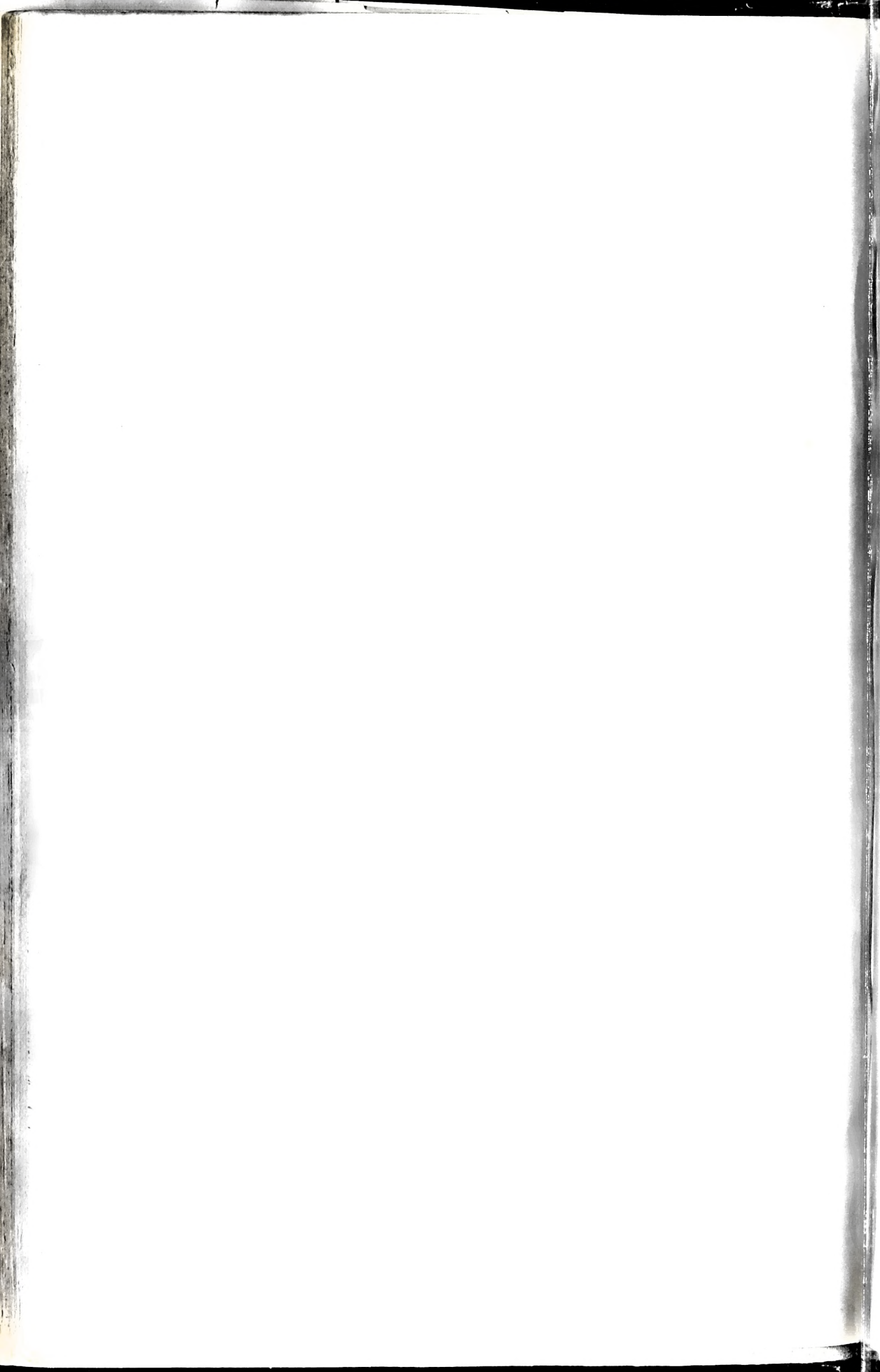


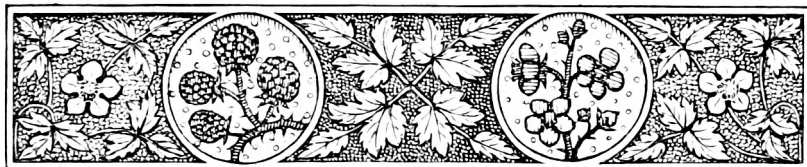
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RECOLLECTIONS  
OF  
GEORGE DAWSON  
AND  
HIS LECTURES IN MANCHESTER  
IN 1846-7.

BY  
ALEXANDER IRELAND.

u. • *Leeway* }  
with • *Ireland's kind regards* }  
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## RECOLLECTIONS OF GEORGE DAWSON

AND

HIS LECTURES IN MANCHESTER IN 1846-7.

BY ALEXANDER IRELAND.

HAVING been requested by Mrs. Dawson, not long after her husband's death in 1876, to contribute some recollections of him, in his earlier years, to a memoir then about to be undertaken by his intimate friend, Mr. Timmins, I willingly put together the following pages.

For many years I had the privilege of knowing him intimately, and of being thrown into the closest relations with him; so that a warm friendship resulted,—a friendship which remained unbroken for thirty years, and was only severed by his untimely death. The memoir has not yet appeared, having been delayed by unforeseen circumstances; but it is now, I am told, in a forward state for publication. I have lately had an opportunity of revising and considerably extending what I wrote in 1877, and of adding a few sentences which I would have hesitated to print while Mrs. Dawson was living. From this reticence I am absolved by her death, which took place about two years after that of her husband. She left, with those who knew her, rich remembrances of a tender and gentle, yet firm spirit; of warm sympathies, and

the performance of active and never-ceasing charities. In her a nobility of nature was joined with high intellectual gifts, which made her conspicuous amongst women, and attracted towards her the admiration and regard of the best persons who came within the sphere of her influence.

