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THIS subject is not one of mere sectarian or temporary interest. It touches a depth far deeper than even the differences which separate disciples of Naturalism from those who profess faith in a miraculous book revelation. The following inquiry reaches down to the "bed rock" of all intellectual and moral life, and deals with the source and development of force in the universe, with the nature of human actions, and with the true *fulcrum* which is to bear the leverage by which this still suffering and disordered world is to be raised towards perfect harmony with law, and with the highest ideal of human intelligence and happiness.

Orthodox guides are constantly warning their people against this proposed line of investigation. We are cautioned that the study of such a topic is unpractical and unprofitable—if not actually profane*—that it involves a mystery which is hopelessly inexplicable, that attempts to solve the mystery have been made over and over again by the "carnal" intellect, but always with the same unsatisfactory result—the mocking of our hopes, the answering of our questions by empty echoes, which but rebuke our presumption. This has been the favourite way of silencing the

* To proscribe as *profane*, studies beyond the comprehension of a particular school or sect is a very old habit. The wisest Greek philosopher maintained that Astronomy was a subject unfit for human inquiry, and that the gods took it under their own special and immediate control.

questionings, the difficulties, and the fears of "doubting believers." There can be no harm, we are told in making ourselves acquainted, as a matter of history, with how the loyal defenders of the faith have been accustomed to "hold the fort" against the "infidel," for we should ever be ready to give a reason of the hope that is in us. But to venture to reason out the point independently for oneself is to enter on a path beset with danger and leading to despair. Minds of any *stamina*, however, and especially if familiar with the wonderful disclosures which science and critical scholarship are daily making, are not likely to submit much longer to this restraint of priestly leading-strings. They will insist on the right of testing the most "mysterious" teachings of the church for themselves, undeterred alike by threats of ecclesiastical taboo in this world and of divine punishment in the next. The light of truth—formerly claimed as the sole prerogative of a pretended "sacred order"—now finds its way as freely into the poor man's cottage as into the palace of the archbishop, and will, sooner or later, compel the dullest to examine for themselves with an urgency that cannot be repressed.

If I looked upon the question under consideration as simply affording scope for curious speculation, I should be content at once to relegate it for decision to the learned hair-splitters who make it their business solemnly to adjust the distinction between "homoousion" and homoiousion." But I am fully convinced that the alleged "mystery of evil" is essentially a practical question, and one upon which hangs the true theory of the universe, a right conception of man's physical and moral relations, and a just understanding of the nature of the human will and human accountability. Moreover, the vulgar notions on this subject will have to be abandoned before the many philanthropic persons whom theological superstitions have misled, are likely to unite in any effectual

attempt at man's physical, rational, and moral elevation. With all becoming reverence for the earnest and often profound efforts of the wise and the good in past times to master the difficulties of this subject, we, in this age of riper learning and more extensive scientific acquisition, occupy a vantage ground in discussing it which was not possible to any previous generation.

"Evil" is a term having a theological origin, though it has in some measure been *adopted* in the language of common life. We usually understand by it whatever is contrary to our ideas of moral rectitude and tends to interfere with the general happiness of mankind physically, morally, and socially. It is but too easy to find endlessly varied traces of the wretchedness and wrong that seem to defy all attempts to reconcile them with the rule of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness in the universe.

What shall we say of the tribes and races that have been permitted to live many centuries in internecine strife, ignorance, filth, and pestilence, and to perish without contributing one thought worth preserving to the stock of human ideas? And still it is often around the haunts of the wandering savage or the uncultivated boor, who is incapable of appreciating the sublime, that nature puts forth her grandest feats of power and beauty. Then what shall we think of the havoc and sorrow which are the heritage of multitudes born into the world with constitutions naturally predisposing them to suffer pain or to violate the sentiments of justice and humanity, and brought up in homes that infallibly foster vice, cruelty, and crime. Nor does it relieve the difficulty to view intemperance, the sickly frame, the life-long disease, the plague and the pestilence as being, directly or remotely, penalties for the neglect of sanitary and moral laws; for reason will persist in asking, "Why, if the universe be ruled by a Being of infinite power, wisdom, and

love, was not this deep turbid river of misery stemmed at the fountain?" Nay, there are forms of suffering yet more appalling and that yet more perplex and overpower us: the storm that dashes a thousand helpless vessels in pieces in spite of every expedient tried by the crews to escape an ocean grave; the earthquake that engulfs towns and cities so quickly that science and forethought are powerless to avert it; the explosion of the mine that suddenly scorches to death many an honest toiler and deprives many a family of its bread-winner. And if we turn from the fury of the unconscious elements to the conscious and troubled inward experience of human beings, the cloud of "natural ills that flesh is heir to," thickens. The tangled affairs of social and moral life is patent to us all. Why, in this century for instance, should law and order, truth and right, have so little influence upon civilised nations, to say nothing of those we deem barbarians? Look back, too, in history, and behold the long perspective of prophets and martyrs, who have sealed their loyalty to truth and righteousness with their blood, while the tyrants who slew them died without one pang of remorse. Look around and see all ages cut down, apparently at random;—in many cases the wise and vigorous, the useful, the talented, and benevolent, withering away in the morning or noontide of their days with their gifts increasing in number and activity, while the effete and the stupid, the besotted, the selfish, the useless, are spared. Knavery arrayed in purple and fine linen fares sumptuously, and at its gate honest poverty clothed in rags, desires in vain to eat of the crumbs that fall from the rich charlatan's table. Consider the millions that have innocently pined in the dungeon, or that have been worked as beasts, flogged as beasts, and sold as beasts. Consider the throng of once blooming maidens ruined by heartless human monsters. Think of nations in the first rank

of civilisation, bowing at the same altar, and rising from their devotions to slay each other by weapons of fiendish ingenuity. And with the spectacle also before us of the greed of ambition, the vapourings of pride, the treachery of the false, the meanness of the little, the vices of the bad, and the frailties of the good, the moral instinct within us cannot help reiterating the question, "Is this the sort of world we should have expected under the government of a Deity clothed with the attributes of perfection? The good man—crude though his ideal be—if he had the power as he has the wish, would at once reduce this chaos to order; and does not the Theist believe in a God infinitely better than the most benevolent of men?

An eminent living physical philosopher has said: "Nature seems to take some care of the *race*, but bestows very little on *individuals*." And in brooding on the dark side of this problem, a man of literary note once exclaimed, in a private circle, "For the credit of our conception of what goodness ought to be, let us *hope* there is no God." This, too, rightly or wrongly, was the very thought put by Byron into the mouth of *Cain* in his reply to Lucifer:

> Why do I exist?
> Why art thou wretched? why are all things so?
> Even He who made us must be as the Maker
> Of things unhappy! To produce destruction
> Can surely never be the work of joy;
> And yet my sire says He's omnipotent.
> Then why is evil?—He being good?

