

THE

320

Logic of Death,

Or, why should the Atheist fear to Die?

By G. J. Holyoake.

"Even in the 'last dread scene of all' *personal conviction is sufficient to produce calmness and confidence.* There was one, who for three months suffered agonies unutterable, who exclaimed in his anguish, 'So much torture, O God, to kill a poor worm! Yet if by one word I could shorten this misery, I would not say it. And at last, folded his arms, and calmly said, 'Now I die!' Yet this man was an avowed infidel, and worse, an apostate priest."—*Spoken by FATHER NEWMAN (in the Oratory of St. Philip Neri) of Blanco White.*

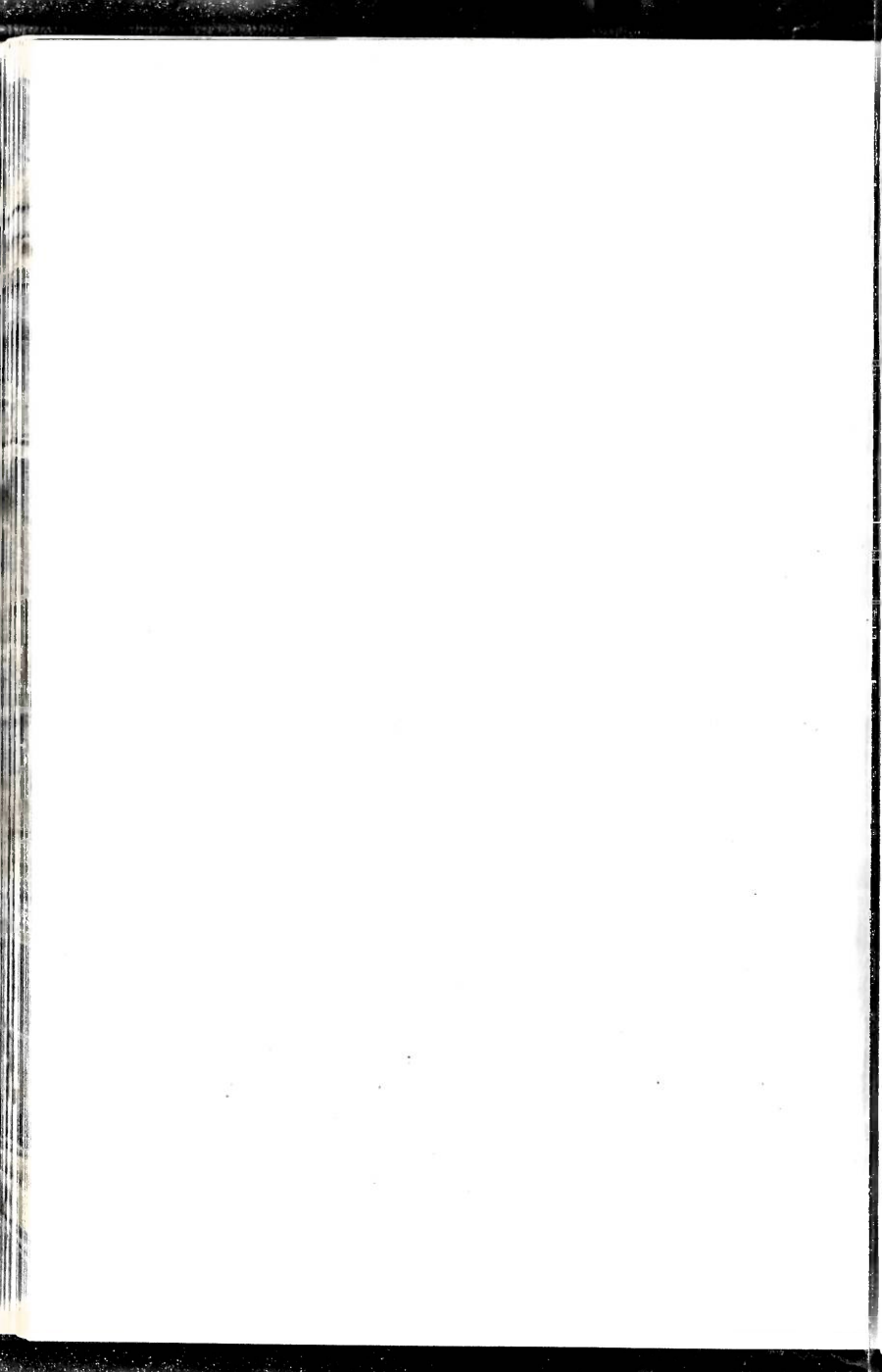
[EIGHTIETH THOUSAND—
ENLARGED AND REVISED EDITION.]