In the last week of 1845, while on a Christmas visit to relations in Birmingham, I went to hear George Dawson preach in a dissenting chapel, of which he was then the minister. I now remember little of the subject of his discourse, but I was struck by the simple earnestness of his manner, and the directness with which he went straight to the heart of the subject he had in hand. But what surprised me most was the quaint, vigorous, and singularly appropriate language in which he conveyed his thoughts to his hearers. It was Saxon, terse and sinewy; and there was a fluency and ease and perfect self-possession in his delivery which surpassed anything I had ever met with before. He had no notes or memoranda before him, and throughout his whole discourse there was not a word which was not in its right place. The attention of his audience was riveted from beginning to end, and what he said evidently produced a powerful effect on their minds. After the service, I was introduced to him, and invited to spend a few hours in his company, in the house of a common friend. Having heard that he had been delivering lectures on social, historical, and literary topics in Birmingham and some of the neighbouring towns, I asked him if he would accept an invitation to lecture to the members of the Manchester Athenæum, if I should be able to offer him one; and to this he assented. I was then one of the Directors of that Institution, and at the next meeting of the Board I proposed that he should be engaged to deliver a course of lectures. This was agreed to, and the selection of the subject, and the other necessary arrangements, were left in my hands. He then came to

Manchester to confer with me on the subject to be lectured upon. Many topics were discussed—literary, social, political, and historical—and at last it was decided that “The Genius and Writings of Thomas Carlyle” would be the most fitting topic for the proposed course.

The first lecture was delivered on Tuesday evening, 13th January, 1846, and was mainly of an introductory character. It was listened to throughout with rapt attention. His thorough appreciation of the spirit, and keen insight into the tendencies and bearings of Carlyle’s philosophy, his remarkable power of summing up its cardinal features, and of applying it to the practical purposes of life, made him just such an interpreter as the apostle of “The Gospel of Work” himself might have desired. It abounded with homely illustrations and frequent appeals to common sense; and these were combined with a most effective elocution, and a singular raciness of language. Absence of affectation, and a directness and simplicity of manner pervaded the discourse. It was altogether one of the most interesting extemporaneous addresses I ever heard—not so much for its eloquence, though replete with that quality, of a glowing yet subdued character; nor for its illustrations and imagery, which were numerous, varied, and striking; but for its deep thought, wide and comprehensive views, and earnest sincerity, its elevated tone and disregard of petty conventionalities, its noble estimate of man’s nature and worth, and solemn regard for the great verities of life. His fearless outspokenness, even when his auditors could not wholly assent to his propositions (often startling enough), gave a freshness and charm to his address not often enjoyed in a lecture-room. And this was greatly increased by the vigorous seventeenth-century diction that flowed with such marvellous ease from his lips. It was not a mere lecture on Carlyle—a reading of selected passages with

comments thereon, but an embodiment of his spirit in a simpler form, and the application of his sentiments to the elements of our daily experience. It was a comprehensive survey of the spirit of the eighteenth century, and of that which dawned on the nineteenth; and comprised a vigorous examination of the faults and merits of the literature and morality of the period; as well as an inquiry into the circumstances and the men that have effected a change in that spirit. He boldly swept away much of the meaningless talk about Carlyle's style; and glanced at what he had done to make us acquainted with the greatest minds of Germany. In the course of his lecture, many prevailing fallacies, prejudices, and weaknesses were commented on and exposed with unsparing keenness—many popular idols dethroned. The key-note throughout was of the highest.

His second lecture embraced an analysis of *Sartor Resartus*—that inimitable “mosaic” of meditations, tender recollections and confessions, passionate invectives, and romantic episodes—every page stamped with genius of the highest order, and from which has flowed all that its author afterwards wrote on life, duty, society, growth, work, culture, and the great and inscrutable problem of Being. The work must be regarded as an exposition of Carlyle's philosophy, a grand prose-poem, a veiled autobiographical account of the changes of thought and opinion through which he had passed—changes through which every thoughtful man must pass on his way to settled convictions on the great questions of Life, Duty, and God.

The third lecture was devoted to *Heroes and Hero Worship*, *Chartism*, and *Past and Present*. With regard to the first of these productions, he said its chief object was to show that all long-lived systems of religion and philosophy must possess some portion of truth; that *shams* never live long; and that truth-speaking and truth-acting are ever

accompanied by a certain kingly energy, as in the case of Mahomet and Cromwell; the latter of whom, after being gibbeted for two centuries, was now beginning to be appreciated. The great aim of *Chartism* was to bring prominently forward a subject which had been drowned amid the war-voices of party—"The condition of England question." It reproved the miserable policy of those Governments, which treat rebellion as the disease, instead of the symptom. Another feature of the book was its doctrine that, in all struggles for progress, the reformer should rather seek to create or diffuse the spirit, than busy himself with constructing the precise form in which it should be embodied. In his remarks on *Past and Present* he adverted to the vivid artist-power with which Carlyle had thrown light and life into a musty old chronicle,—not by any added figments of fancy, but by a strict induction from the recorded facts; just as Cuvier, from the last bone or joint of a bone, would reconstruct the type of an antediluvian species.

The fourth and last lecture was devoted to *The French Revolution* and *Cromwell's Life and Letters*. Speaking of the style of the former, he said that cavillers must surely in this case be silent; for never certainly was style better adopted to a subject than this. It was not unbecoming that the language in which a revolution was recorded should itself be almost revolutionary. It was of little use to read this marvellously-vivid book, if the historical facts were not previously known to the reader. He denounced as sentimental twaddle the perpetual harping upon the darker features of the struggle. Legitimists should remember that in the reign of our Henry VIII. there was more martyr-blood shed than during the whole French Revolution. The Revolution was an inevitable national and natural protest against a corrupt and mechanical Church, and a sensual and insolent aristocracy, which for centuries had oppressed

the people. An infidel philosophy could never have stimulated a nation to rebellion, had there been no oppression to rebel against. The Revolution was not to be considered a thing of the past. It was yet progressing. The present history of Europe was a part of its products. The reviving faith and earnestness of France, Germany, and England were the result of the Revolution. The book was not to be considered a philosophical history of that kind which details the events, and then tells us what to think of them; but a wonderful dramatic narrative, delineating, with matchless power of painting, particular scenes, and leaving the reader to deduce for himself the moral contained in the story. In his remarks upon *Cromwell's Life and Letters*, he praised the author for his modesty and reticence in keeping his own opinions comparatively in the background, and in allowing Cromwell to speak for himself. This was but showing a proper respect for Cromwell. He had been charged with presenting only the virtues of the Protector;—the reason might be that the shadows in the picture had been made black enough already. Never had mankind been so duped as in allowing themselves to be taught to disparage Cromwell. The secret was that the corrupt courtiers of the succeeding age lived too close to the time of Cromwell to be comfortable. They felt dwarfed and chilled in the shadow of that great rock; so they sought to bring it down—at least in public opinion—to their own stature. In a strain of rich humour and incisive sarcasm, he vindicated Cromwell from the oft-repeated charges of lying, hypocrisy, levity, and indifference to law; and proved, by his treatment of Catholics, Episcopalians, Quakers, Unitarians, and Jews, that he was greatly in advance even of a later age in an enlightened respect for the rights of conscience.