The same thought is strongly expressed by Mrs. Browning:—

> My soul is grey
> With pouring o'er the total sum of ill.
> * * * * *
> With such a total of distracted life
> To see it down in figures on a page,
> Plain, silent, clear * * *

* * * That's terrible
For one who is not God, and cannot right
The wrong he looks upon.*

This problem of evil has stirred deeply inquiring minds from the earliest times. In the 'Naishadha Charita' (xvii. 45), a Chārvāka, or materialistic Atheist, is represented as addressing Indra and other gods on their return to heaven from Damayantis Svayamvara, and ridiculing the orthodox Indian doctrines of the Vedas:—"If there be an omniscient and merciful God, who never speaks in vain, why does he not, by the mere expenditure of a word, satisfy the desires of us his suppliants? By causing living creatures to suffer pain, though it be the result of their own works, God would be our causeless enemy, whilst all our other enemies have some reason or other for their enmity."†

Sophocles has lines to the same effect:—"It is strange that those who are impious and descendants of wicked men should fare prosperously, while those who are good and sprung from noble men should be unfortunate. It was not meet that the gods should thus deal with mortals. Pious men ought to have obtained from the gods some manifest advantage, while the unjust should, on the contrary, have paid some evident penalty for their evil deeds, and thus no one who was wicked would have been prosperous."‡

It may be convenient at this point to glance at some of the methods that have been employed to ease or remove the contradiction between the *painful* phenomena of life and the credited rule of an all-mighty, all-wise, and all-good Father. We shall

* 'Aurora Leigh.'
† 'Additional Moral and Religious Passages, Metrically rendered from the Sanskrit, with exact Prose Translations'—*Scott's Series.*
‡ Quoted by Dr. Muir in the 'Additional Moral and Religious Passages.'

thus have an opportunity of detecting the fallacies which lurk under all such methods of harmonising, and which render them nugatory.

Epicurus, from a Theistic point of view, stated the case very comprehensively when, in syllogistic form, he said:—"Why is evil in the world? It is either because God is unable or unwilling to remove it. If he be unable he is not omnipotent. If he be unwilling, he is not all-good. If he be neither able nor willing, he is neither all-powerful nor all-good;"* and it is difficult to see how escape is possible from between the horns of this dilemma on the supposition that an infinite God exists.

The Manichæans believed good and evil or pleasure and pain to be rival powers in the universe. This was also virtually the Persian theory on the subject, only the latter was clothed in oriental dress.† Bolingbroke and the sceptics of his day, accounted for the phenomena referred to on an æsthetic principle—the proportion of parts in the scale of sentient being. Every animal has bodily members of varied grades of honour and importance, and all in harmonious subserviency to the general convenience of their possessor. Every picture has an arrangement of colour producing light and shade. All harmony must consist of voices attuned from alto to bass. Every considerable dwelling must have apartments in the attic as well as on the ground floor, and of greater or less capacity. So the world is formed on a gradational plan from high intelligence, by imperceptible degrees down to life of so doubtful a

* The great Lord Shaftesbury, in his "Inquiry concerning Virtue," 'Characteristics,' Vol. II., page 10, puts the case thus:—"If there be supposed a designing principle, who is the cause only of good, but cannot prevent ill which happens . . . then there can be supposed, in reality, no such thing as a superior good design or mind, other than what is impotent and defective; for not to correct or totally exclude that ill . . . must proceed either from *impotency* or *ill-will*."

† Ormuzd and Ahriman. This is also the germ of the Christian dogma of God who is "Light," and the Devil "The Prince of Darkness."

character that it is impossible to determine whether it be vegetable or animal. In the moral sphere, too, there is a ladder whose top reaches the loftiest unselfishness, and whose rounds gradually descend to the grossest forms of moral life. It is argued that the world would be tame and monotonous without these inequalities in the structure of universal life, and that it is the constant friction between beings of high and low degree which helps to give that healthful impulse to human activity that keeps the universe from stagnating; and unavoidable accidents but quicken the forethought and contrivance of men to provide against such occurrences. It will be felt, however, by the most ordinary thinker, that such a theory utterly fails to cover all the facts, and fails especially to account for the more formidable sufferings of humanity. It is but the view of an artist who lives in a one-sided and unreal region, surrounded by plenty, who simply looks out upon the world through a *coleur de rose* medium, and projects the image of his own luxurious home upon the landscape outside.

There is another theory popular with a large class of airy minds, which regards evil as a modification of good. Right and wrong, truth and falsehood proceed from the same source, and are degrees of the same thing. Lust is only a lower form of love, and what would be described as cruelty inflicted upon others is not *intended* to cause suffering *as an end*, but only occurs in some rather abrupt and unceremonious attempt being made by a person to reach some object much wished for. But the one who suffers happens to be, unconsciously perhaps, an obstacle in the way of that object being attained; and the *suffering* is occasioned simply by accident, just as we stumble against a neighbour who has the misfortune to cross our path at the moment when our attention is fixed on something we

eagerly want to get at on the opposite side of the street. So much the worse for the neighbour if he sustain injury by the impact, but it is no fault of ours!

What goes by the name of meanness, according to the same theory, springs as truly from a wish to be happy in the mean nature as nobility does when manifested by a noble nature. As little harm is intended by the one nature as by the other. But it seems only necessary to state this method of meeting the difficulty in order to see its inadequacy. Even granting that the misery occasioned by men to each other were reconciled by this mode of reasoning, there is a class of troubles which are wholly beyond human agency and control that remains utterly unaccounted for; and respecting the evils which the theory professes to explain away, the question crops up afresh, why, if the government of the world be conducted by a Being of infinite power, wisdom and love, is so much distress permitted to be caused, *however casually*, by men to one another?

Perhaps the most elaborate and closely-reasoned attempt ever made to harmonise existing evil in the world with perfect wisdom, power, and goodness, in a Creator, was the celebrated "Essay on the Origin of Evil," by Archbishop King. The writer postulates, as an *axiom*, that the universe is the work of a God of infinite intelligence, power, and goodness; and he deals in precisely the same manner with the alleged existence of freedom and responsibility in human beings. The pith of the Archbishop's explanation of *moral evil* is contained in the following passage: "The less dependent on external things, the more self-sufficient any agent is, and the more it has the principles of its actions within itself, it is so much the more perfect; since, therefore, we may conceive two sorts of agents, one which does not act unless impelled and determined by external circum-

stances, such as vegetable bodies; the other, which have the principle of their actions within themselves, namely, free agents, and can determine themselves to action by their own natural power, it is plain that the latter are much more perfect than the former; nor can it be denied that God may create an agent with such power as this; which can exert itself into action without either the concourse of God or the determination of external causes, as long as God preserves the existence, power, and faculties, of that agent; *that evil arises from the unlawful use of man's faculties;* that more good in general arises from the donation of such a self-moving power, together with all those foreseen abuses of it, than could possibly have been produced without it."

The gist of the Archbishop's reasoning is in the words: "Evil arises from the unlawful use of men's faculties." But this is a mere begging of the question, and a shifting rather than a settlement of the difficulty; for even granting the assumption put forward, the inquiry naturally recurs: Why, in a world created and sustained by such a perfect Being as Theism recognises, was any arrangement tolerated by which men *should* exercise their faculties *unlawfully*—especially as the results are so painfully discordant with our notions of happiness? It is assumed by the Archbishop that *man* and not his maker is responsible for the moral chaos that has always characterised the condition of the race. But this is only a repetition of the now exploded theological fiction that man was created with his faculties and circumstances equally and entirely favourable to obedience; and that his departure from law was his own voluntary choice—a choice determined upon by him with a full consciousness that he *ought* to have acted differently, and that he was *free* to have done so. By the voluntary depravation of his own mind and by the force of his bad example he involved all

his descendants in the moral and physical consequences of his transgression. But with the undeniable revelations of modern scientific and historical research before us such a view is too absurd to need refutation. In any case we are justified in holding that on the hypothesis of a miracle-working God, there is no tendency to disobedience, error, or vice, in mankind that might not have been easily checked in its first outbreak by an act of omnipotence. The power that is asserted to have rained manna from the skies, arrested the setting of the sun, changed water into wine, and raised the dead, might surely have been exerted in a way more worthy the dignity and goodness of an infinite God, in stopping the first outburst of moral disorder that has filled the world until now with cruel and deadly passions and overwhelmed millions of sensitive spirits in intense anguish.