LONDON:

AUSTIN & Co., JOHNSON'S COURT, E.C.

—
1870.

PRICE ONE PENNY.



THE LOGIC OF DEATH.

WHEN the cholera prevailed in London in 1848, many were carried away without opportunity or power to testify to the stability of those conclusions which had been arrived at when life was calm, and the understanding healthy. The slightest summary of opinions, conscientiously prepared, would have been sufficient to prevent misrepresentation after death, provided the person who had drawn up such statements had strength to revert to them, and to make some sign that a conviction of their correctness remained. Mr. Hetherington and myself drew up brief statements of tenets which appeared to us to be true. He, as we know, sealed his in death. In several lectures delivered, at the time when no man could calculate on life an hour, I recited the grounds on which the Atheist might repose, and it has since appeared that their publication would be useful. The book, of which a second volume has since appeared, entitled 'The Closing Scene,' by the Rev. Erskine Neale (in which the old legends about infidel death-beds are revived), lauded by the *Times*, and patronised by the upper classes, is proof that there are some priests going up and down like roaring lions, seeking consciences which they may devour, and proof of the necessity of some protest on this subject.

Since my trial before Mr. Justice Erskine, in 1842, I have in some measure been identified with sceptics of theology, and many ask the opinions of such on death. If the world ask in respect, or curiosity, or scorn, I answer for myself alike respectfully and distinctly. I love the world in spite of its frowning moods. For years I have felt neither anger nor hatred of any living being, and I will not advisedly resuscitate those distorting passions through which we see the errors of each other as crimes.

In my youth I was in such rude contact with the stern realities of life, that the visions with which theology surrounded my childhood were eventually dispelled, and now (so far as I can penetrate to it) I look at destiny face to face. Cradled in suffering and dependence, I was emboldened to think, and I took out of the hands of the churches, where I was taught to repose them, the great problems of Life, Time, and Death, and attempted the solution for myself. It was not long hidden from me that if I followed the monitions of the pulpit, the

Those who must answer for themselves, have the right to think for themselves.

responsibility was all my own : that at the 'bar of God,' before which I was instructed all men must one day stand, no preacher would take my place if, through bowing to his authority, I adopted error. As I, therefore, must be reponsible for myself, I resolved to think for myself—and since no man would answer for me, I resolved that no man should dictate to me the opinion I should hold : for he is impotent indeed, and deserves his fate, who has not the courage to act where he is destined to suffer. My resolution was therefore taken, and I can say with Burke, 'my errors, if any, are my own: I have [and will have] no man's proxy.'

In the shade of society my lot was cast, and there I struggled for more light for myself and brethren. For years I toiled, with thousands of others, who were never remunerated by the means of paltriest comfort, and whose lives were never enlivened by real pleasure. In turning from this I had nothing to hope, nor fear, nor lose. Since then my days have been chequered and uncertain, but they have never been criminal, nor servile, nor sad : for the luxury of woe, and the superfluous refinement of despair, may be indulged in, if by any, by those only who live in drawing-rooms—sorrow is too expensive an article to be consumed by the cottager or garreteer. The right-minded in the lowest station may be rich, accepting the wise advice of Carlyle :—'Sweep away utterly all frothiness and falsehood from your heart : struggle unweariedly to acquire what is possible for every man—a free, open, humble soul ; speak not at all, in any wise, till you have somewhat to speak ; care not for the reward of your speaking : but simply, and with undivided mind, for the truth of your speaking : then be placed in what section of Space and of Time soever, do but open your eyes, and they shall actually see, and bring you real knowledge, wondrous, worthy of belief.' Thus have I endeavoured to see life ; and it is from this point of view that I explain my conceptions of death.

The gates of heaven are considered open to those only who believe as the priest believes. The theological world acts as if we did not come here to use our understandings, as if all religious truth was ascertained 2000 years ago, and we are counselled to accept the conclusions of the Church, on pain of forfeiting the fraternity of men, and the favour of God. I know the risks I am said to run, but 'I am in that place,' to use the expression of brave old Knox, 'in which it is demanded of me to speak the truth ; and the truth I will speak, impugn it whoso lists.' And after all, the world is not so bad as antagonism has painted it. It will forgive a man for speaking plainly, providing he takes care to speak justly. To give any one pain causes me regret ; but, while I respect the feelings of others, I, as conscience and duty admonish me, respect the truth more—and by this course I may be society's friend, for he who will never shock men may often deceive them.