During these lectures the audiences increased in number from night to night, and many persons were unable to obtain



admittance. The delivery of this course was a noteworthy event in Manchester; not only did it stimulate earnest thought amongst us, but it also revealed to many searching spirits a series of writings, abounding in "riches fineless," hitherto known only to a small number of students. An impulse was given to free thought and to a spirit of free inquiry, and many young men and women were stimulated, by this and subsequent courses of his lectures, to higher aims, and encouraged, by their purifying and elevating tone, to aspire to a nobler daily life. The great success of the first course led to other engagements, not only in Manchester and Liverpool, but in other towns of Lancashire, and also in Yorkshire. Among the subjects treated by him were "The Characteristics and Tendencies of the Present Age;" "The Influence of German Thought on English Literature;" "Historical Characters Re-considered;" "The Poetry of Wordsworth;" "Faustus, Faust, and Festus," &c.

There was one memorable appearance which Mr. Dawson made in Manchester to which I must refer before passing on to other matters. It was an oration on Shakspeare, delivered at the Athenæum on the poet's birthday, and in the afternoon. It was only thought of on the previous day, and notice could only be given to the public on the morning of the day upon which the address was to be delivered. Nevertheless, the hall was crowded to overflowing, and hundreds were unable to gain admission. The subject stimulated him to the exercise of his highest powers, and a more noble and worthy tribute to the genius of Shakspeare could hardly be imagined. It was certainly a remarkable proof of the lecturer's powers, that he was able in our busy town, engrossed in commercial pursuits, to induce a thousand men to leave their ordinary callings at an hour in which they are generally absorbed in business, and listen with breathless attention to what he had to say about the genius

of the greatest of poets, and the influence he has exercised on humanity. Towards the conclusion of the address, he said :—"We thank God for victories gained in warfare, but none seemed to thank God for genius, and for its victories gained over bigotry and superstition. Poets, painters, sculptors, and musicians were all teachers of the Kingdom of Heaven under different parables—each teaching in his own language righteousness and peace, love to God and man, the worship of the holy, the noble, the beautiful, and the true." "How gratifying to me," to quote his concluding words, "to have been able, for a short time, to segregate a number of busy men from their ordinary pursuits, and induce them to think, during an hour of academic quietness, of one whose name would live, when even this great commercial town might be buried in the ruins and the decays of time, and whose genius had offered a true holocaust of peace-offerings and sin-offerings and burnt-offerings upon the altars of Humanity, the incense from which might ascend for ever unto the Holiest of the Holy."

These and subsequent courses of lectures by Mr. Dawson were admirably reported by his intimate friend, the late Mr. John Harland, of the *Manchester Guardian*, who was one of the most accomplished stenographers of his day. The rapidity of Mr. Dawson's utterance, and the novelty and unexpectedness of his turns of expression were sufficient to tax the powers of the swiftest reporter. Mr. Henry Sutton, of Nottingham, also a shorthand writer of the highest class, possessing rare skill and finish, became, a few years later, the head of the reporting staff of the *Manchester Examiner*, and was in the habit of frequently reporting Mr. Dawson. In recalling his experiences of that time, Mr. Sutton says :—

"I do not believe he had any notes before him when I heard him lecture ; everything seemed to come freely out of

a richly-stored mind, which, if it happened to forget for the moment what it had planned to say, was well able to extemporize equally-good material to fill any vacancy. This is how it *seemed* to me at the time, and was probably not incorrect. He was always more difficult to report than most speakers are; his matter was produced so freely and evenly, and had in it so little of verbiage or repetition, besides being so *incalculable* from its originality, that the reporter, straining hard to keep up with him, could neither afford, as with most speakers, to condense whilst going on, nor to omit in the hope of supplying what was missing. Thus, if part of a sentence was lost, the whole sentence was useless, and, in its absence, the thought-connection of the paragraph to which it belonged was broken, and the result was sheer disaster."

During Mr. Dawson's frequent visits to Manchester and the neighbouring towns in the years that followed, I had many opportunities of becoming intimately acquainted with him, and of profiting by his society; and a very close friendship sprang up between us. Of his noble character and admirable qualities of heart and mind, I shall ever retain a grateful recollection, and I feel richer for having known him. I always found him one of the most genial and companionable of men. He had a tender, gentle, and most compassionate nature, and in him the elements of humour and pathos were delightfully blended. In his society the better part of my own nature was stimulated, my sympathies widened and enlarged, the inner as well as the outer world made brighter by contact with him. I have reason to know that this was the experience of other intimate friends besides myself. There was ever conspicuous in him an inherent natural courtesy towards, and thoughtful consideration for others, which attracted an amount of personal regard that does not always fall to the lot of men of intellectual power. In his friendships he was

steadfast as the rock, and to be relied upon under all circumstances and difficulties. With women and children he had the most winning ways, and for honest, simple, earnest, unpretending people—however wanting they might be in intellectual culture or refinement of manner—he entertained a sincere regard. He inspired immediate confidence and trust in those with whom he came into close contact. Here, they felt, was a straightforward, plain-speaking, sincere man, who meant truly what he said—sometimes a little rough and blunt, and peremptory withal—but at the core, kind, genuine, and generous. He never disputed or argued about creeds or dogmas of any kind, nor spoke disparagingly of those who thought differently from himself on religious subjects. He was naturally of a devout and reverent disposition, and the essential spirit of practical religion pervaded all he said or did. And yet this was the man beside whom Samuel Wilberforce, Bishop of Oxford (himself no ordinary man, and of whom one might have expected better things), refused to sit on the same platform, on the occasion of a celebrated *Soirée* held in the Manchester Athenæum in 1846, for promoting the cause of intellectual culture, and at which celebrities of all shades in religion and politics were present;—because, to use the Bishop's own words: "I understand that Mr. Dawson is re-engaged to lecture at your institution, and I have met with sentiments in these lectures of his, which, as far as I understand them, seem to me to be at variance with Christianity; and therefore I cannot give even an accidental or apparent countenance to their further circulation."

There are few left who can recall the pleasant hours occasionally spent with Dawson, after his lectures, in the homes of some of his hospitable friends. Freed from the restraints of the platform, and surrounded by a few congenial spirits, he would revel in the luxury of perfect freedom, and, stretched on an inviting couch, enjoy to the full his

well-earned repose. During these hours, which were humorously spoken of as the sacred period for further elucidating the subject of the lecture—the “after-math” as it were—all manner of topics were discussed—often the political or social, or literary event of the day—amidst curling wreaths of soothing tobacco smoke, which somewhat veiled the features of the interlocutors, and gave a kind of courage to the younger ones. At such times, his wit and humour, free from the slightest taint of malignity or cynicism, had full play, and sparkled forth in endless sallies, evoking the best there was in others. He would sometimes give humorous descriptions of persons he had met in his lecturing tours, making vivid their peculiarities by his happy imitations. Often, too, he would descant on his favourite authors, and his cherished heroes and heroines in history and fiction, until the ominous sound of the clock gave warning that the symposium must break up, and respectable persons return home.