By the same superficial and evasive reasoning, has this writer disposed of those calamities which cannot owe their origin, anyhow, to the will of man. He coolly tells us that "it is no objection to God's goodness or his wisdom to create such things as are necessarily attended with these evils . . . and that disagreeable sensations must be reckoned among natural evils as inevitably associated with sentient existences, which yet cannot be avoided. If anyone ask why such a law of union was established, namely, the disagreeable sensations which sentient creatures experience, let this be the answer, because *there could be no better;* for such a necessity as this follows; and considering the circumstances and conditions under which, and under which only, they could have existence, they could neither be placed in a better state, nor governed by more commodious laws." That is to say, God in his wisdom and goodness did his best to secure the general well-being of the universe and signally failed, as the physical accidents and agonies

endured by innocent multitudes, prove! Yet this is a book of which a distinguished Theistic philosopher said: "If Archbishop King, in this performance, has not reconciled the inconsistencies, none else need apply themselves to the task." If the *data* of Archbishop King as regards the existence of a personal Deity, clothed with infinitely perfect physical and moral attributes, and as regards the free agency of man, had been correct, the most logical course for him would have been to have simply admitted the hopeless irreconcilableness of these data with the state of the world as we find it, and to have betaken himself to the favourite retreat of orthodoxy,—*mystery*,—and spared himself the pains of elaborating a tissue of metaphysical fallacies which only make the confusion to be worse confounded. But I reserve his data for fuller examination afterwards.

The only other theory, which I shall notice, as differing from the one to be subsequently proposed, is that of *fatalistic Deism*, which was held in the last century by a large class of European philosophers, and sought to be refuted by Butler. The following is an epitome of the argument of this school:—The existence of Deity, as infinite and uncreated, is a *necessary* fact, intuitively perceived. If God's existence be necessary, the *conditions* of his existence—physical, mental, and moral,—and the modes of its action and development, must be alike *necessary*. As the visible universe is the outcome of this necessary existence, all the forms of being contained in the universe must also be necessary, by which we are to understand that we cannot conceive the possibility of their being otherwise than they are. If so, then all the orders of existence in the universe, proceeding from the depths of his infinite nature and constantly dependent upon his support, are fated to form links in one chain of eternal and unalterable necessity, and to be precisely as they *are*. Therefore the develop-

ment of human beings, and of every other variety of *life*, is destined to assume the particular form under which they are found to exist at any given stage of the evolution of the universe. Consequently, what, in the vocabulary of mortals, is called *freedom*, is but an illusion,—the actions and characters of rational beings of all degrees of intelligence and moral culture being included in that ceaseless development which is controlled by the same central and all-embracing principle of unexplainable *necessity*.*

It is further maintained by the same class of Deists that amidst all the apparent confusion that prevails, indications of a process of orderly developments are discernible, whether we trace the consolidation of the earth's crust, or the progressive advance of vegetable and animal forms upon it, or the gradual uplifting of the human species. This evolution, it is asserted, is either caused and directed by some controlling Intelligence, or is the result of chance, or arises from some inherent spontaneous power in the universe itself. But our conception of *chance* excludes it from the rank of a causal and regulating force, for we only understand by the term what is fortuitous, blind, undesigning, and impotent. Again, to suppose that some inherent spontaneous power in nature itself is shaping and directing universal progress would be to endow the universe with physical, rational, and moral power; in other words, to identify it with God, or to view it *as* God. Therefore, it is concluded,—these alternatives failing to satisfy the demands of logical consistency,—the only tenable view left is that the framework and development of the universe, is the work of a Deity answering to the Θεος of Homer, who represents the God of his conception, as being

* The reader will be reminded of a remarkable passage in the 'Prometheus Vinctus' of Æschylus: "Even Jove is not superior to the Fates."

the source of all *the good and evil* of life. I confess that for a time, while my own mind was passing from supernaturalism to naturalism, and while I believed that my choice in dealing with "the mystery of evil" lay alone between rival forms of Theism, this notion of God as the primal cause alike of happiness and misery was the only one which seemed co-ordinate with all the facts, and effectually to solve the mystery.

But, as will appear later in this paper, two objections ultimately arose in my mind which shook my fatalistic Deism to its foundation. The first of these was, that the God I thought myself bound to believe in fell far short of the ideal of virtue and goodness at which an average high-minded man felt himself obliged to aim, and thus I was conscious of doing violence to my better nature in holding to such a faith. The second objection was that the *intuitive* idea of Deity was found by me to be a gratuitous assumption which, with other beliefs of this description, collapsed under the unsparing analysis to which the intuitive philosophy has been subjected by the inductive philosophy—the latter being the only one which seems to me to accord with the universal principles of truth.

After the preceding statement of attempted solutions of this alleged mystery by Theistic and Deistic theories, it will probably be admitted that any method of accounting for the existence of evil based on the twofold hypothesis of an Almighty God of omniscience, wisdom, and goodness, and the doctrine of the free, self-determining action of the human will, cannot escape from the charge of mystery—or, more properly, of palpable logical contradiction. In presence of these two conceptions, evil must inevitably remain a mystery. Let them be surrendered, however, and the mystery instantly vanishes.

When a scientific analyst discovers that a hypothesis fails to cover and explain all the phenomena,

he unhesitatingly abandons it, and there is no other alternative left to an inductive theologian—if there be such a person—when he is placed in a similar position. The *facts* in the present instance are agreed upon by all. There *is* a large proportion, if not preponderance, of what is known as *Evil* in the world; and if the idea of an infinitely wise and good personal Deity tend to embarrass instead of allaying the difficulties we have been examining, clearly the idea of an universal ruler ought, in loyalty to truth, to be removed from the category of our beliefs, let the sentimental associations be ever so hallowed and strong that have gathered round it, and the same remark applies to the allied dogma of free will in man.