It becomes me therefore to say that I am not a Christian. If I could find a consistent and distinctive code of morality emanating from Jesus I should accept it, and in that sense consent to be called

The four tenets of the popular theology.

Christian. But I cannot do it. Nor am I a believer in the Inspiration of the Bible. That which so often falls below the language of men, I cannot, without disrespect, suppose to be the language of God. Whatever I find in the Bible below morality (and I find much), I reject; what I find above it, I suspect; what I find coincident with morality (whether in the Old Testament or the New), I retain. I make morality a standard. I am therefore the student of Moralism rather than Christianity. It seems to me that there is nothing in Christianity which will bear the test of discussion or the face of day, nothing whereby it can lay hold of the world and move it, which is not coincident with morality. Therefore morality has all the strength of Christianity, without the mystery and bigotry of the Bible.

But I am not a Sceptic, if that is understood to imply general doubt; for though I doubt many church dogmas, I do not doubt honour, or truth, or humanity. I am not an Unbeliever, if that implies the rejection of Christian truth—since all I reject is Christian error. There are four principal dogmas of accredited Christianity which I do not hold:—

1. The fall of man in Eden. 2. Atonement by proxy. 3. The sin of unbelief in Christ. 4. Future punishment.

A disbeliever in all these doctrines, why should I fear to die? I will state the logic of death, as I conceive it, in relation to these propositions.

1. If man fell in the Garden of Eden, who placed him there? It is said, God! Who placed the temptation there? It is said, God! Who gave him an imperfect nature—a nature of which it was fore-known that it would fall? It is said, God! To what does this amount? If a parent placed his poor child near a fire at which he knew it would be burnt to death, or near a well into which he knew it would fall and be drowned, would any deference to creeds prevent our giving speech to the indignation we should feel? And can we pretend to believe God has so acted, and at the same time be able to trust him? If God has so acted, he may so act again. This creed can afford no consolation in death. If he who disbelieves this dogma fears to die, he who believes it should fear death more.

2. Salvation, it is said, is offered to the fallen. But man is not fallen, unless the tragedy of Eden really took place. And before man can be accepted by God he must, according to Christians, own himself a degraded sinner. But man is not degraded by the misfortune of Adam. No man can be degraded by the act of another. Dishonour can come only by his own hands. Man, therefore, needs not this salvation. And if he needed it, he could not accept it. Debarred from purchasing it himself, he must accept it as an act of grace. But can it be required of us to go even to heaven on sufferance? We despise the poet who is a sycophant before a patron, we despise the citizen who crawls before a throne, and shall God be said to have less love of self-respect than man? He who deserves to be saved thus hath most need to fear that he shall perish, for he seems to deserve it.

The offence of sin reaches not to Deity. Proof by Jonathan Edwards.

3. Then in what way can there be a sin of unbelief? Is not the understanding the subject of evidence? A man, with evidence before him, can no more help seeing it, or feeling its weight, than a man with his eyes or ears open can help seeing the stars above him or trees before him, or hearing the sounds made around him. If a man disbelieve, it is because his conviction is true to his understanding. If I disbelieve a proposition, it is through lack of evidence; and the act is as virtuous (so far as virtue can belong to that which is inevitable) as the belief of it when the evidence is perfect. If it is meant that a man is to believe, whether he see evidence or not, it means that he is to believe certain things, whether true or false—in fine, that he may qualify himself for heaven by intellectual deception. It is of no use that the unbeliever is told that he will be damned if he does not believe; what human frailty may do is another thing; but the judgment is clear, that a man ought not to believe, nor profess to believe, what seems to him to be false, although he should be damned. The believer who seeks to propitiate Heaven by this deceit ought to fear its wrath, not the unbeliever, who rather casts himself on its justice.

4. There is the vengeance of God. But is not the idea invalidated as soon as you name it? Can God have that which man ought not to have—vengeance? The jurisprudence of earth has reformed itself; we no longer punish absolutely, we seek the reformation of the offender. And shall we cherish in heaven an idea we have chased from earth? But what has to be punished? Can the sins of man disturb the peace of God? If so, as men exist in myriads, and action is incessant, then is God, as Jonathan Edwards has shown, the most miserable of beings and the victim of his meanest creatures. Surely we must see, therefore, that sin against God is impossible. All sin is finite and relative—all sin is sin against man. Will God punish this which punishes itself? If man errs, the bitter consequences are ever with him. Why should he err? Does he choose the ignorance, incapacity, passion, and blindness through which he errs? Why is he precipitated, imperfectly natured, into a chaos of crime? Is not his destiny made for him? and shall God punish eternally that sin which is his misfortune rather than his fault? Shall man be condemned to misery in eternity because he has been made wretched, and weak, and erring in time? But if man has fallen at his conscious peril—has thoughtlessly spurned salvation—has wilfully offended God—will God therefore take vengeance? Is God without magnanimity? If I do wrong to a man who does wrong to me, I come down (has not the ancient sage warned me?) to the level of my enemy. Will God thus descend to the level of vindictive man? Who has not thrilled at the lofty question of Volumnia to Coriolanus?—