George Dawson constantly advocated the exercise of free thought in its highest and noblest sense, as well as the assiduous cultivation of a spirit of free inquiry. “Give me,” he used to say, using Milton’s own words, “the liberty to know, to utter, and to argue freely, according to conscience, above all liberties.” “Let us forego this prelatical tradition of crowding free consciences and Christian liberties into the precepts and canons of men.” “To be still searching after what we know not, by what we know, still closing up truth to truth, as we find it (for all her body is homogeneous and proportional), this is the golden rule for making the best harmony, not the forced and outward union of cold, and neutral, and inwardly-divided minds.” He had a passionate love of fairness and fair-play. Everything mean, unworthy, self-seeking, and underhand was abhorrent to him. He detested cant in every form and shape; but what he exposed with the keenest satire, and denounced with the most with-

ing scorn, was that self-sufficient and arrogant intolerance which disparages and would deliberately inflict injury upon those who have the courage to think for themselves, and the independence to hold and avow honestly-formed opinions—however unpalatable these might be to the powerful and fashionable—however much in opposition to interests for the time predominant and in the world's sunshine. I remember his once saying to me—"Verily, in this country, known vice breaks fellowship less than suspected heresy, or difference of religious creed." He looked upon any man—no matter what his creed or social position might be—who spoke of liberty of opinion as a favour conceded, and who treated that liberty with an air of condescending tolerance, as morally pestilent and detestable—whom self-respecting men should endeavour to get rid of by some legitimate but swift method of social extinction.

During one of his visits to Manchester, I showed him a collection of passages I had made from the works of our greatest thinkers, bearing on the subjects of Free Inquiry and Free Thought, Liberty of Discussion, Intolerance, Religious Liberty, the Right of Private Judgment, the Unfettered Publication of Opinion, &c. Some of these he asked me to transcribe for him, wishing to introduce them on suitable occasions in his lectures. To readers of the present generation they would not perhaps appear so significant as they did to those who were young thirty or forty years ago—so remarkable has been the progress of opinion on these subjects within the last quarter of a century. They were from Lord Bacon's *Proficiency and Advancement of Learning*, John Locke's *Works*, the *Areopagitica*, and other prose works (or rather stately prose-poems) of Milton, Jeremy Taylor's *Liberty of Prophesying*, the writings of Bishop Butler, and Bishop Berkeley, and, among more modern writers, Samuel Bailey of Sheffield, and others. A few of these

extracts I have gathered together, and given at the end of this paper in the shape of an appendix. They were especial favourites with him, and represent the essence and outcome of his opinions on the subjects above named.

Concerning the last-named writer, whose works are scarcely known to the present generation, I should like to say a few words. I had the pleasure of making known Bailey's works to Mr. Dawson, who was previously unaware of their existence, and from the perusal of some of which he derived real pleasure and profit. No author of this century has written with greater force and clearness, or with more powerful reasoning, on the right and duty of free inquiry in every department of human thought, on the imperative necessity of candid, temperate, and free discussion, and on that much neglected part of morality—the conscientious formation and free publication of all opinions affecting human welfare. We have never had a more earnest and strenuous advocate of intellectual liberty and free discussion than Samuel Bailey. His style is truly admirable; its characteristics being lucidity, accuracy, and precision—not a word out of its place, not a word that could be spared—his meaning impossible to be misunderstood. All his works were carefully prepared, and long thought over, and subjected to frequent revisions, before publication. He was one of the most perspicuous of English thinkers, and no one can study his writings, especially his first *Essays on the Formation and Publication of Opinions*, and its successor, *Essays on the Pursuit of Truth, on the Progress of Knowledge, and on the Fundamental Principle of all Evidence and Expectation*, without having his intellectual horizon extended. To the thoughtful and earnest, who care for and can appreciate something higher than the ephemeral and vapid literature with which the press floods our modern circulating libraries, these two bracing volumes would be invaluable companions.

They act upon the mind like an intellectual and moral tonic. The most fitting monument to the memory of Bailey would be a carefully-edited edition of his works, most of which are scarce, and entirely out of print. Colonel Perronet Thompson, an accomplished economist and philosophic thinker, and well known as the author of *The Catechism of the Corn Laws*, thus spoke of Bailey in an article in the *Westminster Review*:—

“If a man could be offered the paternity of any comparatively modern books that he chose, he would not hazard much by deciding that, next after Adam Smith’s *Wealth of Nations*, he would request to be honoured with a relationship to the *Essays on the Formation and Publication of Opinions*. . . . It would have been a pleasant and an honourable memory to have written a book so *totus teres atque rotundus*, so finished in its parts, and so perfect in their union as the *Essays on the Formation of Opinions*. Like one of the great statues of antiquity, it might have been broken into fragments, and each separate limb would have pointed to the existence of some interesting whole, of which the value might be surmised from the beauty of the specimen.”\*

One of George Dawson’s most striking and prominent characteristics was his robust common-sense; and to this may be added a shrewd observation of character. He also possessed a fine sense of humour, and the widest sympathies, moral and intellectual. His sarcastic power was of the most delicate and subtle kind; and when he had occasion to express scorn, ridicule, or contempt, no one could launch it forth with more effectiveness. In addition to these qualities he had, as I have already had occasion to remark, the rare

\* In *Notes and Queries*, 5th Series, Vol. IX., p. 182, will be found a bibliographical list of Samuel Bailey’s writings, contributed by me to that periodical in 1878.



gift of being able to clothe his thoughts in the most terse and appropriate words, and to give utterance to them with an ease and mastery of the resources of our language that surprised his hearers. Sentence followed sentence, faultless in construction and symmetry. A lecture of an hour and a half's duration might have been printed from his *ipsissima verba*, without a single alteration. While on the platform he rarely used notes or memoranda. With such endowments, it was not wonderful that he made the lecture-platform an educational agency. To his lectures and expositions (for he was a born expositor) numbers have been indebted for their first real knowledge of some of our greatest countrymen, historical as well as literary. The sympathetic, genial, yet finely discriminative manner in which he discoursed concerning some of the great thinkers and men of action of the past, as well as of our own day, inspired many of his hearers with an earnest desire to become acquainted with their works; and thus his lectures were the means of introducing no small number of thoughtful minds to the rich treasures of our literature and history.