As regards the first of these points, the justice of the course recommended is strengthened when we consider that the existence of such an almighty person is incapable of scientific or any other kind of proof worthy consideration. At the same time, in venturing this remark, I wish emphatically to disclaim all sympathy with positive Atheism; for a *dogmatic* negation of any vitalizing and controlling force *in* the universe, not being *itself the universe,* is almost as objectionable as the most dogmatic form of Theism. All I contend for is, that there is no ground for believing in what theologians call a *personal* God, in other words, "a magnified man" invested with certain characteristics of humanity attributed to him, these attributes being only infinitely extended. Doubtless Theists, and particularly Christian Theists, will be ready to adduce in reply their usual argument for the existence of a personal Deity derived from their *intuitions.* This, consistently enough, is also the stronghold of Christian faith in the doctrine of "a supernatural gospel," namely, "its felt adaptation to the spiritual wants of Christian believers." And the more rapidly and convincingly the evidences

of science and historical criticism accumulate on the non-supernatural and non-Theistic side, they shut their eyes the closer, scream the louder against "the wickedness of Atheistic materialism," and plunge deeper into the sentimental abyss of their "intuitions." Here is a passage *à propos*, written by one of the ablest and best read leaders of the reactionary, semi-mystic, evangelical school which owes its origin (as opposed) to the "fierce light" of modern thought, against which the writer lifts a warning voice. "But whether we represent a 'new school' or a theological 'reaction' we say frankly that, in our judgment, the exigencies of the times require that Christian Churches, and especially Christian ministers, should meet the dogmas of materialism and anti-supernaturalism *with the most direct and uncompromising hostility. It is not for us to* PERMIT *men to suppose that we regard the existence of the living God as an open question.* Nor shall we make any deep impression on the minds of men *if our faith in Jesus Christ rests on grounds that are accessible to historical, scientific, or philosophical criticism.* If we are to meet modern unbelief successfully we must receive that direct revelation of Christ which will enable us to say 'we have heard him, we have seen him ourselves and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world!'" The great object of this school seems to be to make a religious "impression" in Evangelical fashion, and stamp out all that frustrates their doing so, proceeding from the sceptical camp. The historical truth or *error* of the thing taught seems to be of secondary consideration provided it can be made to dovetail with Evangelical intuitions. These *intense* believers deliberately tell us that it is of no use our calling their attention to discrepancies in the Gospel narratives by which these sources of Christian facts are rendered historically untrustworthy. They assure us that such criticism is idle

and beside the mark, and they console themselves with the belief that these discrepancies are only *apparent*, and that if we could but compare the *original* documents (which, by the way, nobody has ever seen or can find the least trace of) instead of the mere *copies* of them (these pretended copies being all we possess), we should be immediately convinced !*

So in regard to the existence of a personal Deity, instead of looking at the facts as they *are*, they assure us that, if we could only know all the complications of the divine government, our difficulty in believing in *their* Deity would disappear. But those who fall back on the fitness of their conception of Deity to their intuitions as a proof of his existence, while perhaps feeling that this argument affords perfect satisfaction to themselves, place an insuperable barrier against all interchange of reasoning between themselves and those who hold opposite convictions. Any one who hides in the recesses of his intuitions, has sunk into a state of intellectual somnolency from which no argument can wake him.

There are some Theistic apologists, however, who still have unshaken faith in the argument from *design*, as establishing the existence of a beneficent designer. But the fallacy of this argument is obvious. The premises and conclusion stand thus :—"Every object which bears marks of design necessarily points to the existence of an intelligent designer. The universe is such an object, therefore *it* had an intelligent designer." But it is usually forgotten that this conclusion is arrived at by comparing the universe with an object—a watch for example, that can bear no

* The weak point in this *intuitional* argument is that *it proves too much.* It is the favourite proof with large sections of the adherents of Buddhism, Brahminism, Fire-worship, and Mahometanism respectively, by which these systems are all *felt* to be supernatural revelations. Therefore by proving too much *it proves nothing.*

analogy to it. It is taken for granted that the universe sustains the same relation to a personal Creator which a piece of mechanism does to a mortal contriver.

Now, it might be perfectly fair *to compare one piece of human handiwork with another*, and infer that *both* suggested the application of power and intelligence equal to their construction. But in comparing the universe—there being only *one*, and *that* one *infinite*, with articles of man's invention, which are *many* and *finite*—are we not comparing the *known* with the *unknown*, and carrying the principle of analogy into a region where it can have no place? It may be just to infer that as one work of human arrangement naturally implies skill in the maker, so another work bearing marks of human contrivance, should, in like manner, suggest to us the action of a thinking mind. But science is so far in the dark as to the mainspring of life, motion and development in the one universe that we should be totally unwarranted by the laws of thought in arguing from the origin of what is *discoverable* to the orgin of what is *undiscoverable*.* To reason, therefore, from design in the operations of man to design in the operations of nature is illogical and impossible.

One of the most remarkable signs of change, of late, in the conception of Deity, among progressive thinkers, who *still cling to the skirts of recognised religious institutions*, is the effort that has been made to reconcile an *impersonal* Power influencing and shaping the evolution of the universe with the teachings of the Bible. The line of thought in Mr. Matthew Arnold's 'Literature and Dogma' has very decidedly this leaning. Indeed, it is no exaggeration to say

* Axiom V., in the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* of Spinoza is decisive on this point. "Things that have nothing in common with each other *cannot be understood by means of each other; i.e., the conception of the one does not involve the conception of the other.*"

that this writer labours to turn the current notion of a personal God into ridicule, and even seeks to prove that, at least, the ancient Hebrews were not in sympathy with such a notion. Some will take leave to doubt whether Mr. Arnold's views of the Hebrew conception of God be not more ingenious than accurate, and whether he may not have foisted far-fetched theories of his own upon the *text* of the Bible in his zeal to make out his case. But, at any rate, we have the phenomenon of a writer cherishing devotion to the teaching of Scripture and concern for the maintenance of the national Church, and yet sapping the foundations of orthodoxy, and actually sneering at the idea of faith in a personal Deity, though professed gravely by eminent bishops—the two whose names he repeats *ad nauseam* throughout the essay.

Another recent book of essays, written with a similar purpose, but in a more reverent and philosophic spirit, is not unworthy of notice.* The author is a Nonconformist minister, and a member of the London School Board—a gentleman of marked ability and wide culture. The peculiarity of his position is that while, like the Broad Church clergy, conducting his service with a liturgy and a hymn-book, fashioned after orthodox models, he has openly renounced the dogma of the *Supernatural* in his pulpit teaching, and rejected the notion of a personal God. He has chosen to represent himself as a "Christian Pantheist,"—a term which we may be excused for deeming paradoxical—and strives throughout the volume to bring his statements into accord with certain passages in the New Testament. The essays reveal more than an average (as well as a discriminating) acquaintance with ancient and modern philosophy and theology, and with the results of modern science in relation to

* 'The Mystery of Matter, and other Essays.' By J. Allanson Picton, M.A. Macmillan. 1873.

the nature of the Universe. His thoughts are, now and then, diffuse, but they are always expressed with a wealth of language and sometimes with an eloquence not ordinarily met with in theological disquisitions. There are, however, as it seems to me, weak points, I had almost said occasional contradictions, in his reasoning, into which he may have been unconsciously led by his unique ecclesiastical relations, but which it is beyond the scope of the present paper to criticise at length. Nevertheless, he forcibly opposes the old error which made a distinction between *matter* and *spirit*, and he reduces the Universe, with Professor Huxley, to a *unity*, namely, SUBSTANCE, of which what have been vulgarly described as *matter* and *spirit* are simply the *phenomena*. He further boldly rejects all theories which regard Deity as *one* amidst a host of *other* beings, and while, with religious fervour, recognising the presence of an efficient though unnameable energy as vitalising and controlling all molecular forces, he seems, at the same time, to identify that unkown efficient energy with *universal substance*, and accords to it the right and title to be formally worshipped. I respectfully think he is not always clear and consistent in this part of his theme. Sometimes he refers—as Spinoza himself does—to this vitalising and all-comprehending essence as if it were invested with attributes of intelligence, wisdom, and goodness, without which attributes the writer's insistance upon the worship of universal substance as deity would be a misnomer. And yet, difficult though it be to discover homogeneity between certain parts of these essays, in one respect the author's aim throughout is unmistakeable. *He emphatically pronounces against the existence of a personal Deity.* Some of his remarks in opposition to the design argument are especially worth quoting:—

