in the heavens, is a separate thing; while the passage from Carlyle has no such distinct shape or wholeness of its own, and suggests, indeed, the dark background from which it was extracted, and of which, in its uneven outline, the traces only too distinctly remain. I doubt if Professor Shairp insists sufficiently on the essentiality of the form to poetry. The form is to the poem what the sculpture is to the marble; without it there could be no singleness of effect. No doubt, certain passages of genuinely poetical prose remain in our memories almost as poems themselves remain; but it is only "almost." They never gain that wholeness of effect which verse gives. There is no single pulse thrilling the whole, or even if there be, none making itself clear to us in that individuality of life-like effect, in which the unity of a true poem always makes itself visible.

Professor Shairp has said some very fine things about Sir Walter Scott's imaginative prose:—

"Or I might point to another of the more modern novels, to *Redgauntlet*, and Wandering Willie's Tale. Every one should remember—yet perhaps some forget—auld Steenie's visit to the nether world, and the sight he got of that set of ghastly revellers sitting round the table there. 'My gude sire kend mony that had long before gane to their place, for often had he piped to the most part in the hall of Redgauntlet. There was . . . And there was Claverhouse, as beautiful as when he lived, with his long, dark, curled locks, streaming down over his laced buff-coat, and his left hand always on his right spule-blade, to hide the wound that the silver bullet had made. He sat apart from them all, and looked at them

with a melancholy, haughty, countenance ; while the rest hallooed, and sung, and laughed, that the room rang.' Turn to the novel, and read the whole scene. There is nothing in the Odyssean Tartarus to equal it. If Scott is not Homeric here, he is something more. There is in that weird, ghastly vision a touch of sublime horror, to match which we must go beyond Homer, to Dante, or to Shakespeare."

Homeric enough, no doubt, but not half so Homeric, in spite of its grandeur, as the passage in which rhyme and rhythm impress the stamp of a single imaginative effort on such a vision as the following :—

" ' But see ! look up—on Flodden bent
The Scottish foe has fired his tent.'
And sudden, as he spoke,
From the sharp ridges of the hill,
All downward to the banks of Till,
Was wreathed in sable smoke.
Volumed and fast, and rolling far,
The cloud enveloped Scotland's war,
As down the hill they broke ;
Nor martial shout, nor minstrel tone,
Announced their march ; their tread alone,
At times one warning trumpet blown,
At times a stifled hum,
Told England, from his mountain-throne
King James did rushing come.
Scarce could they hear, or see their foes,
Until at weapon-point they close.
They close, in clouds of smoke and dust,
With sword-sway, and with lance's thrust ;
And such a yell was there,
Of sudden and portentous birth,
As if men fought upon the earth,
And fiends in upper air ;

> O, life and death were in the shout,
> Recoil and rally, charge and rout,
> And triumph and despair."

The vividness of a truly visionary eye may give many of the fascinations of poetry to prose, as I quite admit that in many of the passages taken from Carlyle and Cardinal Newman it has given; but only verse, only something which, like verse, excludes all that is heterogeneous from the total effect, and in some sense assimilates all that remains, can produce the full impression of what we mean by poetry. The imagination alone is not necessarily poetic. It was a very remarkable imaginative effort made by Dickens when he pictured the death of Nancy and the wanderings of Sikes after the murder; but the result was not a poem, even in the sense in which Hood's "Song of the Shirt" is a poem; and still less is the account of Fagin's establishment a poem, though it is full of imagination. Indeed, I take it that humour of any kind almost always breaks in upon the highest effects of a poem, because it depends upon the bewilderment produced by contrasts and discords, and that is why comic poetry is always regarded as in some degree spurious. And that, too, I take it, explains why Carlyle, who in essence is not only a great imaginative writer, but a true humourist, could not endure the form of verse. He *liked* to have darkness and chaos for his framework, and light and order only in scattered points. For a different reason, prose suits Cardinal Newman better than poetry, not because he cannot write wonderfully fine poetry, when he will, but because he is so great a realist, so anxious to point out where the little roughnesses, selfishnesses, oddities, and jars of human

character chequer the surface of the divine purpose for us, that he cannot, as a rule, afford to use a medium in which all the jars must be merged in some strain of recurrent and overpowering melody. Professor Shairp's lectures on the prose poets, as indeed on all his other subjects, are full of true poetical insight. But I cannot entirely agree with him that imaginative fire and rhythmical cadence are sufficient to constitute poetry. I think that in a true poem there must be that wholeness of effect, that complete assimilation of all the materials contained, into a single impression, which nothing but verse, and verse of a somewhat high order of organisation, can produce.

XV

POETRY AND PESSIMISM

1882

MR. LESLIE STEPHEN has told us that "nothing is less poetical than optimism," and assuredly pessimism has taken a strong hold on the minor poets of our day. Thus, in a series of sonnets, intended to convey "the portrait of a mind,"[1] and as I gather from the preface, the portrait not so much of an individual mind as of the mind most characteristic of the intellectual attitude of our own day, Mr. John Addington Symonds has brought what he terms "the soul's debate upon the fundamental question of man's place in the Universe" to a conclusion with the following cheering Promethean allegory :—

"O thou who sole 'neath Heaven's impiteous stars,
Chained to thy crucifix on those fierce fells,
Pierced by the pendent spikes of icicles,
Quailest beneath the world-wind's scimitars ;
Thou, on whose wrinkling forehead, delved with scars
Unnumbered ages score time's parallels,
Deep in whose heart sin's deathless nature dwells ;
Who on the low earth's limitary bars

[1] *Animi Figura.* By John Addington Symonds. London : Smith, Elder, and Co.

Seest suns rise, suns set, ascending signs
And signs descending through aeonian years;
Still uncompanioned save by dreams and fears,
Still stayed by hope deferred that ne'er declines;
O thou, Prometheus, protomartyr, thus
Teach men to dree life's doom on Caucasus."

That is certainly quite in the spirit of the pessimist poet Leopardi, much more in that spirit, indeed, than in that of the other pair in the trio of pessimist poets,—Leopardi, Byron, Heine,—whom Mr. James Sully, in his book on *Pessimism*, regards as the great poetical progenitors of this school of thought in modern Europe; for Byron mingled so much of personal passion with his pessimism, and Heine shrieked it out in so ironic a scream of almost hysterical laughter, that they rendered it impossible for us to judge with any accuracy how far their beliefs were real beliefs, and not merely effective forms of indictment against an age which it suited their characters and their genius to condemn.

But Leopardi, at all events, believed in the irremediable and inevitable evil of existence as much as he believed in anything,—far more truly, for instance, than Sophocles ever believed what he puts into the mouth of one of his choruses, that "not to be born is much the best, but having seen the light, the next best is to go as soon as may be whence one came." In the play of Sophocles, that is the natural sentiment of the moment on the lips of overawed and trembling old men, but it is hardly his own. Leopardi, however, dilates on this as the leading truth of this world, not only in his poems, but in essay after essay intended to illustrate this creed. No one can tell for certain that either Byron or Heine, scoff as both of them would at the evils

of life and the selfishness and pettiness of man, held existence to be an evil. But so soon as Leopardi became popular, a school of philosophy grew up which tried to carry Pessimism to the same recognised position as one of the great intellectual creeds of Europe, which it had long occupied among the creeds of Asia. Of the tendencies which favoured this attempt Mr. James Sully, in the interesting book on *Pessimism* to which we have already referred, gives us the following explanation :—

"In its earliest manifestations, it was the apparent failure of a social and political ideal which brought about this state of despondency. In more recent years, the collapse of the extravagant expectations and endeavours of certain æsthetic schools, has probably perpetuated, if it has not deepened, the pessimistic mood. So far as we can judge of the dominant features of our own age, there seems much just now to bend the sensitive mind in the pessimistic direction. The critical attrition of revered traditions is, and will be for a long time yet, keenly resented as a denudation of life of its crowning beauty and worth. Science, it is true, flourishes and progresses ; yet it has not so far presented to the mass of mankind any new inspiring ideas, any noble imaginative forms for their emotional aspirations. Then, too, the absence of new creative vigour in Art, which is possibly more than a passing phenomenon, leaves men's propensities to enthusiasm unsatisfied in an æsthetic direction. To this, one may add that the single art which seems to preserve sufficient vitality for new developments, namely, music, is one which lends itself in a peculiar way as an expression to the pessimistic temper. Once more the age is vocal with social plaint, the cry of thwarted or postponed political aims. The masses of the leading European communities seem to be learning to ask whether the monstrous inequalities with respect to the material conditions of

well-being are, after all, an eternal and immutable ordinance of Nature, though they have not yet arrived at the hopeful point of a distinct perception of the means of amelioration. On the other hand, the characteristic trait of our age, rapid material growth, tends to set up a coarse and limited ideal of life, which only makes the absence of loftier aims the more keenly felt by the more discerning order of mind. How can men, who have had visions of universal equality and fraternity find consolation in the spectacle of a plethora of material prosperity confined to a mere handful in the crowd, and serving only to throw out into bolder relief the prevailing emptiness?"

I have no doubt at all that the gorgeous political dream and the profound political disappointment or disillusionment of the French Revolution, had, and still has, an enormous influence in confounding the aspirations of our Western poets, at least of all those,—and they are likely to be among the most numerous of the poets for generations to come,—who find the thought of suffering multitudes, of misery on a large scale, intolerable; and who, when once they have realised that this is the inevitable result of the existing law of society, feel as if their imagination had grasped the conception of something like an evil law of nature, or, still more terrible, an evil God. Poets naturally dwell with more passion than any other class of men on the disappointed desires of human life, and dwell on these disappointed desires all the more, when they have satisfied themselves that theirs are not selfish desires, but are, like the Utopian visions of Shelley, passionate aspirations for the renovation of that suffering humanity, which, in its present condition, is, when you get to the dregs of it, as hideous as it is miserable. I

do not doubt at all that modern pessimism does really owe a great deal of its ardour to the poets, especially to voluptuous poets, not so much because they are voluptuous, as because the same characteristic which makes them dwell so constantly on the gratified or suffering senses of men, blinds them to that aspect of life in which it is seen that disappointment becomes the condition of the truest vision, and that suffering is transmuted into the rarest power. For this is the point of view which modern poets,—and especially poets whose imagination dwells habitually on pleasure as it so often does,—seldom seize. It was because Wordsworth seized it, that the great social catastrophe which drove so many poets into pessimism, raised him to the highest point of his visionary power. No poet of mere desire ever felt, as Wordsworth felt, the true significance of desire,—the world of power that is secured to man by the control and defiance and defeat of desire, or the higher uses and secrets of cravings that are never satisfied. He alone loved to dwell upon the

> "Sorrow that is not sorrow, but delight;
> And miserable love that is not pain
> To hear of, for the glory that redounds
> Therefrom to human kind, and what we are."

Rare and, as a rule, hard and passionless are those poets who can dwell on the sufferings of mankind without shrinking from the belief that these sufferings are amongst the highest and most necessary part of man's destiny, who can dwell with any true poetical rapture on the thought that,

> "Amid the groves, under the shadowy hills
> The generations are prepared; the pangs,
> The eternal pangs, are ready,—the dread strife
> Of poor Humanity's afflicted will."

But of those who can dwell on this, not only without shrinking, but with a certain exaltation, Wordsworth was the chief. For the most part, the modern poet no sooner realises this necessity of human suffering on a large scale than he sinks into pessimism. The mere conception of the physical evils of the various climates of the world fills Leopardi, for instance, with such horror that he finds in it one of the main grounds of his pessimism, as his dialogue between an Icelander and Nature sufficiently shows. Yet even the commonest and most superficial philosophy has admitted that the necessity for strife with natural evils has been the root of progress to the savage and the barbarian, and is, in a more refined form, a principal stimulus to progress still. But this the Southern poet, the poet to whom the evils of physical suffering seem intolerable, cannot realise; and it is because so many of our own modern poets seem to have moulded themselves in the same school, to have taken upon themselves to bewail every mass of human suffering as a final evil which they see no way to mitigate,—just as if there could be nothing indirectly ennobling and tempering in the suffering itself,—that there is such a tendency to pessimism in the poetry of our own day. I have quoted Mr. Symonds' picture of humanity, like the protomartyr Prometheus, "dreeing life's doom on Caucasus," because I suppose that, as this sonnet stands last in his series of pictures of the soul of man, he regards that as the outcome of the whole. But surely a poet who could conceive of this as the noblest outcome of human idealism, should have reflected that while the fabled Prometheus had no power of suicide, man has such a power, and no need at all to "dree" a frightful doom, unless there be something noble,

something grand, some ultimate and final conquest over evil, to be gained by dreeing this doom,—and that if this be so, there clearly must be a God over all the changes and chances of this world, both to prophesy to the soul, and to elicit the final issue. Mr. Symonds himself has put this very finely in another sonnet, intended, however, to image only that phase of credulous hope which he ultimately merges in his very dismal conclusion. We will quote Mr. Symonds himself, as the best antidote to Mr. Symonds:—

"Pathos of piety! Poor human brain,
In thine own image moulding God, to be
Victim and victor of sin's curse like thee,
Like thee submissive to the laws of pain!
Rising not up in anger to arraign
Heaven's justice, thou, with proud humility,
Didst own thy guileless guilt the cause why He
Who made Man's soul thus faulty, wrought in vain!
Sad, tender thought, that God himself should bow
Under the doom he graved on Adam's brow!
Logic illogical, that He who framed
Man thrall of sin, death's slave, for suffering born,
Should on his own head wear that crown of thorn,
And dying prove man's soul from death reclaimed."

Why "pathos of piety?" If the suffering of man is to answer its purpose, as Mr. Symonds appears to expect,—or he would hardly urge man to take up voluntarily the part which Prometheus played involuntarily,—he must believe that there is a Power overruling that will of man which always strives to fly from anguish, a Power inspiring him "to dree his doom on Caucasus." If it were not so, what is to prevent him from taking his fate into his own hands, and dispatching himself, as Carlyle so often

suggested that it would be an excellent thing for man to do? Yet if there be this overruling power which keeps us suffering while we need not suffer, which makes us feel how much better it is to "dree our doom" than to fly from it, what can that power be except one which loves a crown of thorns, which knows how much the crown of thorns adds to the power of him who wears it, and that the true conquest of pain is obtained by wholly submitting to its grasp, not in shrinking fearfully from that grasp?

XVI

THE LATE LORD HOUGHTON'S POEMS [1]

1876

It is a pity that Lord Houghton did not act, in his preface to this edition of his collected poems, on the hint which he gives us in it of his power to appreciate them quite impartially, and with the *sang-froid* of an external critic. There would have been something original in the attempt of an able man of the world to determine precisely what was best and what poorest in his own productions, and though I have little doubt that few critics would have entirely agreed with him,—for even the coolest man of the world must have a soft corner in his heart for the verses with which vivid feelings (perhaps inadequately expressed, if expressed at all) are associated, and this soft corner must now and then have biassed an otherwise calm and independent judgment,—still, the criticism would have been both amusing and instructive, for Lord Houghton has, at least, as much of the critic in him as of the poet, probably, like most men of the world with a vein of

[1] *The Poetical Works of* (*Richard Monckton Milnes*) *Lord Houghton.* Collected Edition. 2 vols. With a Portrait. London: John Murray. 1876.

quick sympathy in them, something more. Even where his verse is poorest, his criticism is sometimes striking, as, for instance, in the lines on "The Return of Ulysses to Ithaca," which are nothing at all as a poem, but which embody a fine and delicate criticism on the wonderful beauty of that touch in the *Odyssey* which makes Ulysses reach his home at last in deep sleep, and lays him like a weary child on the shore of the island home for which he has been yearning so long. But when Lord Houghton says that whatever little hold his poems "may have taken on their time is owing to their sincerity of thought and simplicity of expression," he hardly does justice to his own critical faculty. 'Sincerity of thought and simplicity of expression' are, no doubt, the greatest possible excellences in poetry, but taken alone, they do not constitute even the smallest poetic claim on us. It is possible to be sincere in thought and perfectly simple in expression, without having even the gleam of a poetic feeling; and though every one will admit that these qualities add greatly to the charm of poetry when you have got it, it would be far nearer the truth to say that poetical feeling, as such, tends to sincerity of thought and simplicity of expression, than to say that sincerity of thought and simplicity of expression, as such, tend to any poetic charm. If I were asked what it is which constitutes the specific claim of Lord Houghton's poetry to a certain modest place of its own in the poetry of our day, I should say it was the intertwining in his mind between the threads of tender sentiment and that kind of knowledge of the world which is too apt to take all the melody out of sentiment. Of course, there are poems of Lord Houghton's, and taking ones too,

which do not show this mingling of very different mental strands, like the song by which he is perhaps best known,—"I wandered by the brook-side, I wandered by the mill." That is simply a pretty little sentimental song, but not one sufficiently unique in its kind to tell us at once by whom it had been written. It might be referred, without any blunder of æsthetic insight, to a considerable number of other poets, by whom indeed, had occasion favoured, it might perhaps really have been written. So, again, there are bits of clear, statuesque description which Lord Houghton has written admirable of their kind, but of which, again, no one would be able to discover the individual stamp, or to know the authorship except by the aid of memory. Take this, for instance, written at Mycenæ, on a vision of Agamemnon, Iphigenia, Clytemnestra, and Orestes, —which appears to me almost as good of its kind as one or two of Shelley's descriptive sonnets, but not marked by any authentic seal of the author's:—

"I saw a weird procession glide along
The vestibule before the Lion's gate;
A Man of godlike limb and warrior state,
Who never looked behind him, led the throng.
Next a pale Girl, singing sweet sorrow, met
My eyes, who ever pointed to a fleck
Of ingrained crimson on her marble neck;
Her a fierce Woman, armed with knife and net,
Close followed, whom a Youth pursued with smile,
Once mild, now bitter-mad, himself the while
Pursued by three foul Shapes, gory and grey:
Dread family! . . . I saw another day
The phantom of that Youth, sitting alone,
Quiet, thought-bound, a stone upon a stone."

It is not often that Lord Houghton describes his

vision as nervously as he does here. As a poet of description I cannot rate him high. His eye is clear, but the bubbles of personal sentiment rise too fast to the surface of his mind to give us many strong pictures such as this. As a rule, I cannot say that I greatly admire either the poems of pure sentiment or the poems intended to be descriptive. The former want idea, coherence, intensity, and depth; the latter are too diffuse, and sometimes also too much coloured with elements which disturb the unity of the picture. Both classes are apt to strike one as expressions of cultivated, but ordinary and unmemorable, feeling.

But it is different when Lord Houghton combines, as he does not unfrequently contrive to combine, the thrill of the poet with the subtle insight of the man of the world. Sometimes he misses the latter, and then he is a poet, but a commonplace one. Sometimes he misses the former, and then he is a subtle observer of the world, but not a poet. But sometimes he combines the two, and then his poetry is poetry of a kind which one does not meet with elsewhere. The poem, "I wandered by the brook-side," which he tells us was parodied by the negroes in the Western States of America within ten years of its composition, is one of the purely sentimental kind. It has the echo of a somewhat superficial tenderness and rapture in it, but it has no mark of Lord Houghton's acute mind. We see Lord Houghton at his best when he contrives to combine, as he frequently does, real feeling happily embodied in rhythm with the cool and subtle vision of the man of the world. Here, for instance, we have him at his best:—

"THE WORLD TO THE SOUL.

"Soul ! that may'st have been divine,
Now I claim and take thee mine ;
Now thy own true bliss will be
In thy loyalty to me.

Though thou seemest without stain,
There is evil in thy grain ;
Thou hast tasted of the fruit
Of which Knowledge is the root.

So I must not let thee rest,
Lull'd on Faith's maternal breast ;
Faith and Fancy mar the plan
Of the making of a man.

So thy tender heart I bare
To Ambition's frosty air ;
So I plunge thee deep in doubt,
That thou may'st grow hard and stout.

So I bid the eager Boy
Sense in every form enjoy ;
Stinting not the moment's pleasure,
Save to gain some fuller measure.

Thou wilt lose at last the zest,
Thou wilt need some higher quest ;
Then I bid thee rise a Man,
And I aid thee all I can.

Fix thee on some worthy aim,
Proving danger, fronting shame ;
Knowing only friends or foes,
As they speed thee or oppose :

Trampling with thy rapid feet
Feelings fond and pleas discreet ;
Only for excuses sue
In the great things thou canst do.

If what shone afar so grand,
Turn to nothing in thy hand,
On, again—the virtue lies
In the struggle, not the prize ;

Only rest not : failure-curst
Turn to Pleasure at the worst ;
That may calm thy conscience-cry—
Death may give thee peace, not I."

One would take exception to that ethically, but one cannot deny that it is singularly subtle in its analysis of the sort of defence the world might make for the temptations she puts before the soul. Or again, take the striking poem on the incapacity of man at the different ages of life to enjoy adequately the experience proper to that age,—in other words, on the apparently untimely anticipation which induces human beings to borrow from the future what not only spoils the present, but robs even that future, when it comes, of its due strength :—

"THE EXHAUSTION OF LIFE.

" The Life of man is made of many lives,
His heart and mind of many minds and hearts,
And he in inward growth most surely thrives
Who lets wise Nature order all the parts :

To each disposing what befits their scope,
To boyhood pleasures without care or plan,
To youth affections bright and light as hope,
Deep-seated passions to the ripened man.

Oh ! well to say, and well if done as said :
But who himself can keep each separate stage ?
Stand 'twixt the living feelings and the dead,
And give its special life to every age ?

Who can forbid the present to encroach
On what should rest the future's free domain,
Holding the past undimmed by self-reproach,
Nor borrow joy at usury of pain?

Boyhood invades the phantasies of youth,
Rocked in imagination's golden arms,
And leaves its own delights of healthy truth
For premature and visionary charms.

Youth, to whom Poesy by right belongs,
And every creature of the fairy race,
Turns a deaf ear to those enchanting songs,
And sees no beauty in that dreamy face,

But will, though by experience uninured,
Plunge into deepest gulfs of mental fire,
Trying what angels have in vain endured—
The toils of Thought—the struggles of Desire:

So that when Manhood in its place at last
Comes and demands its labours and its powers,
The Spirit's energies are worn and past,
And Life remains a lapse of feeble hours."

The line describing how we "borrow joy at usury of pain" is expressed with even more nice felicity than Lord Houghton usually reaches, and is a line which the English people are likely to popularise as well as preserve. The same discriminating knowledge of the world, blended with true feeling, is to be found in most of the semi-political poems, like that, for instance, on "The Voice of the People," in which the poet remarks finely on the rarity of the power,

"Through the long progress of our kind,
To read with eyes undimmed and true
The blotted book of public mind;"

and again, in the fine verses on "The Patience of the Poor." It is the same quality, too, which is discernible in the piece called "Unspoken Dialogue," and several of the rather striking sets of verses called "Shadows," where Lord Houghton measures and appraises with a keen eye the various blunders of the affections,—how some men and women will think to live too exclusively in love and repent their error, and others fail to discern it when it might constitute their highest happiness. It is the blending of sentiment with knowledge of the world,—not a cynical, but a sympathetic blending,—which gives the unique character to the best of Lord Houghton's poems.

XVII

THE LATE LORD HOUGHTON

1885

RICHARD MONCKTON MILNES, whom Carlyle once described as "a pretty little Robin Redbreast of a man," and who certainly could sing, in the days in which that description was applied to him, a very taking little song of his own, died on Monday evening at Vichy, and with him there vanishes from London society one of its most unique figures. Lord Houghton may be said almost to have discovered the value of antipathy as a social interest. He was great in bringing together those who were or were supposed to be most utterly hostile to each other, and at his breakfast parties you could always find both the acid and the alkali by which a moral effervescence is produced. He would very much have shared the pleasure expressed by Satan in the prologue to Goethe's *Faust*, at his occasional intercourse with the divine adversary of Satan. Indeed, this feeling of Lord Houghton's extended far beyond a mere theory of social intercourse. He had, apparently, some notion that all absolute hostility is a mistake, even though it be the hostility of moral good to moral evil. He wanted to reconcile the

Church and the World. He wanted to reconcile Conservatism and Liberalism. He wanted to reconcile idealism and materialism. He wanted to reconcile mysticism and commonplace. He seems to have enjoyed the shiver which is so often caused by the mingling of opposites. In politics he first supported the Conservatives in a great Liberal policy,—Sir Robert Peel, in establishing Free-trade,—and next supported a Liberal in his Conservative policy,—Lord Palmerston, in teaching the nation to "rest and be thankful." In regard to the Church, Lord Houghton was the great representative of the idea that it is the duty of a Bishop to be more or less worldly; in fact, he used to eulogise the episcopal bench in the House of Lords on the ground that it helped to teach the Church what the attractions of the world were like, and also helped it to appreciate them at their true worth,—which, in his estimation, was by no means nil, but something very considerable. In poetry, again, catholic as were his tastes, and generous as was his help to poorer brethren of the craft,—to him we probably owe in great measure the delightful poems of David Gray,—his bias always was towards throwing cold water on the high-flown estimate of poetry in which poets occasionally indulge. His last speech, I believe,—a speech made in July at the meeting of the Wordsworth Society, held in his own house,—was a sort of wet-blanket for thorough Wordsworthians. He dwelt gently on all the defects he could find in Wordsworth, taking evidently some pleasure in using such epithets as "vulgar" for the familiar language of Wordsworth's lyrical ballads, and he made his address, in fact, rather a eulogy on Shelley and Keats than on Wordsworth, whose great ode on

"The Intimations of Immortality" was the only poem of Wordsworth's which won from him genuinely enthusiastic praise. Lord Houghton disliked, no doubt, the didactic side of Wordsworth, not only as every poet must dislike direct didactism in poetry, but as a man, one of whose chief interests in life was the skilful blending of the unworldly with the worldly, would especially dislike all stern exhortations such as Wordsworth poured forth so freely, to shake off from the soul the tyranny of the world.

As a poet, Lord Houghton would have been greater had he succeeded in expressing in his poems his own characteristic desire to catch the effervescence of opposite moods of feeling. But this he can hardly be said to have done. In some early lines, written in a miserably sing-song rhythm, he did to a certain extent embody the leading conception of his life. I cannot think that the following are good verses; but they are very characteristic verses, and are marked by a thought which pervaded Lord Houghton's life:—

"PLEASURE AND PAIN.

"Who can determine the frontier of pleasure?
Who can distinguish the limit of pain?
When is the moment the feeling to measure?
When is experience repeated again?

Ye who have felt the delirium of passion,
Say, can you sever its joys and its pangs?
Is there a power in calm contemplation
To indicate each upon each as it hangs?

I would believe not; for spirit will languish,
While sense is most blest and creation most bright;
And life will be dearer and clearer in anguish,
Than ever was felt in the throbs of delight.

See the Fakeer as he swings on his iron,
  See the thin hermit that starves in the wild;
Think ye no pleasures the penance environ,
  And hope the sole bliss by which pain is beguiled?

No! in the kingdom these spirits are reaching
  Vain are our words the emotions to tell;
Vain the distinctions our senses are teaching,
  For Pain has its Heaven, and Pleasure its Hell!"

That is not good poetry, nor perhaps entirely true teaching, but it has a great deal of truth in it, and it was the one truth which Richard Monckton Milnes really embodied in his own social life. If all emotions are not thus shot with threads of apparently contrary and inconsistent feeling, still many are, and no doubt amongst them are to be found some of the most memorable in human life. As I have quoted verse of Lord Houghton's which seems to me very poor poetry, though verse distinguished by a characteristic thought, I must quote something which shows him as a genuine poet,—which he was, though not by any means a great one, for all his verse seems to have come from too superficial a plane to lift the reader up to the height of the higher poetry. In the following little poem there is a subtlety of insight which shows how well Lord Houghton could delineate the mixed feelings of which he was so acute a student:—

"They seemed to those who saw them meet,
  The casual friends of every day,
Her smile was undisturbed and sweet,
  His courtesy was free and gay.

But yet if one the other's name
  In some unguarded moment heard,
The heart you thought so calm and tame,
  Would struggle like a captured bird;—

And letters of mere formal phrase
Were blistered with repeated tears;
And this was not the work of days,
But had gone on for years and years.

Alas, that love was not too strong
For maiden shame and manly pride!
Alas, that they delayed so long
The goal of mutual bliss beside!

Yet what no chance could then reveal,
And neither would be first to own,
Let fate and courage now conceal,
When truth could bring remorse alone."

Even that does not, in our judgment, illustrate Lord Houghton's most perfect verse. The exquisite lines on Wilkie's conversation with the Geronomite monk, about the picture of the Last Supper in the refectory of one of the Spanish monasteries, touch, perhaps, the highest point he reached; but as they were suggested by the actual saying of a Spanish monk, and Lord Houghton only versified the monk's thought, perhaps these lines are hardly a fair specimen of the substance of his poetry, though they are a good specimen of its form. It is curious that the poem which has certainly been more popular than any other in all Lord Houghton's works, and which almost every one connects with Monckton Milnes' name, was the little love poem called "The Brookside." That is happily expressed, no doubt, but it is wholly without the brand of Lord Houghton's personal character,—and in a poet who has usually so little of the magic of form as Lord Houghton, one needs the impress of character even more than in a poet who adorns everything that he touches, and transfigures it merely by passing it through the

medium of his thought. We should, indeed, find few of Lord Houghton's poems so little characteristic of him as "The Brookside;" though it may have been that poem, or a poem of that kind, which suggested to Carlyle the comparison to "a pretty little Robin Redbreast." On the whole, Monckton Milnes' genius was embodied in a certain determination to blend the insight of the man of the world with the sentiment of the poet, and not to allow the sentiment of the poet to run away with the insight of the man of the world. Perhaps I could hardly express better what I mean than by quoting these verses from his picture of "The Patience of the Poor":—

"No search for him of dainty food,
But coarsest sustenance of life,—
No rest by artful quiet wooed,
But household cries, and wants, and strife;
Affection can at best employ
Her utmost of unhandy care;
Her prayers and tears are weak to buy
The costly drug, the purer air.

Pity herself at such a sight
Might lose her gentleness of mien,
And clothe her form in angry might,
And as a wild despair be seen;
Did she not hail the lesson taught,
By this unconscious suffering boor,
To the high sons of lore and thought,
—The sacred Patience of the Poor,

—This great endurance of each ill,
As a plain fact whose right or wrong
They question not, confiding still
That it shall last not over long;

Willing from first to last to take
The mysteries of our life as given,
Leaving the time-worn soul to slake
Its thirst in an undoubted Heaven."

That is not the highest poetry, but it is not without power, and it has on it the mark of Lord Houghton's unshrinking vision in its least nonchalant mood.

XVIII

TENNYSON'S POEM ON "DESPAIR"

1881

THE able critic of Tennyson's latest volume, in the *Edinburgh Review*, has invented a very far-fetched theory of the comparative unproductiveness of Tennyson's later years, in which it will be difficult, I think, for any other careful student of his genius to concur. That theory is that in his earlier days he gathered up and reflected the dominant beliefs of his age, with the felicity with which a great poet can almost always represent that which has partly formed him, and partly been formed in him just because his nature has been shaped by the same causes which also produced those beliefs; but that of late years the leading ideas with which he was and is in sympathy have been exchanged for other leading ideas, which only chill and depress him, and instead of stimulating him to write, paralyse his imaginative energies. The difficulty of this theory is that, so far as Tennyson has dealt with the ideas of his age at all, he has always seemed to be at least as keenly urged on by the desire truly to apprehend and effectually to combat false ideas, as by the desire to express powerfully those which are true. In the time when

democracy was most actively kindling English minds, Tennyson represented true freedom as "turning to scorn, with lips divine, the falsehood of extremes." His great injunction was,—

> "But pamper not a hasty time,
> Nor feed with crude imaginings
> The herd,—wild hearts and feeble wings,—
> That every sophister can lime."