The admirers of George Dawson have never claimed for him the merit of originating new thoughts. But he had a wonderful faculty of seizing and appreciating the original thoughts, however abstruse or complex, of the highest order of minds; of perceiving at a glance their practical bearings; of making them attractive to, and understood by the thousands in all ranks and conditions of life, who so eagerly listened to him; and of adapting them to every range of comprehension. He agreed with Emerson in thinking that next to the originator of a good thought is the first apt quoter of it. If we are fired and guided by a good thought, the presenter of it—whoever the author may be does not matter—becomes to us a benefactor, claiming from us a gratitude almost equal to that we render to the originator of the thought itself.

It may be of interest to those who have followed my remarks on Mr. Dawson as a lecturer, to know something of him in connection with his life and labours in Birmingham. For upwards of thirty years he was the most prominent preacher in that town, and one of its most active and energetic citizens. As a preacher he was essentially eclectic. Well acquainted with the history of Christianity in its successive phases, he believed that even the greatest perversions of its purest form had some *raison d'être*. He never accepted even the cardinal doctrines in the literal sense in which they were understood by the several sects. It would be presumptuous in me, and out of place here, to attempt to give any explanation of his views regarding these doctrines. Suffice it to say that his teaching influenced deeply both Trinitarians and Unitarians, and appeared less dogmatic and more reasonable to the many who stood entirely outside the pale of the sects. Some of the extreme sectarians on both sides complained that his teaching was unsound, because he stopped short of their dogmas, but he looked on all such doctrinal matters as not literally binding, but as "views" to be interpreted by the light of reason, the good of humanity, and the practical action which such beliefs could and should produce in everyday life and work. He was never tired of teaching that real religion should *unite*, and not *divide*; that doctrinal views necessarily differed so greatly, that they should not, and could not be a bond of union. He held that, in the words of the great prayer in the Church Service, "all who professed and called themselves Christians, should hold the faith in unity of spirit, in the bond of peace, and in righteousness of life." He always took a reasonable view of doctrinal difficulties, and constantly preached that "he who does My work shall know the doctrine, whether it be good or evil." *Laborare est orare* briefly expressed the essence and outcome

of his religious belief. The basis of all his teaching, the spirit of all his sermons, the stimulus to all his work, was the dominant conviction that Religion, the greatest of all human concerns, should pervade the thoughts and actions of men in every form, that it should rule in the State, the Community, and the Family, and even in the smallest concerns of ordinary life. By religion he always meant Love to God, and obedience to His divine will, as shewn forth in the laws of the universe, charity and love to our fellow-men, and the embodiment of the spirit of Christ's teachings in our daily walk and conversation.

How successful this form of teaching proved to be, may be found in the fact that, from his very earliest preaching, he attracted and continued to attract and to retain among his congregation, Trinitarians, Unitarians, Swedenborgians, Baptists, Churchmen, and especially many who did not accept the Bible as inspired, who did not believe in miracles, and many who, like Gallio, "cared for none of those things." All, however, heartily united in real service and genuine work. During the whole of his life the members of his church united heartily and liberally in establishing schools for the young and the adult, in kindly and generous care of the aged and the poor, in the industrial training of young women for service and for work, and in every kind of social influence to equalize the lot of all, and to improve the tone and character of rich and poor alike.

"The Church of the Saviour," in which he ministered for upwards of thirty years, was opened in 1846, in the month of August, and his sermon, "The Demands of the Age on the Church," was an eloquent and powerful statement of his position as a teacher, and of the work he had set himself to do; and which he accomplished with such marked success. In his earlier days he visited constantly and kindly the poor and needy, and I am told that no one who had not seen

him in a sick-room, ever saw Dawson at his best. His tender sympathy with all in trouble, his genuine humanity, in the best sense of the word, his generous hand and loving-kindness will be remembered by many with grateful heart and tearful eyes. Later on, his numerous engagements led to the appointment of a Minister to the Poor ; but whenever possible he attended all the sick and needy, and gave such consolation as only he could give. The church would seat about 1,600 persons, and was generally full ; and, in the evenings especially, was crowded to excess. Many orthodox people attended their own churches and chapels in the morning, and came to hear him at night. One of the most conspicuous preachers in the town, for several years during his studentship, heard Dawson once every Sunday, and confessed himself deeply indebted to his teachings, although he differed from his doctrinal views. The most remarkable and touching characteristic of Dawson's services were his prayers, about which all agreed. Their thorough devotion, deep humanity, intense feeling, and passionate love and tenderness, may be found to some extent in the printed volume which has been issued since his death ; but only those who heard his gentle, earnest voice can ever appreciate those memorable outpourings. Another of the prominent orthodox preachers of the same town regarded these prayers as the very highest and best of Dawson's true teaching, and beyond all praise—the very spirit of all prayer to God. I have heard many devout men and women, of creeds the most opposite, speak of their wonderful beauty, and gratefully acknowledge the beneficent influence exercised by them on their own religious feelings. He generally preached every Sunday, morning and evening. Another of his notable characteristics was his reading of the Scriptures. One chapter read by him was better than most sermons. His simple, natural, earnest, manly style made old familiar

verses seem full of meaning and new beauty and force. It is difficult to describe the impressiveness of these readings and prayers. In his Church services he was especially eclectic. He was the first to introduce into Birmingham chapels the practice of chanting, of anthems, and of having the best music possible—at that time an innovation which shocked most dissenters, but which nearly all have adopted since. He also introduced colour and decoration on the walls, where all had been dingy and drab before. Sometimes, on week-day evenings, he gave lectures in his church—one series of six on the Greek Church being most valuable and interesting in the Crimean War time. Another of his innovations was the social parties of the members of his congregation. This example, too, has been followed by all other dissenting congregations in Birmingham.