‘Think’st thou it honourable for a noble man
Still to remember wrongs?’

Shall God be less honourable, and remember the wrong done against

him, not by his equals, but by his own frail creatures? To be unable to trust God is to degrade him. Those passages in the New Testament which we feel to have most interest and dignity, are the parables in which a servant is told to forgive a debt to one who had forgiven him; in which a brother is to be forgiven until seventy times seven (that is unlimitedly): and in the prayer of Christ, where men claim forgiveness as they have themselves forgiven others their trespasses. What was this but erecting a high moral argument against the relentlessness of future punishment of erring man? If, therefore, man is to forgive, shall God do less? Shall man be more just than God? Is there anything so grand in the life of Christ as his forgiving his enemies as he expired on the cross? Was it God the Sufferer behaving more nobly than will God the Judge? Was this the magnificent teaching of fraternity to vengeful man, or is it to be regarded as a sublime libel on the hereafter judgments of heaven? The infidel is infidel to falsehood, but he believes in truth and humanity, and when he believes in God, he will prefer to believe that which is noble of him. Holding by no conscious error, doing no dishonour in thought, and offering his homage to love and truth, why should the unbeliever fear to die? Seeing the matter in this light, of what can I recant? The perspicuity of truth may be dimmed by the agonies of death, but no amount of agony can alter the nature of moral evidence.

To say (which is all I do say) that theology has not sufficient evidence to make known to us the existence of God, may startle those who have not thought upon the matter, or who have thought through others—but has not experience said the same thing to us all? Where the intellect fails to perceive the truth, it is said that the feelings assure us of it by its relieving a sense of dependence natural to man. How? Man witnesses those near and dear to him perish before his eyes, and despite his supplications. He walks through no rose-water world, and no special Providence smoothes his path. Is not the sense of dependence outraged already? Man is weak, and a special Providence gives him no strength—distracted, and no counsel—ignorant, and no wisdom—in despair, and no consolation—in distress, and no relief—in darkness, and no light. The existence of God, therefore, whatever it may be in the hypotheses of philosophy, seems not recognisable in daily life. It is in vain to say, 'God governs by general laws.' General laws are inevitable fate. General laws are atheistical. They say practically, 'We are without God in the world—man, look to thyself: weak though thou mayest be, Nature is thy hope.' And even so it is. Would I escape the keen wind's blast, I seek shelter—from the yawning waves, I look up, not to heaven, but to naval architecture. In the fire-damp, Davy is more to me than the Deity of creeds. All nature cries with one voice, 'Science is the Providence of man.' Help lies not in priests, nor in the prayer: it lies in no theories, it is written in no book, it is contained in no theological creed—it lies in science, art, courage, and industry.

Some who regard all profession of opinion as a mere matter of policy, and not of the understanding, will tell me that I can believe as I please, and that I may call the Deity of theology what name I please : forgetful that names are founded on distinctions, and that he who does not penetrate to them is unqualified to decide this matter. It is in vain to say believe as I please, or entitle things as I please—philosophical evidence and classification leave no choice in the matter.

The existence of God is a problem to which the mathematics of human intelligence seem to me to furnish no solution. On the threshold of the theme we stagger under a weight of words. We tread amid a dark quagmire bestrewed with slippery terms. Now the clearest miss their way, now the cautious stumble, now the strongest fall.

If there be a Deity to whom I am indebted, anxious for my gratitude or my service, I am as ready to render it as any one existent, so soon as I comprehend the nature of my duty. I therefore protest against being considered, as Christians commonly consider the unbeliever, as one who hates God, or is without a reverential spirit. Hatred implies knowledge of the objectionable thing, and cannot exist where nothing is understood. I am not unwilling to believe in God, but I am unwilling to use language which conveys no adequate idea to my own understanding.