When utilitarianism was most popular, Tennyson was ready with his refutation:—

> "Oh! to what uses shall we put
> The wild-weed flower that simply blows;
> And is there any moral shut
> Within the bosom of the rose?"

When all the world was in a ferment about Free-trade, Tennyson, though, as we know from his poems on the opening of the two Great Exhibitions, himself a strong Free-trader, wrote the amusing little fable on the goose which laid the golden eggs, in which he certainly represents commerce with no extravagant reverence, and indulges no over-sanguine spirit as to its triumphs. So far from thinking Tennyson specially affected by what the *Edinburgh Review* calls the "confident optimism" of his own day, I should say that in not one of his more considerable poems—unless indeed "Locksley Hall," be the exception, and, popular as it is, I should hardly class "Locksley Hall" as one of Tennyson's greater poems—is there any reflection of confident optimism at all. Tennyson seems to me always to be greatest when his thought is moving in a resisting medium. "The Two Voices" is a much greater poem than "Locksley Hall," and "The Two Voices" is remarkable for its powerful

expression of the hard, atheistic temper with which the spirit of man has to struggle. In the Arthurian Idylls, he is never so great as in his picture of the melancholy, though not hopeless, close of the ideal career; and he is just as great in that part of the Morte d'Arthur which was written in the later years of his life, as he was in that part of it which was written in his youth. Where does Tennyson touch a higher poetical point than in "Ulysses" and "Tithonus"? and can subjects be found which have less in them of the optimistic ring, more of that yearning which hardly even hopes for satisfaction, than the subjects of "Ulysses" and "Tithonus"? The greatness of "In Memoriam" is the greatness of its delineation of faith and aspiration struggling on under the chill shadow of profound doubt. Without its deep gloom, the gleams of light would lose all their special beauty, and any poem that could be less happily described as the reflection of confident optimism, I cannot even imagine. That a certain steady gain in the force of the brighter visions of the human heart, is perceptible towards the close of "In Memoriam," no one will deny, nor that the conclusion and the prelude may be regarded as the expression of triumphant faith; but even they are the expressions, not of faith unclouded but of faith that has attained a difficult triumph over grave misgivings, faith that no longer perhaps "faintly," but certainly not in any dogmatic or positive attitude of mind, "trusts the larger hope." Far the greatest poems Tennyson has written seem to me poems in which the poet has delineated with extraordinary power a state of mind at the very opposite pole from that of optimism,—sometimes taking care to point out where it is that the light penetrates into the darkness, but not unfrequently only just touching the

gloom with a single point of light. The *Edinburgh* reviewer pronounces on Tennyson a fine and just eulogium for his painful but wonderful poem on the "Death of Lucretius." Where, in that poem, is there even the glimmer of a ray to light up the melancholy of the picture? I should be inclined to say that in not one of the poems where Tennyson touches only the brighter side of life, does he give us the least conception of his full powers as a poet. His is essentially a genius which requires a resisting medium to do it justice; and it is never nobler than where it gives the reader the impression that the poet is stemming the current of the age, and convinced that the age is all astray.

Nothing could illustrate this view better than the fine monologue on "Despair" which appears in the November number of the *Nineteenth Century*. That this poem paints with wonderful power the natural, and I will say, the legitimate, results of the agnostic creed on a tortured human heart, is obvious enough; nor will any one who reads it doubt that the agnostic creed is repudiated by Tennyson,—that his whole nature rebels against it. Still, it would be absurd to say that in this poem Tennyson is reflecting the dominant beliefs of his youth and maturity. On the contrary, he is painting, and painting with unequalled power, the fruits of the very belief which the *Edinburgh* reviewer describes as the belief of George Eliot, that "in the furthest future there is nothing but one blank catastrophe," when

> "Human time
> Shall fold its eyelids, and the human sky
> Be gathered, like a scroll, within the tomb,
> Unread for ever."

Tennyson's object is to show that unless every event

in human life is to be interpreted by the light of eternal issues and eternal purposes, the world is full of troubles so intolerable that no one either need endure them, or is bound to do so by any overpowering obligation :—

"Why should we bear with an hour of torture, a moment of pain,
If every man die for ever, if all his griefs are in vain,
And the homeless planet at length will be wheel'd thro' the silence of space,
Motherless evermore of an ever-vanishing race,
When the worm shall have writhed its last, and its last brother-worm will have fled
From the dead fossil skull that is left in the rocks of an earth that is dead?
Have I crazed myself over their horrible infidel writings? O yes,
For these are the new dark ages, you see, of the popular press,
When the bat comes out of his cave, and the owls are whooping at noon,
And Doubt is the lord of this dunghill and crows to the sun and the moon,
Till the Sun and the Moon of our science are both of them turn'd into blood,
And Hope will have broken her heart, running after a shadow of good."

The "new dark ages of the popular press" does not read very like "confident optimism," and yet it is not the protest of one who believes in the optimism of the last generation against the pessimism of this, for in the last generation, too, Tennyson had the insight to see the deep current of scepticism running strong and dark beneath all the superficial hope, and to fathom all its significance, and show whither it

tended. It is true, of course, that in this last poem he is painting the atheistic view of life with a profoundly religious purpose. The despair which paints the universe as it is painted here, could hardly be expressed in words at all by a man who believed it to be the most reasonable view of the Universe. Such a verse as the following is not the outcome of despair, but of a very different thing,—the wish to find an adequate language for despair, in order that the victims of that despair may realise how much there is in their own souls which asserts or prophesies the falsehood of that language,—

"O we poor orphans of nothing—alone on that lonely shore—
Born of the brainless Nature who knew not that which she bore!
Trusting no longer that earthly flower would be heavenly fruit—
Come from the brute, poor souls—no souls—and to die with the brute——"

Even Tennyson's despairing suicide, when he sinks into himself, cannot help questioning the foundations of his own despair; and no wonder, after he has once faced the question whether, if all things end in annihilation, there is much difference between being "crowned for a virtue or hang'd for a crime." The truth is that to one who believes in annihilation, all things become insignificant. The phenomenon of a moment, and that which has persisted through a million centuries, are alike insignificant when they are really extinguished; and hence it is that that mere consciousness of infinite self-condemnation with which we shrink from a guilty thought or act, is in itself a confutation of the creed of

annihilation such as no sincere mind can get over. Why should we be more revolted at the ruin brought deliberately on the unhappy father depicted in this poem by the baseness of his son than we are at the bite of a venomous serpent, if there be no more provision in the universe for distinguishing, recording, and avenging the one than there is for distinguishing, recording, and avenging the other? Tennyson makes his readers feel by the very depth of the despair which he delineates, that human nature is not the insignificant thing which the bubble-theory of it requires us to conceive it; that it takes passionately to heart distinctions which it has no right, on that view of human nature, to take passionately to heart at all, and which indeed, if human nature had been the temporary and vanishing thing it is represented to be, it could never have taken passionately to heart at all. Doubtless, then, Tennyson's delineation of despair is meant as a medicine for despair; and a powerful medicine it is. But none the less it shows him in the poetic attitude in which he has, to my mind, always been at his best, not reflecting the "confident optimism" of any day, but rather "rowing hard against the stream" of false assumptions and degrading creeds.

XIX

"LOCKSLEY HALL" IN YOUTH AND AGE

1886

THE critics hitherto have done no justice to Tennyson's "Locksley Hall: Sixty Years After," if, indeed, they have carefully read it. I venture to say that it is at least as fine a picture of age reviewing the phenomena of life, and reviewing them with an insight impossible to youth into all that threatens man with defeat and degradation, though of course without any of that irrepressible elasticity of feeling which shows even by the very wildness and tumult of its despair, that despair is, for it, ultimately impossible, as Tennyson's earlier poem was of youth passionately resenting the failure of its first brilliant hope, and yet utterly unable to repress the "promise and potency" of its buoyant vitality. The difference between the "Locksley Hall" of Tennyson's earlier poems, and the "Locksley Hall" of his latest, is this,—that in the former, all the melancholy is attributed to personal grief, while all the sanguine visionariness which really springs out of overflowing vitality, justifies itself by dwelling on the cumulative resources of science and the arts;—in the latter, the melan-

choly in the man, a result of ebbing vitality, justifies itself by the failure of knowledge and science to cope with the moral horrors which experience has brought to light, while the set-off against that melancholy is to be found in a real personal experience of true nobility in man and woman. Hence, those who call the new "Locksley Hall" pessimist, seem to me to do injustice to that fine poem. No one can expect age to be full of the irrepressible buoyancy of youth. Age is conscious of a dwindling power to meet the evils which loom larger as experience widens. What the noblest old age has to set off against this consciousness of rapidly diminishing buoyancy, is a larger and more solid experience of human goodness, as well as a deeper faith in the power which guides youth and age alike. Now, Tennyson's poem shows us these happier aspects of age, though it shows us also that exaggerated despondency in counting up the moral evils of life which is one of the consequences of dwindling vitality. Nothing could well be finer than Tennyson's picture of the despair which his hero would feel if he had nothing but "evolution" to depend on, or than the rebuke which the speaker himself gives to that despair when he remembers how much more than evolution there is to depend on,—how surely that has been already "evolved" in the soul of man, which, itself inexplicable by evolution, yet promises an evolution far richer and more boundless than is suggested by any physical law. The final upshot of the swaying tide of progress and retrogression, in their periodic advance and retreat, is, he tells us, quite incalculable by us,—the complexity of the forward and backward movements of the wave being a complexity beyond our grasp,—and yet he is sure that there is

that in us which supplies an ultimate solution of the riddle:—

"Forward, backward, backward, forward, in the immeasurable sea
Sway'd by vaster ebbs and flows than can be known to you or me.

All the suns—are these but symbols of innumerable man,
Man or Mind that sees a shadow of the planner or the plan?

Is there evil but on earth? or pain in every peopled sphere?
Well be grateful for the sounding watchword, 'Evolution' here.

Evolution ever climbing after some ideal good,
And Reversion ever dragging Evolution in the mud.

What are men that He should heed us? cried the king of sacred song;
Insects of an hour, that hourly work their brother insect wrong.

While the silent Heavens roll, and Suns along their fiery way,
All their planets whirling round them, flash a million miles a day.

Many an Æon moulded earth before her highest, man, was born,
Many an Æon too may pass when earth is manless and forlorn,

Earth so huge, and yet so bounded—pools of salt, and plots of land—
Shallow skin of green and azure—chains of mountain, grains of sand!

Only That which made us, meant us to be mightier by and by,
Set the sphere of all the boundless Heavens within the human eye,

Sent the shadow of Himself, the boundless, thro' the human soul;
Boundless inward, in the atom, boundless outward, in the Whole."

I doubt whether this, and the exquisite passage which precedes it in relation to the optimistic dreams which astronomical science has given birth to amongst us, is not in depth and beauty superior to any passage in the earlier poem, though it cannot, and ought not to glow with the irrepressible buoyancy of youth. And though it is quite true that the old man falls back again from this higher level to his old despondency, as he recalls the hideousness and misery of the haunts of city vice, without recalling, as he might well have recalled, the vastly increased resources of moral heroism devoted to the conflict with that vice,—yet no sooner does his monologue return from this wider survey to the individual life really within the speaker's own experience than his hope revives, and speaking with the wisdom of true experience, he tells us that, if all would but exert on the side of good that "half-control" over their doom with which men have been endowed, the future of Earth might be a grand one yet:—

"Ere she gain her Heavenly-best, a God must mingle with the game:
Nay, there may be those about us whom we neither see nor name,

Felt within us as ourselves, the Powers of Good, the Powers of Ill,
Strowing balm, or shedding poison in the fountains of the Will.

Follow you the Star that lights a desert pathway, yours or mine.
Forward, till you see the highest Human Nature is divine.

Follow Light, and do the Right—for man can half-control his doom—
Till you find the deathless Angel seated in the vacant tomb."

It may, however, be admitted that this later poem is full of fine thoughts even by those who deny that it contains anything like the resonance and thrill of the earlier poem. This I should not assert; but I should insist that such a thrill of emotion and such a resonance of expression would be out of place in the "Locksley Hall" of "Sixty Years After." It was of the very essence of the first poem to paint the warm pulses of life beating in the heart of an ardent, disappointed youth. The lines which have become most popular and entered deepest into the thought of the day, such as the line in which the hero of the poem calls himself "the heir of all the ages in the foremost files of time," or those in which he pours forth his scorn of anything like stationariness, and exclaims,—

"Not in vain the distance beacons, Forward, forward let us range;
Let the great world spin for ever down the ringing grooves of change,"—

are, and were meant to be, expressive of the almost irrational enthusiasm of youth. Such lines as these

would be wholly out of character in "Locksley Hall Sixty Years After;" but are there none to supply their place? It seems to me that the poem abounds in the imaginative expression of the experience of age, of the sad sense of declining vitality, of the firm sense of disinterested conviction. Take the following, for example, as an illustration of the former feeling:—

"There again I stood to-day, and where of old we knelt in prayer,
Close beneath the casement crimson with the shield of Locksley—there,

All in white Italian marble, looking still as if she smiled,
Lies my Amy dead in child-birth, dead the mother, dead the child.

Dead—and sixty years ago, and dead her aged husband now,
I this old white-headed dreamer stoopt and kiss'd her marble brow.

Gone the fires of youth, the follies, furies, curses, passionate tears,
Gone like fires and floods and earthquakes of the planet's dawning years.

Fires that shook me once, but now to silent ashes fall'n away.
Cold upon the dead volcano sleeps the gleam of dying day."

And as an illustration of the strong grasp which age gets of convictions which are products neither of hope nor of fear, take the following on the significance of the belief in eternity as moulding and shaping to new meanings the life of man:—

"Gone for ever! Ever? no—for since our dying race began,
Ever, ever, and for ever was the leading light of man.

Those that in barbarian burials kill'd the slave, and slew the wife,
Felt within themselves the sacred passion of the second life.

Truth for truth, and good for good! The Good, the True, the Pure, the Just;
Take the charm 'For ever' from them, and they crumble into dust."

Has Tennyson ever written anything which concentrates into a single line more of the wisdom of maturity than the last line here quoted?

But the devotees of the earlier poem will no doubt refer to the admirable invective against "my Amy shallow-hearted," and the angry prophecy, happily falsified by the story of the new poem,—of her probable old age:—

"Oh! I see thee old and formal, fitted to thy petty part,
With a little hoard of maxims preaching down a daughter's heart,—

'They were dangerous guides, the feelings,—she herself was not exempt,—
Truly she herself had suffered,'—perish in thy self-contempt."

That is very spirited, no doubt, and expresses perfectly the resentful indignation of the unhappy lover. But is it better than the old man's scornful description of the woman who had just refused his grandson, in order to marry a rich old man?—

"Yours has been a slighter ailment, will you sicken for her sake?
You, not you! your modern amourist is of easier, earthlier make.

Amy loved me, Amy fail'd me, Amy was a timid child;
But your Judith—but your worldling—*she* had never driven me wild.

She that holds the diamond necklace dearer than the golden ring,
She that finds a winter sunset fairer than a morn of Spring.

She that in her heart is brooding on his briefer lease of life,
While she vows 'till death shall part us,' she the would-be-widow wife."

There you have at once the *laudator temporis acti*, the belief that the youth of modern days is not like the youth of ancient days, and yet with it the same vigour of expression in the mood of intellectual scorn, which was shown in the earlier poem in rendering the mood of resentful indignation.

Any one who will read the two pieces side by side will, I think, easily convince himself that while there are fewer lines in the new poem which will take captive the popular fancy of the day, than there were in the earlier poem in relation to the popular fancy of that earlier day, there are also fewer feeble lines, fewer lines which might be omitted almost without any one missing them who did not know the poem by heart. For example, in the earlier poem the young man's "curse" on all the social wants and social lies and sickly forms to which he ascribes his misfortune, has always seemed to me rather feeble, recalling the famous curse in *Faust*, without coming

near to it in verve and vigour. There are few such passages in the new poem, in which there are only two couplets,—the awkward one in which "Zolaism" rhymes to "abysm," and the grotesque one which represents the "black Australian" as hoping that death will transform him into a white,—which I should be glad to be rid of. On the whole, we have here the natural pessimism of age in all its melancholy, alternating with that highest mood of "old experience" which, in Milton's phrase, "doth attain to something like prophetic strain." The various eddies caused by these positive and negative currents seem to me delineated with at least as firm a hand as that which painted the tumultuous ebb and flow of angry despair and angrier hope in the bosom of the deceived and resentful lover of sixty years since. The later "Locksley Hall" is in the highest sense worthy of its predecessor.

XX

WILLIAM GEORGE WARD

1882

On Thursday there died at Hampstead one of the most notable of the Anglican seceders who followed Dr. Newman to Rome,—one who was degraded by the University of Oxford for his Romanising views, and whose book, on *The Ideal of a Christian Church*, was formally condemned there. "Ideal Ward" was, consequently, his Oxford nickname; "Squire Ward" was his title in the Isle of Wight, where he had estates; "Dr. Ward" was the description by which he was best known to the Catholic theologians; while his friends knew him simply as Mr. Ward. Oddly enough, each of the names applied to him by comparative strangers represented something really characteristic in him, and something also that was almost the very antithesis of that characteristic. There was an ideal element in him, but much more that was in the strongest sense real, not to say realistic. There was something in him of the bluff and sturdy manner of the English Squire, and yet nothing was more alien to him than hunters, hounds, partridges, and stubble-fields. There was a good deal in him of the theologian and the doctor,

but yet any one expecting to find the rarified atmosphere of philosophical and theological subtlety would have been astonished to find how substantial, not to say *solid*, theological and philosophical propositions became in his hands.

The name "Ideal Ward" often raised a smile, for anything less like æsthetic idealism than Mr. Ward's manner it would be difficult to conceive. Yet in one sense, Mr. Ward certainly was a thorough-going idealist. His ideal of intellectual authority was as high as it well could be. No man who was so keen and precise a thinker,—who loved, indeed, a good philosophical disquisition not less, but much better, than he loved a game of chess, and he loved a game of chess heartily, — had a more honest love of authority, and a more ardent belief in it, than Mr. Ward. In his very last book, he traverses all the favourite prepossessions of philosophers, by saying that, in his belief, the principle of authority is so far from being "adverse to the true interests of philosophy," that it is, on the contrary, "the only *conservator* of those interests;" and he gives a very plausible reason for his belief. Philosophers, he said, will never come to any good, without being checked in the hasty adoption of wild premisses, and the hasty inference of unsound conclusions from partially true premisses, by the distinct warning from a higher source, as to where the quicksands of falsehood begin. An authority, he thinks, which fixes the limits within which alone speculation is legitimate, puts just the sort of pressure on philosophy which is requisite to give an edge to thought. I agree entirely with Mr. Ward, though I disagree as to the authority by which the pressure should be administered. Nothing seems to me more certain than that

the speculative faculty of man is not adequate to its vast work unless and until it accepts limits from a source which cannot be called speculative, because, whether it come from within or without, it must be held to be the "categorical imperative" of a divine law. Until we have made up our minds where the moral law comes from,—whether we are or are not at liberty to explain it all away into elements of error and emotional misapprehension,—whether the sense of moral freedom, of right and wrong, of sin and remorse, be trustworthy or not,—whether, in short, the origin of our most commanding instincts be spiritual, or fanciful and illusive,—till then, speculation is far too vague and indeterminate to be worth attempting; and the answer to these questions is, after all, not really speculative, but precisely of the same kind as the answer to the question whether this or that man is our moral superior,—whether we ought to welcome his influence or to resist it. So far, then, I quite agree with Dr. Ward, that speculation *in vacuo* is not for man, that human speculation should start from fixed points given us by authority from above,—though I do not think, with him, that that authority is the authority of an external and historical institution. But I have referred to the subject only to point out what an amount of iron Dr. Ward's belief in an actual authority really put into his speculations,—what a tonic it gave to his reasoning,—how firm it made his convictions, what strength it lent to his illustrations, and what fixity to his conclusions. His was a mind of high speculative power, but of speculative power which was always referring back to the fixed points of certainty from which he started, and which attempted to deal only with the intermediate and indefinite world between these

fixed points. And his source of strength was also his source of weakness. He had so many dogmatic certainties which (as I believe) were mistaken, that he seemed to have all the sphere of higher knowledge spread out clear and sharp in a sort of philosophical ordnance map, and held immovably hundreds of fixed beliefs which he freely admitted to be unattainable, and even incredible to a Protestant. Never did a mind of great power luxuriate so heartily in the bars of what an outsider thought his intellectual prison. 'That,' he would virtually say, 'seems to you a prison-bar, does it? Now, look at me; I have got fast hold of it, and it keeps me from falling out of the window out of which I have seen you Protestants fall so often. I like it. It is a good, strong support, which the Church has been good enough to provide me with. It keeps me from attempting all sorts of insoluble problems. It leaves me plenty to speculate upon, with fixed, determinate points, which prevent my speculation from being barren and shadowy. But you, without these bars, as you call them, you are like a surveyor who has no known data from which to calculate the unknown elements of his problem. Indeed, your speculation is not determination of the unknown from the known, but like an attempt to solve an equation in which there are more unknown quantities than there are conditions which fix their value.' In this sense, then, Mr. Ward was a genuine Idealist. His ideal of the intellectual authority to be exerted over the mind by the Church was a high one, and it was to him a source of strength, and not of embarrassment.

But in another sense, "Ideal" Ward seemed a term almost applied in irony. Never was there a thinker or a man who seemed to live on such definite

and even palpable convictions,—to whom the vague and indefinite, even though steeped in a haze of bright sentiment, seemed so unwelcome. As an Oxford tutor, he was said to be always wrestling with men's half-thoughts or illogical inferences, often trying to make them ignore, perhaps, *that* half which was deepest rooted in their own minds, though less visible to him than the half which he undertook to develop. It is said that Dr. Newman converted him to Anglicanism almost by a single remark,—namely, that it would have been impossible, if the Primitive Church had been Protestant in our modern sense, that the Church of the third and fourth centuries should have been what it was,—that the growth of Catholicism could not have been from a Protestant root. That is true enough, of course; but how impossible the Anglicans of those days appear to have found it to realise that the unspiritual no less than the spiritual, elements of the Early Church—the tendencies rebuked by our Lord, no less than the tendencies fostered by him—were among the seeds out of which the historical Church grew! Ward's powerful mind had therefore enormous influence over those whose real starting-point he grasped, but he constantly failed to influence others, for sheer want of insight into the many half-discovered doubts which played round the admissions into which he was able to draw them. Thus, on poetic minds like Clough's, it is probable that Ward's influence was not wholly salutary. He put too much strain on the clear convictions, and allowed too little for, indeed endeavoured too little to get a sight of, the many prolific half-thoughts which had hardly risen above the horizon of the young thinker's mind. He applied a vigorous logic to what was palpably admitted, but

failed to see the large penumbra of impalpable and yet most influential doubt.

And it was a curious thing to compare the real man with the "Squire Ward," of the Isle-of-Wight nomenclature. No man more hearty, frank, and with a more real hold on such of the physical enjoyments of life as were to him physical enjoyments, can be imagined. He had nothing of the hermit, or the monk, or the rapt pilgrim through visionary worlds about him. His pleasures were as definite and as intelligible as any squire's, but he had no love for any of the ordinary agricultural amusements,—no pride in "the land," no interest in crops, no pleasure in the chase. He enjoyed trudging about on the plain road talking theology, or a game of chess, or a good opera-bouffe, better than any orthodox squirearchical amusement in England. Indeed, he enjoyed the former amusements very much, and none of the latter at all. He had a great sense of humour, and the humour which he enjoyed was as bright and clear and definite as was his reasoning itself. It was, indeed, strange to contrast the impalpable character of Ward's chief interests with the extraordinarily palpable way in which they represented themselves to him. His philosophy, theology, and music were as real to him as real property is to others,—a great deal more real than real property was to himself.

For many of the latter years of his life, Mr. Ward had the opportunity of comparing his own deepest convictions with the convictions, or no-convictions, of many of the ablest doubters of the age. He was one of the founders of the now deceased Metaphysical Society, where he met Anglican Bishops, Unitarians, sceptics, physicists, journalists, all sorts of thinkers, on perfectly equal terms; and probably no one

among them knew what he thought so well, and made it so distinct to his brother metaphysicians, as Mr. Ward. There, indeed, he was "Dr." Ward, and his position as a Doctor of Theology, with a degree conferred by Pio Nino, gave him a position hardly inferior in professional weight as an authoritative Catholic divine to that of Cardinal Manning himself. And no man in the Society was more universally liked. The clearness, force, and candour of his argument made his papers welcome to all,—for in that Society nebulousness was almost the rule, weakness chronic, and inability to understand an opponent's position, rather than want of candour, exceedingly common. I well remember the dismay Dr. Ward caused amongst the Experience School of philosophy by a paper on "Memory," in which he maintained that unless you had at least one intuitive faculty, unless you had an intuitive certainty that the absolute asseverations of memory were indisputably true asseverations, not only the experimental philosophy, but all philosophy, all coherent thought, becomes impossible at once:—"You are hearing at this moment," he said, "the *last* word of the sentence, but how do you know the other words of which it is composed? Simply by *remembering* them." "Unless you assume that memory is to be trusted, you cannot understand the meaning of a single sentence which is uttered; nay, you cannot so much as apprehend its external, bodily sound." That fell like a bombshell among the antagonists of intuitive certainty. And yet no one took more pains to understand the school of Mr. John Stuart Mill, or received more full recognition from that school, as meeting their philosophy fairly, and face to face, than Mr. Ward. From the time, indeed,

that he ceased to become a regular attendant at the Metaphysical Society, the Metaphysical Society began to lose its interest, and to drop into decay. Such was the attractive power of at least one strong and definite philosophical creed.

It is well known that Mr. Ward, though an ardent disciple of Dr. Newman's, did not in his later years belong to the same school of ecclesiastical thought. Indeed, he was amongst the strongest of the so-called Vaticanists, as it was natural he should be; while Cardinal Newman belonged to the school which dreaded premature definition, not to say even over-definition. But it would be a great mistake to suppose that Mr. Ward did not up to the last cherish the deepest admiration for his old leader, which, whether in public or in private, he hardly found enough opportunity to express. His mind, indeed, was one of the most modest, as well as of the most grateful to those from whom he had learned anything, with which I ever came in contact; and to Cardinal Newman, Mr. Ward always seemed to feel that he owed his intellectual life. To represent him as in any sense estranged in spirit from his old master by his ecclesiastical differences of opinion, is one of the greatest blunders which have ever been current in the theological world. His friendships were unusually deep and tender, and the tenderness of his love for Dr. Newman is a matter of which all his friends had the fullest and the most absolute knowledge. To not a few in various communions his friendship will be a very great and keenly-felt loss. For myself, I cannot but wonder whether Mr. Ward's theological beliefs are more or less definite now, than they were a few days ago. I suspect *less* definite.

XXI

DEAN CHURCH'S "BACON"[1]

1884

THE Dean of St. Paul's has treated his subject with a master hand, and has given us not only such a picture of Bacon as nobody can fail to be impressed by, but ample means of judging for ourselves that that picture is true. To Dr. Church this must have been a painful task. To sum up against Mr. Spedding, and in favour, on the whole, of the popular view of Bacon, must have been a most invidious duty for him. But the qualifications which he introduces into the unfavourable character he draws are as just as they are generously insisted on. Still, on the whole, no one will read this sketch of Bacon without being convinced that Bacon for the most part looked on men chiefly as instruments to be played on for his own purposes, as Rosencranz and Guildenstern would have played upon Hamlet had he not seen through them, and that Bacon scrupled at no sycophancy, at no false praise, at no unjust blame, in order to bring men

[1] *English Men of Letters.* Edited by John Morley. "Bacon." By R. W. Church, Dean of St. Paul's, Honorary Fellow of Oriel College. London: Macmillan and Co.

round to his own wishes. Nor, again, can it be questioned that, in spite of Bacon's splendid imaginative genius and his rich stores of moral observation, he failed disastrously, and, with a few exceptions throughout the greater part of his life, in moulding any inferior man to his mind. Dean Church, however, is equally impressive in dealing with all the sides of Bacon's mind. Not only does he make us see the weakness of the man, but his wisdom also; not only his moral fibrelessness, but his intellectual stamina; not only the too exclusively physical bent of his speculative genius, but the spiritual grandeur of the horizon within which that speculative genius for physical science displayed itself.

The only remark which Dean Church does not make on Bacon that is, I think, justified by the whole essay, is that there was a strange and most complete want in Bacon of the whole life of healthy impulse. As the Dean says, the essay on "Love" shows "an utter incapacity to come near the subject except as a strange external phenomenon;" and this I believe to be the root of a great deal of Bacon's singular suppleness and weakness, and of that tendency "to the Italian school of political and moral wisdom, the wisdom of distrust and of reliance on indirect and roundabout ways," on which the Dean also comments. Nothing seems to me more astonishing than that, in spite of this most notable feature of Bacon's character, so many wiseacres should have persisted in attributing Shakespeare's plays to Bacon's authorship. I do not scruple to say that the man who could have written Bacon's essay on "Love,"—unless it were as a blind,—was simply incapable of writing the least powerful of all Shakespeare's plays; and yet, if I am not very much mistaken, Bacon's

essay on "Love," though one of his weakest, is one of his most characteristic essays, and the character which gave birth to it may be seen cropping up again and again in all his other essays. The genius of Shakespeare was a genius which, while comprehending a great part of Bacon's,—not, however, his grasp of the realm of knowledge,—was as prodigal of the life of impulse, passion, and affection as of the life of intellectual vision. Bacon had none of this. His imagination, powerful as it was, played continually over the world of counsel, of diplomatic strategy, of far-sighted self-interest, but hardly entered into the warmer life of the passions at all. It is obvious, for instance, that he had no combativeness, little vindictiveness, little of the soldier's spirit, whether good or bad. Even his great dignity of manner was all intellectual, and totally devoid of that keen sense of personal honour which makes a man feel disgrace less tolerable than death itself. Nothing shows this better than the deliberate way in which he prepares himself for doing what any man of his calibre should have smarted keenly under the sense even of being able to do. Read this private memorandum of Bacon's as to the best way of managing "My Lord of Salisbury," from whom he expected great favours:—

"'To furnish my L. of S. with ornaments for public speeches. To make him think how he should be reverenced by a Lord Chancellor, if I were; Princelike. To prepare him for matters to be handled in Council or before the King aforehand, and to show him and yield him the fruits of my care. To take notes in tables, when I attend the Council, and sometimes to move out of a memorial shewed and seen. To have particular occasions, fit and graceful and continual, to maintain private speech

with every (*sic*) the great persons, and sometimes drawing more than one together. *Ex imitatione Att.* This specially in public places, and without care or affectation. At Council table to make good my L. of Salisb. motions and speeches, and for the rest sometimes one sometimes another; chiefly his, that is most earnest and in affection. To suppress at once my speaking, with panting and labour of breath and voice. Not to fall upon the main too sudden, but to induce and intermingle speech of good fashion. To use at once upon entrance given of speech, though abrupt, to compose and draw in myself. To free myself at once from payt. (?) of formality and compliment, though with some show of carelessness, pride, and rudeness'" (pp. 110-111).