As a citizen, Dawson greatly shocked his brother preachers at first by appearing in non-clerical attire. From the beginning, he took an active part in all public work, and especially in political and social reforms. He was one of the first to arouse any interest in the Hungarian struggle. He earnestly supported the French Republic after Louis Philippe's flight, and was one of the most eloquent speakers during the Crimean War. He ably and constantly advocated the claims of Italy, and was placed in the "black book" by the Austrians, as the friend of Mazzini. In all local matters he took a special interest; and he was really the first public man in Birmingham who studied and understood foreign politics, and who aroused any local interest in the affairs of Hungary, Italy, and France. His frequent absences on his lecturing tours prevented his taking personally any public work, except on the Free Libraries Committee; but on that, and on the Committee of the Subscription Library, he did excellent work from his coming till his lamented death. He educated the people by his lectures, and taught them

to go to the libraries and use them. He and his accomplished and devoted friend, Mr. Timmins, established a literature class and delivered a series of lectures on English Literature from Saxon times down to 1800. These lectures have been continued ever since with great and growing success. They sensibly raised the tone of the town, and have set many persons reading and thinking. While he did not take office personally, he advocated most earnestly and persistently the duty of every citizen to take some share of public work. It is beyond all question that he so educated and influenced his personal friends and occasional hearers, that they went forth to work; and he really gave the first impulse to that public life, high municipal spirit, political energy, and literary and artistic progress which have so distinguished Birmingham during the past thirty years. His constant pressure and personal influence infinitely improved the quality of the Town Council, which, when he came, was in but indifferent repute. He used to say: "Never send a man into the Council whom you would not like to be Mayor." Practically, that advice has been followed, and hence the very marked improvement in the municipal life of Birmingham. No one man ever had so large and so evident an influence in a great town. He came when, after the Reform Bill, the town was resting from its labours. He evoked a new spirit, and aroused a new life, and became an important power. No meeting, no movement, no cause was complete without him, *for or against*. This sturdy independence, his manly courage, his inflexible principle, his passionate love of liberty, and unflinching fairness all round, made him respected and also feared. It was felt by all that he was above party, a man of stern principle, a bold, honest, and generous advocate of truth and justice.

I must now bring these remarks to a close. Yet, I cannot do so without recording a most pleasant incident in our

intercourse, inseparably associated with the memory of my friend and his charming wife. He was married in the autumn of 1846 to Miss Susan Fanny Crompton, of Birmingham, a lady possessing mental gifts of no common order, and whose grace of form and feature will ever linger in the memory of those who knew her in the society which she so much adorned. To her might be applied the lines of Wordsworth—

The reason firm, the temperate will,  
Endurance, foresight, strength, and skill;  
A perfect woman, nobly plann'd,  
To warn, to comfort, and command.

Instead of making the usual conventional wedding tour, they wisely preferred a better course. They arranged with Harriet Martineau (who at that time was leaving England to visit Palestine), to occupy her pretty cottage near Ambleside for a month. Here their honeymoon was spent amidst the most picturesque scenery of the Lake district. It was proposed that I should join them for a week, an invitation gladly accepted. Fortunately, the weather was of the finest; and the hills, fells, lakes, and streams, and the fading glories of the autumn woods, were seen to perfection, bathed in the serene September sunshine. On this pleasant occasion, all the circumstances connected with my visit were of the most auspicious kind. Included in the invitation was Dr. W. B. Hodgson, afterwards Professor of Political Economy in the Edinburgh University, since deceased—a dear and most intimate friend of us both. His social gifts were of the rarest kind, and cannot be forgotten by those who had the privilege of knowing him. His unflinching memory and inexhaustible stores of wit and wisdom made him a favourite wherever he went. We had many delightful rambles by the margin of Rydal Water and Grasmere, and on the Loughrigg Fells; and the cliffs and woods of Fox-

how often rang with the laughter evoked by our brilliant friend's jokes and humorous stories. Alas! that three of those merry voices are now for ever silent! The enjoyment of this delightful week was greatly enhanced by an unexpected piece of good luck for us. The way in which this came about was curious, but I need not enter into details. Suffice it to say that we had the rare privilege of spending part of a forenoon with the *Genius loci*—the venerable poet Wordsworth, then in his seventy-sixth year—about four years before his death. He received us with a dignified but cordial courtesy, introduced us to Mrs. Wordsworth, and showed us many books in his library, taking down from the shelves some precious presentation volumes from Coleridge, Lamb, Southey, and other friends, and pointing out to us the inscriptions with which they were enriched. He walked with us about his grounds, conversing freely on various topics, and occasionally telling us amusing anecdotes of his neighbours. Not long before this had occurred the tragical suicide of Haydon, the painter, and the subject became matter of conversation. Wordsworth spoke most feelingly about the sad event, and asked us if we remembered his sonnet, addressed to Haydon in his earlier days, long before the clouds had begun to gather round him. Of course, all readers of Wordsworth know this, one of his finest sonnets, beginning "High is our calling friend," and ending with the lines—

And oh! when nature sinks, as oft she may,  
Through long-lived pressure of obscure distress,  
Still to be strenuous for the bright reward,  
And in the soul admit of no decay,  
Brook no continuance of weak-mindedness:  
Great is the glory; for the strife is hard!

Wishing to hear the sonnet from the old man's lips, and knowing it would gratify him to be asked to repeat it, we made the request with a deferential or rather reverential



hesitancy, to which, however, he at once acceded, repeating the lines in a sonorous and rather monotonous voice, but with evident feeling. On this occasion I was fortunate enough to have it in my power, by the merest accident of an accident, to give the venerable poet a trifling pleasure. While we stood in a little breakfast-room, fronting the eastern sky, which he called his morning study, he showed us with pride a set of framed portraits of some of the old English poets and worthies: Chaucer, Gower, Spenser, Shakspeare, Sidney, Bacon, Selden, Beaumont, Fletcher, and others—the series known as Houbraken's. On my observing that Ben Jonson was not amongst them, although he belonged to the same series, he said he had never been fortunate enough to meet with a copy of that portrait. Curiously enough, and by rare good fortune, as far as I was concerned, I happened then to possess a very fine impression of the identical portrait wanted to complete his set. It instantly flashed into my mind that here was a supreme opportunity offered me of pleasing the aged poet, so I at once made my little speech: "How much pleasure it would give me to fill up the gap, &c." My offer was, after a little preliminary reluctance, accepted, accompanied with a friendly shake of the hand, followed some days afterwards by a cordial letter of thanks, after the picture had been received by him, and hung in its rightful place. This little incident was often recalled in after years, and became a pleasant memory with us.

INGLEWOOD,  
BOWDON, CHESHIRE,  
*April 1st, 1882.*



## A P P E N D I X.

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The following are the extracts (referred to at p. 15) from the writings of Bacon, Milton, Locke, Taylor, Berkeley, Butler, Brougham, and Samuel Bailey. The quotations from the latter writer are given at some length, as his works are comparatively unknown.

LORD BACON. 1561-1629.

The commandment of knowledge is yet higher than the commandment over the will ; for it is a commandment over the reason, belief, and understanding of man, which is the highest part of the mind, and giveth law to the will itself : for there is no power on earth, which setteth up a throne, or chair of state, in the spirits and souls of men, and in their cogitations, imaginations, opinions, and beliefs, but knowledge and learning.

