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THE PARTING OF THE WAYS.

A STUDY ON THE LIVES

OF

STERLING AND MAURICE.

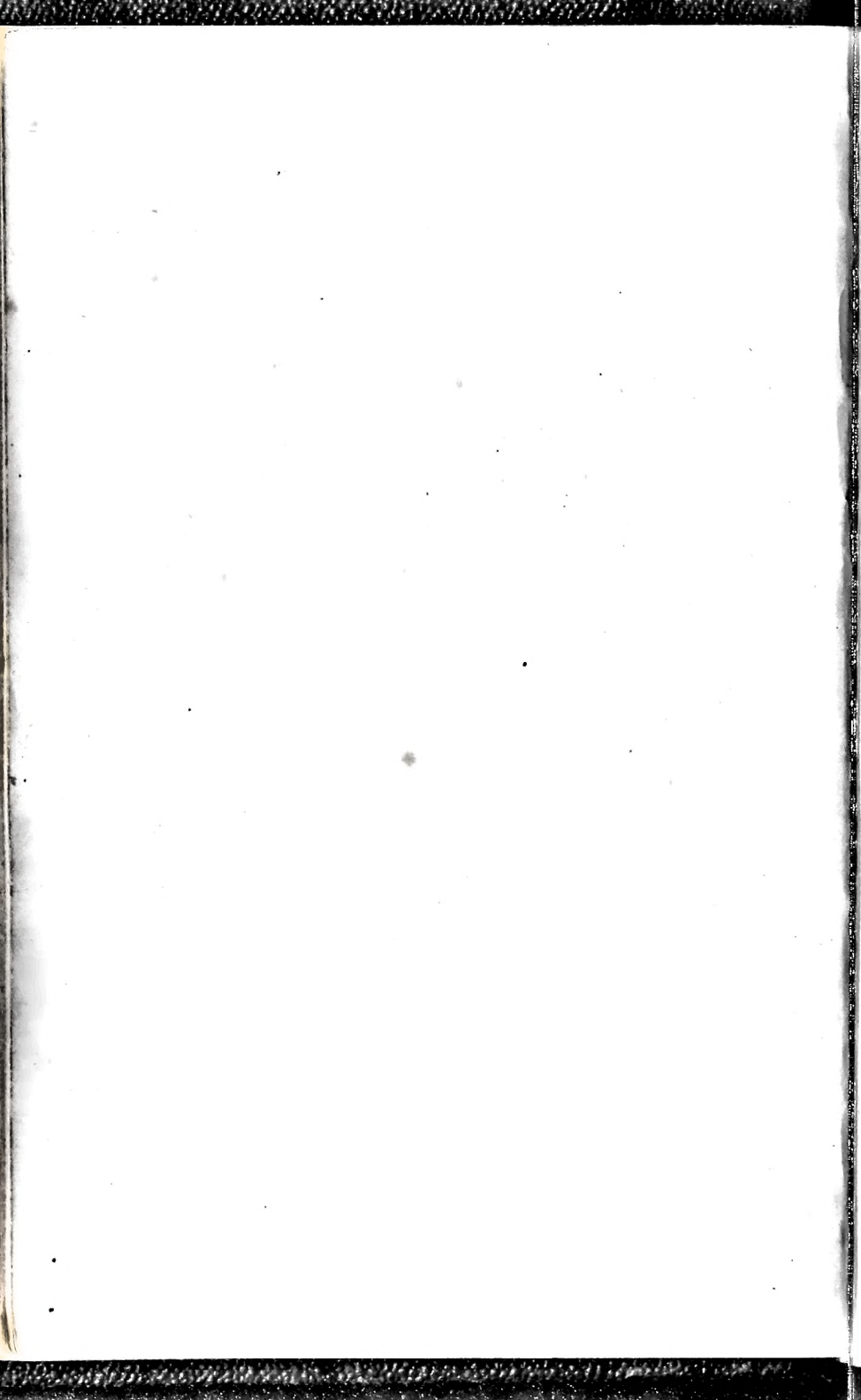
BY

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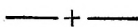
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THE PARTING OF THE WAYS.