A man of Bacon's calibre could hardly have thus deliberately counselled himself, though a man of Bacon's calibre might have played the sycophant as completely, without being wholly deficient in those sharp stings of shame which so often paralyse such craft as this. Men as great as Bacon might have actually played such a part, trying hard all the time to conceal from themselves what part they were really playing; but only a man deficient in some of the chief auxiliaries of conscience, only a man never visited by those pangs by which the sense of honour keeps clean the conscience, could have paraded before himself in this deliberate fashion the base means of getting illegitimate access to Lord Salisbury's favour. Yet Bacon, who flattered Elizabeth, who flattered James, who flattered Salisbury, and flattered Buckingham, though it was perfectly obvious that he saw the evil and the weakness in all whom he thus flattered, and could point out clearly, when it was safe to do so, what that evil and weakness was, never seems to have had one flush of

shame to help him to realise how base this flattery was. So far as I can see, he regarded it only as the machinery by which to turn them to his own ends, and thought that,—if his ends were not evil in themselves,—all machinery for this purpose was perfectly justifiable, just as he afterwards defended himself for receiving bribes by saying that as the bribes had never induced him to alter the course of what he believed to be justice, he had thought it venial to receive the bribes. There was no impetuous nobility in Bacon; no healthy pride; no moral dignity; he ought not, therefore, to be judged as a man of his calibre should usually be judged, for some of the most effective of the instinctive allies of conscience seem to have been almost wholly deficient in him. He was abjectly grateful to Buckingham for getting him the Lord Chancellorship, abjectly grateful to him afterwards for interceding with the King against his deprivation, abjectly grateful to him after his own fall for getting him a pardon; and yet he knew his own infinite intellectual superiority to Buckingham as well as he knew anything, and knew that wherever they had differed he himself had been in the right, and Buckingham in the wrong. In Bacon, "the natural man" was even more exceptionally defective than "the spiritual man." Even his wonderful imagination itself never lighted up for him the world of passion and feeling. A vacuum seemed to intervene between the higher intellectual and imaginative life and the practical life of this wonderful man,—a vacuum which in ordinary persons is filled and guarded by a large company of healthy sentiments, impulses, and instincts.

Even in this admirable sketch of Bacon, the Dean of St. Paul's has done nothing better than his picture

of what Bacon did, and what he did not do, for the enlargement of knowledge,—the ideal end of Bacon's life and love. It would be impossible to describe what Bacon aimed at, and the measure of his success in achieving that aim, more comprehensively than the Dean describes it in the following fine passage :—

"It is this imaginative yet serious assertion of the vast range and possibilities of human knowledge which, as M. de Rémusat remarks, the keenest and fairest of Bacon's judges, gives Bacon his claim to the undefinable but very real character of greatness. Two men stand out, 'the masters of those who know,' without equals up to their time, among men—the Greek Aristotle and the Englishman Bacon. They agree in the universality and comprehensiveness of their conception of human knowledge; and they were absolutely alone in their serious practical ambition to work out this conception. In the separate departments of thought, of investigation, of art, each is left far behind by numbers of men, who in these separate departments have gone far deeper than they, have soared higher, have been more successful in what they attempted. But Aristotle first, and for his time more successfully, and Bacon after him, ventured on the daring enterprise of 'taking all knowledge for their province;' and in this they stood alone. This present scene of man's existence, this that we call nature, the stage on which mortal life begins and goes on and ends, the faculties with which man is equipped to act, to enjoy, to create, to hold his way amid or against the circumstances and forces round him—this is what each wants to know, as thoroughly and really as can be. It is not to reduce things to a theory or a system that they look around them on the place where they find themselves with life and thought and power: that were easily done, and has been done over and over again, only to prove its

futility. It is to know, as to the whole and its parts, as men understand *knowing* in some one subject of successful handling, whether art, or science, or practical craft. This idea, this effort, distinguishes these two men. . . . We shall never again see an Aristotle or a Bacon, because the conditions of knowledge have altered. Bacon, like Aristotle, belonged to an age of adventure, which went to sea little knowing whither it went, and ill furnished with knowledge and instruments. He entered with a vast and vague scheme of discovery on these unknown seas and new worlds, which to us are familiar and daily traversed in every direction. This new world of knowledge has turned out in many ways very different from what Aristotle or Bacon supposed, and has been conquered by implements and weapons very different in precision and power from what they purposed to rely on. But the combination of patient and careful industry, with the courage and divination of genius, in doing what none had done before, makes it equally stupid and idle to impeach their greatness."

And again, as regards Bacon's comparatively poor analysis of the mind itself, and yet splendid treatment of the various weaknesses and prepossessions by which the mind stands, as it were, in its own way, and interferes with the clearness and efficiency of its own vision,—the "idols," as he called them, of our social and individual life,—what could be better than what Dean Church tells us in the following beautiful passage?—

"Bacon has been charged with bringing philosophy down from the heights, not as of old to make men know themselves, and to be the teacher of the highest form of truth, but to be the purveyor of material utility. It contemplates only, it is said, the '*commoda vitæ*;' about the deeper and more elevating problems of thought it does

not trouble itself. It concerns itself only about external and sensible nature, about what is 'of the earth, earthy.' But when it comes to the questions which have attracted the keenest and hardiest thinkers, the question, what it is that thinks and wills, — what is the origin and guarantee of the faculties by which men know anything at all and form rational and true conceptions about nature and themselves, whence it is that reason draws its powers and materials and rules—what is the meaning of words which all use but few can explain—Time and Space, and Being and Cause, and consciousness and choice, and the moral law—Bacon is content with a loose and superficial treatment of them. Bacon certainly was not a metaphysician, nor an exact and lucid reasoner. With wonderful flashes of sure intuition or happy anticipation, his mind was deficient in the powers which deal with the deeper problems of thought, just as it was deficient in the mathematical faculty. The subtlety, the intuition, the penetration, the severe precision, even the force of imagination, which make a man a great thinker on any abstract subject, were not his; the interest of questions which had interested metaphysicians had no interest for him: he distrusted and undervalued them. When he touches the 'ultimities' of knowledge he is as obscure and hard to be understood as any of those restless Southern Italians of his own age, who shared with him the ambition of reconstructing science. Certainly the science which most interested Bacon, the science which he found, as he thought, in so desperate a condition, and to which he gave so great an impulse, was physical science. But physical science may be looked at and pursued in different ways, in different tempers, with different objects. It may be followed in the spirit of Newton, of Boyle, of Herschel, of Faraday; or with a confined and low horizon it may be dwarfed and shrivelled into a mean utilitarianism. But Bacon's horizon was not a narrow one. He believed in God, and immortality, and the Christian creed and hope. To him the restoration

of the Reign of Man was a noble enterprise, because man was so great and belonged to so great an order of things, because the things which he was bid to search into with honesty and truthfulness were the works and laws of God, because it was so shameful and so miserable that from an ignorance which industry and good sense could remedy, the tribes of mankind passed their days in self-imposed darkness and helplessness. It was God's appointment that men should go through this earthly stage of their being. Each stage of man's mysterious existence had to be dealt with, not according to his own fancies, but according to the conditions imposed on it; and it was one of man's first duties to arrange for his stay on earth according to the real laws which he could find out if he only sought for them. Doubtless it was one of Bacon's highest hopes that from the growth of true knowledge would follow in surprising ways the relief of man's estate; this, as an end, runs through all his yearning after a fuller and surer method of interpreting nature. The desire to be a great benefactor, the spirit of sympathy and pity for mankind, reign through this portion of his work—pity for confidence so greatly abused by the teachers of man, pity for ignorance which might be dispelled, pity for pain and misery which might be relieved. In the quaint but beautiful picture of courtesy, kindness, and wisdom, which he imagines in the *New Atlantis*, the representative of true philosophy, the 'Father of Solomon's House,' is introduced as one who 'had an aspect as if he pitied men.' But unless it is utilitarianism to be keenly alive to the needs and pains of life, and to be eager and busy to lighten and assuage them, Bacon's philosophy was not utilitarian. It may deserve many reproaches, but not this one."

Or once more, who can say anything of the style of Bacon's Essays that is more perfectly descriptive of it than this?—

"These short papers say what they have to say without preface, and in literary undress, without a superfluous word, without the joints and bands of structure; they say it in brief, rapid sentences, which come down, sentence after sentence, like the strokes of a great hammer. No wonder that in their disdainful brevity they seem rugged and abrupt, 'and do not seem to end, but fall.' But with their truth and piercingness and delicacy of observation, their roughness gives a kind of flavour which no elaboration could give."

Dean Church, though he deals justly, deals tenderly with Bacon. He makes us see the richness, the grandeur, the astonishing elasticity of his genius; he makes us see the remarkable suppleness and want of manliness about him, which probably sowed distrust in Elizabeth, in Burghley and Cecil, and which, if it did not sow distrust in James, did not do so only because he had the same defect himself; he makes us see the curious *innocence*, I had almost said, of Bacon's meanest actions; the unconsciousness with which he deliberately sets himself to the work of adulation; the bland self-approbation with which he takes bribes and assures himself that they do not make him swerve from what is just; the *naïveté* with which he writes to Buckingham that in the proceedings before the Star Chamber against Suffolk, the Lord Treasurer, "he had taken care that the evidence went well." Bacon's own words were—"I will not say I sometimes holp it, as far as was fit for a judge," and he tells us how, "a little to warm the business, I spake a word, that he that did draw or milk treasure from Ireland, did not *emulgere*, milk money, but blood." In fact, if the Dean shows us clearly how mean Bacon was, he shows us equally clearly that he was mean from a sort of moral impotence to

feel how mean he was, not from deliberately sinning against the light. And he does full justice to the strangely transient but evidently genuine piety of Bacon's self-humiliation.

The book is a perfect model of what such a book should be, and the charm of its style is at least as great as the terseness and closeness of its matter. It is the most perfect and the most final summing-up of the verdict of posterity on a great man, after counsel on both sides have been fully heard, with which I am acquainted.

XXII

DEAN CHURCH ON THE PSALMS

1885

In that remarkable series of sermons which the Dean of St. Paul's preached in his own Cathedral during the month of August, the most remarkable perhaps was the one on "The Psalms and the Prophets." "Surely," he said, in introducing the subject of the sermon, "there is nothing more wonderful in the religious history of our race, than the interval between the Book of Judges and the Book of Psalms. In Judges we have the picture of a society lost in rebellion and apostasy, of a coarse and stiff-necked people whom the law had not curbed even to an outward obedience, whom no deliverances could bring to a better mind. It closes in shame and desolation and blood, which Saul's troubled and disastrous kingdom could not repair. That is the history; and then we come to the Book of Psalms, not yet, of course, in its earliest portions, all that it was to be, but still even in its earliest portions marked with that special character which gained for the whole collection the name of the Psalms of David. In the Book of Psalms, the religious affections are full-grown; it was the highest expression

of them that the world was to see. The profoundest religious thinkers have met there what they feel after. The highest saint cannot soar higher to the eternal throne of justice and love. And where were the foundations of this laid? Where did they come from? Songs of triumph like those of Miriam and Deborah, prophecies like those of Balaam, lyrical retrospects like the 'Song of Moses,' thanksgivings like Hannah's, or laments like David's over Saul and Jonathan." Perhaps the Dean overlooked in that enumeration that wonderful early lyric, Jacob's dream. Nothing suggests so powerfully the germ of the attitude of mind which the Psalms developed, as the account of the dream in which a ladder is seen uniting heaven and earth, and from which Jacob awakes to say,—"Surely the Lord was in this place and I knew it not. How dreadful is this place. This is none other but the house of God: this is the gate of heaven." Certainly the religious affections are not "full-grown" there. But the attitude of mind is there in that first tremulous sense of the reality of the inward communion with God, of which the "full-grown" affections of the Book of Psalms are the natural maturity. For, as the Dean says most truly, "in the Psalms the soul turns inward on itself, and their great feature is that they are the expression of a large spiritual experience. They come straight from "the heart within the heart," and the secret depths of the spirit. "Where," he asks, "in those rough cruel days, did they come from, those piercing, lightning-like gleams of strange, spiritual truth, those magnificent outlooks over the kingdom of God, those raptures at His presence and His glory, those wonderful disclosures of self-knowledge, those pure outpourings of the love of God?"

They came partly, I think, from the recoil which those "rough and cruel days" produced, but from a recoil which had only become feasible after the soul had learnt that there was an escape from the outer world possible, that there was truly "a refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble," in which the soul of man could take sanctuary, "though the earth do change, though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea." The most passionate utterance of the religious life has always, and not unnaturally, resulted from the cruelty and violence of a sensual world. Indeed, the problem which the Dean put so powerfully before us,—the problem how it was possible in such an age as that of the Kings of Israel to anticipate the most spiritual feelings of the most spiritual ages of the world,—of those ages which saw even the life of the Redeemer, and of those which rehearsed with the fondest minuteness every trace of that life left to them,—finds, perhaps, the best solution we can give it in the fact that in that early age the spirit of man was not, in its most religious moments, distracted from God either by the intellectual yearnings or by the human sympathies which crowded out its religious life afterwards, and which so often crowd it out still. It is remarkable enough that the passion of tenderness to man, which the Dean observes as appearing almost for the first time in the later Isaiah,—if the assumption that there were two prophets thus designated may be granted,—is hardly visible at all in the Book of Psalms. The deep and passionate sense of the love of God for man,—of his wonderful and almost inexplicable love for such a creature as man,—is in the Book of Psalms from beginning to end. But there is very little indeed of the feeling

that man ought to love, even if only for God's sake, a creature whom God loves so tenderly. The burden of the Psalms is the wonderful goodness of God; the burden of the later Isaiah is more and more the reflection of that goodness in the love of man; and the reason, I take it, why, after the time of Christ, the religious thinkers of genius, like St. Augustine, and the author of the *Imitatio Christi*, wrote in a style that recommends itself even to the Positivists of to-day,—thinkers who eliminate the central idea, the person of God, from their meditations,—is that, in these religious writers the love of God becomes so inextricably identified with the love of man, that it is easy even for those who place an idealised humanity in the vacant Heavens, to substitute for the purely religious vein of thought, the closely allied philanthropic vein on which alone they care to dwell.

Now, it seems to me that a great deal of the wonderful beauty of the Book of Psalms consists in the fact that this time had not yet come. The religious heart was in those days alone with God, in a sense in which it has never been alone since. The lesson which St. John enforces, and which it was most easy for those to enforce in whom a single human love had concentrated at once all that they counted most real in their whole life, human or divine,—"He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?"—was a lesson quite foreign to the minds of the greater number of the Psalmists. The authors of these wonderful poems certainly found it much easier to love God than to love man, and their only theme of perpetual wonder was how it had been possible for God himself to love man.

"What is man that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that thou visitest him?" was the frequent burden of their grateful wonder. The heart which could say,—"Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison of thee; my flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever," was certainly not distracted from God by the crowding confusions and bitter cries of human misery.

No one could read the Dean of St. Paul's wonderful sermon on the Psalms and the Prophets, without being at first staggered by the thought,—Is there in the modern world, in spite of the Christian teaching of near two thousand years, anything to compare in depth, and freshness, and reality of religious feeling, with the religious feeling of the Psalms? I am disposed to think that there is not. But I do not think that it is so staggering a thought as it at first appears, and just for this reason, that in the education of the human race there have been so many strands of new purpose introduced since the age of the Psalmists, that it is hardly possible to conceive that the pure leaven of religious feeling, as it presents itself where there is no distracting conflict between it and a multitude of other obligations and ties, should have leavened as yet the whole lump of humanity such as in this century we find it. The mere intellectual problems with which the world has been occupied since the religious education of the heart was presented in its completest form, have been distracting enough, for it is difficult to exaggerate the magnitude of the claims they have made on the attention of men, and the magnitude of the interests they have added to the

secular life of men. The development of science and philosphy alone in the last two hundred years will undoubtedly account for a great diversion of energy from the religious life to the life of the intellect; and no one can deny that the development of science and philosophy is a part of the divine purpose for man, not less truly, though in a much more subordinate sense, than the development of his religious life. Again, the development of science is as nothing compared with the developmemt of the passion of pity for man as man, which is a very different thing indeed from the pity for man as a creature of God; and in our own day we see that this last growth has been the cause of a much more temporary but a much more serious diversion of energy from the religious life, than even the rapid growth of intellectual and physical science. I think that the development of the passion of pity for man as man, has caused a much more temporary, though a much more serious, diversion of energy from the field of the invisible to the field of the visible universe, than the abnormal growth of man's intellectual life, for while the latter at present shows no signs of leading us directly back to God, the former,—the immense growth of the passion of pity for man as man,—does, I think, show very definite signs that it will break down all the natural barriers and constitutional limits under the restraints of which alone the nature of man can thrive, unless it brings us back,—as it will bring us back,—to the much deeper and truer and wiser pity which is felt for man as the object of God's love. The great series of electric storms through which Europe has been passing ever since the occurrence of that wonderful outbreak of feeling for "liberty, fraternity, and

equality," which we call the French Revolution, have proved how easy it is for the passion of pity to overreach itself, and to end in something like the fierce cruelty of the present Anarchist movement. It is the same with milder outbreaks of the same feeling when they ignore the sobering influence of religion. They all appear to end in excitements which overstrain the heart of man, and result in consequences the very opposite of those expected when the great wave of feeling was first set in motion. But who can wonder that with so much new experience of all kinds,—intellectual, moral, sympathetic,—to be assimilated, the religious life of man should not now be as fresh and vivid as it was at the time when almost the sole object of the divine training was the implanting of that religious life? Meanwhile, the Book of Psalms remains to show us the centre from which our spiritual life was first developed, and the centre to which it must return, after it has conquered all these distracting influences of intellect and emotion, and reduced them to acknowledge its humbling and sobering and spiritualising sway.

XXIII

DEAN CHURCH

1890

ONE after another, the great men of our Church disappear, and their places are not filled. Within a single year, the Bishop of Durham, Canon Liddon, and Dean Church have all passed away, and we hardly know to which of the three the Church has owed the most. Bishop Lightfoot was by far the most learned and sagacious Englishman amongst the historical critics of the New Testament and of the apostolic Fathers; Canon Liddon was our most eloquent and stately preacher; Dean Church, our wisest and most accomplished man. In some respects, the last loss is the heaviest of the three. The late Bishop of Durham had a mind and judgment as massive as they were simple, but the field of his deepest interests was rather narrowly limited; Canon Liddon was as fascinating as he was eloquent, but his mind was saturated with the magic and music of the ecclesiastical past, rather than with the most urgent problems of the present; the scholarship of the Dean of St. Paul's was the scholarship of modern literary insight: he lived in the present, not in the past; his wisdom was as large as it was

spiritual. It was not for nothing that he had been one of Newman's most discriminating disciples and most intimate friends. A good deal of that luminous and delicate sympathy which made of the late Cardinal's nature a burnished mirror in which all the combinations and permutations of human motive were vividly reflected, was visible in Dean Church, who, though he never submitted his mind to that dominant ecclesiastical conception of Christianity which runs through Newman's, yet showed in every one of his fine literary studies, and almost every page of his equally subduing and exalting sermons, the deep impress of Newman's early teaching. Take up, for instance, his volume on *The Gifts of Civilisation*, and one cannot read a page without being reminded of Newman, not, indeed, by anything of either conscious or unconscious imitation, but simply by the depth of the Christian feeling, the lucidity of the vision, the precision of the thought, the delicacy of the detail, and the candour of the exposition. Yet there was something more of the critic and the statesman in Dean Church than in Cardinal Newman, while there was more of the Christian enthusiast in the latter than in the former. The Dean of St. Paul's was too much of a critic to doubt for a moment that the inspiration of the Bible and of the Church is closely interwoven with all those human elements of personal bias and limitation which we never find so characteristically developed as we do when they are brought out by the stimulus of the Divine Spirit; and he was too much of a historian to accept Cardinal Newman's strong impression of the permanent presence amongst men of some infallible *human* authority to which all human intellects are subject, and by which

they should be subjugated. The Dean believed profoundly in the Providence which guided the development of Christian thought and Christian doctrine, but he believed in it as a power which overrules its errors, instead of keeping it free from all error. He believed in the divine trust committed to the Church, but he believed in it as a trust that was often partially betrayed, and withdrawn when it had been betrayed by human faithlessness, and that was renewed again only in proportion to human fidelity. In truth, the Dean of St. Paul's had the fine historical sense of modern scholarship far more fully developed in him than it was in his great Oxford teacher, though he had no doubt a less subtle insight into the paradoxes of the human heart. He sympathised heartily with the spirit of what is called the High-Church movement, so far as it made war on the worldliness of the old high-and-dry Church on the one side, and on the spasmodic and purely emotional aspects of Evangelical revivalism on the other side. He never ceased to insist that the comprehension of the Anglican Church ought to include in the largest sense those who pushed the sacramental teaching of the Church to its extreme limits, at least as definitely as those who minimised and made light of that teaching. But the Dean of St. Paul's understood the ecclesiastical spirit too well ever to idolise it. He was a great student of Dante, and had learnt in that school to appreciate all the narrowness and bigotry, as well as all the grandeur and majesty of the mediæval Church. Nothing, perhaps, impressed him so much as the power of recovery which has been manifested in the Christian Church after her worst falls,—falls so great, that limited

human beings may be excused for having supposed that the Divine Spirit had left the Church altogether. And he regarded the High-Church movement in England as, in spite of its occasional wanderings from perfect sanity, one of the greatest evidences of that power of recovery. He judged it by its fruits, and little as he sympathised with what we may call the strait-laced sacerdotalism which sometimes seemed to predominate in it, he held that more than any other movement of these latter days, it had restored to England the true sacramental conception of life, — the conception which treats the whole of life as something to be transformed, and, if you please, even transubstantiated, by the spirit of divine grace into a perfect expression of the character of Christ. He had his own idea of the "development" of Christian institutions, and one which differed, on the whole, widely from Dr. Newman's. It is described most adequately in his volume on *The Gifts of Civilisation*. He admitted in full that primitive Christianity compelled men to separate themselves from a world with which at that time they could not be on good terms without being corrupted, without contaminating or deserting the life in God. He admitted, therefore, the applicability of semi-monastic ideas to the early life of the Church, and saw that they had saved Christian institutions from being utterly drowned in the world. "But as soon as the first great shock was over which accompanied a Gospel of which the centre was the Cross and Resurrection, it became plain that the mission of the Church was not to remain outside of and apart from society, but absorb it, and act on it in endless ways; that Christianity was calculated and intended for even a

wider purpose than had been prominently disclosed at first; that in more refined and extended ways than any one then imagined, it was to make natural human society, obstinate and refractory as it was, own its sway, and yield to an influence working slowly, but working inexhaustibly, over long tracts of time, not for generations but centuries. Then was made clear the full meaning of such sayings as those of the net gathering of every kind, and the great house with many vessels. May it not be said that our Lord has done to human society,—even that society which is for this world, and which in so many of its principles and influences is so deeply hostile to His spirit, — what He did among men on earth? He came to widen man's prospects of thought and hope to another world. And yet His great employment here was healing their bodies and comforting their present sufferings; comforting sorrows that must soon be again, healing sicknesses which were to come back worse, restoring to life bodies which were again to die. He is now above 'giving gifts to men;' and now, as then, the great ends of His religion are the things of God and the soul. But as then He healed their bodies when He sought their souls, so He has taken possession of that world which is to pass away. He has sanctified, He has in many respects transformed that society which is only for this time and life; and while calling and guiding souls one by one to the Father, He has made His gracious influence felt where it could be least expected. Even war and riches, even the Babel life of our great cities, even the high places of ambition and earthly honour, have been touched by His spirit, have found how to be Christian."

That passage contains one of the leading lines of thought in which Dean Church diverged from Newman. He held that the development of Christianity meant something more than Newman held it to mean, as well as something less,—more in the direction of the assimilation and transformation of secular society, less in the direction of a separate ecclesiastical organisation of providential securities against sin and error. Indeed, the Dean of St. Paul's had the true historical mind. His essay on Early Ottoman history contains, as much better judges than I am think, one of the most remarkable indications of high historical imagination which the literature of the present day has produced. His essays on St. Anselm and on Bacon are as full of historical as of literary insight, and for the appreciation of Dante and the Dante period, there was no English scholar to compare with him. Dr. Church had, indeed, in treating political subjects, the advantage of a considerable intimacy with foreign countries, which secured him against all the limitations of purely English ideas. His father lived long both in Portugal and in Italy. His uncle was the great Greek General who conducted the War of Independence to its successful conclusion; and to the Dean himself Italy was almost like a second country. Of that somewhat narrow Anglicanism which was not uncommon amongst the Puseyite party, the Dean of St. Paul's was never in any danger. And he had so much of the historian in him, that if he had given himself up to history, no writer of the present day would have surpassed him in grasp, as well as in nicety of perception. And he had much in him, too, of the breadth of the true statesman.

Yet his Quaker ancestry, — both his paternal grandfather and grandmother were Quakers, — had left on him a certain stamp of stillness and tranquillity, what the Roman Catholics call "recollectedness;" and so far as his literary achievements were concerned, he was almost too destitute of ambition. I do not mean that his character did not gain by its absence, but that he would have probably effected more if that sharp spur to human energy had pricked him on to exertion. Mr. Gladstone had the hardest task possible in persuading him to accept the Deanery of St. Paul's, for Dr. Church's ideal of life was the quiet life of his Somersetshire parish. Had the family remained Quakers, the Dean might, indeed, have been almost a Quietist, so averse to anything like the fume and fret of the world were his temperament and his deliberate choice. At the same time, he was a strong man, singularly tenacious when he had once made up his mind, and endowed with the great gift of knowing when he had the data for making up his mind, and when he had not. He was, I think, the strongest man amongst the ecclesiastical section with which he usually acted, and it was the spiritual clearness and depth, as well as the singular humility of his character, that gave him his strength. He was one of those in whom the prophetic saying is verified: "In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength."

XXIV

DEAN CHURCH'S "OXFORD MOVEMENT"[1]

1891

THOSE who did not know the late Dean of St. Paul's, perhaps the ripest scholar among our Oxford divines, certainly the most accomplished man of letters, with a large share of Cardinal Newman's perfect delicacy and simplicity of style, and an independence of thought of his own that rendered it impossible for him to follow Newman to Rome, deeply as he had entered into his genius and sympathised with the ardour of his spiritual purposes, will find in this book something as near to a literary transcript of his mind as it is often given to men to embody in their writing. No book so vivid and so truthful on the Oxford Movement has been written, or, I strongly suspect, ever will be written in the future; for the men who personally knew what it was, are rapidly passing away, and among those that remain there is probably not one possessed at once of the late Dean of St. Paul's knowledge of its leading men, and of anything like his literary genius. Dean Church

[1] *The Oxford Movement: Twelve Years*, 1833-1845. By R. W. Church, M.A., D.C.L., sometime Dean of St. Paul's and Fellow of Oriel College, Oxford. London: Macmillan and Co.

was, of course, one of the younger generation of Tractarians. He did not go to Oxford at all till 1833, taking his degree in 1836, so that he was an undergraduate during all the early part of the Oxford movement. He was never personally acquainted with Richard Hurrell Froude, to whom, as every one admits, the Oxford movement owed so much of its impetuous force and intensity of purpose. But he was in its later stages very intimate with Cardinal Newman, and he was one of the Proctors who in 1841 vetoed the condemnation of Tract 90. He was much at Littlemore with Dr. Newman during what the latter called his Anglican death-bed period, and he was familiar with Charles Marriott, with W. J. Copeland, with Isaac Williams, with W. G. Ward, and entered with deep interest into the Hampden controversies and all the various complications of the Tractarian controversy in all but its earliest stage. Add to this that his mind had much of the inflexible reality, and his religious feeling much of the lustre, simplicity, and depth which lend so great a charm to Newman's sermons, and that this book gives full expression to these rare qualities, and we have a group of qualifications which it is very unlikely that any future chronicler of those vivid twelve years of Oxford life will ever possess in a combination so unique.

Nothing can be more perfect than the sketch of Keble, in whom, by the consent of all, the Oxford movement had its origin, though it was not from Keble that it took its main supply of force, but from Hurrell Froude and Newman. Keble was too much of the shy, retiring poet to set any great movement afoot; but it was his singular reality and disinterestedness, his humility and his ardent devotion, which kindled

first Froude and then Newman (through Froude) into life:—"Mr. Keble had not many friends and was no party chief. He was a brilliant university scholar overlaying the plain, unworldly country parson; an old-fashioned English Churchman, with great veneration for the Church and its bishops, and a great dislike of Rome, Dissent, and Methodism, but with a quick heart; with a frank, gay humility of soul, with great contempt of appearances, great enjoyment of nature, great unselfishness, strict and severe principles of morals and duty." Yet Keble had plenty of vividness of a kind. He was pronounced by his own servant, at the time he was reading with Hurrell Froude, Isaac Williams, and Robert Wilberforce, to be "the greatest boy of them all." Yet he did not scruple to make the intensity of his own religious convictions tell on his pupils. A characteristic story is told by Dean Church of one of the sayings by which Keble most impressed Hurrell Froude:—"'Froude told me many years after,' writes one of his friends, 'that Keble once, before parting with him, seemed to have something on his mind which he wished to say, but shrank from saying, while waiting, I think, for a coach. At last he said, just before parting, "Froude, you thought Law's *Serious Call* was a clever book; it seemed to me as if you had said the Day of Judgment will be a pretty sight." This speech, Froude told me, had a great effect on his after life.'" It was from Keble that Newman contracted his great dread of anything like excitement and fanaticism, and it was from Keble that the Oxford movement contracted its profound dislike of the theatrical elements of the Roman Catholicism of the South. In men like Isaac Williams, this element of the movement dominated

its whole course, and Dean Church tells us how sensitive Isaac Williams, in spite of his devotion to Newman, was to something in Newman which appeared to warn him of a less sober and reserved element in Newman's character threatening an issue in something less moderate than Anglican divinity :—

"Froude was now residing in Oxford, and had become Newman's most intimate friend, and he brought Newman and Williams together. 'Living at that time,' he says, 'so much with Froude, I was now in consequence for the first time brought into intercourse with Newman. We almost daily walked and often dined together.' Newman and Froude had ceased to be tutors ; their thoughts were turned to theology and the condition of the Church. Newman had definitely broken with the Evangelicals, to whom he had been supposed to belong, and Whately's influence over him was waning, and with Froude he looked up to Keble as the pattern of religious wisdom. He had accepted the position of a Churchman as it was understood by Keble and Froude ; and thus there was nothing to hinder Williams's full sympathy with him. But from the first there seems to have been an almost impalpable bar between them, which is the more remarkable because Williams appears to have seen with equanimity Froude's apparently more violent and dangerous outbreaks of paradox and antipathy. Possibly, after the catastrophe, he may, in looking back, have exaggerated his early alarms. But from the first he says he saw in Newman what he had learned to look upon as the gravest of dangers—the preponderance of intellect among the elements of character and as the guide of life. 'I was greatly delighted and charmed with Newman, who was extremely kind to me, but did not altogether trust his opinions ; and though Froude was in the habit of stating things in an extreme and paradoxical manner, yet one always felt conscious of a ground of entire confidence and

agreement; but it was not so with Newman, even though one appeared more in unison with his more moderate views.' But, in spite of all this, Newman offered, and Isaac Williams accepted the curacy of St. Mary's. 'Things at Oxford [1830-32] at that time were very dull. 'Froude and I seemed entirely alone, with Newman only secretly, as it were, beginning to sympathise. I became at once very much attached to Newman, won by his kindness and delighted by his good and wonderful qualities; and he proposed that I should be his curate at St. Mary's. . . . I can remember a strong feeling of difference I first felt on acting together with him from what I had been accustomed to: that he was in the habit of looking for effect, and for what was sensibly effective, which from the Bisley and Fairford School I had been long habituated to avoid; but to do one's duty in faith and leave it to God, and that all the more earnestly, because there were no sympathies from without to answer. There was a felt but unexpressed difference of this kind, but perhaps it became afterwards harmonised as we acted together.' Thus early, among those most closely united, there appeared the beginnings of those different currents which became so divergent as time went on. Isaac Williams, dear as he was to Newman, and returning to the full Newman's affection, yet represented from the first the views of what Williams spoke of as the 'Bisley and Fairford School,' which, though sympathising and co-operating with the movement, was never quite easy about it, and was not sparing of its criticism on the stir and agitation of the Tracts."