Deem me not blind to the magnificence of nature or the beauties of art, because I interpret their language differently from others. I thrill in the presence of the dawn of day, and exult in the glories of the setting sun. Whether the world wears her ebon and jewelled crown of night, or the day walks wonderingly forth over the face of nature, to me—

‘Not the lightest leaf but trembling teems
With golden visions and romantic dreams.’

It is not in a low, but in an exalted estimate of nature that my rejection of the popular theology arises. The wondrous manifestations of nature indispose me to degrade it to a secondary rank. I am driven to the conclusion that the great aggregate of matter which we call Nature is eternal, because we are unable to conceive a state of things when nothing was. There must always have been something, or there could be nothing now. This the dullest feel. Hence we arrive at the idea of the eternity of matter. And in the eternity of matter we are assured of the self-existence of matter, and self-existence is the most majestic of attributes, and includes all others. That which has the power to exist independently of a God, has doubtless the power to act without the delegation of one. It therefore seems to me that Nature and God are one—in other words, that the God whom we seek is the Nature which we know.

I will not encumber, obscure, or conceal my meaning with a cloud of words. I recognise in Nature but the aggregation of matter. The term God seems to me inapplicable to Nature. In the mouth of the

The distinction between the Pantheist and the Atheist.

Theist, God signifies an entity, spiritual and percipient, distinct from matter. With Pantheists the term God signifies the aggregate of Nature—but nature as a Being, intelligent and conscious. It is my inability to subscribe to either of these views which prevents me being ranked with Theists. I can conceive of nothing beyond Nature, distinct from it, and above it. The language invented by Pope, to the effect that 'we look through Nature up to Nature's God,' has no significance for me, as I know nothing besides Nature and can conceive of nothing greater. The majesty of the universe so transcends my faculties of penetration, that I pause in awe and silence before it. It seems not to belong to man to comprehend its attributes and extent, and to affirm what lies beyond it. The Theist, therefore, I leave; but while I go with the Pantheist so far as to accept the fact of Nature in the plenitude of its diverse, illimitable, and transcendent manifestations, I cannot go farther and predicate with the Pantheist the unity of its intelligence and consciousness. This is the inability, rather than any design of my own, which has exposed me to the unacceptable designation of Atheist.

One has said, I know not whether in the spirit of scorn or suffering, but I repeat it in the spirit of truth—'What went before and what will follow me, I regard as two black impenetrable curtains, which hang down at the two extremities of human life, and which no living man has yet drawn aside. Many hundreds of generations have already stood before them with their torches, guessing anxiously what lies behind. On the curtain of futurity many see their own shadows, the forms of their passions enlarged and put in motion; they shrink in terror at this image of themselves. Poets, philosophers, and founders of states have painted this curtain with their dreams, more smiling or more dark as the sky above them was cheerful or gloomy; and their pictures deceive the eye when viewed from a distance. Many jugglers, too, make profit of this our universal curiosity: by their strange mummeries they have set the outstretched fancy in amazement. A deep silence reigns behind this curtain; no one once within will answer those he has left without; all you can hear is a hollow echo of your question, as if you shouted into a chasm.*'

Theology boasts that it has obtained an answer. What is it? The world will stand still to hear it. Worshipper of Jesus, of Jehovah, of Allah, of Bramah—in conventicle, cathedral, mosque, temple, or in unbounded nature—what is the secret of the universe, and the destiny of man? What knowest thou more than thy fellows, and what dost thou adore? He has no secret to tell. You have still the old dual answer of centuries, given in petulance or contempt—'All the world have heard it, and so has you;' or, 'None can understand the Infinite, and you must submit.' The solution of the problem must therefore be sought independently.

Separate individual man from the traditions of theology, and what is his history? A few years ago he sprang into existence like a

The actuality of life apart from theology.

bubble on the ocean, or a flower on the plain. He came from the blank chaos of the past, where consciousness was never known, where no gleam of the present ever pierces, no voice of the future is ever heard. He exists—but in what age he appears, or among what people or circumstances he is thrown, is to him a matter of accident. To him no control, no choice is vouchsafed. His physical constitution, his powers and susceptibilities, his proportion of health or disease, are made for him: and fettered in nature and fixed in sphere, he goes forth to struggle or to triumph, and encounter the war of elements and strife of passion, and oppose himself to ignorance, error, and interest, as best he may.