"It is demonstrable that there must be some fallacy in such an argument as that of Paley. For if it be

rigorously applied, it cannot prove what Paley certainly wished to establish—the existence of an omnipotent and omniscient worker. . . . If we are to see design only when we can compliment nature on an apparent resemblance to operations of human skill; and if, the moment that resemblance ceases, we are to confess our ignorance and to refrain from carrying the analogy further, would it not be better, seeing how infinitely larger is our ignorance than our knowledge, to recognise in both bearings of the analogy an appearance only which, though for some purposes practically useful, is infinitely below the divine reality. . . . Of whatever value the analogy of human design may be, no one would think of insisting upon its *admitted imperfections* as a part of the argument; and yet, without pressing those imperfections, it is impossible to make the argument consistent. But if it be fairly carried out, what it proves is this, that an omnipotent designer, intending to produce a beautiful and perfect work, went through millions of operations, when a single fiat would have sufficed; that these operations consisted not in clearly-aimed and economical modifications of material, but in the evolution of a thousand imperfect products, amongst which some single one might form a step to the next stage, while all the rest were destroyed; and thus the living material wasted was immensely greater than that which was used; that myriads of weaklings were suffered to struggle together, as though omniscience could not decide, without experiment, which were the better worth preserving; that in each successive modification the worker preserved, as far as was possible, the form of the previous stage, until it was found to be inconsistent with life; nay, that he carefully introduced into each successive product parts which had become obsolete, useless, and even dangerous—and all not through any inevitable conditions—for omnipotence excludes them, but in pursuit of a

mysterious plan, the reasons for which, as well as its nature, are acknowledged to be utterly inscrutable. Analogies which lead to such issues surely cannot be of much value for the nobler aims of religion." *

The other cause of the difficulty encountered in probing "the Mystery of Evil" is the traditional notions entertained by many, of the action of the human will. Man is represented by the orthodox as a "free agent" (I except, of course, hyper-Calvinists who now form a very small minority among Christians), and the doctrine of volitional liberty has acquired prominence in theological and philosophical discussions; not from any practical influence the doctrine can exert, one way or another, on the actual conduct of life, but simply from the accident that the question whether the will was absolutely free or determined by necessity happened to be thrown to the surface, in the fifth century, in the theological battle between the Augustinians and the Pelagians. The inquiry is itself interesting and important, but many mental philosophers from that period until recently, having a dread of the *odium theologicum*, have been desirous it should be known that they were "sound" on the subject, and have been particular in declaring themselves on the orthodox side. The strong enunciation of one view has called forth an equally vigorous statement of the opposite theory, and hence philosophers have filed off into two sharply defined parties—libertarians and necessitarians—so that the importance that has come to be attached to the free-will controversy is, in a great measure, adventitious.

The introduction of moral evil into the world, as before stated, has been ascribed by the greater number of Christians to the voluntary disobedience of the progenitor of the race. Tradition has handed down the unscientific and unhistoric story of an original man who,

* 'Mystery of Matter,' pp. 330, 340, 345.

having been severely plied with temptation in order to test his virtue, voluntarily broke a certain arbitrary and positive command of his maker, and involved himself and his posterity in tendencies to wrong-doing which could only be corrected by supernatural means. But, without debating the wide question of the origin of mankind, manifestly men are so constituted and surrounded that limitations are placed as indubitably upon their volitional faculty as upon their other mental powers. So that in no libertarian sense can we be said to be free agents. The form a man's character takes is necessarily dependent on his innate predispositions and capacities—the form and size of brain and cast of temperament which he derives from his parents—and on the nature and extent of the influences under which he is trained. Some natures are constitutionally more attuned to intellectual and moral harmony than others, and when impelled by favourable influences from without, there is little merit in their moving in the line of conformity to truth and right. There are other natures that inherit less fortunate tendencies, to whom virtue must always be the result of conscious effort, and especially if they be encircled with influences unfriendly to the culture of a high and noble life. It is certain that if such persons attain any considerable degree of goodness, the end will be reached through the experience of error and folly and of the natural penalties attaching to both. As far as I can understand, the chief ground of the alarm affected by a certain class of philosophers and theologians at the idea of human actions being determined by *necessity* is the morbid and fictitious weight they have given to the doctrine of *individual responsibility;* I say *morbid* and *fictitious*, because whether a man violates the laws of nature or of society he is sooner or later made to bear more or less of his share of responsibility in enduring the natural punishment due to the offence. Had the

same amount of concern been felt by society about their *collective* share of responsibility in reference to the physical, intellectual, and moral well-being of *individuals* as is felt about the influence of necessitarianism upon "men's felt sense of *individual* responsibility" the results to the community and the race would have been much more rational and beneficial. I am persuaded that the individual conduct of citizens —be they good or bad—is not affected in the slightest degree, for better or for worse, by the views they may entertain of the philosophy of the human will. This might be proved demonstratively did space permit.

The kernel of this controversy, then, lies in the inquiry, Whether the will is absolutely self-determinative, and capable of arbitrarily kicking the beam, when motives present to the mind, and tending in opposite directions, seem to be evenly balanced; or whether, in every instance, the motive, embracing a great variety of considerations in the mind itself as well as in the circumstances around it, do not infallibly determine the character of the choice that is made. If the libertarian view be the right one, no certainty can be ever predicated as to the effect upon the conduct of uniformly good or bad motives, and, consequently, the most earnest and philanthropic exertions to improve the world are, at best, disheartening. But since it can be demonstrated that the formation of human habits is governed by necessary laws, and that these laws can be ascertained and acted upon with the undoubted assurance that corresponding results may be anticipated, the labours of science and philanthropy are animated by a well-founded hope that they need not be expended in vain. What, then, is "will" but simply that faculty or power of the mind by which we are capable of *choosing?* And an act of will is the same as an act of choice. That which uniformly determines the will is *the motive which*,

as it stands in the view of the mind, is the strongest. The motive is that which excites or invites the mind to volition, whether that be one thing *singly* or many things *conjointly*. By *necessity*, in this connection, is meant nothing more than the philosophical certainty of the relation between given antecedents and consequents in the production of actions. Man, like every other sentient being, is necessarily actuated by a desire for happiness, according to his particular estimate of it. It would be a contradiction to suppose that he could hate happiness, or that he could desire misery for its own sake, or with a perception that *it was such*. He is placed in circumstances in which a vast variety of objects address themselves to this predominating desire, some promising to gratify it in a higher degree, some in a lower, some appealing to one part of his nature and some to another. He cannot but be attracted to those objects and those courses of conduct which his reason or his appetites, or both combined, assure him are likely to gratify his desire of happiness. The *various degrees or kinds* of real and apparent good, promised by different objects or courses of conduct, constitute the *motives* which incline him to act in pursuance of the *general* desire of happiness which is the grand impulse of his nature. Sometimes he *really* sees and sometimes he *imagines* he sees (and as regards their influence on the will they come to the same thing) greater degrees of good in some objects or proposed courses of conduct than in others; and this constitutes *preponderance* of motive, that is, a greater measure of real or apparent good at the time of any particular volition. This preponderance of motive will be as is the character of the moral agent and the circumstances of the objects, taken conjointly. This preponderance of motive will be, therefore, not only different in different individuals, but different in different individuals at different times. That which

at any particular time is or appears to promise the greatest good, will uniformly decide the Will.* This necessarily flows from the tendency of a sentient nature to seek happiness at all, and is, indeed, only a particular application of the same general principle; inasmuch as it would imply as great a contradiction that a being capable of happiness should not take that which it *deems* will confer, all things considered, a greater degree of happiness rather than that which will confer a less, as it would be to imagine it not seeking happiness rather than the contrary, or some happiness rather than none. This *certainty* of connection between the preponderance of motive and the decisions of the will is what is meant by *necessity*, as simply implying that the cause will as certainly be followed by the appropriate effect in this instance as in any instance of the mutual connection of cause and effect whatever.†