JOHN MILTON. 1608-1674.

The light which we have gained was given us, not to be ever staring on, but by it to discover onward things more remote from our present knowledge. Well knows he, who uses to consider, that our faith and knowledge thrive by exercise, as well as our limbs and complexion. Truth is compared in Scripture to a streaming fountain ; if her waters flow not in perpetual progression, they sicken into a muddy pool of conformity and tradition. A man may be a heretic in the truth ; and if he believes things, only because his pastor says so, or because the Assembly so determines, without knowing other reason, though his belief be true, yet the very truth he holds becomes his heresy.

BISHOP JEREMY TAYLOR. 1613-1667.

It is unnatural and unreasonable to persecute disagreeing opinions : unnatural, for understanding being a thing wholly spiritual, cannot be restrained, and therefore neither punished by corporal affliction. It is in *aliena republica*, a matter of another world ; you may as well cure the colic by brushing a man's clothes, or fill a man's belly with a syllogism. . . . For is an opinion ever the more true or false for being persecuted ? Force in matters of opinion can do

no good, but is very apt to do hurt ; for no man can change his opinion when he will, or be satisfied in his reason that his opinion is false because discountenanced. . . . But if a man cannot change his opinion when he lists, nor ever does heartily or resolutely but when he cannot do otherwise, then to use force may make him an hypocrite, but never to be a right believer ; and so, instead of erecting a trophy to God and true religion, we build a monument for the Devil.

JOHN LOCKE. 1632-1704.

He that examines, and upon a fair examination embraces an error for a truth, has done his duty more than he who embraces the profession of truth (for the truths themselves he does not embrace), without having examined whether it be true or no. And he that has done his duty, according to the best of his ability, is certainly more praiseworthy, than he who has done nothing of it. For if it be our duty to search after truth, he certainly that has searched after it, though he has not found it, in some points has paid a more acceptable obedience to the will of his Maker, than he who has not searched at all, but professes to have found truth, when he has neither searched for it, nor found it.

BISHOP BERKELEY. 1684-1753.

Two sorts of learned men there are ; one, who candidly seek truth by rational means. These are never averse to have their principles looked into, and examined by the test of reason. Another sort there is, who learn by *rote* a set of principles and a way of thinking which happen to be in vogue. These betray themselves by their anger and surprise, whenever their principles are freely canvassed.

BISHOP BUTLER. 1692-1752.

We never, in the moral way, applaud or blame either ourselves or others for what we enjoy or what we suffer, or for having impressions made upon us which we consider as altogether out of our power ; but only for what we do, or would have done, had it been in our power ; or for what we leave undone which we might have done, or would have left undone, though we could have done it.

LORD BROUGHAM. 1778-1868.

The great Truth has finally gone forth to all the ends of the earth that man shall no more render account to man for his belief, over which he himself has no control. Henceforward, nothing shall prevail upon us to praise or to blame any one for that which he can no more change than he can the hue of his skin, or the height of his stature. Henceforward, treating with entire respect those who conscientiously differ from ourselves ; the only practical effect of the difference will be, to make us enlighten the ignorance on one side or the other, from which it springs—by instructing them, if it be theirs, ourselves, if it be our own ; to the end, that the only kind of unanimity may be produced, which is desirable among rational beings—the agreement proceeding from full conviction after the freest discussion.

## SAMUEL BAILEY. 1791-1870.

Whether a man has been partial or impartial, in the process by which he has acquired his opinions, must be determined by extrinsic circumstances and not by the character of the opinions themselves. Belief, doubt, and disbelief, therefore, can never, even in the character of indications of antecedent voluntary acts, be the proper objects of moral reprobation or commendation. Our approbation and disapprobation, if they fall anywhere, should be directed to the conduct of men in their researches, to the use which they make of their opportunities of information, and to the partiality or impartiality visible in their actions. . . . The allurements and the menaces of power are alike incapable of establishing opinions in the mind, or eradicating those which are already there. They may draw hypocritical professions from avarice and ambition, or extort verbal renunciations from fear and feebleness; but this is all they can accomplish. The way to alter belief is not to address motives to the will, but arguments to the intellect. To do otherwise, to apply rewards or punishments or disabilities to opinions, is as absurd as to raise men to the peerage for their ruddy complexions, to whip them for the gout, and hang them for the scrofula. . . . All pain, mental or physical, inflicted with a view to punish a man for his opinion, is nothing less than useless and wanton cruelty, violating the plain dictates of nature and reason. . . .

Although the advanced civilization of the age rejects the palpably absurd application of torture and death, it is not to be concealed, that, amongst a numerous class, there is an analagous, though less barbarous persecution, of all who depart from received doctrines—the persecution of private antipathy and public odium. They are looked upon as a specie of criminals, and their deviations from established opinions; or, if any one prefer the phrase, their speculative errors, are regarded by many with as much horror as flagrant violations of morality. In the ordinary ranks of men, where exploded prejudices often linger for ages, this is scarcely to be wondered at; but it is painful, and on a first view unaccountable, to witness the prevalence of the same spirit in the republic of letters; to see mistakes in speculation pursued with all the warmth of moral indignation and reproach. He who believes an opinion on the authority of others, who has taken no pains to investigate its claims to credibility, nor weighed the objections to the evidence on which it rests, is lauded for his acquiescence, while obloquy from every side is too often heaped on the man who has minutely searched into the subject, and been led to an opposite conclusion. There are few things more disgusting to an enlightened mind than to see a number of men, a mob, whether learned or illiterate, who have never scrutinized the foundation of their opinions, assailing with contumely an individual, who, after the labour of research and reflection, has adopted different sentiments from theirs, and pluming themselves on the notion of superior virtue, because their understandings have been tenacious of prejudice.