Three or four years pass away before sentient existence is lighted with the spark of consciousness, which burns faintly, intensely, or flickeringly till death. Gradually the phenomena of the universe disclose themselves to man. The ocean in its majesty, or the earth in its variety, engage him—spring is exhilarating, summer smiling, autumn foreboding, winter stern. By day the sun, by night the moon and stars, look down like the eyes of Time watching his movements. Above him is inconceivable altitude—around him, unbounded distance—below, unfathomable profundity; and he arrives at such idea as man has of the infinite. What is, seems to exist of its own inherent power. It always was, or it could not be. The idea of universal non-entity is instinctively rejected. Utter annihilation never enters into his most desultory conceptions. The sentiment of the Everlasting seems the first fruit of meditation, as an impression of the Infinite was the first lesson of comprehensive observation. Man stands connected with the infinite by position, and is related to the eternal in his origin, and an emotion of conscious dignity follows the first exercise of his reason—and his pride and his confidence are strengthened by perceiving that this infinite is the infinite of phenomena, and the eternal that of matter. He may be but the spray dashed carelessly against the shore, or the meteor-flash that for a moment illumines a speck of cloud—or a sand of the desert which the whirlwind sweeps into a transient elevation with scarcely time for distinction: yet he is sustained by conscious connection with the ever-existing, though ever-changing—his home is with the everlasting, and when he sinks, it is into the bosom of nature, the magnificent womb and mausoleum of all life.

As youth advances, and his experience increases, he finds his knowledge amplified. With nothing intuitive but the aptitude to learn, he feels that his wisdom is ever commensurate with his industry or observation—and as even aptitude is but progressively manifested, he perceives that to attempt the untried, is to develop his being more. Prematurely wasted by sudden efforts to change the order of society or influences of things, he sees that nature never hastens, and that in measured continuity of action lies the rule of success. Neither the

The epitaph of a student of nature.

muscle of the gladiator, nor the brain of Newton, acquired at once their volume or power—the leveling of the mountain or the raising of the pyramid is not the result of a single hasty attempt, but of repeated and patient efforts. Thus, while man learns that his degree of intelligence depends upon his industry and observation, his conquests depend on the strength of his perseverance—and he looks to himself, to the exercise of his faculties, and the right direction of his exertions, both for his knowledge and his power. His lot may be cast in barbarian caves, where ignorance and wildness ever frown, or under gilded pinnacle, where learning and refinement are lustrous: he may have to tread the very rudimental steps of civilisation, or he may have but to stretch forth his hand to appropriate its spoils—still what he will be will depend on his aptitudes, and what he will acquire on his discrimination, application, assiduity, and intrepidity.

As his improvement, so also his protection depends on his own precautions. He defends himself from the inclemency of the elements by suitable clothing—for health he seeks the salubrious locality, wholesome, nutritious food, exercise, recreation, and rest in due proportion, and observes temperance in all things. His security on land is the well-built habitation—on the sea, the firmly-built vessel. His relation to the external world, and the conditions of fraternity with his fellows, are the physical and social problems he has to solve. He sees the strength of passion and the educative force of circumstances, and he studies them to control them. The affairs of men are a process which he seeks to wisely regulate, not blindly and violently thwart. The world has two ages—those of fear and love. The barbarian and incipient past has been the epoch of fear. Even now its dark shadows lower over us. Love has never yet emerged from poesy and passion, has not yet put forth half its strength, nor kindness half its power. These graceful forces of humanity, whose victory is that of peace, have scarcely invaded the dominions of war—but Love will one day step into the throne of Fear, the arts of peace become the business of life, and fraternity the watch-word of joyous nations. Plainly, as though written with the finger of Orion on the vault of night, does man read this future in his heart. The impulse of affection that leaps unbidden in his breast, though suppressed in competitive strife, or withered by cankering cares, yet returns in the woodland walk and the midnight musing, ever whispering of something better to be realised than war, and dungeons, and isolated wealth have yet brought us. The student of self and nature, thus impressed, goes forth in the busy scene of life, to improve and to please. The attributes which rationalism prescribes to man, are perennial discretion and kindness.

Thus I have believed. I accepted the order of things I found without complaint, and I attempted their improvement without despair—and it might be written on my tomb,

‘I was not troubled with the time which drove
O'er my content its strong necessities,
But let determined things to destiny
Hold unbewailed their way.’

The physical fear of death as groundless as the theological.

And looking out from the bed of death, over the dim sea of the future, on which no voyager's bark is seen returning, I can place no dependence on priestly dogmas, which all life has belied. The paltry visions of gilt trumpets and angels' wings seem like the visions of irony or levity. The reality it is more heroic to contemplate. The darkness and mystery of the future create a longing for unravelment. The enigma of life makes the poetry of death, and invests with a sublime interest the last venture on untried existence.