Motive sustains a dynamical relation to will, as a cause does to an effect in *physics*. Therefore the only liberty which man possesses or *can* possess, is not the liberty of *willing as he will*—which is an idea philosophically absurd—but of *acting* as he wills, according to the laws of necessity. Otherwise he would be *independent* of cause; and, indeed, libertarians actually assert that a motive is not the cause, but only the *occasion* of choice.‡ Either human volitions are effects or they are not. If they are effects, they are consequents indissolubly associated with the antecedent causes or motives which precede them;

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* "The greatest of two pleasures or what appears such, sways the resulting action, for it is this resulting action that alone determines which is the greatest."—Bain on the 'Emotions and the Will,' p. 447.

† This is the course of argument adopted by Edwards in his remarkable book on the WILL, and it is admirably summarised by Henry Rogers in his 'Essay on the Genius and Writings of Edwards,' prefixed to the Complete Edition of his Works, pp. xx to xxiv.

‡ For this distinction, enforced by Drs. Clarke and Price, see remarks in Bain's 'Mind and Body,' p. 76; also in 'The Refutation of Edwards,' by Tappan.

and therefore "the liberty of indifference" is impossible.* If human volitions be *not* effects, the actions of men are independent of condition or relation, undetermined by motives or antecedents, and for that reason removed beyond the domain of that principle of necessary law which is the sole guarantee for the order and progress of the Universe.†

The elimination from this problem, therefore, of the conception of a Deity clothed with personal and moral attributes and of the notion of a self-determining will in man, liberates it from all mystery and difficulty whatsoever; for if there be no personal God the existence of *physical* evil casts no imputation upon the infinite character attributed to him. And if there be no "liberty of indifference" in man, he is exempt from the charge of being, in any sense, the originator of moral evil, as the circumstances that constitute his motives are made *for* him and not *by* him; and therefore the praise of virtue and the blame of vice and, in fact, the whole theory of conscience as held by the vulgar, are *annulled*.

What is the distinct *reality* left to us, then, after we have parted with these two inventions of fancy?

The pith of the matter may be conveniently summed up in a few simple propositions :—

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* Definition VII. in the 'Tractatus' of Spinoza runs thus :—"That thing is said to be free *which exists by the sole necessity of its own nature, and by itself alone is determined to action. But that is necessary or rather constrained which owes its existence to another and acts according to certain and determinate causes.*"

† The controversy on Free Will and Necessity has, within the last quarter of a century, passed from the region of mere theological wrangling into the circle of scientific studies, and has assumed to the social and moral Reformer *practical* importance. The subject now claims the attention of all who would have intelligent views of the moral condition and prospects of Humanity and who seek to work hopefully for its regeneration. It is not within the province of this Essay to particularise the various recent phases of the controversy, but those who are alive to the importance of the subject cannot fail to find intensely interesting those chapters bearing upon it in such works as Mill's 'Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy,' Bain's 'Compendium of Mental and Moral Science,' and Herbert Spencer's 'Study of Sociology.'

1. All we can know of the Universe is *phenomena,* —(including the molecular force-centres into which existing organisms are resolvable by scientific analysis) —and the fixed uniformity of the laws that regulate and control the physical and moral evolutions and developments of *universal substance;* but of *noumena* we can know nothing, and consequently any dogmatic definition—positive or negative, of a primal cause, *in* or *beyond* substance, or not in or beyond substance —is totally unsustained by facts. Therefore the systems of Theism, Deism, Pantheism, and Atheism are mere *hypotheses,* which all involve unproved assumptions. As regards the existence of any overruling power, we are in a state of *nescience.* As regards motives and actions, all we know is the uniform and necessary relation of sequence that exists between them—nothing more.

2. The universe, or, at least, the portion of it with which we have immediate acquaintance, is being slowly and gradually developed from rudimental elements, from confusion and discord to order and harmony; and this remark applies, throughout, to physical, intellectual, and moral life. Thus it follows that the generations of mankind, up to the present, having been brought upon the planet before it has reached the state of complete development and perfect equipoise of forces, are fated to suffer those physical trials which arise from storms, floods, earthquakes, droughts, blights, and other casualties, which, when the material agencies around us have attained more perfect equilibrium, may be expected to disappear. There are many more physical inconveniences experienced by the race by reason of their still necessarily limited knowledge of the operations of nature, of the laws of being, and of their true relations to the world and humanity, and by reason of the yet very imperfect stage of human culture. It is inevitable, therefore, that numerous diseases and

sufferings should be encountered, which a broader intelligence and a clearer forethought will, in the distant future, be able to anticipate and prevent.

3. "Evil" is a word which originated with theologians, and which, from its vagueness and ambiguity, has introduced much of the mystification and error that have beclouded past investigations of the subject. In its primitive signification and as applied in theology, *evil* had a penal character assigned to it, and it derived that character from the childish tradition long believed by adherents of churches, that physical disasters, including disease and death, were the result of a trivial transgression committed by "Adam." The same cause has been adduced to account for all the moral obliquities which have brought pain and misery upon the descendants of the first man. "Sin," which denotes the moral side of evil, in the language of theology, is represented as being at once an effect and a cause of the first transgression. But with the rejection of the idea of a personal Ruler of the world, "evil" and "sin" in the sense in which they are usually understood by the orthodox, are rendered *meaningless*. Both these terms point back to a period in the intellectual and moral childhood of mankind, before the universal and uniform action of Law was dreamt of, and when human duty was held to consist only of a series of positive commands, formally proclaimed by an infinite personal governor, and constituting his "revealed will," for the direction of his creatures. And for the perpetuation of this antiquated belief down to the present we are indebted to stereotyped creeds, which clergymen and ministers of religious bodies still solemnly pledge themselves to maintain. But the light of science presents the source of duty and the nature and standard of morals, in our time, in an altered aspect. In this amended view there is nothing corresponding to the theological ideas of *evil* and *sin* in the world, at all.