Though the Dean of St. Paul's did not personally know Froude, who died in 1836, he has gathered from Cardinal Newman, and Froude's other intimate friends, a singularly impressive conception of his character. I have seldom met with a more powerful sketch of eager and melancholy ideal passion than is

contained in the chapter on the leader whose early death left the Oxford movement in Newman's hands. The following remarkable passage contains but a fragment of the study, but it is the fragment which will best bear quotation :—

"There was yet another side of Froude's character which was little thought of by his critics, or recognised by all his friends. With all his keenness of judgment and all his readiness for conflict, some who knew him best were impressed by the melancholy which hung over his life, and which, though he ignored it, they could detect. It is remembered still by Cardinal Newman. 'I thought,' wrote Mr. Isaac Williams, 'that knowing him, I better understood Hamlet, a person most natural, but so original as to be unlike any one else, hiding depth of delicate thought in apparent extravagances. *Hamlet*, and the *Georgics* of Virgil, he used to say, he should have bound together.' 'Isaac Williams,' wrote Mr. Copeland, 'mentioned to me a remark made on Froude by S. Wilberforce in his early days: "They talk of Froude's fun, but somehow I cannot be in a room with him alone for ten minutes without feeling so intensely melancholy, that I do not know what to do with myself. At Brighstone, in my Eden days, he was with me, and I was overwhelmed with the deep sense which possessed him of yearning which nothing could satisfy, and of the unsatisfying nature of all things."' Froude often reminds us of Pascal. Both had that peculiarly bright, brilliant, sharp-cutting intellect which passes with ease through the coverings and disguises which veil realities from men. Both had mathematical powers of unusual originality and clearness ; both had the same imaginative faculty ; both had the same keen interest in practical problems of science ; both felt and followed the attraction of deeper and more awful interests. Both had the same love of beauty ; both suppressed it. Both had the same want of

wide or deep learning; they made skilful use of what books came to their hand, and used their reading as few readers are able to use it; but their real instrument of work was their own quick and strong insight, and power of close and vigorous reasoning. Both had the greatest contempt for fashionable and hollow 'shadows of religion.' Both had the same definite, unflinching judgment. Both used the same clear and direct language. Both had a certain grim delight in the irony with which they pursued their opponents. In both it is probable that their unmeasured and unsparing criticism recoiled on the cause which they had at heart. But in the case of both of them it was not the temper of the satirist, it was no mere love of attacking what was vulnerable, and indulgence in the cruel pleasure of stinging and putting to shame, which inspired them. Their souls were moved by the dishonour done to religion, by public evils and public dangers. Both of them died young, before their work was done. They placed before themselves the loftiest and most unselfish objects, the restoration of truth and goodness in the Church, and to that they gave their life and all that they had. And what they called on others to be they were themselves. They were alike in the sternness, the reality, the perseverance, almost unintelligible in its methods to ordinary men, of their moral and spiritual self-discipline."

It adds no little interest and significance to this remarkable book that Dr. Church knew the Oxford of the last years of the third decade, and of the first years of the fourth decade of this century, with an intimacy that gives a singular freshness to his sketch of the academic side of the movement. University towns are always cliquish, and these cliques greatly injure them as places of intellectual study. But the Oxford of 1833-1845, though it had its cliques, even as the Oxford of to-day has its cliques, was an Oxford

of larger conflicts and more significant divisions than those which now divide Oxford Socialists and Radicals from Oxford Conservatives, Oxford theologians from Oxford rationalists, Oxford æsthetes from Oxford economists. It is definitely easier to conceive the whole course of the Oxford movement after one has read Dean Church's very striking ninth chapter, headed "Dr. Hampden," than it ever was before for those who had not lived in that vortex of eager controversy :—

"Oxford stood by itself in its meadows by the rivers, having its relations with all England, but, like its sister at Cambridge, living a life of its own, unlike that of any other spot in England, with its privileged powers, and exemptions from the general law, with its special mode of government and police, its usages and tastes and traditions, and even costume, which the rest of England looked at from the outside, much interested but much puzzled, or knew only by transient visits. And Oxford was as proud and jealous of its own ways as Athens or Florence ; and like them it had its quaint fashions of polity ; its democratic Convocation and its oligarchy ; its social ranks ; its discipline, severe in theory and usually lax in fact ; its self-governed bodies and corporations within itself ; its faculties and colleges, like the guilds and 'arts' of Florence ; its internal rivalries and discords ; its 'sets' and factions. Like these, too, it professed a special recognition of the supremacy of religion ; it claimed to be a home of worship and religious training, *Dominus illuminatio mea,* a claim too often falsified in the habit and tempers of life. It was a small sphere, but it was a conspicuous one ; for there was much strong and energetic character, brought out by the aims and conditions of University life ; and though moving in a separate orbit, the influence of the famous place over the outside England, though imperfectly understood, was recognised and great.

These conditions affected the character of the movement, and of the conflicts which it caused. Oxford claimed to be eminently the guardian of 'true religion and sound learning;' and therefore it was eminently the place where religion should be recalled to its purity and strength, and also the place where there ought to be the most vigilant jealousy against the perversions and corruptions of religion. Oxford was a place where every one knew his neighbour, and measured him, and was more or less friendly or repellent; where the customs of life brought men together every day and all day, in converse or discussion; and where every fresh statement or every new step taken furnished endless material for speculation or debate, in common rooms or in the afternoon walk. And for this reason, too, feelings were apt to be more keen and intense and personal than in the larger scenes of life; the man who was disliked or distrusted, was so close to his neighbours that he was more irritating than if he had been obscured by a crowd; the man who attracted confidence and kindled enthusiasm, whose voice was continually in men's ears, and whose private conversation and life was something ever new in its sympathy and charm, created in those about him not mere admiration, but passionate friendship, or unreserved discipleship. And these feelings passed from individuals into parties; the small factions of a limited area. Men struck blows and loved and hated in those days in Oxford as they hardly did on the wider stage of London politics or general religious controversy. The conflicts, which for a time turned Oxford into a kind of image of what Florence was in the days of Savonarola, with its nicknames, Puseyites, and Neomaniacs, and High and Dry, counterparts to the *Piagnoni* and *Arrabbiati*, of the older strife, began around a student of retired habits, interested more than was usual at Oxford in abstruse philosophy, and the last person who might be expected to be the occasion of great dissensions in the University."

And then follows a most interesting sketch of that most uninteresting personage who in the early days of the Oxford movement gave rise to a controversy of very much the same kind as that which Dr. Mansel's Bampton Lectures on "The Limits of Religious Thought" raised some twenty years later. Dr. Hampden's was a dry and not very powerful mind, but he was just able enough to irritate the High Church section as it was getting into the full swing of its influence; and hence the excitement which Lord Melbourne's appointment of him to the Regius Professorship of Divinity caused. It was the appointment of a religiously colourless man at a time when definite religious colour was assuming more and more importance in the centre of academic religious feeling; of a man who had no appreciation of the substantive importance of dogma, at a time when the weakness and uselessness of limp, undogmatic creeds was being more and more keenly felt; the appointment of a man who hardly knew his own mind, at a time when the cry had gone forth that in the religious controversies of the day, mere neutrality was of all forms of thought the least defensible. No wonder that the appointment gave a definite impulse to the attempt to take up high ground for the Anglican Church and Anglican divinity, and that it stimulated that feeling of estrangement between the Church and the Establishment which as much as anything else, perhaps more than anything else, led to Dr. Newman's own secession.

It is said that Dean Church's review of the attitude of the Heads of the Oxford Colleges towards the Oxford Movement is one-sided,—a review which would have been possible only to an adherent of the movement. That does not seem to me in any degree

true. The Dean recognises fully the weak points in the movement, which it would have been right and judicious for the authorities at Oxford to indicate; and he not only does not blame them for their wish to regulate it, but recognises fully the right and duty which lay upon them to check by the use of their authority anything that they thought extravagant in the tendencies of the movement of 1833. What he does find fault with the Heads of Houses for was, their denseness, their obtuseness to the high and noble elements in the characters of the leaders, their supineness while the movement was gaining ground, their panic and unfairness afterwards; and of this I think that Dean Church has certainly not said too much; perhaps he has hardly said enough. Nothing that the Dean writes bears hardly on the anxiety and regret with which the Heads observed the dangerous tendencies of the movement. What it does bear hardly on is their failure to appreciate the personal character of those who led it, their foolish and unjust charges of dishonesty and insincerity, their blank ignorance of their own theologians, so far as the great Anglican divines of the seventeenth century could be called their own, when they hardly knew anything about them; in a word, their indolence in mastering the meaning of the movement, and their intolerant and irritating way of treating it, when at last it alarmed them:—

"It behoved the heads of the University to be cautious, even to be suspicious; movements might be hollow or dangerous things. But it behoved them also to become acquainted with so striking a phenomenon as this; to judge it by what it appealed to—the learning of English divines, the standard of a high and generous moral rule;

to recognise its aims at least, with equity and sympathy, if some of its methods and arguments seemed questionable. The men of the movement were not mere hostile innovators; they were fighting for what the University and its chiefs held dear and sacred, the privileges and safety of the Church. It was the natural part of the heads of the University to act as moderators; at any rate, to have shown, with whatever reserve, that they appreciated what they needed time to judge of. But while on the one side there was burning and devouring earnestness, and that power of conviction which doubles the strength of the strong, there was on the other a serene ignoring of all that was going on, worthy of a set of dignified French *abbés* on the eve of the Revolution. This sublime or imbecile security was occasionally interrupted by bursts of irritation at some fresh piece of Tractarian oddness or audacity, or at some strange story which made its way from the gossip of common-rooms to the society of the Heads of Houses. And there was always ready a stick to beat the offenders; everything could be called Popish. But for the most part they looked on, with smiles, with jokes, sometimes with scolding. Thus the men who by their place ought to have been able to gauge and control the movement, who might have been expected to meet half-way a serious attempt to brace up the religious and moral tone of the place, so incalculably important in days confessed to be anxious ones, simply set their faces steadily to discountenance and discredit it. They were good and respectable men, living comfortably in a certain state and ease. Their lives were mostly simple compared with the standard of the outer world, though Fellows of Colleges thought them luxurious. But they were blind and dull as tea-table gossips as to what was the meaning of the movement, as to what might come of it, as to what use might be made of it by wise and just and generous recognition, and, if need be, by wise and just criticism and repression. There were points of danger in it; but

they could only see what *seemed* to be dangerous, whether it was so or not; and they multiplied these points of danger by all that was good and hopeful in it. It perplexed and annoyed them; they had not imagination nor moral elevation to take in what it aimed at; they were content with the routine which they had inherited; and, so that men read for honours and took first classes, it did not seem to them strange or a profanation that a whole mixed crowd of undergraduates should be expected to go on a certain Sunday in term, willing or unwilling, fit or unfit, to the Sacrament, and be fined if they did not appear. Doubtless we are all of us too prone to be content with the customary, and to be prejudiced against the novel, nor is this condition of things without advantage. But we must bear our condemnation if we stick to the customary too long, and so miss our signal opportunities. In their apathy, in their self-satisfied ignorance, in their dulness of apprehension and forethought, the authorities of the University let pass the great opportunity of their time. As it usually happens, when this posture of lofty ignoring what is palpable and active, and the object of everybody's thought, goes on too long, it is apt to turn into impatient dislike and bitter antipathy. The Heads of Houses drifted insensibly into this position.

That is severe, but it is not a severity directed against the theology of the Heads of Houses; it is a severity directed against their supineness, their want of discrimination, their incapacity for treating fairly men whose noble private character and aims they had had every means of studying and of knowing well. And I do not think it can be asserted that towards the total inability of the Heads of Houses in Oxford to measure and deal fairly by the leaders of the movement, Dean Church is too severe. I am inclined to think that he is even too lenient.

He says in one place that the mistake committed by the rulers of Oxford was "the mistake of upright and conscientious men" (p. 293). I should be sorry to dispute it. But it was certainly the mistake of men who, in their treatment of this particular movement, manifested neither their uprightness nor their conscientiousness. What they did manifest was their timidity, their irritability, their eagerness to smother the movement or to blow it out, when once they had persuaded themselves that it was powerful enough to be feared. They showed neither candour nor self-command in their dealings with it. They neither knew what they themselves believed on the points raised by the Tractarians, nor did they know what weighty Anglican authority there was for the line taken by those whom they were desirous to crush. Whether the Tractarians were right or wrong, or whether they were partly right and partly wrong, the authorities of the University neither knew nor cared. They only knew that they themselves were fluttered and uneasy, and intent on making as short work with the movement as possible, whether in their hurry they did justice or injustice to the vigorous and devout men whom they desired to silence. In my opinion, the late Dean of St. Paul's, far from characterising too severely the blundering and the short-sightedness of the Oxford authorities between 1840 and 1845, is eminently charitable to them. If they had had the least sagacity, courage, and candour, they would have dealt with the Tractarians far more gently, far more respectfully, and far more successfully. To my mind, the temper of the Heads is sufficiently gauged by the proposal (unfortunately, and to the great discredit of the country clergy, a successful proposal)

not only to condemn Mr. W. G. Ward's book on *The Ideal of a Christian Church*, which, if it were to be judged at all, could not but have been condemned, but to take away his degree as a punishment for writing it. There was something at once petty, farcical, and spiteful in the penalty. It was a penalty which only small men could have thought of, and only small minds could have imposed. That 569 votes should have been given in favour of that penalty, against only 511 against it, will always be to me the measure of Oxford University graduates' narrowness of mind in the year 1845.

But admirable as the sketch of the struggle and the close of the struggle between the Tractarians and the Oxford authorities is, I think Dean Church hardly does full justice to the character and strength of Mr. W. G. Ward, at least as he was known to a later generation,—and, I am inclined to think, even as he was in the later days of the Tractarian movement itself. That he exerted an unfortunate influence over Dr. Newman in those later days, I quite believe; and that there was something quaint, *outré*, and even a little provocative of laughter in his demeanour at that time, something which tended to throw a certain amount of ridicule on a movement which was otherwise altogether impressive and serious, I can well believe. But Mr. Ward was not only a man of great force and earnestness, as Dr. Church paints him, but also a man with something of ideal nobility in his character, which he showed in a great many different ways, in his extraordinary moral humility, in his complete and perfectly exceptional indifference to worldly considerations, and in his great magnanimity,—for no Tractarian of them all was so utterly incapable as he was of vindictive or even sore feeling

under bitter personal attacks. This he showed by the perfect friendliness with which he accepted the snubs he had to suffer when he was deprived of his Balliol tutorship, and afterwards of his degree. It never even occurred to him to resent what other men could not help resenting. It never occurred to him to feel grieved and hurt at the blows which he received. He "drank delight of battle with his peers" without ever wincing under a wound or being angered by a knock-down blow. And he was, moreover, keener than I think the Dean of St. Paul's gives him credit for, to perceive early, and with greater force than his colleagues, that the English Church could never embody the sacerdotal principle as the Tractarians taught it and Newman himself understood it, with anything like the coherence and consistency of Rome. The married life of the clergy is to a great extent inconsistent with it; the connection with the State is inconsistent with it; the inherited traditions as to Anglican practice are inconsistent with it. It is inconceivable that the practice of confession, which the Tractarians encouraged and many of them practised, and on which Mr. Ward insisted as essential to the production of the kind of humility at which he aimed, should be reintroduced with anything like force and efficacy into the Anglican Church; and all this he realised and gave expression to with much greater vigour and reality than any of his colleagues. Whatever the Tractarians have done to raise the tone of the Church in other respects, they have not been able to make it the thoroughgoing sacerdotal Church at which the movement appeared to aim, and which Mr. Ward at least intended with all his heart to make it. In this respect, Mr. Ward's logic stood him in good stead.

He made the Tractarian party feel, as no other member of that party made them feel, what the priestly principle which they had adopted, pushed to its full extent, really meant. This is the only point on which I am competent to form a judgment, on the late Dean of St. Paul's estimate of one of the most remarkable figures to which the Tractarian agitation gave rise.

I cannot leave this fascinating book without expressing my admiration of the last most beautiful and touching chapter, with its exquisite picture of the state of mind of those Churchmen who could neither follow Newman to Rome, nor fall back into the old attitude of contemptuous hostility towards the Roman Catholic Church. It seems to me to depict more truly than anything else known to me the real advantage gained for the English Church by making it sacramental, without making it in the highest sense sacerdotal,—in a word, by filling it with the spirit of Keble and Newman; for whatever his principles may have forced him into, Newman never was a true sacerdotalist at heart, and could not help softening and modifying to something like the tone of domestic life, the thoroughgoing sacerdotalism of his adopted Church. "The Catastrophe," as the Dean of St. Paul's termed his last chapter, is a striking and pathetic climax to a wonderfully vivid picture.

XXV

THE THEOLOGY OF "ROBERT ELSMERE"

1888

It is not very easy to summarise with any precision what it is which Mrs. Humphry Ward has intended to convey in her very interesting novel, *Robert Elsmere*, as the sum and substance of her hero's reasons for renouncing Christianity, or at least for refusing to consider it anything more than one of the many changing forms which the religious spirit of the ages has, in certain regions and for the benefit of certain races of men, assumed. It is the great disadvantage of fiction for purposes of this kind that it will not admit of anything like a coherent chain of thought and criticism, and must content itself with brief and picturesque indications of the most characteristic phases of feeling and opinion which are supposed to present themselves to the mind of some representative person. Now, the worst of *Robert Elsmere* is, that striking as are some of the characters it contains, the character of the hero is one of the least striking; nor does one feel that one has made any real acquaintance with him through all the phases of the intellectual development which led him from a passionate Christianity to a still more passionate rejection of any special right in Christianity to represent the ardent theism which he retains.

But, so far as I can understand the young clergyman's mind, I should analyse the process through which Mrs. Humphry Ward means to take him, something in this way. First, he is struck by the extraordinary incapacity of some of the noblest minds, in some of the most critical and creative ages of human history, for discriminating between what has really happened and what has been supposed to happen, for discriminating between fact and the voracious credulousness of human belief,—by the uncritical facility with which a mediæval saint, for instance, is given credit for some legendary miracle in which almost all the miraculous elements are not only unproved, but not even within the reach of evidence. Next, he finds traces of a good deal of the same vagueness of mind in the literature of the Bible, and persuades himself that testimony meant little in the Biblical literature; that what we now mean by testimony is something quite different from what it meant to the authors of the Biblical literature; and that we can only judge truly what their evidence is worth if we allow not merely something, but (I had well-nigh said) everything, for that appetite for marvel and superstition which, in his opinion, coloured all they saw, and refracted the lines of all their records. Next, it is assumed, with the calm positiveness of Matthew Arnold, that "miracles do not happen;" that science is trustworthy not only in relation to the laws it discovers, but in relation to the tendency it fosters in scientific men to assume that everything can be reduced to law without taking account of spiritual influences. Finally, Robert Elsmere has it pointed out to him that the Christian Gospels embody evidence of a belief in apocryphal books,—books which are well-nigh proved not to belong to the age to which on the face of them they profess to

belong; and hence it is argued that, so far from revealing the divine mind in the sense in which orthodox Christianity claims to reveal it, the Gospels simply present to us one of the many lovely rainbows in which the light of a divine goodness is seen refracted on the stormy rain-clouds of human error and passion. These, as far as I am capable of summarising them, are intended to be Robert Elsmere's reasons for finding it impossible to believe any longer that Christ is the Son of God in any sense different in kind from that in which every good man is a son of God, for holding that the story of his resurrection from the dead was "partly invented, partly imagined, partly ideally true," and that St. Paul was a fanatic of genius quite incompetent to sift the evidence on which alone a reasonable mind could accept the testimony he rendered concerning the resurrection of his Master.

Now, if I have at all adequately drawn out the reasons which are attributed by Mrs. Humphry Ward to her pious rationalist as his ground for rejecting Christianity, I will say that they seem to me most inadequate reasons. In the first place, though it is quite true that there have been very credulous ages in which there appear to have been no limits at all to the appetite for marvel, it is not true that "man's power of apprehending and recording what he hears and sees has grown from less to more, from weaker to stronger" at all in the same steady way in which a scientific man's power of apprehending physical truth has during the last three centuries grown from less to more, from weaker to stronger. As is remarked in one of the chapters of *Robert Elsmere*, there is far more of the modern feeling for true or false in a great deal of the Greek and Roman literature, than there is in the mediæval; and I should say without hesitation that there is far more of the simplicity and uncon-

sciousness which belong to all the most solemn testimony in the Biblical literature, than there is either in the mediæval or the post-apostolic times. The contrast between the apocryphal and the accepted Gospels is even greater than the contrast between mediæval and modern standards of history. The seriousness and simplicity of such a book as the Book of Samuel, or the historical parts of Isaiah, is a great deal more striking than that of Josephus, or Livy, or the Venerable Bede, or Mr. Froude. It is as far as possible from the truth that the power of sifting testimony has steadily grown and developed, at all in the sense in which the author means it,—*i.e.*, in the sense in which it would prove the testimony of Scripture to great groups of facts to be trivial or of no account as compared with modern testimony.

In the next place, it is evident that when Robert Elsmere assumed, as he does throughout assume, that God is in all human history, and was guiding him personally throughout his career,—through the descending as well as through the earlier ascending phases of his belief,—he assumed what it is not only beyond the reach of modern science to verify, but what those heroes of modern science, who regard scientific methods as adequate to the solution of the religious problems of the world, would positively repudiate. The whole doctrine of conscience, of right and wrong, of sin and righteousness, is in positive contradiction to the scientific law of necessary relation between cause and effect, which, if it be of universal application, excludes the possibility of right and wrong by its crushing fatalism. And besides this, science deals only with the order of the finite, while the apprehension of God is an apprehension of the infinite. If, then, the methods of modern science

are the only methods at our disposal for the criticism of religious literature, we shall certainly come to the conclusion that religious literature is one long chronicle of mythology, and has no objective truth at all. And yet the whole underlying thought of *Robert Elsmere* is that the higher conceptions of God and duty and sin, as revealed in the various religious literatures of the world, and amongst these in Christianity, are fundamentally true, and not a long tissue of unscientific fiction. I venture, then, to suggest to the author of *Robert Elsmere* that the transcendental assumptions,—and, as I believe, the profoundly true transcendental assumptions,—which run through this book, imply tests of truth quite remote from those which are suggested by those sciences of which the outcome is such a maxim as Mr. Matthew Arnold's "Miracles do not happen." If miracles do not occur,—which, in the sense in which it is generally understood, is certainly false, at all events if we are to mean by miracle what we ought to mean by it, namely, extraordinary modifications and alterations of the ordinary successions of natural phenomena due to the power exerted by spiritual will over that order,—neither do evidences occur of the control of God over human affairs even in that sense in which our author would strenuously maintain that they do.

In the third place, there is a singular confusion in the mind of the hero of this book as to the need for infallibility in the human organ of divine character and teaching, the sort of infallibility which any divine revelation to man must in his opinion be supposed to involve. He seems to think that the evidence of any human error in the Gospels, or of any local or traditional limitation in the human mind of Christ, is proof complete that God is not revealing

in it. I should have thought, on the contrary, that a divine revelation through a human medium and a human nature, is impossible without involving human error. If God can be manifested in the human nature of an infant, a child, a boy who asks questions of his elders in the Temple and is subject to his parents, and, finally, a prophet who expressly asserted that the Son did not know what the Father knew,—as all orthodox theology admits,—it is an unaccountable assumption that the human nature which was thus steeped in all the Jewish literature of the time ought not to have accepted even the erroneous critical assumptions of that literature so far as our Lord's own divine holiness did not find shortcomings in it. It is unreasonable to expect that Jesus of Nazareth should have discriminated between a prophet like Isaiah, whose prophecies belong to the time to which they are referred, and a prophet like Daniel, who is now regarded as the product of an age much later than that suggested by the author. I should as soon expect our Lord to have understood in his human intellect and rectified in his human career the astronomy of the age, as to have understood and corrected the scholarship and criticism of the age. But does it follow from this that the divine nature was not manifested in such a human nature in the only manner in which God *could* be manifested in the life of a given age and race and country,—that is, by a perfect personal fusion between the human nature whose conditions God had assumed, and the divine nature which had assumed them? The inference would be most unreasonable. The Son of God could only be manifested in Jesus of Nazareth so far as the conditions of the latter's human life admitted of the manifesta-

tion. But if that is to exclude a perfect impersonation of divine goodness, and an imperfect but still grand impersonation of divine power and foresight, why then, as it seems to me, the whole theistic conception of this book is as unsound as the scientific positivists would of course, declare it to be.

Robert Elsmere is exceedingly wroth with the habit of separating the story of Christianity from the story of other religions, and treating it on a separate basis. I should have thought that the less this was done, the more Christianity would gain by not being thus insulated. Is there any other great religion, the religion of Confucius, or the religion of Buddha, or the religion of Mahommed, which shows a steady historical development of the vision of one infinite character, gradually unfolding itself to man throughout a period of many centuries, as the Jewish and Christian religion shows it? The one feature which discriminates that religion from other religions, is that throughout the development of Judaism we see the divine righteousness gradually shaping itself in the mind of the chosen race, through the conceptions of Abraham, of Samuel, of David, of Isaiah, of Micah, of Ezekiel, and then suddenly springing into perfect life in that more than marvellous nature which no Jewish fishermen could possibly have conceived, if it had not been burned in upon their hearts in letters of fire. It seems to me that the race which was chosen to receive this great revelation, and to hand it down to the Christian Church, has presented to us a story of evolution such as nothing which Darwin conceived for us in the region of physical science could for a moment rival, and that there is none other of the great world-religions which has any such story to relate.

XXVI

CARDINAL NEWMAN

1890

THERE are deaths yet to come which will agitate the English world more than Cardinal Newman's; but there has been none, and will be none, so far as I know, that will leave the world that really knew him with so keen a sense of deprivation, of a white star extinguished, of a sign vanished, of an age impoverished, of a grace withdrawn. To many, and to many who are not Roman Catholics, it will seem the nearest approach in their own experience to what the death of the Apostle John must have been to the Church of the Fathers, when the closing words of his epistle, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols," were still ringing in their ears. Cardinal Newman was one of those who did not lean on others, but on whom others leaned. He has told us in his *Apologia* that Dr. Whately had attributed to him the ambition to be the head of a party, but he thought he had attributed it unjustly: —"My habitual feeling then and since has been, that it was not I who sought friends, but friends who sought me. Never man had kinder or more indulgent friends than I have had, but I expressed

my own feeling as to the mode in which I gained them in this very year 1829, in the course of a copy of verses. Speaking of my blessings, I said: 'Blessings of friends, which to my door *unasked*, *unhoped*, have come.' They have come, they have gone; they came to my great joy, they went to my great grief. He who gave took away." Dr. Copleston said of Newman, "Nunquam minus solus, quam cum solus,"—and that is one reason why he leaves such a blank behind him. It is always the lonely spirit on which more social natures lean. And yet Newman was quite right in saying that ambition was never his weakness. As he himself confesses, he soon lost all hold of the Tractarian movement, and found it proceeding on lines of its own without much relation to his own wish or will; nor did it evidently trouble him to find that he had lost his hold of it. He speaks of a sense of relief rather than of a sense of mortification when he found himself, after the publication of Tract 90, posted up on the buttery-hatch of every College "like a discommoned pastry-cook." He found it hard enough to make out whither he himself was going; but it was a much easier inquiry, and one less embarrassed by all sorts of moral perplexities, than it had been at the time when he felt himself more or less responsible for a whole host of other men's movements, and, indeed, for the action of a great party in the Church. He might have said of himself what he said of St. Gregory Nazianzen in his own poem (Palermo, 12th June, 1833):—

"Thou couldst a people raise, but couldst not rule:
So, gentle one,
Heaven set thee free,—for, ere thy years were full,
Thy work was done;

According thee the lot thou lovedst best,
To muse upon the past,—to serve, yet be at rest."

That was a lot which, for the last twenty years, at least, of his long life, Cardinal Newman enjoyed. Yet, though he served and was at rest, the mere knowledge that he was living in the quiet Oratory at Edgbaston helped men to realise that the spiritual world is even more real than the material world, and that in that lonely, austere, and yet gracious figure, God had made a sign to Great Britain that the great purpose of life is a purpose to which this life hardly more than introduces us.

For it is impossible to find any life in this century so singly and simply devoted to spiritual ends as Cardinal Newman's. There have been more heroic lives, more laborious lives, more apparently beneficent lives,—the lives of soldiers, martyrs, missionaries, all lived nobly in the sight of God,—but none of them at once so detached from the common human interests, and yet so natural, genial, and human as Newman's. He was not sixteen when the impression first came upon him that "it was the will of God" that he should lead a single life. "There can be no mistake," he tells us, "about the fact," and it was an anticipation, he added, which "has held its ground almost continuously ever since, with a break of a month now and a month then up to 1829, and after that date without any break at all." That admission of the breaks marks the difference between Newman and the ordinary ascetic, who would have been so possessed by the importance of the divine call to celibacy, that he would have unconsciously exaggerated its completeness and its rigour. But Newman was always human, and even when, on

his conversion to the Roman Catholic Church, he finally determined to become a religious, he chose no regular order but preferred a semi-monastic life, feeling the supreme attraction of a saint who, like St. Philip Neri, lived half in the world, and whose home was called "the home of Christian mirth," rather than of the more austere and romantic founders of great religious Orders. In fact, Cardinal Newman, though he lived a life so detached from the ordinary pleasures and cares of this world that it is hardly intelligible to an ordinary Englishman who gives his whole soul to those pleasures and cares, was altogether human. There was nothing in him of the spiritual pride and grandiosity of detachment from the world. He was detached from it in the simplest and most sensitively natural manner, as of one who was all compact of the tenderest fibres of human feeling, even though he did not permit himself to plunge into its passions and its fascinations. Yet how delicately, how truly he read human nature,—its smallness as well as its greatness; its eagerness about trifles; its love of the finest gossamer threads which connect it with its kind; its immense satisfaction in dwelling not merely on all the external incidents of life, but even on all the possible incidents which might have been but were not,—in building up in imagination the fortunes which some averted accident would have revolutionised if it had not been averted, in entering into the influences which made this or that man what he was, and might have made him richer or poorer if only some other not improbable event had occurred to modify his actual destiny; how exquisitely he depicted the stir of pleasurable emotion with which men reflect that in their youth they

knew some great personage, or heard some great speech, and with which they felicitate themselves on having been so near the focus of a considerable drama as actually to touch one of its leading figures; all this Newman represented to himself and to his hearers and readers with a vivacity which made his own detachment from the world all the more impressive, his own passionate absorption in the spiritual interests of life all the more unique and emphatic. There was no finer genius than his for understanding the gentle vividness, the happy reciprocal affections, the light play and irony and tender surprises of life. Yet when he was only thirty-two years old, he could truly write this of himself:—

> ". . . . . But Thou, dear Lord,
> Whilst I traced out bright scenes which were to come,
> Isaac's pure blessings and a verdant home,
> Didst spare me and withhold Thy fearful word;
> Wiling me year by year, till I am found
> A pilgrim pale with Paul's sad girdle bound."