Many honest and intelligent persons, who do not fear the future, fear the transit to it. Novelists and dramatists, in illustrating a false theory of crime, adopted from the Churches, have drawn exaggerated pictures of the aspects of death, through which the popular idea of dying has become melodramatic, and as far from truth and nature, as is the extravagance of melodrama from the pure tone of simple and noble tragedy.

A little reflection will show us that the physical fear some have of death is as groundless as the moral. Eminent physicians have shown that death being always preceded by the depression of the nervous system, life must always terminate without feeling. While apprehension is vivid, while a scream of terror or pain can be uttered, death is still remote. Organic disease, or a mortal blow, may end existence with a sudden pang, but in the majority of cases men pass out of life as unconsciously as they came into it. To the well-informed, death, in its gradualness and harmlessness, is, what Homer called it—the half-brother of sleep: and the wise expect it undisturbed; and if they have no reason to welcome it, bear it like any other calamity.

Were we not from childhood the victims of superstitions, we should always regard death thus; but priests make death the rod whereby they whip the understanding into submission to untenable dogmas. For men know no independence, and are at the mercy of every strong imposition, while they fear to die. That ancient spoke a noble truth who said nothing could harm that man—tyranny had no terrors with which it could subdue him who had conquered the fear of the grave. How often progress has been arrested—how often good men have faltered in their course—how often philosophy has concealed its light, and science denied its own demonstrations, only because the priest has pointed to his distorted image of death!

Among people of cultivated intelligence the idea of a punishing God is morally repulsive. It is rejected as a fact because demoralising as an example. The Unitarian principle, which trusts God and never fears him, is the instinct of civilisation: it gains ground every day and in every quarter. The parent coerces his child in order to correct him, because the parent wants patience, or time, or wisdom, or humanity. But as God is assumed to want none of these qualities, he can attain any end of government he wishes by instruction, for in moral discipline 'it is not conduct but character which has to be changed.' In Francis William Newman's portraiture of Christian attributes, he enumerates 'love, compassion, patience, disinterested-

THE LOGIC OF DEATH.

The Golden Rule considered as a maxim of the Last Judgment.

ness,' qualities incompatible with the sentiment of eternal punishment—and as was before observed, God cannot be supposed as falling short of the virtues of cultivated Christians. If we accept the hypothesis of God, we must agree with Mr. Newman that 'all possible perfectness of man's spirit must be a mere faint shadow of the divine perfection.'

'The thought that any should have endless woe,
Would cast a shadow on the throne of God,
And darken heaven.'

The greatest aphorism ascribed to Christ, called his Golden Rule, tells us that we should do unto others as we would others should do unto us. It is not moral audacity, but a logical and legitimate application of this maxim, to say that if men shall eventually stand before the bar of God, God will not pronounce upon any that appalling sentence, 'Cast them into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth;' because this will not be doing to others as he, in the same situation, would wish to be done unto himself. If frail man is to 'do good to them that hate him,' God, who is said to be also Love, will surely not burn those who, in their misfortune and blindness, have erred against him. He who is above us all in power, will be also above us all in magnanimity.

Wonderful is the imbecility of the people! The rich man is conceded the holiest sepulchre in the Church, although his wealth be won by extortion or chicane, or selfishly hoarded while thousands of his brethren have perished, while children have grown up hideous for want of food, while women have stooped consumptive over the needle, and men have died prematurely of care and toil. The priest-soothed conscience feels no terror on the pillow of plethoric affluence—then why should the poor man be uneasy in death? Kings and queens, who cover their brows with diadems stained with human blood, and maintain their regal splendour out of taxes extorted from struggling industry, are, in their last hours, assured by the highest spiritual authorities of their free admission to Heaven, and Poets-Laureat have sung of their welcome there—then why should the obscure man be tremulous as to acceptance at the hand of Him who is called the God of the poor? The aristocracy pass from time unmolested by death-bed apprehensions, although they hold fast to privilege and splendour, though their tenants expire on the fireless hearth, or on the friendless mattress of the Poor Law Union—then why should the people entertain dread? While every tyrant who has fettered his country—and every corrupt minister who has plotted for its oppression, or betrayed its freedom to the 'Friends of Order'—is committed to the grave 'in the sure and certain hope of a glorious resurrection'—why should the indigent patriot fear to die? While even the bishop, who federates with the despots, and gives his vote almost uniformly against the people—while the Priests, Catholic, Protestant, or Dissenting, work into the hands of the government against the poor, and fulminate celestial menaces against those whose free thoughts reject the fetters of their creeds—while these can die in peace, what have the honest

It is only the slave soul that imagines a tyrant God.

and the independent to fear? If the insensate monarch, the sordid millionaire, the rapacious noble, the false politician, and the servile clergyman, meet death with assurance, surely humble industry, patient merit, and enduring poverty, need not own a tremor or heave a sigh! If we choose to live as freemen, let us at least have the dignity to die so, nor discredit the privilege of liberty by an unmanly bearing. If we have the merit of integrity, we should also have its peace—while we have the destiny of suffering we should not have less than its courage!