What is *called* evil is simply a synonym for *imperfection* in the material or moral circumstances of humanity, or in both. The earth has not yet attained its ultimate and perfect form, and the mind of man has not yet acquired a full and practical knowledge of the working of law so as to guard successfully against collisions with the more violent and dangerous agencies of nature, and so as to use nature as a minister of good. What is known as *sin* or wrong-doing is nothing more than the result of human *ignorance,* which is but another form, again, of *imperfection.* Many acts, I am aware, are called sinful by *clerics* and their votaries, but such transgressions, though ranked by orthodox teachers as equally obnoxious to divine displeasure with acknowledged *natural* immoralities, are found when looked into to be only *ecclesiastical* sins—sins of priestly manufacture which have no place in nature and no recognition in the enlightened conscience. That this is the only true account of the matter is evident from the fact that, as men become familiar with the uniform operations of nature in their bearing on human welfare, the ills of life perceptibly diminish, and the necessity of conforming, in every sphere of existence, to natural law comes to have the force of a safe and efficient guiding impulse. No sane being ever did *wilfully* what he knew to militate against individual or social happiness as an *ulterior* end, and no one ever *continued* to practise habits having this tendency a single moment after his mind became really sensible of the character and influence of his doings. That acts mischievous and cruel are too often committed there can be no doubt; but the mischief or the cruelty is always and only *accidental* to the design the malicious person has in view. Many, it is true, persist in doing what they *profess* to know is at variance with the principles of justice, honour, and utility, and hence the *apparent* anomaly

of proper knowledge and improper conduct sometimes being found united in the same person. But the anomaly is only *apparent;* for the individual *professing* to know what befits his relations to the universe and to society, and yet doing what contradicts that knowledge, deceives himself that he possesses suitable knowledge at all. *Knowledge,* in such a connection, is confounded with *notions.* A man may have a *notion* or a dim idea of what he ought to *do* or to be, in his *imagination* or his *memory,* but in this instance the notion is held by the mind as an impotent *sentiment* or a barren *tradition,* the mere semblance of actual knowledge. The *notion* of a thing is but a *theoretic or hypothetical conception,* and does not penetrate the mind and touch the springs of action. All *knowledge,* worthy to be so designated, enters into us and becomes *conviction,* modifying thought, feeling, and will. So that all the faults—so-called—committed by individuals and communities have proceeded from their *not knowing better.* Even the crucifixion of the founder of Christianity is ascribed, in the New Testament to this cause. "I wot," says St. Peter, "that ye did it ignorantly." This point receives irresistible confirmation on every hand. The vast proportion of crimes of violence, such as wife-beating, garotte-robbery, manslaughter, and murder, are confined for the most part to one class of society—those who live beyond the pale of education and refinement, agencies by which feelings of decency and humanity are fostered. And the only cause of the difference between this social *stratum* and the one above it is that the training of the better class of people is favourable to the controlling of their passions, at least as regards the commission of crimes of that hue. The sexual vices, again, are not confined to *any* particular social grade. They are probably indulged in as great a ratio by the well-to-do as by the lower orders. But if we compare the victims

of licentiousness, of whatever social grade, with the philosophic and the devout who have been taught to hold these vices in abhorrence, we here, again, find the same rule hold good. The culture of the pure-minded has been specially directed to the instructing of the mind in the bad consequences of this sort of vice, and to the habituating of the mind to the moderation and government of animal appetencies. In like manner the difference between the false ideas and practices of many at one period of their lives, and their improved ideas and practices at another, lies alone in the fact that they have come to know better.

The drift of this reasoning is plain. The ever-widening circle of knowledge, the knowledge of manifold truth in physics and morals, is the grand power by which the upward march of Humanity is to be secured. But, as has been already observed, knowledge, considered as the great curative principle, is not a mere fortuitous concourse of facts, however good and useful in themselves, thrown into the mind, any more than food is muscular strength. Our diet must first become assimilated with the tissues; and so knowledge, which strengthens, renovates, and elevates, is the concentrated essence of principles which the thoughtful mind extracts from any given collection of facts. This representation of the case is as consoling as it is true; for it reveals a "silvery lining" in the cloud of prevailing human suffering, which inspires joy and hope as we contemplate the future of the world. It is a law of nature that every common bane should carry with it a common antidote, and a careful inspection of history makes it clear that it is the tendency of each separate species of error and wrong-doing *to wear itself out.* The discovery of imperfection, usually made through enduring the painful results thereof, leads towards perfection in every department of human interests. Every dis-

comfort, physical and moral, that vexes the lot of man, reaches a crisis; human effort is immediately braced up to grapple with the crisis, and inventive brains are excited to devise expedients for its removal. Thus have all social and political improvements been effected.

The method of viewing the problem of evil which has been adopted in the preceding pages is the only one compatible with an unruffled state of mind in presence of the defects of our race that frequently offer us such bitter provocation in daily life—bigotry, cruelty, stupidity, selfishness, ingratitude, and pride. A wise man once remarked ironically: "There are words in Scripture that afford me unspeakable consolation when I have to encounter a person who is unreasonable and unjust. 'Every creature after its kind.' If such a man attempts to over-reach or insult me; if he show treachery or unkindness; if he deceive or malign me, I look at him with pity, and my sympathy for his misfortune in inheriting a defective organisation, or in lacking efficient intellectual and moral discipline, neutralises the anger I should otherwise feel towards him." Thus the practical philosopher remains undisturbed by the turbulent passions that blind and warp the minds of the mass, who are affected chiefly by superficial effects, the causes of which they have not the patience or the capacity to discriminate.

When the principles that have been enunciated become intelligently and generally recognised, they will not fail to produce a revolution in our whole system of dealing with vice and legislating for crime. The popular way of treating offences of all kinds at present is as absurd as it would be, after the fashion of our ancestors, to carry a bay-leaf as a preventive of thunder, or to remove scrofula by hanging round the neck a baked toad in a silk bag. Social irregularities of whatever kind, in a more rational age, will

no longer be visited with inflictions of corporeal pain, whether deficient nourishment, the application of the *cat*, confinement in a dismal cell, imposition of aimless grinding labour or chains. Far less will the murderous propensity to kick or beat or stab or poison a fellow-creature, be punished by so preposterous an instrument as the gallows or the guillotine. When acts of violence against society come to be viewed as the result of an imperfect nature or deficient knowledge and culture, care will be taken by the State to lay hold of the child through the influence of the school, and insist by compulsion on every citizen from tender years being taught the laws, social and legal, under which he is expected to live. And when any are found in riper years to give suspicion that the lessons of their youth are overborne by innate bad tendencies, public opinion, then enlightened as it will be by science, will, in a spirit of philosophic sympathy for the misfortune of the wrong-doer, demand his prompt separation for a time, at least, from his more fortunate neighbours, and his subjection before any extreme manifestation of his propensity accrues, to a beneficent *régime*, partly educational and partly medical, to enable him, as far as possible, to obtain the mastery over his besetting morbid tendencies, and merit a place once more, if possible, among well-conducted members of the community. The attempt, as now, to set the world right by teaching theological dogmas and by the agitations of revivalistic or ritualistic fanaticisms, or by the existing *lex talionis* of our criminal law, is mere ridiculous and wasteful tinkering. To permit a system of commerce which offers the worst temptations for the commission of fraud and fosters a heartless competition,* that often drives the honest and the weak to the wall, and then

* The noble-souled Robert Owen used to denounce it as "that monster, *competition;*" and by the way, it is worthy of remark, that the evident tendency of social reform now is in the very wake of the

to treat as outcasts the victims of intemperance and poverty which this unnatural system contributes to produce, and punish them with the degradation of the jail or the workhouse, is as senseless and cruel as to sanction gins and snares in the highway and then whip men for falling into them. These social absurdities, arising from crass ignorance of the constitution of man, and of physical and moral law, cannot last for ever. They may be hallowed by prestige, pompous judicial ceremony, and Parliamentary precedent, but they belong to a transitional stage of social life which is *doomed* before the triumphs of science and philosophy. The old shallow and mischievous scheme of reformation which exhibits a jealous Deity consigning wrong-doers to eternal death and the magistrate as "a terror to evil-doers," will be superseded by a method of government in which the revolting penal code now practised by civilised nations will have no place, and in which, without exception, the reform of the offender will be the supreme consideration, while the peace and safety of society will be found to be promoted thereby. And surely such happy anticipations for the race are a satisfactory compensation for the sacrifice truth compels us to make in parting with the illusions of our intellectual childhood,—the dogmas of a personal God and a self-determining will.