Never surely was there an intellect which combined a happier and more delicate insight into the concrete side of life, with a larger and more daring grasp of its abstract truths, and of that fine and intricate middle region which connects the logic of facts with the logic of the understanding.

For Newman was very much more than a masterly thinker. There have been many more masterly thinkers of the kind which men call "systematic." But Newman perceived more vividly than any English thinker of our century the weakness of what is called systematic thought, and the faint influence exerted by any abstract system over the practical life of men. There is no religious

thinker in our country, I will not say merely of the present century, but, so far as I know, of any century, who has apprehended more clearly how various and how mixed and unrecognised by men in general, are the elements of motive and perception which go to make up practical genius, the genius for *doing* successfully what most men only try to do and wish to do. The implicit reason by which those are practically guided who succeed in what they attempt, as distinguished from the explicit theoretic reason with which they are formally furnished by those who profess to educate them and to fit them for their actual careers, had never been analysed by any English thinker as it was analysed by Newman, especially in the Oxford University Sermons; and this, indeed, was the great source of his religious influence. As he measured rightly the width of the chasm between blundering good intentions and social tact, the immense distance between practical genius and the formal theoretic teaching of which men of practical genius make so little, so he had apprehended clearly the immeasurable gulf that divides real religious motive from the formal appeals which are supposed to produce religious habits of mind. He delineates again and again the utter dreariness with which the mere mention of the word "religion" fills the heart of young people, and what is more, he knew how to charm all that dreariness away, how to fill the heart with gratitude, with devotion, with ardent zeal, with loving ambition. He knew the awakening effect of presenting to his hearers what was the actual life of the primitive Church, and asking them how far that life resembled the life of religious faith of our own day. He knew how to prick with his irony the sluggish will, how to move

with his pathos the obtuse heart, how to transfer, in short, his own reality of insight into the actual life depicted in the New Testament to those who had so accustomed themselves to hear of it without realising it, that it had lost all vivid practical meaning for them altogether. He insists in many of his University sermons on the difference between a really great General's appreciation of the facts of a campaign and the theoretic General's idea of the formal treatment of those facts, between a really practised climber's command of the various points at which he can make his way up a precipice, and the inexperienced man's futile conception of the proper way to climb it; and he himself showed just the same piercing vision into the most effective ways of moving men to be Christians, which he ascribed to the military genius in his insight into the true treatment of a campaign, or to the mountaineer in his mastery of the deftest way of scaling an apparently inaccessible rock. And he could not only do this; he could analyse the mode in which it was done. He could justify theoretically the potent implicit reason of man against the fruitless and formal explicit reason. He could show how much more powerful was the combination of humility, trust, imagination, feeling, perception in apprehending the revealed mind and will of God, than the didactic and formal proofs to which the popular religious appeals of our day usually have recourse. Never was there a bolder appeal than his to the craving of the heart for a great example, never was there a more delicate mixture of reason and imagination than his in stirring up the heart to great resolves. His practical sermons illustrated in the most powerful way what the University Sermons philosophically

analysed and justified. He was much more than a great thinker,—a great thinker who could wield that "zigzag lightning of the brain" which presses home the thought it gauges and measures.

Of Newman's literary style it is hardly possible to speak too highly. It was so pure and delicate that it fascinates even those who have least sympathy with his intellectual and moral creed. Mr. John Morley, himself master of one of the purest styles in England, spoke of it only two or three months ago as an illustration of the perfect style. Newman's English was simple, graceful, subtle, real; and it often displayed all these great qualities at once. There was passion in it, and yet there was that pleading, subdued tone which chastens and softens passion, and moulds it to all the tenderest purposes of life. Even the most bitter Protestant cannot read his appeals to men to submit to the Church without emotion:—"O long sought after, tardily found, desire of the eyes, joy of the heart, the truth after many shadows, the fulness after many foretastes, the home after many storms, come to her poor wanderers, for she it is, and she alone, who can unfold the secret of your being, and the meaning of your destiny." Still higher, for more completely free from the ring of rhetoric, is the exquisite farewell uttered to his Anglican friends, which so long anticipated the actual severance of his tie with the English Church and his conversion to the Roman Catholic Communion:—"And O my brethren, O kind and affectionate hearts, O loving friends, should you know any one whose lot it has been by writing or by word of mouth, in some degree to help you thus to act; if he has ever told you what you know about yourselves, or what you did not know; has

read to you your wants or feelings, and comforted you by the very reading; has made you feel that there was a higher life than this daily one, and a brighter world than that you see; or encouraged you, or sobered you, or opened a way to the inquiring, or soothed the perplexed; if what he has said or done has ever made you take interest in him, and feel well inclined towards him;—remember such a one in time to come, though you hear him not, and pray for him that in all things he may know God's will, and at all times may be ready to fulfil it." That is the conclusion of the sermon on "The Parting of Friends," and it will echo in the hearts of many, Catholic and Protestant, Anglican and Nonconformist, during that final earthly parting when the remains of the great Anglican, the great Catholic, the great Englishman, are committed on Tuesday to their quiet grave.

XXVII

SIR WALTER SCOTT IN ADVERSITY [1]

1890

THIS is such a book as the world has not often seen. No doubt the most impressive portions of it are not new, for Mr. Lockhart quoted freely from it in the most delightful of all biographies. But to have it without the omissions then made, and to have it in a single whole, is as different from having it as a mere factor in a fascinating biography, as to have the whole web of a skilful weaver is different from having a great composite structure into which parts of that web have been skilfully incorporated. These two impressive volumes contain one of the most effective pictures of a really strong man, painted as only that man himself could have painted it, which the English language contains. It is true tragedy without the idealising background generally given to tragedy, the story of a great intellectual and moral struggle ending in defeat, but in defeat in which there is absolutely no personal failure, no conscious yielding of a single inch of ground, no concession to weakness, no self-deception, no shrinking from the

[1] *The Journal of Sir Walter Scott, from the Original Manuscript at Abbotsford.* 2 vols. Edinburgh: David Douglas.

truth, no despondency, and no ostentation of pretended indifference. Everywhere you see the same large, clear insight, the same large, genial nature, the same indomitable resolution, the same sober suffering, the same calm fortitude, the same frank determination to face the worst and to do the best. It is rarely indeed that so sunny a nature as Scott's is seen in such dark eclipse without a great deal more bitterness or collapse than Scott ever betrays. And yet, though the heart of religion is in Scott, you cannot say that his Journal shows what can be called a spiritual nature. He feels keenly the duty of submission to God's will in his misfortunes, but he does not dwell on it; he submits in the darkness, as it were, but without at all realising that to implant the disposition to subdue his heart to the right frame of feeling, was perhaps the very object of the sufferings with which he copes so manfully. The whole force of his large nature is thrown at once into the struggle to *do* what is honourable and right, and the effort to feel rightly is almost lost sight of in the effort to brace all his nature to high action. How little of the conscious spiritual life there is in him, we see when the sense of worldly honour bursts out so strongly in his resolve to fight a duel about his *Life of Napoleon* rather than submit to the disgrace, as he held it, of not standing to his colours on behalf of his country. No man who had thought first and most of his spiritual life would have done that; but Scott had the highest kind of natural goodness rather than of the supernatural, and that is precisely what makes the vivid light which this Journal throws on his inner life so profoundly interesting. You see the grandeur of the man's whole make and character,—the large sympathy with all suffering, the magnani-

mity, the habit of endurance, the slight scorn for his own sensitiveness, and yet the frank and hearty desire not to suffer, to have an end of his sufferings, which bespeaks the true man of the world, though a high-minded and a noble man of the world. It is the semi-Christian Stoicism in Scott which makes the inner life of this Journal so fascinating, and at times so grand a spectacle. Fortunately for the reader, the Journal opens a day or two,—though only a day or two,—before the anxieties as to the coming crash of his fortunes begin. The first entry is the 20th of November, 1825, the first note of the approaching storm appears on the 22nd, and on the 25th Sir Walter records his firm resolve to economise; but within a few days the whole pressure of the approaching catastrophe is felt, and on January 16th, 1826, the crash came. The illness and death of his wife followed in the same spring, and then for three or four years Scott went on labouring in the interest of his creditors, using his great imagination, as long as it would work through his enfeebled physical organisation, to restore what he owed, to retrieve the rather spendthrift prodigality of his earlier years, and to reconcile himself to himself, so far as he could do so after his large, clear sense had fairly recognised how deeply his rather hare-brained passion for land and position had involved him in responsibilities for other men whose speculative tendencies he could not control, and who were quite unfit to control their own.

Let me take first what the Journal shows in abundance, the large, sunny good sense that was the background of Sir Walter Scott's great imagination. What could be happier than this criticism on the sanguineness of the Whig mind?—

"*November* 25.—Read Jeffrey's neat and well-intended address to the mechanics upon their combinations. Will it do good? Umph. It takes only the hand of a Lilliputian to light a fire, but would require the diuretic powers of Gulliver to extinguish it. The Whigs will live and die in the heresy that the world is ruled by little pamphlets and speeches, and that if you can sufficiently demonstrate that a line of conduct is most consistent with men's interest, you have therefore and thereby demonstrated that they will at length, after a few speeches on the subject, adopt it of course. In this case we would have [no] need of laws or churches, for I am sure there is no difficulty in proving that moral, regular, and steady habits conduce to men's best interest, and that vice is not sin merely, but folly. But of these men each has passions and prejudices, the gratification of which he prefers, not only to the general weal, but to that of himself as an individual. Under the action of these wayward impulses a man drinks to-day though he is sure of starving to-morrow. He murders to-morrow though he is sure to be hanged on Wednesday; and people are so slow to believe that which makes against their own predominant passions, that mechanics will combine to raise the price for one week, though they destroy the manufacture for ever."

That is almost as nearly true of our too sanguine reformers to-day as it was sixty years since. Then, as to his genial Stoicism, take this little entry a few days later, when his daughter and Lockhart are leaving Scotland for London, Lockhart being about to take up the editing of the *Quarterly Review*:—

"*December* 5.—This morning Lockhart and Sophia left us early, and without leave-taking; when I rose at eight o'clock they were *gone*. This was very right. I hate red eyes and blowing of noses. *Agere et pati Romanum est.* Of all schools commend me to the Stoics. We cannot indeed overcome our affections, nor ought we if we could,

but we may repress them within due bounds, and avoid coaxing them to make fools of those who should be their masters. I have lost some of the comforts to which I chiefly looked for enjoyment. Well, I must make the more of such as remain—God bless them. And so 'I will unto my holy work again,' which at present is the description of that *heilige Kleeblatt*, that worshipful triumvirate, Danton, Robespierre, and Marat."

Again, take this living sketch (written in the middle of his own anxieties) of Henry Mackenzie, the author of *The Man of Feeling*:—

"*December* 6.—A rare thing this literature, or love of fame or notoriety which accompanies it. Here is Mr. H[enry] M[ackenzie] on the very brink of human dissolution, as actively anxious about it as if the curtain must not soon be closed on that and everything else. He calls me his literary confessor; and I am sure I am glad to return the kindnesses which he showed me long since in George Square. No man is less known from his writings. We would suppose a retired, modest, somewhat affected man, with a white handkerchief, and a sigh ready for every sentiment. No such thing: H. M. is alert as a contracting tailor's needle in every sort of buisness—a politician and a sportsman—shoots and fishes in a sort even to this day—and is the life of the company with anecdote and fun. Sometimes, his daughter tells me, he is in low spirits at home, but really I never see anything of it in society."

I give these passages to show the wise and sagacious background of the mind by which the long four years' struggle of imaginative power with accumulating physical and moral troubles was maintained. Now let me illustrate the temper of the same mind under the first heavy shock of impending ruin. Mr. Douglas has enriched this edition of the Journal with

extracts from Mr. Skene's reminiscences of Scott, which greatly add to the impressiveness of the whole effect. And I shall illustrate the remarks in the Journal of January 23rd, 1826 (just a week after the crash) by Mr. Skene's account of his walk with Sir Walter on the same day :—

"*January* 23.—Slept ill, not having been abroad these eight days—*splendida bilis.* Then a dead sleep in the morning, and when the awakening comes, a strong feeling how well I could dispense with it for once and for ever. This passes away, however, as better and more dutiful thoughts arise in my mind. I know not if my imagination has flagged; probably it has; but at least my powers of labour have not diminished during the last melancholy week. On Monday and Tuesday my exertions were suspended. Since Wednesday inclusive I have written thirty-eight of my close manuscript pages, of which seventy make a volume of the usual Novel size. Wrote till twelve A.M., finishing half of what I call a good day's work—ten pages of print, or rather twelve. Then walked in Princes Street pleasure-grounds with good Samaritan James Skene, the only one among my numerous friends who can properly be termed *amicus curarum mearum*, others being too busy or too gay, and several being estranged by habit."

To this passage the following note is appended :—

"On the morning of this day Sir Walter wrote the following note to his friend :—

"'DEAR SKENE,—If you are disposed for a walk in your gardens any time this morning, I would gladly accompany you for an hour, since keeping the house so long begins rather to hurt me, and you, who supported the other day the weight of my body, are perhaps best disposed to endure the gloom of my mind.—Yours ever,

'*Castle Street*, 23 *January*. W. S.

'I will call when you please: all hours after twelve are the same to me.'

"On his return from this walk, Mr. Skene wrote out his recollections of the conversation that had taken place. Of his power to rebuild his shattered fortunes, Scott said, 'But woe's me, I much mistrust my vigour, for the best of my energies are already expended. You have seen, my dear Skene, the Roman coursers urged to their speed by a loaded spur attached to their backs to whet the rusty metal of their age,—ay! it is a leaden spur indeed, and it goads hard.' I added, 'But what do you think, Scott, of the bits of flaming paper that are pasted on the flanks of the poor jades? If we could but stick certain small documents on your back, and set fire to them, I think you might submit for a time to the pricking of the spur.' He laughed and said, 'Ay! Ay!—these weary bills, if they were but as the thing that is not—come, cheer me up with an account of the Roman Carnival.' And, accordingly, with my endeavour to do so, he seemed as much interested as if nothing had happened to discompose the usual tenor of his mind, but still our conversation ever and anon dropt back into the same subject, in the course of which he said to me, 'Do you know, I experience a sort of determined pleasure in confronting the very worst aspect of this sudden reverse,—in standing, as it were, in the breach that has overthrown my fortunes, and saying, Here I stand, at least an honest man. And God knows, if I have enemies, this I may at least with truth say, that I have never wittingly given cause of enmity in the whole course of my life, for even the burnings of political hate seemed to find nothing in my nature to feed the flame. I am not conscious of having borne a grudge towards any man, and at this moment of my overthrow, so help me God, I wish well and feel kindly to every one. And if I thought that any of my works contained a sentence hurtful to any one's feelings, I would burn it. I think even my novels (for he did not disown any of

them) are free from that blame.' He had been led to make this protestation from my having remarked to him the singularly general feeling of goodwill and sympathy towards him which every one was anxious to testify upon the present occasion. The sentiments of resignation and of cheerful acquiescence in the dispensation of the Almighty which he expressed were those of a Christian thankful for the blessings left, and willing, without ostentation, to do his best. It was really beautiful to see the workings of a strong and upright mind under the first lash of adversity calmly reposing upon the consolation afforded by his own integrity and manful purposes. 'Lately,' he said, 'you saw me under the apprehension of the decay of my mental faculties, and I confess that I was under mortal fear when I found myself writing one word for another, and misspelling every word; but that wore off, and was perhaps occasioned by the effects of the medicine I had been taking; but have I not reason to be thankful that that misfortune did not assail me?—Ay! few have more reason to feel grateful to the Disposer of all events than I have.' "—*Mr. Skene's Reminiscences.*

That comparison of Scott's, of his later imaginative career,—in which, by the way, he wrote *Woodstock*, *The Fair Maid of Perth*, and *Anne of Geierstein*, as well as a great portion of the *Life of Napoleon*, and a multitude of smaller literary papers, besides discharging all his duties as Clerk in the Courts of Law, —to the efforts of the Roman coursers driven forth free from the control of any rider, but pricked on by spurs which jangled constantly against their sides, seems to me a singularly fine and appropiate one, which really helps one to conceive and understand the labours of the last and greatest four years of his literary life,—greatest, of course, not imaginatively but morally. Even during the composition and printing of his first real failure,—*Count Robert of*

Paris,—the first book in which signs of the ruin of the great imagination became distinctly visible, Scott seems to me almost greater and nobler than he had ever been before. The power of his glorious imagination was gone, but the mighty and sober will which struggled on even under the overwhelming burden of a conscious sense of decay, was more impressive in defeat than it had been even in victory. Scott could hardly have been persuaded that in many respects this private journal was his greatest work,—and of course, imaginatively speaking, it is far from his greatest work,—but it is certainly the work which is more likely to subdue other minds, struggling with much less, but to their lesser power perhaps relatively equal burdens, to that spirit of deep resignation and grave resolve with which Scott met some of the greatest trials man can have to bear, than anything which he had written in the heyday of poetic inspiration and of dazzling imaginative triumphs. This book is one of the greatest gifts which our English literature has ever received.

XXVIII

BISHOP THIRLWALL

1874 and 1875

THE loss of the Bishop of St. David's will weaken the intellectual strength of the Episcopal Bench even more than the death of the late Bishop of Winchester weakened its popular influence. The Bishop of St. David's has never been a great debater, like Dr. Wilberforce; nor a great orator, like Dr. Magee; nor a practical moral reformer, like Dr. Fraser; nor a sagacious ecclesiastical statesman, like Dr. Tait; but no Bishop now on the Bench, or who has, in our time, ever been there, has given evidence of so high a calibre of intellectual capacity in relation to the profoundest subjects, or has shown more of the "sweet reasonableness" of Christian liberality in the wish to make the Church of England a strictly just, as well as a comprehensive Church. With a gift for sarcasm in controversial writing which now and then, perhaps even more recently than formerly, he has permitted himself to indulge somewhat too freely, Dr. Thirlwall has always shown himself anxious to give others the full benefit of the large intellectual freedom he claimed for himself, and to vindicate to the utmost

for all the clergy of the Church the full right to entertain in their own breasts, as he certainly has entertained,—

> "That grey spirit yearning in desire
> To follow knowledge, like a sinking star,
> Beyond the utmost bound of human thought."

None of our recent Bishops has ever written charges showing so complete a mastery of the intellectual range necessary for the adequate holding of a great mystery as has been shown by Bishop Thirlwall. In defending Bishop Colenso against the accusations of heresy for having imputed human ignorance to Christ, he pointed out, with the most unshrinking courage, that orthodoxy, as it was called, was just as much in danger of making revelation sound hollow on one side by dissipating belief in the real humanity of Christ, as was the so-called heterodoxy on the other. "The subject," he concluded, "is not only one of the most abstruse with which the human mind can be engaged, but it lies beyond the reach of our faculties, and is one of those mysteries which are to be embraced by faith, not to be investigated by reason." Yet he has never forgotten that, in some sense, reason cannot be banished from faith; if you cannot get a higher point of view from which to make faith seem reasonable, you can at least reasonably guard against the inclusion of anything distinctly unreasonable in your faith, and so mark out the field of a discerning and thoughtful reserve as to avoid the falsehoods of an impatient, shallow understanding. Mystery to Dr. Thirlwall has never meant the field appropriate for enthusiasm, as it means for so many theologians, but rather the field appropriate for a higher than

ordinary self-restraint, a more than normal self-distrust. On the holy ground where the prophet is told to put off his shoes, the thinker must exchange his firm and self-reliant step for the confession of a profound inadequacy; nor can it be appropriate to indulge in the most positive and intense moods, even of mere emotion, in a region where the intellect cannot pretend to do more than "go sounding on its dim and perilous way." Something of that sad irony with which prophets and poets offer half-solutions for insoluble problems is much more appropriate to a sphere of spiritual thought full of giddy heights and depths, than the passion of the zealot or the vehement ardour of the devotee. This has been, for the most part, Bishop Thirlwall's view of theological mysteries. He led the school which treats them with thoughtful reserve, as subjects to be meditated rather than dogmatised upon, as justifying the mood of hesitating awe not that of keen and confident ecstasy.

In fact, Dr. Thirlwall was one of the few Bishops on the Bench who has always realised the radical uncertainty of mere theological systems, and therefore, naturally enough, made the most of the tolerably wide verge given by the English Church to variety of interpretation. But with this strong intellectual foundation for his theological Liberalism, he has combined all the caution of an accomplished historian who knows how doubtful the foundations of history often are, and what are the sure signs of doubtful authenticity. Early in life he translated Schleiermacher's treatise on St. Luke's Gospel, and so showed his sympathy with the critical temper of the most scholarly German

interpreters of the Bible, as well as with the genuine piety of one of the most heartily Christian among them. The *History of Greece* which won him so great a name as a scholar and a critic, is, as compared with Mr. Grote's, the work of a detached intellect, of a calm, considerate judgment, while Mr. Grote's is that of a practical politician, who strove to restore the party politics of ancient Greece, and to defend the democratic policy from the unjust slurs cast upon it by modern prejudice. Dr. Thirlwall's historical power was not so much of the kind which restores to us the interior life of the nation whose history it discusses, as of the kind fitted to weigh the conflicting evidence concerning it with that cultivated predisposition to find an explanation for even the wrong view, by which the sober, judicial intellect is apt to be distinguished from that of the earnest partisan, or even that of the business-like assailant of a time-honoured prejudice. In his capacity of prelate, Bishop Thirlwall has often shown the sort of caution which discovers an unexpected reason for acting with people whose own motives he has disliked and disapproved. He was heartily opposed to the Sabbatarian ground of the objection against Sunday excursion trains. But he opposed Sunday excursion trains, though exclusively from non-Sabbatarian reasons, because he was struck with the evidence that Sunday excursions led to a great increase of waste, drunkenness, and other vices. He was heartily opposed to the omission of the sentence in the Burial Service which expresses a "sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life," but he advocated the appointment of a Commission to consider the Burial Service with a view to needful alterations,

because he objected to the very different prayer "that it may please thee of thy gracious goodness shortly to accomplish the number of thine elect, and to hasten thy kingdom," which he regarded as dictating to God. In this way Bishop Thirlwall has not unfrequently found a reason, peculiar to himself, for supporting a movement originated by men wholly at issue with him, and only two or three times in his life has he come forward with full conviction to take a strong side on a well-defined battlefield. He was hearty in his support of the abolition of the Irish Church, devoting an elaborate and very vigorous speech to the exposure of the argument against it grounded on its being a "sacrilegious" measure. Again, he spoke of the celebrated "Oxford Declaration," in favour of which the clergy were so keenly canvassed,—the declaration, I mean, to the effect "that the Bible not only contains, but is, the Word of God,"—as "a sort of moral torture;" "for," said the Bishop "the adjuration employed implied that unless persons appended their names to it, they were wanting in love to God and the souls of men."

No one would get an adequate insight into Bishop Thirlwall's mind who had not studied the singularly fine essay to which I have already referred, on "The Irony of Sophocles," an essay in which he evidently expressed not only thoughts which had struck him as a scholar in dwelling on the evolution of the literary plots of the greatest of the Greek dramatists, but also thoughts which had struck him as an historian in dwelling on the evolution of national destinies greater than any which human foresight had been able to conceive. They

were thoughts, too, which undoubtedly entered deeply into his meditations on the theological subjects more especially brought under his consideration as a bishop. Dr. Thirlwall held, and his various writings illustrate, a very strong view of the appropriateness of the tone of irony to the higher moods of thought and feeling, — nay, even of its function in the development of all plans which are worked out through fragmentary and partial instruments, *i.e.*, of all great plans, human and divine. "Where irony," he says, "is not merely jocular, it is not simply serious, but earnest. With respect to opinion, it implies a conviction so deep as to disdain a refutation of the opposite party. With respect to feeling, it implies an emotion so strong as to be able to command itself, and to suppress its natural tone in order to vent itself with greater force." And there are traces of both kinds of irony, the intellectual and the emotional, in his writings. But it is the judicial irony, — of which he speaks as the irony natural to a mind commanding both sides of a hotly-contested question, — which was most characteristic of him. "There is always a slight cast of irony," he says, "in the grave, calm, respectful attention impartially bestowed by an intelligent Judge on two contending parties who are pleading their cases before him with all the earnestness of deep feeling;" and he goes on to explain that the irony of this attitude of mind consists in the almost inevitable conviction that both antagonists are right and both are wrong; that, with all their warmth, neither can be intellectually justified in the passion with which he maintains his exclusive point of view, even though it is the very onesidedness of that passion which could

alone make good for him such ground as he eventually contrives to hold. This ironic judicial insight into the onesided machinery of even the best human passion and action, Bishop Thirlwall evidently attributed, with Sophocles, to the Divine Mind, as a necessary incident of its omniscience. Perhaps we have an instance of this irony in our Lord's sorrowful promise to his two ambitious Apostles, that they should indeed drink of the cup that he would drink of, and be baptized with the baptism with which he was baptized, though that would issue in a destiny very different from that which they craved for themselves. But it was in the destinies of cities, and of nations, and of empires, that Dr. Thirlwall saw, with a mixture between reverential awe and intellectual admiration, the most striking illustrations of this irony of Providence who sows the seeds of ruin in the very acts which seem to consummate success, and moulds the elements of a fresh career in the very heart of seeming failure. And the same thought evidently penetrated the Bishop's theology. He was never severer than he was on the attempt to brand with heterodoxy the Bishop of Natal's criticisms on the finite and human elements in Christ's earthly life. How the divine and human could be blended in any life Dr. Thirlwall maintained to be a mystery which no one could fathom; but the way to fathom it was certainly not to deny Christ's true humanity, or to throw doubt over all statements which assume it. He saw clearly the irony of destiny which drives such orthodox excesses of zeal as these into inevitable heresies of denial, as he saw also the irony of destiny which drives almost as surely the excesses on the side of denial back

into superstition. To Dr. Thirlwall, theology was a line of thought marking very inadequately a thread of practical divine guidance of which it was hardly possible to exaggerate the importance, but most easy to misunderstand the drift; and the history of Christian theology seemed to him full of the irony of Providence, showing how error led to the assumption of infallibility, and dogmatism to the glorification of ignorance; how the neglect of the human side of Christianity issued in the degeneration of theology, and the neglect of the divine side, in the degeneration of man. I deduce these inferences as to Dr. Thirlwall's theology from hints scattered through several of the Bishop of St. David's Charges during the last ten years; and certainly his general theologic conclusions corresponded strikingly with this fear of incurring the ironic nemesis which follows human dogmatism, for throughout the theological passages of these writings there runs a tone of speculative reserve and reverential Liberalism which seems to be as much afraid of either presumptuous assertion or presumptuous denial, as a nation ought to be of assuming that its prosperity is sound, or a man that his happiness will be lasting. In Dr. Thirlwall there was an habitual desire to catch the judicial view even of faith and ecclesiastical history, a desire which is as rare in English Bishops, as it should be useful to the English Episcopate when in exceptional cases it is found. His was not the mind to lead men to believe, but to warn men against undue belief or undue doubt. And since it is even easier to be arrogant about divine things than about human, it will probably be long before such an influence as Dr. Thirlwall's shall be replaced amongst the higher

authorities of the English Church. The glimmer of his judicial irony in dealing with over-confident spirits was always a beneficial influence, though it was not one of a kind which theologians particularly affect.

XXIX

ARCHBISHOP MAGEE

1891 (May 9th)

ARCHBISHOP MAGEE was perhaps the only man in England who could have made England feel the full tragedy in his own apparently purposeless elevation to the highest point in the Church, just that he might sink into the grave as soon as it was reached. How eloquently he would have driven home his own teaching in that fine sermon on "The Victor manifest in the Flesh," that "circumstance is our master, and conditions our life as much as ever;" that "it is not in our surroundings, change or improve them as we may, but in ourselves," that true power is to be found. He reached the place where he could best have exercised his great gifts for the benefit of the Church, only perhaps to illustrate his own eloquent words that you can best conquer "want by wanting, weariness by wearying, pain by suffering, grief by grieving, death by dying." He reached the highest place but one in the Church, only to give it up, so soon as he had made men feel that he was admirably fitted to wield the great responsibilites which he was not destined to sustain. Had he not been made Archbishop of York, he might perhaps have lived

much longer. At least, it was probably in his new diocese that he caught the fatal complaint which has been ravaging Yorkshire with such singular severity; and though he came to London before he fell really ill, the skill of his medical advisers could not combat with success the fatal malady which he had in all probability contracted in his own province. He appeared, for the first and last time, at the head of that province only to vanish from it for ever.

The Archbishop was a strong man, even more truly distinguished by his strength than by his still more conspicuous eloquence. Indeed, there are a much larger number of eloquent men amongst the higher clergy than there are of men as strong as Dr. Magee. I often had occasion to differ from him, and to differ from him widely. He was a thoroughgoing Conservative of the old type. He was bitterly opposed to Disestablishment in Ireland. He exulted in the stern opposition which the majority of the Anglican clergy gave to Mr. Gladstone's political policy long before Mr. Gladstone committed himself to Home-rule in Ireland. It seemed to me that the clergy might have wielded a much greater influence in England if they had not been so eager to keep the poor in what they called their proper "station," and to confirm the rich and fastidious not only in all their possessions, but even in all their prepossessions. Nevertheless, he was a zealous Church reformer. He lent his influence heartily to the reform of patronage and the more equal distribution of the Church's wealth amongst her hard-working clergy. His prejudices were as strong on behalf of the constitutional rights of the people as they were on behalf of the constitutional privileges of the upper class. The bold saying for which he incurred so much obloquy,

as to the comparative worth of freedom and temperance, was not, of course, meant in any way to excuse intemperance, but solely to guard the principle that temperance is not temperance unless it shows itself as free self-restraint, and not as a consequence of elaborate protection against temptation. No one valued genuine moral freedom more than Dr. Magee, or was more solicitous that it should not be coaxed and wheedled out of existence by the process of treating every downright battle for the right as one that was too hard to be fought unless with the help of all sorts of artificial aids and encouragements and bursts of sympathy from tender friends. The whole preaching and teaching of Dr. Magee was above all manly, and manliness has not been always the characteristic of eloquent preachers. There was no relaxing element, no unctuous sensibility, about his preaching. Like all strong men in the North of Ireland, Dr. Magee was remarkable for his shrewdness, sagacity, and common-sense, though he added to these qualities a liveliness of insight and a force of imagination which redeemed his preaching from all the hardness and aridity and excess of dogmatic tenacity which are characteristic of that region. In theology Dr. Magee had a little of that disposition to lean heavily on cut-and-dried theories of the Atonement, which marked out his sympathy in some respects with the doctrines of the orthodox Presbyterians of the same region,—hearty Anglican though he was. And with doctrinal leanings of that nature there can be no doubt that, but for his keen wit and his powerful imagination, he might have belonged rather to what has been called the Hard Church, than either to the Broad Church or the High. But from this he was saved by the vividness and vivacity

of his whole nature, and by that masculine and hearty reverence for reality which kept him from ever pressing dogma too far, and kept him also from the misty and namby-pamby sentimentalism into which undogmatic religious teachers, in their recoil from the unreality of hard-and-fast dogmatic standards of religion, too often fall back. The Archbishop of York was a man of the world as well as a religious teacher,—not, of course, a man of the world in the worldly sense, but a man who knew the world on its bad side as well as on its good,—and this enabled him both to assign its true value to the dogmatic kernel of religion, and *not* to assign to it that exaggerated value which it often has in the minds of mere theologians. He neither dissolved revealed truth into a mere nebula, nor hardened it into a mere system.