The truth is, if we do not know how to die, it is because we do not know how to live. If we know ourselves, we know that when we can preserve the temper of love, and of service, by which love is manifested, and of endurance, by which love is proved, we acquire that healthy sense of duty done which casts out fear. They who constantly mean well and do well, know not what it is to dread ill. And the fearless are also the free, and the free have no foreboding. 'It is only the slave soul which dreads a tyrant God.* Therefore—

'So live, that when thy summons comes to join
The innumerable caravan, that moves
To that mysterious realm where each shall take
His chamber in the silent halls of death,
Thou go not, like the quarry slave at night
Scourged to his dungeon; but approach thy grave
Like one who wraps the drapery of his couch
About him, and lies down to pleasant dreams.'†

The Queen's Views.

Since this article was written in 1849, the religious doctrine of death in England has entirely changed. The highest minds in the Church of England, the most cultivated preachers among the Dissenters have, in some cases, since originated, and in others, now accept views similar in spirit to those advocated in these pages. Bishop Colenso found that when the honest and clear thinking Kafr of Natal was told of the "dreadful judgment of God," which an ignorant orthodox Missionary carried to him, he replied with great simplicity but with natural dignity and resolution—"If that be so we would rather not hear about it;" and the Bishop has found the means of proving, even from St. Paul himself, that the doctrine of eternal punishment is alien to the genius of Christianity and must be given up. Professor Maurice, the most influential name in the Church of England, now teaches that the conception of punishment by physical pain is a gross idea, and that the sense of having incurred God's moral displeasure is the deepest natural punishment to the spiritual man. Her Majesty the Queen has authorised the publication, since the death of the Prince, of 'Meditations on Death and Eternity,' of which the leading idea is that even 'sudden death is a sudden benefit' to those who live well, and that those 'who endeavour to make amends for every fault by noble actions' ought no more 'to dread to appear before God' 'than a child ought to fear to appear before its loving parent, even though it had not yet conquered all its faults.' This is nobler and more humane doctrine than was ever taught by authority in this country before. But incomparably the finest passage in the whole compass of literature, which depicts the spirit in which all should conduct life so as to meet death in a patient and noble way, is from the pen of Mazzini. It occurred in a criticism upon George Sand, in an article in the *Monthly Chronicle* in 1839. It contains the whole of that philosophy which has given to Italy its heroes and its freedom, and taught the Italian patriots in so many forlorn struggles how to die without sadness and without regret. The sublime passage is this—"Schiller, the poet of grand thoughts, has said, "*Those only love that love without hope.*" There is in these few words more than poetry; they contain a whole religious philosophy that we do not yet well understand, but that futurity will. Life is a mission; its end is not the search after happiness, but the *knowledge and fulfilment of duty*. Love is not enjoyment, it is devotedness. If on the path of duty and devotedness God sends us some beams of happiness, let us bless God, and bask our limbs enfeebled by the fatigues of the journey; but let us not suspend it for long; let us not say—"We have found the secret of existence, for the action of the law of our existence cannot be concentrated in ourselves; its development must be pursued from without. And if we meet only suffering, *still march on; suffer and*

act. God will measure our progress towards him not by what we have suffered, *but by how much we have desired to diminish the sufferings of others, by how much our efforts have been directed to the saving and the perfecting our brethren.*” Of those who believe in God intelligently, this is the language they hold—and those who are not Theists, this is the doctrine they trust. People who say they could not be happy with the convictions of the Atheist, the Sceptic, or the Heretic, speak merely for themselves; they do not speak for us. With regard to us, they speak of that of which they know nothing, and of that of which they have no experience. With their views what they say may be true. But different views and different principles bring with them their own consolations. Conviction makes all the difference. It is not the formal creed which gives mental support, but the consciousness of truth and integrity and pure intent. Nothing can disturb the peace of mind of those armed by a fortitude founded on love and justice, on rectitude and reason.