The true grounds, the grand principles of toleration, or (to avoid a term which men ought never to have been under the necessity of employing) of religious liberty and liberty of conscience, are the principles which it has been the object

of my Essay to establish—that opinions are involuntary, and involve no merit or demerit, and that the free publication of opinions is beneficial to society, because it is the means of arriving at truth. They are both founded on the unalterable nature of the human mind, and are sure, sooner or later, to be universally recognized and applauded. Under the general prevalence of these truths society would soon present a different aspect. Every species of intolerance would vanish; because, how much soever it might be the interest of men to suppress opinions contrary to their own, there would be no longer any pretext for compulsion or oppression. Difference of sentiment would no longer engender the same degrees of passion and ill-will. The irritation, virulence, and invective of controversy would be in a great measure sobered down into cool argumentation. The intercourse of private life would cease to be embittered by the odium of heterodoxy, and all the benevolent affections would have more room for expansion. Men would discover that although their neighbours differed in opinion from themselves, they might possess equal moral worth, and equal claims to affection and esteem. A difference in civil privileges and social estimation—that eternal source of discontent and disorder, that canker in the happiness of society, which can be cured only by being exterminated, would be swept away, and in a few years a wonder would arise that rational beings could have been inveigled into its support. Another important consequence would be, a more general union of mankind in the pursuit of truth. Since errors would no longer be regarded as involving moral turpitude, every effort to obtain the grand object in view, however unsuccessful, would be received with indulgence, if not applause. There would be more exertion, because there would be more encouragement. If moral science has already gradually advanced, shackled as it has been by inveterate prejudices, what would be the rapidity of its march under a system, which, far from offering obstacles, presented facilities to its progress?

Whoever has attentively meditated on the progress of the human race cannot fail to discern that there is now a spirit of inquiry amongst men which nothing can stop, or even materially control. Reproach and obloquy, threats and persecution, social ostracism, will be vain. They may embitter opposition and engender violence, but they cannot abate the keenness of research. There is a silent march of thought, which no power can arrest, and which it is not difficult to foresee will be marked by important events. Mankind were never before in the situation in which they now stand. The press has been operating upon them for several centuries, with an influence scarcely perceptible at its commencement, but daily becoming more palpable, and acquiring accelerated force. It is rousing the intellect of nations, and happy will it be for them if there be no rash interference with the natural progress of knowledge; and if, by a judicious and gradual adaptation of their institutions to the inevitable changes of opinion, they are saved from those convulsions, which the pride, prejudices, and obstinacy of a few may occasion to the whole.—*Essays on the Formation and Publication of Opinions, and on other Subjects.* 1821.

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If, instead of encouraging candid and complete examination, I endeavour to instil my own notions into the mind of another by dogmatical assertion and inculcation ; if I do all in my power to prevent the evidence on both sides from coming to his knowledge ; if I forcibly or artfully exclude any arguments or facts from his cognizance ; if I try to coop up his mind in my own views, by keeping aloof every representation inconsistent with them, and even pervert his moral feelings by teaching him the guilt of holding any other ; if, in still greater defiance of integrity of conduct, I attempt to work upon his will in the matter ; if I offer him certain advantages provided he come to a conclusion agreeable to my wishes, and threaten him with obloquy, and pains, and penalties, should he decide against me ; all these proceedings are surely so many offences, not only against him, but against the Almighty. What are they all but trying to prevent the full and free application of his faculties for discerning truth to a question of the greatest moment between him and the Almighty Ruler of the Universe ? And what are the worst of them, but bribing and terrifying the poor human creature ; in the first place, not to examine fully and freely, not therefore to discharge the obligation he is under to his Maker ; and in the second place, to hide his internal convictions, and to profess what he does not feel. If the principles of duty to God, which the light of nature clearly exhibits, are to be relied upon, it is scarcely possible to conceive grosser moral turpitude, or greater madness, than this. My own duty clearly is a full and impartial examination ; and yet, by the course described, I should be endeavouring, to the utmost of my power, to prevent in my neighbour that full and impartial examination, which is as incumbent on him as it is on myself.

It is to be deeply lamented, that nothing is more common among mankind than this senseless, this immoral, this truly impious proceeding, the only palliation of which is unconsciousness of its real character. Look abroad into the world, and what is the language on this subject held by man to man, in all ages and all countries ? It is in effect this : I care nothing for your partiality or impartiality, for the diligence or negligence of your investigations : here are certain advantages in my gift : if you are of my opinion, or will say you are, they are yours ; if you differ from me, I will take care you suffer for it.

Figure to yourself, my friend, a young man, who, while he is desirous to discharge every duty, and ardent in the pursuit of truth, is at the same time ambitious of power, wealth, and distinction. A career is open to him, in which these latter desires may be gratified on the single condition of professing and teaching certain established tenets, and performing certain offices grounded upon them. Is it to be supposed, that before he accepts the tempting offer, his candour and conscientiousness will be sufficiently strong to induce him to institute a fair and rigid examination of tenets on which his wealth and station are to depend ? and after he has accepted it, will the inducements to the performance of that duty be strengthened or increased ? The result is not very doubtful ; he shuns inquiry and accepts the office, and from that moment all probability of any fair investigation is at an end : he becomes an intellectual slave bound in golden fetters : he is no more free to pursue truth than the chained eagle is free to soar

into the sky ; or rather he is quite as free to pursue it as the muezzin\* to throw himself from the minaret, or as the traveller to leap from the summit of the great pyramid ; that is to say, at the risk of consequences—of utter destruction.

And is it possible not to perceive, that besides putting an end to impartial examination, this species of bribery is a bounty on hypocritical pretension ? Is there one man in ten thousand, who, looking forward to the prospect of living in the enjoyment of worldly advantages from the profession of certain opinions, will shrink from that profession in the first instance, or subsequently abandon it, because he finds it impossible to believe in the opinions professed ? Can there be a more effectual method of creating insincerity, as well as indifference to truth, and can there be a practice more destructive of moral worth and real piety ?

You know, Hassan, as well as I can describe, how all this is exemplified amongst the followers of the Prophet ; you are aware not only of their utter neglect of examination, but of the secret disbelief of thousands of Moslems (priests as well as laymen) in much of what they profess for the sake of gain, the scarcely disguised violations of precepts they pretend to revere, the rapacity for wealth and power which puts on the semblance of holiness and laughs at the credulity of its dupes.

I shall never, for my own part, lose the recollection of the indifference to truth and the hypocrisy I witnessed on my pilgrimage to Mekka. Wrapt myself in holy thoughts and sincere devotion, I was shocked at the conduct of those whom sordid rapacity had congregated around the sacred place.

Here, too, we have another main root of intolerance and persecution. Whenever the emolument, power, and distinction of any set of men depend on the reception of particular doctrines, or are bound up in their maintenance, not only is all fair examination at an end on the part of their supporters, but the liveliest zeal is kindled in their defence, and the bitterest hostility is roused against all who will not fall into the same blind acquiescence. There is an inseparable connection between the lucrateness of opinions and persecution.—*Letters of an Egyptian Kafir on a Visit to England, in Search of a Religion, Enforcing some Neglected Views regarding the Duty of Theological Inquiry, and the Morality of Human Interference with It.* 1839.

\* The muezzin is the crier who, from the minarets of the mosque, summons the faithful to prayer.

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