Dr. Magee showed his true manliness most happily, perhaps, in declining positively, as he repeatedly did, to consider the question whether any particular policy which he held to be for the advantage of the Church, might or might not have the effect of strengthening the hands of the Disestablishment party. He held it to be simply wrong to fetter the Church by artificial rules of prudence which had relation only to the retention of her emoluments, and would never have been thought of but for the fear of the Liberation Society. Now, there are very few of the higher clergy who have sufficient courage to declare that they would never burden their minds with political cautions conceived only for the sake of warding off attacks on the Establishment. Dr. Magee had that courage. He thought it the true policy to act in every way for the benefit of the Church and her people in the same spirit in which action

would be taken even if the Church had been thrown on her own resources. And, indeed, he held that any less courageous course would not only be unmanly in itself, but would result in making the Church unpopular too. As a political statesman I hold Dr. Magee to have been far too Conservative. As an ecclesiastical statesman, I believe him to have been nearly as bold and sagacious as any clergyman or layman of his century.

But, after all, it will be as a really great preacher that Dr. Magee will be longest remembered. He laboured under the great disadvantage that, as he never wrote his sermons out in full, he seldom had the means of reporting them in the best form, the form in which they really embodied all the glow and vivacity of his strong imagination. And yet there are sermons of his which will outlive even the most eloquent of his speeches, because they contain higher thoughts expressed with rare force, and even splendour. It would be difficult to overestimate, for instance, the force of that sermon to which I have already referred, on the difference between what the nineteenth century is apt to call the conquest of Nature, and the only true conquest of Nature. "The only victory," he said, "which fully and entirely overcomes the world" "comes from the faith which places man above and beyond the world, which makes humanity the lord of nature and time and change and chance, because it makes all these subservient to that life which has its source, not in the creature, but in the Creator, not in the world, but in God. Compared with this one great lifelong victory for humanity, this conquest over all outward circumstances, those other occasional miraculous conquests of His, those victories not of endurance, but of

change of circumstance, that strike us so much at first, seem infinitely smaller conquests. We might conceive of our being able to work all these works, and greater than these, and yet gaining no real victory. What would it avail us, though we could turn stones into bread, and water into wine, if our gluttony and intemperance made us slaves to the food and to the wine we had miraculously produced? What would it avail us, if we could heal disease by a touch, and recall the dead with a word, if the health we regained, and the dead we called back, were to us more than God,—were sources to us, therefore, not of life but of death? Is not this the mistake, the sad mistake, man is ever making, when he imagines that his discoveries of the powers of Nature are giving him increasing power over Nature? The truth is, that they are all of them giving Nature increased power over him. These new forces in Nature which man discovers, as we apply them to the uses of human life, what do they do for us? They quicken the pace at which we must all live. We must live now faster, harder far, than our fathers did. Steam and electricity are our masters, not we theirs. We are like hands in some great factory,—the faster the wheels revolve, the more unremitting and exhausting is our work to keep up with them. Circumstance is our master, and conditions our life as much as ever. It is not in our surroundings, change or improve them as we may, but in ourselves, that true power over Nature is to be found. Which do you think is most truly lord and master of outward nature, he who could, by one wonder-working word, bind the Old World and the New with such a link as binds them now, or he who could bear with patient trusting heart, with calm, unshaken faith, the message

those wires might send him that all he loved and all he possessed in life were gone? The world might be the master of the one; the other would be the master of the world." That is the kind of teaching which the nineteenth century profoundly needs, and which the nineteenth century very seldom gets. Eloquent as he was, eloquence was not Dr. Magee's greatest personal distinction, for strength such as his is rarer than eloquence; nevertheless, the eloquent lips which delivered such teaching, and much more that is akin to it, were even more to England than the lips of the eloquent debater, or of the wise and generous ecclesiastical statesman.

XXX

THE CONSCIENCE OF ANIMALS

1876

In the very interesting paper on "Conscience in Animals," contributed by Mr. G. J. Romanes to the April number of Mr. Crooke's *Quarterly Journal of Science*, I find,—together with an introduction which rather surprises me by its curious and unreasoned, not to say unreasonable, assumptions as to the origin and nature of the rudimentary conscience which may be observed in certain of the more sympathetic and intelligent animals,—some very skilfully recounted and very remarkable facts, which well deserve to be ranged along with those which Mr. Darwin has collected in those chapters of the *Descent of Man* devoted to the inherited character of the "moral sense." Properly interpreted, these facts seem to me to suggest the very opposite of the theory which Mr. Romanes supposes them to suggest. He appears to think, indeed, that Mr. Darwin has not only put his finger precisely on that class of facts in which we may expect to study best the origin of the moral sense,—wherein I quite agree,—but that his study and analysis of them are adequate. I entirely dissent from that view, and propose to use the accounts

which Mr. Romanes himself has supplied us of the evidence of conscience in dogs to show how inadequate Mr. Darwin's analysis is, how the most characteristic of all the true ethical criteria disappear beneath the point of his moral scalpel.

The doctrine which alone Mr. Darwin really needed to maintain was no doubt this,—that in animals below the rank of man, we may see in germ many of the same phenomena which, when they appear in man, we at once refer to that mysterious and imperious sense of obligation which we call Conscience. So far, I think, he succeeded admirably. But whether from philosophic bias or from inadvertence, he went further. He tried to show that wherever these germs of moral life could be traced, they were resolvable into something else which was not moral life at all, but a mere victory of the persistent social affections over the periodic individual appetites and passions. Mr. Darwin illustrates his theory graphically by a purely hypothetical case. He remarks that the migratory birds feel at the season of migration so strong a desire to join their comrades on the wing, that caged birds will dash themselves against the bars of the cage till their breasts are quite bare and bloody, while uncaged birds will often, at a moment when their latest nestlings are not in sight, take flight and desert them. "When arrived at the end of her long journey, and the migratory instinct ceases to act, what an agony of remorse," says Mr. Darwin, "each bird would feel, if, from being endowed with great mental activity, she could not prevent the image continually passing before her mind of her young ones perishing in the bleak North of cold and hunger."[1] Of course, the drift of that

[1] *Descent of Man*, First Edition, vol. i. p. 91.

hypothesis is very clear. Mr. Darwin thinks he can get rid entirely of the sense of ability to act otherwise, which is of the very essence of remorse, by representing remorse as simply consisting in the reassertion of itself by a more persistent instinct, after a stronger but more periodic instinct has had its gratification, and is consequently for the time in abeyance. He asserts this, in very clear words, in another passage:—"The imperious word *ought* seems merely to imply the consciousness of the existence of a persistent instinct, either innate or partly acquired, serving him" [the moral agent] "as a guide, though liable to be disobeyed. We hardly use the word *ought* in a metaphorical sense, when we say hounds ought to hunt, pointers to point, and retrievers to retrieve their game. If they fail thus to act, they fail in their duty and act wrongly."[1] In other words, duty means only the involuntary subordination of the more temporary and individual to the more persistent and social instinct, for of voluntary subordination in these cases there is no pretence. The creature that obeys the more persistent, or permanently urgent, instead of the more periodic, impulse is the creature with a conscience. It is the comparatively greater persistency of the social instincts which alone gives them, according to Mr. Darwin's view, their moral estimation, and also, as I suppose, in his view, their moral worth.

Now, let me try this view by some of Mr. Romanes's new facts, as well as some of Mr. Darwin's old facts. To take the old facts first. Mr. Darwin quotes from Dr. Hooker a story that an elephant which he was riding in India became so deeply bogged, that it remained stuck fast till next day,

[1] *Descent of Man*, First Edition, vol. i. p. 92.

when it was extricated by means of ropes. "Under such circumstances, elephants seize with their trunks any objects, dead or alive, to place under their knees to prevent their sinking deeper in the mud; and the driver was dreadfully afraid lest the animal should have seized Dr. Hooker and crushed him to death. But the driver himself, as Dr. Hooker was assured, ran no risk. This forbearance under an emergency so dreadful for a heavy animal, is a wonderful proof of noble fidelity." No doubt. But is there the slightest vestige of evidence that the social instinct of fidelity could, in the agony of that crisis, have been felt by the creature as a more persistent instinct than that of self-preservation? If, like Mr. Darwin's imaginary swallow, the elephant had crushed the human beings in the urgency of his self-preserving instinct at the moment, and had gone mad the next day with remorse after the more temporary instinct had been satisfied and thereby lost its immediate hold on his mind, the case would have been one in support of his theory. But as it was, it is open to either of two explanations,—either (1) that the elephant's impulse of reverence, say, for the command of his keeper, was actually the *stronger* at the moment, as well as the more persistent, in which case he was not tempted to crush either his rider or his master; or (2) if he were strongly tempted to do so, that he used such will as he had to repress the inferior impulse, and to steel himself to brave the prospect of his own suffocation. In the latter case only, the act of the creature was truly moral. But in neither case was his abstinence from the act prompted by the natural instinct of the elephant, in the least an illustration of Mr. Darwin's theory, that it is the greater persistency of the social instincts

which give them their moral authority. At that critical moment certainly the more *persistent* of the two instincts could not have been the one which taught the elephant to prefer his keeper to himself, though it may have been the stronger. And to suppose that it was the expectation of suffering remorse the next day, in case he yielded then to his wild instinct, which determined his self-restraint, is too artificial and even grotesque an hypothesis to have any likelihood in it. Again, Mr. Darwin quotes from Brehm the story of a baboon in Abyssinia which returned to rescue a young baboon, only six months old, who had been surrounded by dogs. "One of the largest males, a true hero, came down again from the mountain, slowly went to the young one, coaxed him, and triumphantly led him away, the dogs being too much astonished to make an attack." Now, that again, might be due to either of the forms of true courage,—the complete preponderance of sympathy over fear, or the triumph of will over fear, in deference to the sense of a higher claim; but to whichever source it was due, it was evidently not the greater persistency of the one feeling which gave it any advantage over the other, for at the moment both must have been in full activity, the occasion serving to develop both. If the baboon had any sense of moral obligation in the matter at all, as is quite possible, it was in some dim way just like our human sense that it would be nobler to perish in trying to save the little one than to abandon him to his foes. Of course no one can say that there was such a feeling, but it is easy to see that Mr. Darwin's analysis of "the imperious word *ought*" gains no more support from such facts as these than it would gain from the most subtle of

human experiences. The 'persistency' of the social instinct might possibly explain a feeling of remorse, when the action of the less persistent instinct which had momentarily conquered the social feeling had ceased, but such remorse after the event is just what we see least trace of in animal life, and where we do trace it at all, it is in the very clearest cases of conscience in animals, cases where there has been a conflict first as well as remorse afterwards; whereas remorse is just what Darwin's theory should require us to find most trace of in the conscience of animals, and that, too, in animals not yet capable of so far anticipating their subsequent remorse as to resist, even for a moment, the acts which might lead to it.

However, Mr. Romanes certainly has one story which would agree very well with Mr. Darwin's theory, though not better than it would agree with any other ethical theory whatever. It is the story of a terrier of his own, which he speaks of as far surpassing "any animal or human being I ever knew in the keen sensitiveness of his feelings," and which he assures us, "was never beaten in his life," so that the fear of physical punishment, at least, had nothing to do with his behaviour:—

"One day he was shut up in a room by himself, while everybody in the house where he was went out. Seeing his friends from the window as they departed, the terrier appears to have been overcome by a paroxysm of rage; for when I returned I found that he had torn all the bottoms of the window-curtains to shreds. When I first opened the door, he jumped about as dogs in general do under similar circumstances, having apparently forgotten, in his joy at seeing me, the damage he had done. But when, without speaking, I picked up one of the torn shreds of the curtains, the terrier gave a howl, and

rushing out of the room, ran upstairs screaming as loudly as he was able. The only interpretation I can assign to this conduct is, that his former fit of passion having subsided, the dog was sorry at having done what he knew would annoy me; and not being able to endure in my presence the remorse of his smitten conscience, he ran to the farthest corner of the house, crying *peccavi* in the language of his nature."

Now there, if you please, it is quite possible to suppose that the more persistent social instinct returned upon the creature the moment the paroxysm of rage or despair was passed, and revenged itself for its temporary suppression during that paroxysm; but though that view is tenable, it is no more plausible than any other. No one can venture to affirm that it was the mere persistency of the higher feeling, and not rather a power of perceiving that it was the less worthy feeling to which he had given way, which caused the dog's remorse. We can only interpret the dog's feelings from our own in similar cases,—our own, at least, deprived as much as possible of their higher intellectual elements,—and so interpreted, Mr. Darwin's explanation seems the less likely of the two. As far as we know, we seldom or never suffer true remorse without having first gone through a moral conflict as to what we ought to do. It is not with us the anticipation of remorse which puts in a veto on a bad action, but the knowledge at the time that it is bad, which ultimately induces the remorse. Let me, however, quote Mr. Romanes's best and most instructive story of animal conscience, which really seems to go to the heart of the question as to the meaning of that conscience. It is a story of the same terrier, and before giving it, I should add that Mr. Romanes

solemnly assures his readers that in all the facts he narrates he carefully "avoids exaggeration or embellishment of any kind." The story is as follows :—

"I had had this dog for several years, and had never —even in his puppyhood—known him to steal. On the contrary, he used to make an excellent guard to protect property from other animals, servants, etc., even though these were his best friends. [Mr. Romanes here adds in a note :—"I have seen this dog escort a donkey which had baskets on its back filled with apples. Although the dog did not know that he was being observed by anybody, he did his duty with the utmost faithfulness ; for every time the donkey turned back its head to take an apple out of the baskets, the dog snapped at his nose ; and such was his watchfulness, that, although his companion was keenly desirous of tasting some of the fruit, he never allowed him to get a single apple during the half-hour they were left together. I have also seen this terrier protecting meat from other terriers (his sons), which lived in the same house with him, and with which he was on the very best of terms. More curious still, I have seen him seize my wristbands while they were being worn by a friend to whom I had temporarily lent them."] Nevertheless, on one occasion he was very hungry, and in the room where I was reading and he was sitting, there was, within easy reach, a savoury mutton chop. I was greatly surprised to see him stealthily remove this chop and take it under a sofa. However, I pretended not to observe what had occurred, and waited to see what would happen next. For fully a quarter of an hour this terrier remained under the sofa without making a sound, but doubtless enduring an agony of contending feelings. Eventually, however, conscience came off victorious, for, emerging from his place of concealment and carrying in his mouth the stolen chop, he came across the room and laid the tempting morsel at my feet. The moment he dropped the stolen property he bolted again

under the sofa, and from this retreat no coaxing could charm him for several hours afterwards. Moreover, when during that time he was spoken to or patted, he always turned away his head in a ludicrously conscience-stricken manner. Altogether, I do not think it would be possible to imagine a more satisfactory exhibition of conscience by an animal than this; for it must be remembered, as already stated, that the particular animal in question was never beaten in its life."

Now, here we have several most important points for the determination of the question of the nature of conscience in this dog. This was not certainly a case of an easy victory of the stronger feeling of his respect or love for his master over the weaker feeling of hunger, for the hunger so far prevailed as to plunge the dog into the very act of theft, and even took him so far that he must have had the temptation at its very strongest when the mutton-chop was really under the sofa, as well as within his mouth. If ever the less "persistent" impulse could be in the ascendant, it must have been then, and for a few moments it was so far clearly in the ascendant that the dog yielded to the first temptation. But before this desire had really been gratified,—while the gratification was still before it, and while the desire must have been at its very highest,—either the dog's respect for his master returned in a great rush and won the day, or else,—and this seems to me far the more natural explanation,—the dog made a great effort of will to resist the temptation presented to his appetite, and not only delivered up the chop, but made, as it were, an act of confession and contrition by placing it at his master's feet, and doing voluntary penance for his fault, instead of making any attempt to restore the chop stealthily, and make as though

he had never taken it. If ever there were a distinct moral action done by an agent unable to explain his own state of mind, this, so far as it is possible for us to interpret the state of another creature's mind at all, seems to have been one. The temptation was resisted, and not only resisted, but confessed, and not only confessed, but penitence was vehemently expressed. It is impossible in this case to explain the apparent remorse by the exhaustion of the impulse which led to the act repented, for the impulse was not exhausted, but was encountered and conquered in full swing.

What I maintain is that Mr. Darwin, though he has probably succeeded in proving that the germs of morality, in our human sense of the word, exist in the lower animals, has not at all succeeded in so explaining away those germs of morality as to take all that is really spiritual and transcendental out of them. On the contrary, as far as the actions of the lower animals are moral at all, I maintain that they are moral in the higher sense which man has always assigned to that word,—that they imply a real though very limited freedom, and a real though very limited sense of the imperiousness of moral obligation. That conception of "evolution" which finds the more highly organised form to be "potentially" contained in the lower organised form, is surely unworthy of Mr. Darwin, and is even inconsistent, to my mind, with his whole theory of the survival of the fittest. At every stage in the process of evolution there enters, as I believe, somewhat new which was not there before; and as soon as the sense of moral obligation emerges, whether it be in man or in the less dignified animals, there enters something not only new, but of a totally different

and nobler kind than anything which can be discovered on the lower planes of existence. I am neither unable nor indisposed to accept adequate evidence, such as Mr. Romanes gives, that this spark of somewhat divine shows itself in fitful glimpses below the human level. But I am both unable and indisposed to believe that this spark of diviner life can by any so-called "higher analysis" be explained away into constituents of no moral value and an origin of no spiritual significance.

XXXI

SIR JOHN LUBBOCK ON "THE LITTLE BUSY BEE"

1874

SIR JOHN LUBBOCK has been devoting his attention to the mental qualities displayed by bees and wasps, with a result which would be very far from satisfactory to Dr. Watts and those other orthodox admirers of the busy bee, who made that insect so obnoxious to our childhood by over-praise and invidious comparisons. In fact, the result of Sir John Lubbock's ingenious investigations may be said to have been, so far as they have yielded definite results, decidedly iconoclastic. The bees have always been idols of the moralists, from causes more or less accidental. Teachers have been discreditably overawed by the hexagonal cell of these excellent insects, which sheds a certain aureole of mathematical glory round their heads; and Mr. Darwin had not, in those days, explained that the distinction between the comparatively barbarous bees—the Mexican Melipona domestica—which make spherical cells partially moulded, at the side at which they come into contact with each other, into rectilineal forms,—and the hive bee of civilisation, was not by any means so great as the

distinction between the Esquimaux and the Englishman or Frenchman. The idea of the bee as an insect of only one remove from barbarism, is an entirely heterodox one. In the last generation it was the insect devoted to the moral improvement of little boys and little girls, and it would have been a far less shock to our grandmothers to be assured that schoolmasters were capable of idleness,—this they really knew, though they carefully concealed their knowledge of it from us,—than that bees were in any respect undeserving of the eulogium uniformly bestowed upon them in moral books for the young. Nor can I say that Sir John Lubbock has exactly attacked their moral character. He does not at all deny the bee's laborious qualities. He credits the bee with a complete ten hours' working day, even about the equinox, when the days are not at their longest, and does not suggest that they knock off work for any day in the week. But then an essential part of the glory of the bee in the days of our grandmothers was its wonderful ingenuity :—

> "How skilfully she builds her cell,
> How neat she spreads her wax!"

sang Dr. Watts, leading the chorus of the bee's didactic admirers,—immediately adding, too, as from his young disciple's mouth,—

> "In works of labour and of skill
> I would be busy too,"

and evidently never dreading the advent of the day when the pre-eminence of the bee in such matters might possibly be rudely assailed.

But that day has at length come. Sir John Lubbock has done a fair stroke of work towards

exposing the Bees. The unreasoning enthusiasm for bees, on the strength of their gift for architecture and organisation, has so prejudiced the eyes of naturalists, that they have been credited with all sorts of qualities not in the least borne out by facts. Indeed, there has been something in the blind deference for bees analogous to the blind deference for the clergy. What with their monarchial constitution, and their ancient repute, and their formidable stings, and their impressive love for hexagons, it has been held a sort of impiety not to take example by the bees, and still more to speak lightly of their virtues. As Sir John Lubbock shows, bees have been assumed to possess the power of communicating ideas freely to each other on the slenderest evidence in the world. I suspect that these qualities were ascribed to them rather *honoris causâ*,—as honorary degrees are given to distinguished preachers,—than from any clear testimony in favour of the honorific opinion thus formed of them. Sir John Lubbock has taken great pains to test their capacity of communicating very simple ideas to each other, and has proved either that they do not possess it,—or, that if they do, they are even more purely devoted to the selfish system, and are less of communists, than men themselves. And as we shall see, the last opinion is not very probable, unless we attribute very great inequalities of intellectual capacity to the bees, and suppose at least one individual selected accidentally to have been by chance a bee-idiot. First Sir John Lubbock brought eight bees separately to some honey which he had placed in his sitting-room near the open window. In each of these cases the little busy bee fed with much satisfaction, flew away, and returned no more. Sir John then brought

a hive of bees to his sitting-room, placing it between the open window and the honey, while he left open a little postern door in the back of the hive by which those of them which were of an inquiring and enterprising turn might find their way to the honey and then back again into the hive. Sir John Lubbock found that very few bees found their way through the postern at all, while of those which did so, the greater part flew straight to the window and did not discover the honey. The few, however, which did find out the honey went and returned to the hive at regular intervals, but did not communicate their discovery to their friends in the hive. Clearly either they were like Lord Byron, who, when he met a friend in Rome, humourously explained in his journal, "Did not invite him to dine with me to-day, because I had a fine young turbot which I wished to eat myself;" or if they were less governed by selfish instincts, they were also less competent to gratify generous instincts. One experiment of Sir John Lubbock's, if it were made on a bee of average ability and culture, would be decisive on this point of intellectual capacity. "He put a bee into a bell-glass, 18 inches long, with a mouth $6\frac{1}{2}$ inches in diameter, turning the closed end to the window." If, then, the bee had had sufficient sagacity to explore its prison, it would have found that at the end furthest removed from the light there was no obstacle to its escape at all, though at the end turned towards the light there was no escape. It does not seem, however, to have occurred to the bee to try for an egress on the dark side. "The bee buzzed about for an hour, when, as there seemed no chance of her getting out, he released her,"—clearly, a bee quite without scientific method, and destitute even of that

familiarity with the paradoxes of the universe which might have suggested to her that her best way towards the light might well be to begin by retiring from it. Sir John Lubbock, musing on these phenomena, suggests that the bees and wasps which so often seem to be idling frivolously in our rooms have simply lost their way, and are not so much unprincipled loafers, as dull, laborious red-tapeists, who cannot originate anything when once off the beaten track of regularly-organised instinct.

I confess to a feeling of satisfaction in the result. Thanks to the didactic writers of the early part of this century, we have been so "sat upon" by bees, as to feel quite a new sense of self-respect at discovering that after all they can't go even a hair's-breadth or two out of the beaten track of immemorial Conservatism, without coming to signal grief. But there is an inference from these facts of even more importance than any touching simply our private vanity, supposing that what Sir John Lubbock has observed should be confirmed by future observation. The favourite theory amongst an influential school of naturalists,—Mr. Lewes, for instance, insists very eagerly upon it in his *Problems of Life and Mind*,—is that instinct is nothing but the organised and hereditarily transmitted experience of ancestors who have learnt to adapt their habits to their needs. Thus the sure and elaborate instincts of the bees of to-day would be nothing but the confirmed predispositions to habit, due to the ingenuity and resource of the primitive bees of many centuries ago, hereditarily transmitted to their descendants. Now I am not going to refer to the difficulty that unless you start from certain instincts as a fixed point of departure, you can hardly find any explanation of

the growth and building-up of any other instincts,—though it is obviously difficult to conceive what you could do, without assuming the instincts of sex, and either those of parental care, or of a ready-made power of discriminating the proper food and the best way to find that food, towards explaining the genesis of any other instinct at all. But without regard to that further difficulty, one is compelled by Sir John Lubbock's facts to ask oneself,—How is it that if bees were once so ingenious and skilful as to invent the architectural and organising habits which they have now transmitted as instincts to their descendants, those descendants should be so utterly devoid of any similar intelligence of their own, that they cannot communicate to their fellows the best way to a store of honey, nor even find their way out of an open bell-glass, simply because the opening is at the end furthest from the light? Surely if Mr. Lewes's theory of the origin of instinct were true, the only thing to say of these bees would be that their instincts have been so completely sufficient for their life, that, by being saved from necessity, they have lost that invention which is said to flow from necessity;—in other words, that the bees have been degraded through the very perfection of the instincts formed for them and transmitted to them by their ancestors. No doubt it is not the only case in which the transmission of a valuable method has caused the complete loss of the originating faculty to which that method owed its origin. Chinese science is said to be in the same condition as the instinct of the bees would be on this hypothesis,—a system of valuable rules with the originating principle lost. But still it is difficult to suppose that even the most degenerate descendant of a creature which helped to

organise the hive, could have become so stupid as not to find its way out of a bell-glass with the mouth turned away from the light. Why, indeed, should not common sense be hereditary as well as instinct? With us it is so, and the bee must have plenty of occasion for the exercise of common sense in its little perplexities. There is clearly a great difficulty in ascribing the origin of very recondite and artistic instincts to the wit of a creature which has transmitted absolutely no wit along with the traditions it invented. If Mr. Lewes's theory of the origin of instinct be true, some Lycurgus among the bees must have sworn the aboriginal hive to a system of rules which he deemed useful for them, and then departed never to return,—without calculating that the result would be to kill out mind amongst them, through the blighting force of overpowering custom. Anyhow, if Sir John Lubbock's views of the bees be true, we must infer that if the instinct which now guides bees be not original in the species, the species must at one time have been vastly superior in general intelligence and resource to what it now is; and that the accumulation of experience, instead of promoting, must have diminished the general mental resources of the bees. Even that inference would itself be of the greatest moment in estimating the worth of mere experience as the chief factor in the progress of races and the growth of organisations.

XXXII

THE "SOCIOLOGY" OF ANTS

1879

ONE of the most valuable of the scientific tendencies of the present day is the very useful study which is devoted by our naturalists to the habits of the more sociable of the animal races. Sir John Lubbock has made the scientific observation of the sociable insects,—particularly bees, wasps, and ants,—a subject peculiarly his own; and his admirable example has evidently produced excellent effects on the other side of the Atlantic. Only this week, the *Times* has republished for us, from the *Proceedings of the Philadelphia Academy of Natural Sciences*, a paper by the Rev. H. C. McCook on the personal cleanliness of the agricultural ant of America, from which it appears that the Transatlantic ant is at least as conspicuous for the quality which is said to be next to godliness, and as anxious to aid its fellow-ants in the business of their "sanitary ablutions," as Sir John Lubbock has shown various species of English ants to be. Lord Beaconsfield's cry of "*Sanitas sanitatum, omnia sanitas!*" is evidently substantially adopted by the ants of both worlds; and no doubt the ant has been helped to gain the

habits which this maxim summarises, by the law of the survival of the fittest. Clearly ants, like men, cannot live healthily in crowded communities without well-marked restrictions on personal habits which would tend in any way either to spread disease, or even to impede individual freedom of motion. If ants, living in such vast crowds and within such narrow spaces as, by comparison, almost make London itself seem a spacious and thinly-populated city, were either to lose their activity through getting clogged with foreign substances, or to contract diseases such as dirt is known to foster in all organic bodies, the whole society would soon come to an end. Indolence and inactivity amongst the workers in such crowded communities would mean the immediate failure of the commissariat, and consequently death. Contagion in such communities would mean plague, and consequently death. Hence it is clear enough that any community of ants whose workers were endowed with cleanly and active habits would have the greatest possible advantage over other communities not so fully endowed with those habits, whence, perhaps, the successful evolution of this great principle of practical "sociology" among the ants of both hemispheres. The Philadelphian naturalist suggests, indeed, that the ants whom he has watched in a state of captivity may devote more attention to their personal cleanliness than they would devote in a state of nature. But this I take leave to doubt. It is clear at least that they bring their instincts with them into captivity, and that if, in the comparatively limited numbers of a captive community, the law of cleanliness asserts itself so strongly, it is because it has been so imperatively impressed upon them by the

accumulated experience of thousands of generations. It is clear that either the habit of personal cleanliness, or amongst the aristocratic and dependent races of ants, the possession of slaves who attend to the personal cleanliness of their masters, is an absolute condition of social well-being. Either the ant must keep itself clean and help to keep its companions clean, and take delight, as Mr. McCook and Sir John Lubbock have described to us, in that cleanliness; or the slave-races must keep themselves and their masters clean, as sedulously as they feed themselves and their masters. The communities of the ant would probably become ultimately impossible, were they not protected by these habits of sedulous cleanliness.

So far it is clear that habits of gregariousness even among insects may tend to evolve other habits which, if not exactly ethical, are in the sententious wisdom of mankind classed as "next" to godliness. And no doubt this remark is very encouraging to that new school of scientific thought which is endeavouring to show how the principles of morality are a perfectly inevitable outgrowth of the laws which make society coherent and strong. And it is very interesting, therefore, to ask ourselves how much further, at least in the case of insects, this principle will take us? Does it tend to produce any vestige of morality, or only to come as near to it as cleanliness does to godliness, which, I venture to assert, in spite of the maxim we have referred to, is not near at all, but a very long way off indeed? Now on this point Sir John Lubbock has made some most interesting observations. He has carefully studied the domestic and foreign policy of the ant, with a view to the sentiments, "altruistic" or

otherwise, which appear to be indicated, and has come to some very remarkable results indeed. The foreign policy of the ant is very simple, and rather Chinese (of the old school). It consists entirely in killing a foreigner who intrudes in any way on the territory of the community. And as a foreigner, an ant appears to regard any individual which has not been produced in its own nest, even though it be of the same species. Sir John Lubbock has shown most effectually that ants distinguish, after very long periods of separation, the ants which have belonged to their own nest, and even the ants reared from the pupæ produced in their own nests. These they will hospitably receive after a period which would seem to make individual identification hardly possible; while strangers,—ants of another nest, though of the same species, or ants reared from the pupæ of ants of another nest,—they will attack and destroy. That is a conclusion which Sir John Lubbock has established with regard to a good many different species of ants, and in a large number of cases for each species. Nor do I regard it as one intrinsically fatal to the idea that habits of gregariousness tend eventually to "evolve" a morality. Certainly, as I have said, there are plenty of parallels amongst human savages, and even amongst civilised peoples in the historic period, for a foreign policy almost as simple. And one can well understand that before it is possible for a Jew to look upon a Samaritan as his neighbour, he must first have learned to understand what neighbourliness really means in the case of Jews. But Sir John Lubbock's observations have gone a good deal further, and touched a much more interesting point than this. He has tried to make out how far neighbourliness, as amongst ants of the

same nest, really goes. It is known, as I have said, that ants of the same nest will help to cleanse each other, and sometimes, I believe, they will carry a wounded and disabled ant, that has come to grief outside it, into the nest. But these are habits obviously essential, the one to the cleanliness of the nest, the other to a kind of co-operation necessary for war with hostile ants. Does the sense of friendliness go further, and extend to relieving ants of the same nest from difficulties in which they find themselves, simply for the sake of fellow-citizenship, and without any relation to the public safety? As far as Sir John Lubbock's very curious investigations go, I believe the answer is entirely in the negative. I extract a passage condensing his results from the very interesting paper published in the fourteenth volume of the *Proceedings of the Linnæan Society* (pp. 274-276):—

"To test the affection of ants belonging to the same nest for one another, I tried the following experiments. I took six ants from a nest of *Formica fusca*, imprisoned them in a small bottle, one end of which was left open, but covered by a layer of muslin. I then put the bottle close to the door of the nest. The muslin was of open texture, the meshes, however, being sufficiently large to prevent the ants from escaping. They could not only, however, see one another, but communicate freely with their antennæ. We now watched to see whether the prisoners would be tended or fed by their friends. We could not, however, observe that the least notice was taken of them. The experiment, nevertheless, was less conclusive than could be wished, because they might have fed at night, or at some time when we were not looking. It struck me, therefore, that it would be interesting to treat some strangers also in the same manner. On September 2nd, therefore, I put two ants from one of my

nests of *F. fusca* into a bottle, the end of which was tied up with muslin as described, and laid it down close to the nest. In a second bottle I put two ants from another nest of the same species. The ants which were at liberty took no notice of the bottle containing their imprisoned friends. The strangers in the other bottle, on the contrary, excited them considerably. The whole day one, two, or more ants stood sentry, as it were, over the bottle. In the evening no less than twelve were collected round it, a larger number than usually came out of the nest at any one time. The whole of the next two days, in the same way, there were more or less ants round the bottle containing the strangers, while, as far as we could see, no notice whatever was taken of the friends. On the 9th the ants had eaten through the muslin, and effected an entrance. We did not chance to to be on the spot at the moment, but as I found two ants lying dead, one in the bottle and one just outside, I think there can be no doubt that the strangers were put to death. The friends throughout were quite neglected. September 21st.—I then repeated the experiment, putting three ants from another nest into a bottle as before. The same scene was repeated. The friends were neglected. On the other hand, some of the ants were always watching over the bottle containing the strangers, and biting at the muslin which protected them. The next morning at 6 A.M. I found five ants thus occupied. One had caught hold of the leg of one of the strangers, which had unwarily been allowed to protrude through the meshes of the muslin. They worked and watched, though not, as far as I could see, with any system, till 7.30 in the evening, when they effected an entrance, and immediately attacked the strangers. September 24th.—I repeated the same experiment with the same nest. Again the ants came and sat over the bottle containing the strangers, while no notice was taken of the friends. The next morning again, when I got up, I found five ants round the bottle containing the strangers, none near the friends.