The world is, indeed, racked and torn by selfishness, cruelty, ignorance, and folly. Communities and individuals have writhed under burdens of sorrow from the beginning. But manifestly the *natural tendency* of physical and moral law is not to produce

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system of Owen which the "respectable classes" used to smile at as *Utopian*. Most intelligent men are either tacitly or openly coming round to the persuasion that "Man is the Creature of Circumstances." Mr. Owen probably inadvertently left out certain *factors*, indispensable to the success of his "New Moral World." But he has pointed out for us the only true path, and the failure of his scheme was a grand success.

these effects, but quite the contrary; and the complete happiness of the race is to be attained through the knowledge of law and yielding submission to it. But this great consummation can only be accomplished by slow degrees. A thousand years in this business is "as a watch in the night." If it should be asked, why should this training to perfect virtue and happiness be so slow and painful, and why should such slow and painful discipline be the only safe and solid basis on which the progress of humanity can be established, there is no answer except that in the nature of things it must be so. Suppose that we were living on some fair and perfect planet when the earth was in its once fluid state, and that we saw the huge animals belonging to that geological period wallowing in the mire and obscured by the dense fogs which then enveloped the half-formed world. If that had been our first introduction to the present abode of man we should probably have concluded, had we no previous experience of such a state of things elsewhere, that a world of sea and mud, with volcanoes ever and anon spouting forth their lava and steamy vapours shutting out the light, could never become fitted for human habitation. But this, nevertheless, was the elemental chaos, out of which our globe was, in the course of countless ages, evolved. So the present development of the moral world bears some analogy to the physical state of the earth in the primeval ages. It is still very gradually emerging out of its original intellectual and moral formlessness, and is yet a long way from the harmony and beauty with which humanity will, in future ages, be crowned. For any one, therefore, to judge of the tendency and goal of the universe from the seething troubles and pangs that harass the world's life now in its slow transition state, would be as rash as for the imagined spectator of the chaotic earth before man came upon it to

suppose that it could never be built up into a habitable world. The error consists in judging the whole circle of material and moral development by the very small segment of the circle which we have an opportunity of seeing. But a retrospect of human history justifies the assurance that in nature there underlies all present contradictions and incompatibilities, a moulding principle that will eventually transmute all incongruities into palpable consistency. The very tardiness, therefore, of the process by which humanity is to attain its highest possible life may be taken as a guarantee for the permanent advance of that life when it is realised. It is not for us now living, or for immediately succeeding generations to participate in this Elysium of prophetic forecast, at least in our present state of existence; but instead of moping over our inevitable fate, and groaning over the woes of the world, it is more becoming cultured manhood to bear that fate with philosophic fortitude, make the best of it, and help our fellow-mortals to do the same. The idea of "the Colossal Man," first worked by a great German writer, and repeated in the retracted essay of Dr. Temple, looks in the direction to which these remarks point. Humanity must be viewed *as a whole*. Particular nations may decay, but *man* is destined to rise to a higher plane of being. For an indefinitely long period he is kept under the tutelage of grievous trials, which, in the wonderful economy of nature, have the effect of unfolding and invigorating his powers, that he may rise to the highest possible knowledge, and use that knowledge in correcting his faults, so that at length he may be brought into perfect accord with his own noblest moral ideal, and with the general progressive movement of the universe. Even if, for scores of thousands of years, vast continents and islands of savage or semi-barbarous people live and then perish, there is no waste. Neither is there waste anywhere

in the laboratory of nature's forces. Had we seen the germs which afterwards developed into primeval forests, when these germs were just beginning to sprout in the bare rocky earth, we could not have dreamt of so mighty a use in store for them. But could we come back to the spot centuries afterwards when these tiny beeches and pines had grown into giant trees, the function of the insignificant germs would be obvious. The yearly shedding of the leaves of the trees into which they have grown has covered with mould the once barren surface in which they were planted, and supplied land suitable for the sowing of our crops. So the primeval trees in the forest of humanity, the first races, to all appearance not worth the power expended on their existence and support; these early races and tribes—so unproductive for ages—have been permitted to shed their millions of human leaves to make soil in the moral world. The barbarism that once reigned over the greater part of the earth is a pledge, in the arrangements of nature, that humanity will never, as a whole, return to barbarism again. The child cannot grow into the shrewd, cautious, enterprising man, but through the tumbles and bruises of childhood and the mistakes of passionate youth. Our measured intelligence, charity, and tolerance in the present century, has grown out of the ignorance, superstition, and intolerance of all the ages that have preceeded. The primitive races were allowed to live a life of low civilisation, and so by the picture of wretchedness they present for the warning of those who come after them, prove at once a beacon of warning and an effectual safeguard against the higher races that come after, sinking back to the same condition. The same consoling reflection applies to all the pains and discomforts which the good and the bad alike suffer in our present condition. These untoward circumstances, dark though they be, are not a mere waste of power,

but mark an epoch in universal progress—needful, disciplinary, transitional, leading to grander issues,—to universal conformity to the standard of universal harmony. If in this unique development the interests of individuals and races,—whose lot happens to be cast in the early or intermediate periods of that development,—are not so favoured as those of mankind will be in the happier and more remote future, such a consideration is subordinate, and not to be named in comparison with the final result—the expansion, culture, and coherent use of all the faculties of humanity, the extinction of disease, want, strife, and suffering of every kind; and if such an end is only to be gained, for a permanence, through physical and moral suffering in preceding ages of the world, the result may possibly well repay the cost. Nay, I think science justifies me in going farther. I might venture to add that the trials to which individuals and nations have ever been exposed in this life are introductory to a state of being *beyond the present*, when the island earth will be one in spirit with the invisible "summer-land," when free and pleasant communion between the embodied in the former state, and the disembodied in the latter, will be possible, when the sea of material and moral discord that now divides the one state from the other will be dried up, and when the last speck of imperfection that sullied the purity and splendour of regenerated humanity will be effaced.

In the immortal words of our Laureate:

> "O! yet, we trust that somehow good
> Will be the final goal of ill,
> To pangs of nature, sins of will,
> Defects of doubts and taints of blood;
>
> That nothing walks with aimless feet;
> That not one life shall be destroyed,
> Or cast as rubbish to the void,
> When *Nature makes* the pile complete.

That not a worm is cloven in vain,
That not a moth with vain desire
Is shrivelled in a fruitless fire
Or but subserves another's gain.

Behold we know not anything—
I can but trust that good shall fall
At last—far off—at last—to all,
And every winter change to spring."

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