As in the former case, one of the ants had seized a stranger by the leg, and was trying to drag her through the muslin. All day the ants clustered round the bottle, and bit perseveringly, though not systematically, at the muslin. The same thing happened all the following day. These observations seemed to me sufficiently to test the behaviour of the ants belonging to this nest under these circumstances. I thought it desirable, however, to try also other communities. I selected, therefore, two other nests. One was a community of *Polyergus rufescens*, with numerous slaves. Close to where the ants of this nest came to feed, I placed as before two small bottles, closed in the same way—one containing two slave ants from the nest, the other two strangers. These ants, however, behaved quite unlike the preceding, for they took no notice of either bottle, and showed no sign either of affection or hatred. One is almost tempted to surmise that the war-like spirit of these ants was broken by slavery. The other nest which I tried, also a community of *Formica fusca*, behaved exactly like the first. They took no notice of the bottle containing the friends, but clustered round and eventually forced their way into that containing the strangers. It seems, therefore, that in these curious insects hatred is a stronger passion than affection."

From this it would appear that while the habit of living in communities and co-operating in labour, the habit which the late Professor Clifford used to speak of with strange moral enthusiasm as "band-work,"—importing into the phrase, of course, all those disinterested ideas which human nature has borrowed from a totally different region,—has resulted in excellent and mutually helpful sanitary habits, and also in what we may call very rigid alien laws, it does not seem to have resulted in anything which looks in the least like personal

affections. The desire to destroy the aliens in the neighbourhood of the nest was keen and active. A patrol was set to watch them. The desire to help the captive fellow-citizens in the same neighbourhood was apparently non-existent. In all the species tried, no notice was taken of the fellow-citizens in difficulty; while every notice was taken of the strangers in ambush. Sir John Lubbock expresses this mildly, when he says that it appears that in these curious creatures hatred is a much stronger passion than affection. The evidence here given rather goes to show that fear or hatred is very active indeed, while of pure affection in the sense of love of fellow-citizens for their own sake—as distinguished from the interest of the nest—there is not a trace.

And this, I am strongly disposed to believe, is just the sort of morals—if morals they could, by any possibility, be called—which could alone be deduced as consequences of the habits most conducive to the safety and cohesion of large communities. The gregarious insects afford far more instructive examples of the needs of such communities than any higher class of creatures. Their communities are much more crowded, their instincts much more clearly the offspring of their social needs, their administrative organisations much more purely social, and on a much larger scale, than in the case of any other gregarious creature whatever, man not excepted. And what do we find? That while habits which would at first-sight appear to involve disinterested service, tending to the health and strength of the community, are certainly produced, these habits appear to stop just short of anything like real personal attachment and regard.

And probably for a very good reason,—namely, that such personal affections would be destructive of the safety of the community, instead of conservative of it, unless they were completed and regulated by that very refined, and subtle, and far-reaching principle, of which the human conscience is the highest earthly form. The first condition of successful social life on a large scale taken alone, would be, I believe, not the existence of the higher individual affections, but the non-existence of such affections. The mechanical order of one vast community of insects, crowded together in a minute space, would be as much disturbed by strong personal ties between individuals and individuals, as an army would be by the existence of such ties (if they were not kept in check by the spirit of discipline), between the soldiers of one regiment and the soldiers of another regiment performing different functions in a different part of the field. The gregarious principle taken alone is not the germ of the human affections. It is the germ of a kind of organisation very much more perfect, for very much lower ends;—but one not in the least tending to the most perfect development of the sort of order for which the sense of a moral law, and the existence of a moral government, are the great essentials.

XXXIII

SIR JOHN LUBBOCK ON ANTS

1877

THE paper by Sir John Lubbock in the March number of the *Fortnightly Review*, on the habits of ants, is as fascinating as the best of novels, without having anything in it of that highly imaginative character which has too often attached to the observations of naturalists on the habits of creatures so widely separated from us as the insects. Nothing is more difficult than to draw the right inferences from the facts observed as to the habits of such creatures; indeed, Sir John Lubbock has already shown, I imagine, that many of these inferences are illegitimate, and assume too easily the kind of explanations which would be the true explanations of similar conduct on the part of men, but are not the true explanations in these cases. Sir John Lubbock's reputation as a naturalist is due in great measure to his ingenuity in devising experiments which enable him to compare the conduct of insects under circumstances in all respects but one the same, and to infer accurately, therefore, from the difference (if any) in their conduct, that they are actuated by the circumstance of this particular difference. For instance, the

following is a most conclusive experiment, which he tried in order to establish the power of ants to communicate to each other a simple idea. Nothing is more certain than that ants set great store by the larvæ of ants (whether of their own tribe or not), and that they will carry carefully to their nests any they can find. Sir John Lubbock, therefore, put two glasses, the one filled with larvæ (from 300 to 600), and another containing only two or three (of which, however, any one taken away was immediately replaced by another), in positions accessible to an ants' nest, and then put one of the tribe *Lasius niger* to each glass, noting on her return to the nest how many companions each brought with it; but all these companions on their arrival at either glass of larvæ were imprisoned till the end of the experiment, so that they might not, by their return to the nest carrying larvæ, betray in which glass the larger number was. The result was that in every case here recorded—(Sir John quotes the total result of all the experiments occupying fifty hours, and the individual result of five of the experiments occupying eight hours, but not of course, the individual result of every experiment)—the ant visiting the glass with few larvæ brought either no companions or very few, —the largest number of companions ever brought by her was three in one hour, in which she herself made ten journeys; while the one visiting the glass with many larvæ never brought less than seven companions in an hour's time, and once brought sixteen companions within that time,—the remarkable fact being that in the hour in which she brought most companions, she made the fewest journeys herself, while in the hour in which she brought fewest companions with her she worked singularly hard herself. But the

most final of these experiments was the one in which Sir John reversed the glasses, leaving the ant which had hitherto been engaged on the large heap of larvæ with but two or three, and the one which had been hitherto engaged on the small heap with hundreds to work at. And the result was most remarkable. The ant which had previously brought comparatively few companions, now brought twenty in the two hours during which the experiment lasted, —or at the rate of ten in the hour,—while the other one, which had hitherto brought many companions with it, though it worked hard itself, brought only one companion throughout the two hours. It is clearly impossible not to infer that each ant while working at the larger heap communicated to its companions in the nest either its greater need of assistance or the greater booty to be had, while the other ant either communicated its indifference to assistance or the smallness of the booty to be had. The total result of all the experiments was that the ant working at the glass with few larvæ, brought in fifty hours only eighty-two friends, or little more than an average of, say, one friend in every thirty-eight minutes, while the other brought 257 companions in the same time, or one friend every twelve minutes. It is hardly conceivable that with so careful a series of experiments such a result could have been accidental, especially taking into account the striking result where the heavy job was given to the ant which had previously been working at the light one, and *vice versâ*. On the other hand, I am not quite convinced by the experiment from which Sir John infers that though one ant can communicate a simple notion of this kind, it cannot communicate a more complex one—cannot tell another ant the proper way to a

store of food which it has discovered. The manner in which he satisfied himself of this was by placing a store of honey in a glass accessible to the nest, and putting an ant to the honey, but instead of allowing her after her return to show her companions the right way, he removed her straight to the honey directly she had started on her subsequent journey from the nest, leaving her companions to find their own way if they could,—he had carefully arranged a place where they might go wrong, and could not be kept right by scent alone,—from any directions their friend might have given them. But then why should the ant have even tried to give them directions, when she was herself going to show them the way? Even a man would hardly tell the right way to his companion, if he intended himself to accompany him. Surely the better course would have been to tether the ant as she set out from the nest on her first return to the honey, and then, observing the same precautions as before, to see whether she could *send* any of her companions in search of the store she had found. Still though this experiment is not final, it seems probable that the conclusion represents fairly enough the general standard of the ant's intelligence. Sir John Lubbock has shown by another very decisive experiment that though the ants will *tunnel* through earth to get at food the whereabouts of which they know, they will not make the minutest of embankments to help them to economise their labour in getting at such food; nor did they even drop food down to the nest from a point directly above it, to save themselves a very long roundabout journey in bringing it. In a word, the modes of engineering to which, as a race, they have long been accustomed, they will still pursue when necessary. But they seem

to devise no variation on them, however slight and easily accomplished, to save their labour. To make a passage through mould to a store of food, they will move away numbers of particles of earth which are in the way; but they will not collect two or three such particles together, in order to make for themselves a raised pathway by which they may get to food above them.

About the same level of intelligence is shown in the experiments made by Sir John Lubbock on the power of ants to discriminate between friends and strangers, and on their friendliness towards their friends. That they discriminate clearly in the general way between friends and strangers,—and this even when the friends have been separated from them for upwards of a year,—Sir John has clearly proved, but that they are not particularly anxious to go out of their way to befriend even their friends, he has also shown; and more than this, he has proved that even in the favour they show to their own companions over strangers, there is a certain indifference to small mistakes, which appears to indicate that they are acting rather on general political rules than on any principle of personal affection. When Sir John Lubbock chloroformed twenty-five friends and twenty-five strangers, the ants carried out almost all as dead and dropped them into the water,—friends and strangers alike,—and as ants do not recover from chloroform, they were not, so far, wrong. But when instead of chloroforming he intoxicated twenty-five friends and thirty strangers with alcohol,—from which ants do recover,—their procedure was very different. They carried twenty friends into the nest, where they probably recovered, and dropped the other five, as if they were dead, into the water. Of the thirty

strangers, they dropped twenty-four into the water, and took six into the nest, but brought out four again and dropped them also into the water, so that while only two strangers were retained in the nest, only five friends were put out of the way after the fashion in which twenty-eight out of the thirty strangers had been disposed of. Were these two strangers, I wonder, distinguished strangers, whom they wanted to honour, or to keep as hostages, or to send back as ambassadors? And were the five friends *mauvais sujets*, whom they were glad of an excuse for getting rid of? Or was it the case, as is more probable, that, dealing somewhat carelessly with the matter, as a mere matter of business, they confounded friends with strangers in one or two instances, just as in a town-and-gown affray one or two gownsmen might be mistaken for so many townsmen? There is a good deal which seems to show that ants are rather political than personal in their principles of action. Cover one of their citizens with mould, and numbers of them will pass him by on the other side, though a very little labour would disinter him. On the other hand, where a good many citizens are collectively affected, a policy has to be adopted. It need not be a very delicately discriminating policy, still it must be a policy,—and though mistakes are made in the individual details, it is efficiently carried out.

On the whole, Sir John Lubbock's experiments and observations seem to show that the world of ants, while a very industrious, very prudent, and in some respects, a very highly and economically organised world, is rather a world ruled by averages, in which what has been called "the individuality of the individual" is not of much account. There is clear economy of labour. Sir John Lubbock has shown that in the

time of comparative torpidity, when there are no larvæ to be fed, two or three ants do the foraging for a whole nest, coming out usually about twice a day. If these foragers were imprisoned, then an equal number were sent out in their places by the community at home; and so again, if these last were imprisoned. Again, one of the experiments I have detailed, shows that an ant which has found more larvæ than it can carry home itself, conveys in some way to its comrades that it needs help to transport them. A still higher economical instinct is shown in the care the ants take to preserve and hatch the *eggs* of the aphides on whose honeydew they live;—in a word, they do just what a poultry-keeper does, a feat beyond the foresight of many tribes of human savages. Again, besides keeping such stock-farms, they seem to have dependents,—especially blind beetles and blind wood-lice,—which they keep possibly as a caste of scavengers, to remove what they find deleterious, possibly as a caste of minstrels to amuse them. (Sir John Lubbock finds ants to be quite indifferent to any sounds he can make, but he shows that they have an elaborate apparatus which looks very like an auditory apparatus, and conjectures that they may be very sensitive to vibrations which our ears do not perceive at all.) Then, too, some ants have carried the division of labour so far, that the fighting ants (the Amazons or *Polyergus rufescens*) can do nothing except fight,—cannot even feed themselves, much less clean the nests and manage the young, and are wholly dependent on a different tribe, whose pupæ they plunder in order to provide themselves with slaves. In one case, quoted by Sir John Lubbock from M. Forel, ant-organisation had been carried so far that a sort of ant-empire had been created, con-

taining within a circle whose radius was two hundred yards, no less than two hundred colonies of the species *Formica exsecta*,—an empire which must have contained at least a population of ants equal to the human population of the British Islands. Indeed, Sir John Lubbock ventures to suggest that if the life of the individual ant were longer,—he supposes it to be from one to two years,—and if they could accumulate the lessons of their experience,—a great "if,"—they would, from their enormous numbers, contend on equal terms with man even in temperate regions, and probably on much more advantageous terms within the tropics.

Hence, though the old advice to the sluggard to go to the ant to learn industry might evidently be enlarged upon, and the learned doctors of capitalism and trades-unionism might be sent to the ant to learn economy also, the most instructive lesson which these wonderful communities seem likely to teach us is this, that the modern sceptic's idea of ethics, which makes ethical progress to consist in the gradual, unconscious subordination of the good of the individual to the good of the community, has been most effectually tried among the various tribes and nations of ants, and the economy in which it results carried out to a far higher perfection than it ever can be with men,—but only to prove that individuality, and the affections which foster individuality, are the most essential of conditions for the accumulation of experience. And yet the effect of experience on mere organisation is far greater, and far more rapidly accumulated, through the hereditary modification of the instincts of a creature of very short span of life like the ant, than it can be through the instincts of a being with as long an infancy as man's. Of course the more genera-

tions are possible within a given time, the more chance there is that beneficial modifications of an organism will perpetuate themselves. And yet in the cleverest of the short-lived creatures, this process proves to be indefinitely inferior in power to the accumulation of experience through conscious individual effort. Surely the inference is clear that it is not by naturally differentiated organisations, but only by the individual self-culture of consciously free beings, that the accumulation of experience in any large or moral sense becomes really possible.

XXXIV

INSECT CONSERVATISM

1880

SIR JOHN LUBBOCK will certainly earn the praise of accumulating more facts upon which we may found reasonable inferences as to the intellectual character of the Ant, than all his acute predecessors in the same field put together. His results I should describe generally as showing that the ants display, first, a preternaturally keen sense of consanguinity, —next, a good deal of that narrow conservatism which is so often the result of too much belief in the family and too little receptivity for the ideas of the external world — in the third place, a thorough distrust of revolution, so that they are almost equally afraid of establishing a new dynasty, and of destroying an old one,—and finally, a good deal of the scepticism which narrow conservatism inevitably engenders towards all suggestions not fitting easily into the established grooves. The ant, it is evident, does not, like Lord Beaconsfield, believe mainly in *race*, but, on the contrary, like the English squire, "acred up to his lips, consolled up to his chin," believes chiefly in family, and, I must add, has shown much more amazing instincts than

any English squire in discriminating the progeny of one group of families from the progeny of another. That a strange ant, though of the same species, put into any nest, will be at once attacked and killed, Sir John Lubbock has proved again and again. Like the English rustic who, on assuring himself that a man is a stranger to the district, immediately proposes to "'eave 'alf a brick at him," the ants pay no regard to species at all, if they find an ant who cannot trace his descent to their own nest intruding upon it. They make a principle of hostility to aliens, drawing no distinction between aliens of their own species and aliens of another species. But the remarkable thing appears to be their special instinct for identifying the descendants of their own tribe. Sir John Lubbock separated into two parts, in February, 1879, a nest of ants which contained two queens, giving about the same number of ants and one queen to each. In February the nest contains neither young nor eggs, so that the division was made before the earliest stage of being for the next generation began. In April both queens began to lay eggs. In July, Sir John Lubbock took a lot of pupæ from each division, and placed each lot on a separate glass, with attendants from the same division of the nest. At the end of August he took four previously marked ants from the pupæ bred in one division and put them into the second division, and one previously marked ant from the pupæ bred in the second division and put it into the first; in both cases the ants, which could never have been seen in any stage of their life by any of the ants in that division, were welcomed as friends, cleared of Sir John's paint, and accepted as members of the family. The same

thing happened again and again. But whenever a stranger was introduced after the same fashion, it was immediately attacked and destroyed. This confirmed still more remarkably a series of less crucial experiments formerly made by Sir John Lubbock on the same subject. By some inscrutable sense or other, the ants, it is clear, know the descendants—at least in the first degree—of those which have once belonged to their own nest, even though they were neither born nor thought of when their parents left the nest. So much for the profound instinct of consanguinity in the ant, as well as for the unconquerable hostility they show to those ants who are not connected with them, within recognisable degrees at least, by blood.

But now as to the intense political conservatism which this bigoted sort of family feeling produces. Sir John Lubbock has discovered, it appears, that once let an ants' nest get accustomed to living without a queen,—once let it organise democratic institutions,—and nothing will induce it to admit a queen for the future. Queens introduced into queenless nests were always ruthlessly killed, even though in one case Sir John exhibited the queen for three days to the ant-democracy in a wire cage which protected her from them, in order to accustom them to the sight of royalty. The moment the protecting wire was removed, the queen was attacked and slain, just as if she had been an ordinary alien. Sir John, however, was occasionally able, by the help of a little intrigue,—of the Marshal MacMahon kind, but more successful,—to obtain a throne for a wandering queen. The way he managed was this. He took a few ants from their nest, and put them, in that disorganised state, with

a strange queen. The ants were then in a timorous and diffident mood. They had no fixed institutions to fall back upon. They felt wanderers in the world. And feeling this, they did not attack the queen, but rather regarded her as the nucleus of a possible organisation. By thus gradually adding a few ants at a time to a disorganised mob which had accepted the queen as the starting-point for a new polity, "I succeeded," says Sir John Lubbock, "in securing the throne for her." But this success speaks as much for the conservatism of the ants, as the former unanimous rejection of the queen by an organised community. They repudiated a queen when they knew that their institutions were in working order without her. They accepted her, when they felt at sea and in peril of anarchy, as the germ of a new system. It was a timid conservatism which dictated their policy in each case. In the former, they rejected with horror the prospect of a change of constitution; in the latter, they accepted, not, perhaps, without eagerness, the prospect of a more rapid political development than, without any ready-made leader, they could have counted upon. For the ants, then, the throne was, as M. Thiers said of a Republic, under dissimilar circumstances, the constitution "which divided them least."

And it is to be inferred, I think, that the languid scepticism which is one of the commonest causes or effects,—it is difficult to say which,—of that intense timidity which is so often connected with Conservatism, affects these wonderful little creatures also. Sir John shows us most satisfactorily that the ants understand each other,—that when an ant goes back from a bit of food which she

is unable by her own strength to stir, she can and does communicate in some way to her fellow-ants the need of help. They clearly understand her message, and they prepare to assist her; but they have, it appears, no real confidence in her information. What they see with their own eyes fills them with the utmost eagerness, but what they learn from others they do not more than half believe. They usually go with the messenger, but they go without any real *élan*, without any of that earnestness which they display after getting personal experience of the existence of the store of food. After that they are all urgency. After that they outrun their fellows, and cannot reach the store of provisions too soon. But on the hearing of the ear they act with the utmost languor. They follow, but so slowly that they never keep up with their eager guide, soon drop behind, and generally give up the expedition, as one beyond their courage or strength, or at least too much for their half-faith. Let us hear Sir John's curious delineation of the sort of authority which one ant's information appears to carry to his fellow-ants :—

"I selected a specimen of *Atta testaceo-pilosa*, belonging to a nest which I had brought back with me from Algeria. She was out hunting about six feet from home, and I placed before her a large dead bluebottle fly, which she at once began to drag to the nest. I then pinned the fly to a piece of cork, in a small box, so that no ant could see the fly until she had climbed up the side of the box. The ant struggled, of course in vain, to move the fly. She pulled first in one direction and then in another, but, finding her efforts fruitless, she at length started off back to the nest empty-handed. At this time there were no ants coming out of the nest. Probably there were some few others out hunting, but for at least

a quarter of an hour no ant had left the nest. My ant entered the nest, but did not remain there ; in less than a minute she emerged, accompanied by seven friends. I never saw so many come out of that nest together before. In her excitement the first ant soon distanced her companions, who took the matter with much *sang-froid*, and had all the appearance of having come out reluctantly, or as if they had been asleep and were only half awake. The first ant ran on ahead, going straight to the fly. The others followed slowly and with many meanderings ; so slowly, indeed, that for twenty minutes the first ant was alone at the fly, trying in every way to move it. Finding this still impossible, she again returned to the nest, not chancing to meet any of her friends by the way. Again she emerged in less than a minute with eight friends, and hurried on to the fly. They were even less energetic than the first party ; and when they found they had lost sight of their guide, they one and all returned to the nest. In the meantime, several of the first detachment had found the fly, and one of them succeeded in detaching a leg, with which she returned in triumph to the nest, coming out again directly with four or five companions. These latter, with one exception, soon gave up the chase and returned to the nest. I do not think so much of this last case, because as the ant carried in a substantial piece of booty in the shape of the fly's leg, it is not surprising that her friends should some of them accompany her on her return ; but surely the other two cases indicate a distinct power of communication. Lest, however, it should be supposed that the result was accidental, I determined to try it again. Accordingly, on the following day I put another large dead fly before an ant belonging to the same nest, pinning it to a piece of cork as before. After trying in vain for ten minutes to move the fly, my ant started off home. At that time I could only see two other ants of that species outside the nest. Yet in a few seconds, considerably less than a minute, she emerged with no less than twelve

friends. As in the previous case, she ran on ahead, and they followed very slowly and by no means directly, taking, in fact, nearly half an hour to reach the fly. The first ant, after vainly labouring for about a quarter of an hour to move the fly, started off again to the nest. Meeting one of her friends on the way she talked with her a little, then continued towards the nest, but after going about a foot, changed her mind, and returned with her friend to the fly. After some minutes, during which two or three other ants came up, one of them detached a leg, which she carried off to the nest, coming out again almost immediately with six friends, one of whom, curiously enough, seemed to lead the way, tracing it, I presume, by scent. I then removed the pin, and they carried off the fly in triumph. Again, on June 15th, another ant belonging to the same nest had found a dead spider, about the same distance from the nest. I pinned down the spider as before. The ant did all in her power to move it; but after trying for twelve minutes, she went off to the nest. For a quarter of an hour no other ant had come out, but in some seconds she came out again with ten companions. As in the preceding case, they followed very leisurely. She ran on ahead, and worked at the spider for ten minutes; when, as none of her friends had arrived to her assistance, though they were wandering about evidently in search of something, she started back home again. In three-quarters of a minute after entering the nest she reappeared, this time with fifteen friends, who came on somewhat more rapidly than the preceding batch, though still but slowly. By degrees, however, they all came up, and after most persevering efforts carried off the spider piecemeal. On July 7th I tried the same experiment with a soldier of *Pheidole megacephala*. She pulled at the fly for no less than fifty minutes, after which she went to the nest and brought five friends exactly as the *Atta* had done."

Can anything be more remarkable than the extraordinary difference in the demeanour of the ants taught by personal experience, and of the ants trusting to the report of another? Obviously, the latter had a very languid belief in the statements of their friends, just enough to make them enter on the enterprise, but not enough to make them prosecute it even so far as to hasten their pace, in order to keep up with their eager friend. Clearly, the ants are not very good judges of character. Their predisposition to distrust sanguine statements, like the predisposition of timid Conservatives in general, is so deep, that at the first obstacle they fall away, perhaps questioning the use of tasking themselves for news that sounds so improbable as that of a treasure-trove. Sir John Lubbock even reports one case in which a slave ant, of the Polyergus species, twice returned to her nest in search of co-operation in vain. Nothing she could say would induce her fellow-slaves to enter on a new bit of work, without better evidence of its remunerative character than a wandering fellow-servant's report gave them. Twice she returned alone to the unequal task, reproaching bitterly, no doubt, the faithlessness of her associates.

Those who doubt my reports of the extremely timid political caution of these insect tribes, will convince themselves that I am not exaggerating, if they will but refer to Sir John's very interesting account of these formican Conservatives, — Tories they are not, for obviously there is no blatant element in the politics of the ants. Their democ racy, when they are democrats, is the democracy of the Swiss Republic, not the democracy of the Imperialists, still less the democracy of the French Revolution.

XXXV

ANTS AS FARMERS

1881

"Go to the ant, thou sluggard," says Solomon. But I am not quite sure that Solomon, if he had to advise the Irish farmer at least, would be inclined to insist so much on the ant's example. It is true that as a farmer, as I shall show, the ant is not only industrious, but very capable. The agricultural ant of Texas achieves wonders. But it achieves wonders with a little too much of the method of the Irish Land League. Not that it has discovered the art of Boycotting its comrades, but that it does at times adopt a sort of physical compulsion which dispenses with all need for that operation. In short, the agricultural ant, being a communist by profession, naturally invents methods of compulsion which are appropriate to the life of the commune, and not appropriate to societies in which there is any attempt to cultivate what has been called "the individuality of the individual." But before I touch on this part of our subject, let me show what admirable achievements in farming the agricultural ant has accomplished. In the amusing book of Mr. McCook, of Philadelphia, *The Natural History of the Agricul-*

tural Ant of Texas, recently published in the United States, we have a most fascinating account of one great tribe belonging to that species of insects which has achieved a pastoral as well as an agricultural career. That the ant is a cowkeeper, and milks its aphides as carefully as a dairyman milks his cows, has long been admitted. But that there exists an ant so far at least a farmer as to gather in its grain harvest against the winter, and often even to husk its grain before storing it in the granaries, has been strenuously denied, in spite of Solomon's assertion of the fact, till the late Mr. Moggridge and others re-established this point within the last few years. Mr. McCook, by his careful study of the habits of the agricultural ant of Texas, has put the farming talents of the insect up to a certain point beyond doubt. It is true, he does not believe, though he does not deny, that the Texas ant itself sows the seeds of the crop which it expects to reap. He thinks the facts, so far as they are known to him, rather point to the supposition that the agricultural ant simply *permits* the growth within its enclosure of the particular plant whose seeds it wishes to harvest, while carefully clearing all other grasses away. But thus much appears to be certain,—that during the ants' partial winter hybernation, grasses of all sorts grow over the disks which the agricultural ants are in the habit of clearing round the principal gate of their nest; that in the early spring, these ants clear away all this winter vegetation completely; but that by May the clearings of all those kinds of agricultural ants which have a flat disk round their chief entrance are more or less overgrown with one plant, and one only,—the Aristida Oligantha, whose seeds they love to harvest and to feed on. Mr. McCook himself be-

lieves that this growth is permitted by the ant within its enclosure, on account of the greater convenience of harvesting the seed, while every other growth is carefully arrested and exterminated. "It seems hardly credible," he says, "that the energy and skill which enables these creatures to wholly clear away a winter growth which had overrun the disks, should be foiled in the effort to keep them clear." Mr. McCook describes carefully the operations by which this ant clears away the grasses it wants to get rid of. An ant goes to the root and bites, pulls, and twists at it, with a view to sever the stem at this point. Often after making a great incision, it will run up the leaf, and hang by the end of it, in order to increase the fracture by thus pulling it to the ground. Sometimes, while one ant continues to gnaw away at the root, another will run up the leaf, and hang with its whole small weight from the extremity. As a result of all this work, the clearing is usually left with the stunted grass-stumps, precisely resembling on a minute scale the clearing which a backwoodsman effects in an American forest. Thus Mr. McCook says of the tufts of grass in the ants' clearing :—"The stumps were dry, quite dead and black, and stood slightly above the surface, as the soil had been removed from between the gnarled rootlets. These tiny objects were spread over the inner section of the clearing. The whole so vividly recalled the pioneer scenes in Western forests with which I was familiar in boyhood, that I could not rid myself of the impression that the ants had wrought much on the same principle as the pioneers, who, having chopped down the trees and cleared away the timber and bush, leave the stumps afield, that the roots may loosen by natural decay, so that the

stumps may be more easily removed and burned." The agricultural ants of Texas garner in their seed-harvest only after the grain has dropped from the stalk, but the *Atta crudelis* of Florida and Georgia does more,—it mounts the stalk, and severs the ripe grain while still growing on the stalk. In fact, it *reaps* as well as garners in the grain; and this Mr. McCook proved for himself by sticking stalks of millet upright into the box where a nest of ants of this kind were confined; these stalks the ants mounted, and cut the grain away. In Texas, Mr. McCook found that the agricultural ant, when it was by any chance overshadowed by a peach-tree, deliberately stripped the tree of all its leaves, as this ant cannot bear to live in the shade; and if it cannot destroy an overshadowing tree, or strip it of its leaves, it will migrate, and build itself a nest more exposed to the sun, rather than remain in the shadow. That the ant garners in great stores of grain, and not only garners it in, but, in case of injury from rain, brings out the moistened grain to dry again in the sun, Mr. McCook had the fullest proof; so that I may say, on the authority of this very cautious and scrupulous writer, that the agricultural ant of Texas rivals the farming operations of man, at least on these heads,—it makes a clearing round its home; it encourages the growths it approves, and exterminates all others; it garners the grain when it is ripe, and stores it away in granaries; it husks much of this grain; it brings it out to dry when injured by moisture, and then stores it away again; and some of the allied tribes of ants not only do all this, but also reap the grain while still growing on the stalk. And all this the ant does, in addition to the very elaborate mining operations by which it constructs

the various chambers of its subterranean dwelling. No human farmer is at the same time a most effective miner. But the agricultural ant of Texas is both, and spends even more of its energy and skill on mining than it spends on farming.

But now, how are these great results attained? Clearly, to a great extent, by the complete merging of the individual self in the tribal self,—which, as we are told by the modern moralists, is the great goal even of human morality. Mr. McCook has accumulated curious evidence that the agricultural ant hardly develops his proper nature at all except under the stimulus of a considerable society; and thus is so often required to merge his individuality in the communal impulse of the tribe, that however little he shares that impulse, he hardly ever finds it worth while to struggle against it. "Three ants in a small jar remained for a number of days upon the surface of the soil, without the slightest attempt at digging; they fed freely, lapped moisture, were evidently healthy, but would not dig; they were reinforced by four individuals from the same nest, but more recent arrivals from Texas. The newcomers breathed fresh vitality into the inactive three, and in a little while the gallery-making was going merrily on." So far, there is nothing but respect due to ants who would not undertake a work requiring much co-operation with inadequate means. But when we come to look at the means adopted to enforce the communal will on the ants' individual wills, we can hardly give them equal praise. Mr. McCook speaks extremely well of the individual unselfishness of ants, having watched them constantly, both in confinement and in their free life. He says that the selfish fighting for food observable among

cattle is hardly to be observed at all amongst ants. "I have never but once,—and my observations have not been few,—seen among them any such show of selfishness and bullying. The single exception was a large-headed Floridian *crudelis*, who compelled a small worker to retire from a juicy bit of croton-seed in order to enjoy it herself. It is to be noted that this exception occurred with one of the soldier caste, not with a worker proper." But the coercion which was never applied in the interest of the individual self, was applied with great severity in the interest of the tribal self, and this though, so far as Mr. McCook believes, there is no official government of the community to issue orders which the nation are expected to obey. Momentous communal resolves, even when they are of so important a character as to determine a migration,—all originate with enthusiastic individuals whose example is catching, so that the resolve is, as it were, carried by acclamation. When, however, any movement of this kind takes place, there is often a dissentient minority who do not agree in the general wish for a change of place or policy, and the question is how to deal with these cases. The mode of doing so is curious. It appears that, as a rule, the result is always this,—that the malcontents are carried—without any great resistance—by the enthusiasts to the new nest or new scene of operations, are constrained as it were by force, but by a force to which they are not wholly indisposed to yield; and then, when they have been thus constrained, they recognise the new condition as a *de facto* though unconstitutional order of things, to which they bow, having liberated their conscience by the endurance of this partial coercion. Here is Mr. McCook's account of such an affair :—

"April 16, in digging around the old tree in order to trace the number and position of the galleries, I greatly agitated the nest. The principal gate seemed to be just within the hollow trunk. Galleries extended into the hill underneath and behind the tree, the decayed roots being also apparently used as galleries. After the invasion of the nest, the ants began, in the most excited manner, to carry bits of dry wood, straw, earth, etc., some of them many times larger than themselves, into the main gate and other doors in the hill and under neighbouring stones. I could not clearly make out the special object of this movement, although I supposed, of course, that it bore upon the repair and protection of the formicary. Two hours afterwards I revisited the spot. The same busy dragging of refuse continued. One ant was observed carrying a comrade into the hollow trunk. Searching in the direction from which she seemed to have come, I presently found another, and still another carrier. A slightly-worn path led up the hill, terminating about eleven feet from the old tree, in a gate into the ground. Along this path, and issuing chiefly from this gate, but also from underneath stones near by, moved a column of carrier-ants, every one of whom was burdened with a comrade. In a few moments I counted twenty-one of these passing along the path. The deported ants were seized by the mandibles of the carriers on or below the meso-thorax, the back being downwards; their heads were bent forward, the abdomen turned up, the legs drawn up and huddled together. The body was motionless; not the slightest sign of resistance or of struggling to get free was observed. I teased several of the carriers until the deported were released. One of the prisoners then made an effort to resist recapture. Another was evidently confused for a moment, then turned back and ascended the hill. A third was carried quite to the opening in the trunk, when, in pushing under a straw that overhung the path, the carrier stuck fast in the narrow gangway. Before this, such obstacles were readily flanked. Now,

however, the carrier abandoned her comrade, thinking, perhaps, that having reached the strong swirl and current of activity that surrounded the main gate, she would need no further coercion. Such, at least, proved to be the case, for the deported ant, after a momentary confusion, passed under the arch and was lost to sight within the cavity. Her captor and carrier, meanwhile, seemed utterly indifferent as to her whilom prisoner and her conduct, but having paused a little space to repair her toilet, straggled listlessly into the hollow. A fourth ant, when first noticed, was in the act of dragging a comrade by a leg into the cavity, where presently she was left."

Such is the mode in which the tribal self prevails over the individual self among the ants. The reluctant ants invite coercion, as it were, which the enthusiasts apply, and then the need for coercion ceases. Is it not the nearest approximation we can conceive among the world of insects to the action of the Irish Land League now? And is not the lesson worth learning? Are not the Irish farmers emulating the self-obliteration of the ants, in their utter helplessness to assert their individual conscience against the arbitrarily determined interest and policy of their tribe?

XXXVI

ANTS AND THEIR POLITY

1881

MR. J. G. ROMANES gives a very clear and terse summary, in the *Nineteenth Century* for June, of the points which are clearly established in relation to the intelligence of Ants; and those who read it may, I think, be well assured that there is not a single exaggeration in that account,—that it describes accurately and plainly the sort of civilisation of which the most social of the insects are capable. What is quite certain is that ants have a great organising power, that they have carried the subdivision of labour much further than any earthly creature known to us, outside our own race; that they beat us altogether in their power of discriminating with certainty blood relations, even when they have never seen them, nor seen the grubs, nor even the eggs from which they sprang; that they feel nothing but enmity to mere ant-hood, as such, and even for the very species—physiologically considered—to which they themselves belong, except so far as regards those members of that species who are the

descendants of one and the same family; and yet, that they will freely avail themselves of the domestic services of quite different species of ants, where they themselves have become so far specialised in their powers, that they cannot conveniently do both the working and the fighting for their own nest. Further, many species of ants are clearly pastoral; that is, they keep flocks of aphides, some of which they feed in their own stables, while they turn out others of these flocks to graze on the food most suited to them outside their nests. They know exactly when the time is come for these flocks to go out to pasture, and will guide them to the right pasture. Lastly, the more military of the Ant tribes actually send out pickets to explore the ground, before they invade a nest of the species of which they make slaves, and organise the attack on these nests in admirable style, always bringing away apparently only the grubs for their future slaves, and not attempting to make slaves of those who have reached maturity without being educated in the air of slavery. Some ants, too, practise a sort of agriculture; they store their food in large store-houses, and even bring it out to sun it at fixed periods; and in adapting their tactics to sudden emergencies they are extremely skilful, tunnelling, for instance, beneath tramways, when they have had their numbers thinned by the waggons passing over the rails and crushing them, and removing their stores from nests injured by floods, or from other unwholesome situations, to drier and more secure magazines. On the whole, this is perfectly clear,—that the ants have a civilisation of their own; that some of their races are as much superior in intelligence to others of them, as man in European

countries is to the Esquimaux; that the more specialised races of ants have a very elaborate system of caste, a professional army, so to speak, which is so military that it cannot even feed itself, and is dependent on its slaves for its very life; that other ants keep separate burial-places, one for masters and one for slaves, and that others indulge in something very like games and pastimes, as well as useful labours, while there are tribes which take intense delight in the luxury of being cleaned, and brushed, and combed by each other.

Now, thus much being, as I think, really well established, by all who have compared the very careful testimony of the different observers of the various species of ant-life in different localities, the most natural question that occurs to one is, why creatures which have got so high a civilisation have not got higher; why, with such marvellous adaptation for society and social well-being, there has not been a constant tendency to evolve higher forms of social intelligence, leading at last, perhaps, even to the accumulation of knowledge and the direct study of the secrets of Nature. It is not so easy to explain why, if the processes of evolution, and the processes of evolution alone, have brought ants so far, those processes have never brought them farther. If they have got well into the pastoral stage, and as Mr. McCook thinks, at least so far into the agricultural stage, that they clear away stumps of grass, while they allow the growth round their nests of those plants whose seed they use as food, why have they not passed on into higher exercises of intelligence? Why have they not proved capable of some kinds of manufacturing industry, and, perhaps, even of small

feats of navigation, in the little ponds or streams in the neighbourhood of their dwellings?

Such a question may seem extravagant, but it is only those who are not acquainted with the facts which Mr. Romanes has so well summarised who would think it so. When you find large tribes of ants which really clear away the primeval forest as the tufts of prairie grass must seem to them, which really reap and store, and even husk their seeds, which keep cows, and take them out at the proper season to pasture, and train slaves to help them in their work, no one can well refuse to ask himself, is this the work solely of evolution in the scientific sense,—that is, is it a complex result, gradually accumulated out of profitable accidents of organisation, through long centuries of selection of the fittest? or is it a result of instincts which have come fully armed into the world, in all their completeness of minute adaptation to circumstances? If the former, why has it not gone further? Why has not the same extraordinary process of evolution, selected —let us say, out of the leaf-cutting ants of South America, or some of the allied races, with their high organisation, elaborate training, and skilful treatment of the various problems of military empire, emigration, engineering, and so forth, with which they show themselves so much better able to cope than many of the races of men,—creatures able to register their knowledge, and therefore able to extend it? reformers as well as Conservatives? emancipators of the slave as well as founders of a domestic institution against which no one appears to rebel? non-resistance and moral-force ants, as well as high-caste military ants, who will not, or cannot, even feed themselves?—ants, in short, which contem-

plate an ideal of perfect ant-hood, and strive to attain it by all paths, meditative as well as practical, till some one tribe has arrived at the general idea of Formicanity, and even asserted its right to perform painful experiments on the living bodies of those heavier and grosser human beings, whom the higher orders of ants would probably regard as the most clumsy and degraded embodiments of material life? My readers will think I am speaking in mockery, but I speak quite sincerely, when I say that if all the elaborate instincts which the more intelligent ants can be shown to have, were the mere result of natural selection out of simpler forms of intelligence, we could not see any limit at all to their development. The smallness of the creature,—and it is this which makes these large ideas of its possibilities so odd to us,—is rather in its favour, than against it. If a population consisting of as many different tribes of ants as there are races of men, and of as large a population, could all exist together within a square mile, only conceive the variety of manners and ant-philosophies which a travelled ant could acquire. No doubt, at present, the extraordinary dislike of ants to any ants except those which are either of their own family, or of the race useful to them as servitors, would put great obstacles in the way of an ant with the tastes of an Herodotus or a Livingstone. But, then, what I am supposing is that there would be such a further evolution of the intelligence of ants, as to raise effectually at least this question concerning them, whether this habit of theirs of assassinating strangers is really legitimate or justifiable. It has been already proved, as Mr. Romanes shows, that under extremely exceptional circumstances, ants of different stocks will live like a happy

family in the same prison; and what ants in prison will do, ants at liberty might easily learn to do, if that proved to be a variation of habit profitable to them, instead of dangerous. Of course, the first step in such a development as I have suggested would be the growth of a general desire for knowledge and for reasonableness of life. But why an ant which has developed a heroic caste of separate fighters, a caste absolutely dependent on slaves for both food and cleansing, might not, in the same manner, develop a class of separate thinkers, or moralists, living only to meditate, and announce the result of its meditations, it is, on the principles of selection, impossible to say. If imagination and idealism be due merely to the overflow of nervous energy beyond the bounds of strictly organised habit,—a sort of excursion into higher possibilities of action or suggestion,—there is no more reason why a creature so highly endowed with nervous energy as the ant should not have developed it, than there could be why man should not have developed it. And the much greater rapidity of the process by which improvements of organisation are fixed and engraved, as it were, on the organisation of the ant, is in favour of its appearing sooner in the ant, than in our more cumbrous race.

For my own part, I seriously believe that if the instincts of the Ant were merely evolved, by selection of the fittest out of useful varieties of accidental habit, and were not, in the old sense, elaborate "instincts" at all, we should have had long ago ants fully the equals or superiors of man in intelligence and capacity. But the more we know of ants and other wonderful insects, the more certain it seems that their instincts are *not* organised results of pre-

vious acts of reason on their part, but are specific habits implanted in them for the preservation of the race, rather than for the guidance of the individual, and implanted by a higher reason which takes little account of their individual safety, but very much of the general course of development of natural organisms in preparing the Earth to be the habitation of Man.

XXXVII

SIR JOHN LUBBOCK ON THE STUDY OF WASPS

INSUFFICIENT INSTINCTS

1881

AMONG the very numerous contributions which Sir John Lubbock makes every year to our knowledge of the insect world, the address which he delivered a few weeks ago at the anniversary meeting of the Entomological Society is one of the most interesting, though it refers to other men's observations, and not to his own. Perhaps the most curious part of the address is the account of M. Fabre's studies of wasps. The curious point in these studies is the way in which M. Fabre has brought out the blending of a very remarkable complexity of instinct with an equally remarkable and very sharp limitation. For example, the species called Chalicodoma "is enclosed in an earthen cell, through which, at maturity, the young insect eats its way. M. Fabre found that if he pasted a piece of paper round the cell, the insect had no difficulty in eating through it; but if he enclosed the cell in a paper case, so that there was the space even of only a few lines between the cell and

the paper, in that case the paper formed an effectual prison. The instinct of the insect taught it to bite through one enclosure, but it had not wit enough to do so a second time." Or, to take a still more singular case of the same sort of curious limitation of a complex instinct, "It is remarkable," says Sir John Lubbock, "how the Bembex remembers (if one may use such a word) the entrance to her cell, covered as it is with sand, exactly, to our eyes, like that all round. Yet she never makes a mistake or loses her way. On the other hand, M. Fabre proved that if he removed the surface of the earth and passage, exposing the cell and the larva, the Bembex was quite at a loss, and did not even recognise her own offspring. It seems as if she knew the door, the nursery, and the passage, but not her child." And these instances do not stand alone. A particular species of wasp is accustomed to provide a kind of grasshopper for her young, and this she drags by one antenna. "M. Fabre found that if the antennæ be cut off close to the head, the Sphex, after trying in vain to get a grip, gives the matter up as a bad job, and leaves her victim in despair, without even thinking of dragging it by one of its legs. Again, when a Sphex had provisioned her cell, laid her egg, and was about to close it up, M. Fabre drove her away, and took out the ephippigera and the egg. He then allowed the Sphex to return; she went down into the empty cell, and though she must have known that the grasshopper and the egg were no longer there, yet she proceeded calmly to stop up the orifice, just as if nothing had happened." I call attention to these curious facts here, because it seems to me that the problem of instinct is not sufficiently studied in connection with these sharp limitations of

the field of instinct. Just as the bird will sit on a false egg as patiently as on her own, just so this Sphex carefully closes up the empty cell with as much maternal care as if it contained the egg and the food for the insect which the egg was to produce; and, what is even more remarkable, the living insect which has eaten its way through one cell will not break its way through a second wall, however thin, but remains a starving prisoner, with nothing but paper between itself and the means of life. In fact, it has then exhausted the very limited stock of directing-power which the inherited instinct provided for it. Nevertheless, what the particular instinct enjoins is sometimes so highly complex in its character as to involve,—somewhere or other,—a highly refined anatomical knowledge of the structure of insect life :—

"M. Fabre," says Sir John Lubbock, "has continued and added to the very interesting observations on the solitary wasps which he published some years ago. He then described the singular state of paralysis into which they throw their victims, which if killed would decay, and if buried alive would, in their struggles, almost infallibly destroy the egg or young larva of the wasp. The wasp, however, stings them in such a manner as to pierce the ganglia, and thus, without killing them, almost deprives them of all power of movement. One species of *Sphex*, which preys on a large grasshopper (*Ephippigera*), obtains the same result in a different manner. After having almost paralysed her victim in the usual manner, she throws it on its back, bends the head so as to extend the articulation of the neck, and then, seizing the intersegmental membrane with her jaws, crushes the subœsophageal ganglion. Truly a marvellous instinct. M. Fabre found that after this treatment the victims retain some

power of digestion, and he was able considerably to prolong their life by feeding them with syrup."

Now this clearly involves somewhere amongst the antecedent causes of this wasp's organic structure, an exact knowledge of the particular ganglion to be pierced, and of the precise effect of piercing it. And yet the very creature which is, we suppose, the blind automatic instrument to give effect to this exact knowledge, is so utterly incapable of adapting itself to new circumstances, that if it finds no antennæ by which to seize its prey, it has not sufficient sagacity to seize it by the leg instead of one of those missing antennæ to which its inherited instinct confines its too narrowly concentrated attention. The problem, then, is this,—how best to explain instincts involving, on the one hand, somewhere or other, very recondite knowledge of the mechanism of the insect system; and on the other hand, so little power of adapting means to ends, as to result in the loss of all the parent wasp's labour, or even the death of the offspring, for want of the most infinitesimal power of prolonging its efforts beyond the usual limit, or of varying the process necessary for attaining the instinct's proper end. How account for instincts which seem to involve at once so much knowledge and so little?—so much knowledge of the anatomical structure of the creatures preyed upon, and of the wants of the larva not yet produced; so little of the objects for which these instincts are conferred, and the modifications needed, in order, under some infinitesimal change of circumstances, to adapt them to that infinitesimal change? It is as if the maker of an elaborate watch had provided every condition requisite for its perfect time-keeping, including the

key, but were quite unable, when that key was lost, to provide it with another,—though he could make a new watch with its own key, just as he had made the old one;—or as if, having made the watch and its key, and the works having been removed by some external agency, he could not see the utter uselessness of going through the process of turning the key in the watch-case, as though the works were still in it. The problem of accounting for these at once singularly complex and singularly incompetent instincts, is to reconcile the accurate and curious nicety of knowledge involved in some of them with the absolute incapacity—whenever a hitch occurs—of removing that hitch, and this even though the knowledge needed to remove the hitch is immeasurably less than the knowledge needed to provide the structure with its usual working apparatus. The difficulty in the ordinary Paleyan form of the argument from Design, is that the infinite intellect which is assumed as the source of the various and highly complex animal instincts, seems *too wide* for the effect. It explains easily enough all that is perfect in Nature. It totally fails to explain the appearance of failure, and of a failure so unaccountable before difficulties which have already been overcome, and vastly more than overcome in principle, in the very process of generating the instincts which nevertheless often fail of their proper result.

Mr. Darwin has tried to explain this difficulty by suggesting a certain self-acting mode by which,—variations of sufficient number and calibre being once assumed,—some of them will tend to *perpetuate themselves*, by giving great advantages to the creatures which they affect, in the "conflict for existence." But it is hardly possible to apply such an explana-

tion as this to such phenomena of insect life as I have just been considering. It is incredible that any insect should, by an accidental variation of its habits, hit upon the perforation of a particular ganglion in its prey as a mode of providing food fit for its offspring, and should repeat the accident often enough to transmit a habit of repeating it to its descendants. Especially does this seem incredible, when we hear of other species, plentiful enough, which have no such instinct, but which *kill* the prey with which they provide food for their offspring. And, indeed, Mr. Darwin's explanation, though it really accounts adequately for some modifications of species,— especially for the protective colours of birds and butterflies,—is almost absurd as an account of the whole process of Creation, if for no other reason, at all events for this simple one,—that the structure of the physical and mechanical universe, lying beneath the zone of what we call Life, betrays precisely the same kind of large intellectual plan which this particular hypothesis, assuming both life and a law of descent, is invoked to explain. A physical world which can only be explained by geometrical and astronomical science must certainly have owed its origin to knowledge greater than the geometrical or astronomical science by which we explain it, and it seems therefore idle to look in the sphere of life itself for an explanation which we are impelled to assume in accounting for phenomena which do not involve life.

The inelasticity of highly elaborate instincts among the lower insects,—that is, their inadequacy to meet even the most trivial emergencies to which the species is not generally liable,—not only proves conclusively that the individual possessor of these

instincts is not the possessor of the intelligence necessary to interpret their meaning even dimly, but, to my mind, also renders it almost certain that the stringent limitation of the instinct to the external acts needful for the species, without the variability and the expansibility needful to fit new circumstances, is one of the conditions of its practical efficiency. If the wasp could ever satisfy its instinct without closing up the cell,—even though the egg had been removed from it,—the danger that it would often leave the cell containing the egg unclosed would, I suppose, far more than compensate the waste of power in closing up a cell from which the egg had been abstracted. If the larva which had eaten through one wall in search of its food were endowed with any further exploring power, there would be far more risk of numbers of such larvæ getting into an unsuitable environment, than there would be chance of saving the few which had been artificially immured by the experiments of such observers as M. Fabre. The strict limitation of these elaborate instincts to the production of external acts,—even in cases where these external acts are rendered quite useless and fruitless by interference from without,—indicates that the individual could not be trusted to do what is essential in nine hundred and ninety-nine cases out of a thousand, unless it were absolutely deprived of the power of omitting to do what is usually essential, in that thousandth case where it is quite useless. In other words, the limitation of the instinct to external acts (which may in exceptional cases be quite useless), is part and parcel of the efficiency of the instinct. Indeed, the combination of any modifying element of reason with these highly elaborate instincts of the lower

insects would probably be not only useless, but dangerous and prejudicial. If this be so, such instincts are evidently implanted by a reason which knows the danger attaching to a small infusion of reason in creatures incapable of being actuated by reason in the larger sense. In other words, the insufficiency of instinct for the exceptional needs of the individual is the consequence of that Providence which foresees how much reason there must be, before even a little discretion can be safely permitted at all.

And this very fact has been made by some an argument against the infinitude of the creative Reason, and in favour of that view favoured by John Stuart Mill, which represents the Creator as a "demiurgus," very powerful indeed, but unable to do all he would. For why, they say, should animal instinct be given in this mechanical way, so as to be sometimes inadequate to individual needs, *because* it cannot be varied without danger to the species? Why should it not ensure its end to the species, by virtue of ensuring its end to all the individuals of that species? I should reply,—Simply because the stock of instincts implanted in the lower animals is intended as the foundation for the evolution of the higher animal characters, and ultimately of man's:—and since it is intended that the more important of these instincts shall ultimately be partly governed and partly replaced by reason and personal discretion, the stock of animal instincts must be adapted for this gradual supersession—must, in short, be of that imperfect kind which show their deficiency more and more, the higher the nature in which they are implanted, and fade away or dwindle in proportion as reason and the capacity for personal discretion

grow. If the instinct were too complete, too well adapted for the welfare of the individual, there would be no room left for the training of reason, for the gradual increase of reason and discretion, as unfaltering instinct fails. It is just at the point where instinct fails that the reason of man takes its place; but instinct would not fail at all if it were adaptable to all the emergencies of individual life, if it left no training-ground open where instinct is at fault, and those endowed with a higher faculty of thought and choice are forced to determine their own alternative for themselves. It is just where the individual ceases to find help from the instinct of his species that his personal life begins to develop itself; and hence, as I suppose, the strict limitation of the stock of instinct in the lower animals, so that its insufficiency for the emergencies of life may become more and more obvious, as the complexity of life itself increases, and so that reason may encroach steadily, though gradually, on the domain of instinct, till at last evolution has prepared the brain of a being much more capable of understanding the rationale of instincts, than of obeying implicitly their narrow and decisive admonitions.

XXXVIII

SIR JOHN LUBBOCK ON THE DUTY OF HAPPINESS

1886

Sir John Lubbock divides with Lord Iddesleigh the special power which politicians have gained for themselves in this generation of diverting attention from politics to those vaguer, but after all more important subjects, to which very few except politicians can persuade modern audiences carefully to attend. It is some compensation, perhaps, for the dreary condition of politics that the reputation of political distinction enables a few wise men who are too moderate to lead the van in political strife, to give us advice which the people would certainly not accept with equal deference from any man who had not shown his capacity in the political field. And even Lord Iddesleigh does not give good counsel with more ease and grace and humour and variety of illustration than Sir John Lubbock. His address at Preston yesterday week, on "The Conduct of Life," was a perfect model of the kind of address which charms by its wisdom, and renders us wiser by its charm. What a range of attractive reading it covers! Bacon, Pliny, Theognis (in a translation

of high poetical merit), *Alice in Wonderland*, Epicurus, Hearne's *Journey to the Mouth of the Coppermine River*, Simonides, Cicero, Brown the author of *Christian Morals*, Ruskin, Lord Brougham, La Bruyère, Goethe, *The Imitation of Christ*, St. Bernard, Marcus Aurelius, Helmholtz, Mr. Pater, Luther, Mr. W. R. Greg, besides not a few proverb writers, are all laid under contribution without the smallest effort, or the smallest trace of pedantry, to add to the life and interest of the lecture, and it is difficult to say which of the quotations is the more pertinent or the more fascinating in form. Perhaps the one which gave me most pleasure was the old-fashioned one from Brown, the author of *Christian Morals*,—one which was perfectly new to me,—on the two classes of men who, for opposite reasons, are afraid of solitude. "Unthinking heads who have not learnt to be alone are a prison to themselves if they be not with others; whereas, on the contrary, those whose thoughts are in a fair and hurry within, are sometimes fain to retire into company, to be out of the crowd of themselves." I quote this, however, not so much for the quaintness and originality of the saying, as because it has a bearing on the subject on which Sir John Lubbock enunciated the only doubtful doctrine of his address,—the subject of the duty of happiness. In the opening, he deprecated a life of drudgery, and insisted that though abilities, like property, imply duties as well as rights, these duties ought not to be of a kind to make life a life of drudgery; that even for the ablest man "time spent in innocent and rational enjoyments, in social and family intercourse, in healthy games, is well and wisely spent. Moreover, there are other temptations in youth which strong exercise enables us better to

resist. Indeed, so far from wishing to put drudgery as the ideal of life, I would do the very reverse, and impress on you the duty of happiness, as well as the happiness of duty." Well, but if happiness be a duty, surely unhappiness is a sin, and in that case, those who make it one of their chief aims in life to drive away unhappiness of every kind, are following the guidance of conscience no less than the impulse of self-love, in their endeavour. Yet in that case, Goethe's teaching,—and Goethe was not at all inclined to be too spiritual in his ideal of conduct,—that the first great lesson which man has to learn is renunciation,—what Christ calls self-denial,—is not a true lesson. You cannot make the duty of happiness a leading principle of your creed, if you are to teach yourself to renounce willingly; for these are contradictory doctrines,—the one teaching that there is a greater spiritual force in renouncing happiness when any higher claim comes into collision with it, than in tenaciously pursuing happiness; the other teaching that it is one of the highest duties of life to secure happiness. Now, I am far from thinking that Sir John Lubbock, the great author of Bank holidays though he be, does hold that in any true sense it is a duty to be happy,—that is, if you can only gain happiness, I do not say merely by injuring others, but even by forgetting your true self. He evidently does not approve either the man who seeks refuge from his own vacancy of mind in constant recourse to the society of others, or the man who seeks refuge there from the engrossing character of his own feelings, who retires into company to be out "of the crowd" of himself. Rather he holds, with Marcus Aurelius, that "that which causes us unhappiness is not misfortune; but that to

bear it nobly is good fortune." We suffer much more, he thinks, with Marcus Aurelius, from our own vexation at little misadventures than we do from those misadventures themselves. Indeed, we should misread the drift of Sir John Lubbock's whole address if we supposed him really to say that there is any duty in happiness so imperative as to make us seek distractions from all kinds of troublesome thoughts, instead of boldly facing such thoughts and extracting from them all they have to teach us as to our own weaknesses and sins. He quotes with approval the saying of Epicurus, that "the man who is not content with little is content with nothing," and that clearly tells strongly against the doctrine that we have any absolute right to happiness such as would justify a man in trying to avoid or evade pain, as he would avoid or evade moral evil. If it were a sin to be unhappy, the man who rushed into society to distract his mind from his own unhappy thoughts, would be pursuing virtue in the very act; and if happiness were the main end of life, the man who contented himself with little instead of eagerly grasping at much, would be neglecting his duty instead of showing his sobriety and wisdom. It is obvious, I think, that what Sir John Lubbock really meant when he insisted on the duty of happiness, was not the duty of happiness, but the duty of cheerfulness and thankfulness, both of which virtues are often seen at their maximum in lives which it is impossible to call in any natural sense happy. There may be the utmost cheerfulness where the true basis of life is not happiness but fortitude. There may be the utmost thankfulness where men who enjoy no more than an average share of happiness would see no room for anything but despair.

It is the more necessary that Sir John Lubbock's address should not be misunderstood, because his own just reputation for zeal in allotting more time for popular amusement and recreation, and his wise panegyric on healthy sports and games, might, if interpreted by the light of the saying that happiness is a duty, disguise the drift of the greater part of his address, which consists in impressing on us that we shall not only be better, but in the end happier too, if we do not anxiously pursue happiness, but hold on to it very loosely, and are willing to give it up cheerfully rather that resign any greater good. Ours is a time when the young, at least, think too much of recreation, and devote too much of the real energies of their life to the strategy of amusement. To some extent, the very disinterested beneficence of the day which has contrived so many palliatives for the misery of the toilworn classes, has lent countenance to the prevalent notion that those who do not enjoy their lives are defrauded of their absolute rights, and has encouraged the young people of a class which has more than its share of the pleasures of life, to regard those pleasures as their just inheritance. Yet nothing can be more certain than that the lives which are pervaded by the belief that the pursuit of happiness is the natural and legitimate aim of men, are neither the noblest nor the happiest. The lesson of renunciation (Goethe's *Entsagen*), or the lesson of self-denial,—what Matthew Arnold calls "the secret of Jesus,"—is, indeed, at the root of true cheerfulness, though not, in this life, of absolute happiness; and however good Sir John Lubbock's teaching may be as to the wisdom of embodying recreation in the scheme of life, the justification of it lies not in the fact that pleasure is

one of the chief ends of man, but in the fact that for the most part those who play well, work better than they play, and could not work so well as they do if they did not play also. It is not that the pleasurable occupation is the right one because it is pleasurable, but that the pleasurable occupation gives zest to the more arduous occupation, and lends to the enthusiasm of labour something of the delightful glow of conscious enjoyment. Sir John Lubbock, strenuous as he has been in providing opportunity for leisure and for pleasure among the hard-worked classes, is the last man to teach that it is a duty to avoid unhappiness in the same sense in which it is a duty to avoid moral evil, or that any life will really be anything but ignoble in which the pursuit of happiness is not made comparatively light of, wherever it comes into collision with true duty. In insisting that a man should not be afraid of his own company,—that he should neither be without resources in himself, nor afraid of the throng of his own desires,—neither aghast at being thrown back on himself, nor so aghast at the passions he finds within himself that he is reluctant to face his own inner world,—Sir John Lubbock virtually teaches that, instead of aiming at satisfying our most eager cravings, we should aim at craving that which most deserves to be won. And if that be so, there cannot be said to be any duty of happiness. It is our duty to make others happy, so far as we can do so lawfully; it is a duty not to make them unhappy by whining over our troubles; it is a duty to put a cheerful face on life; it is a duty to enjoy the blessings we have, and to show that we are grateful for them; but it is not a duty to be happy, for if it were, we should be quite right in fleeing from

unhappiness as from absolute evil, and in drowning in amusement all those anxieties and discontents with ourselves which it is of the highest importance to us to confront. The only case in which it may be truly said that it is a duty to seek happiness, is where we are fully convinced that a certain measure of happiness will make us stronger for our duties, just as a certain measure of recreation makes us stronger for our professional tasks. The strong man can do with less happiness than the weaker man; but in either case alike, the happiness which it is a duty to aim at is only so much as is subservient to the higher work of life; and when all is said, the duty of happiness can never really compare, in its significance to human life, with the happiness of duty.

THE END

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