I.

AMID the manifold currents of religious thought and belief, the question which most concerns us is, not so much the point at which a man may be at any given moment, as the direction in which he is moving. Which way is his face set? The ship which is leaving London to go down the river is virtually nearer the sea than the ship at Gravesend which is pressing its way towards the city. The question of direction is important above all others in any consideration of the religious life of an age. Dr. von Döllinger recently delivered, at Munich, some admirable lectures upon the religious history of England, which have been widely circulated in this country. The real aim of those lectures was to clear the way toward some union between the English Church and the wing of the Catholic Church which that reformer represents. It is plain that he looks to the Ritualistic and High Church elements in the English Church as representing the nearest point of contact between the two. And so they do apparently, but really it is otherwise ;

though for the moment the advanced Catholics and the English Ritualists are near each other in their superficial forms, they are animated by different spirits, they are following contrary tendencies, and their proximity is only that of two trains moving in opposite directions which have for a little paused side by side at a junction. Hence we have the remarkable phenomenon that since the brave utterances of Dr. von Döllinger have been heard, there has been almost no response to them from the Ritualists, whereas they have been warmly welcomed by Rationalists within and outside of the Church. These have felt that, whatever may be the forms which still cling to the new movement in the Catholic Church, it is in their direction, it is for freedom, whilst the tendency of those in this land who have surrendered the religious liberties amid which they were born is toward that very Papal authority against which the others have rebelled.

These currents and counter-currents are not less notable when they are found controlling the lives and thoughts of individual men. Everywhere around us we see minds passing each other, seemingly near, but bound for different latitudes of thought; everywhere hearts torn asunder by the mastering tides they cannot resist. These experiences do indeed make the religious changes and evolutions of our time a perpetual tragedy. It is significant of the unhappy condition of society in this respect, that the birth of a profoundly religious nature implies a new

spiritual tragedy. It means the fresh divorcing of earnest hearts, alienation of tenderest natures, the reluctant estrangement of friends at the sad parting of the ways. Who can tell what heart-breaks have been suffered ere the brothers Froude or the brothers Newman parted for paths that led on the one side to Rome, on the other to Reason? But there are hearts that have a deeper relationship than that of blood, and such were the two whose characters and lives have suggested what I have to say at present. These two men—John Sterling and Frederick Denison Maurice—were intimate friends at college; they were originally united by the deeply religious temperament common to both; they sat together under the instruction of the same cultivated and earnest teacher, Archdeacon Hare; they sat together at the feet of the greatest thinker of their time, Coleridge; they were alike brought under the quickening genius of Thomas Carlyle; their interests and lives were cemented by their inter-marriage with gifted women, who were sisters, and by their union in the founding and editing of the *Athenæum*. But one had been born a Unitarian, and had turned his back upon the door it opened toward liberty; the other had been born in the Church, and had steadily set his face toward that door which the other had abandoned. They passed by each other. Though their hearts clung together to the end, their minds passed each other. In a letter which I received some years ago from Professor Newman, to whom Sterling left the guardianship of his eldest son, he says:—

“Though Sterling had totally renounced Christianity, among his last words to me were, ‘There are no better persons in the wide world than Frederick Maurice and his wife.’”

Now observe this anomaly! Here are two cultivated, sincere, true-hearted friends. If you had asked them any question concerning a triangle, or a Greek verb, they would have given one reply; had you asked them their opinion concerning any political or scientific or even ethical question, they would have given probably the same answer, the answer of common sense and common conscience. Guided thus by the simple reason common to them, they could pass arm in arm, and see eye to eye, amid the thousand problems and concerns of life, until they come at last to theology: one step into that, and lo, the two friends fly wide as the poles asunder!

This is not an unusual case. It occurs every day. Religion, since it became merged into theology, has become the great dividing force of the world. And that because theology has built up in the very heart of a world, developed and civilised by reason, another world that holds reason at a distance, and claims a magical or supernatural influence that sets aside both reason and law.

Into this little enchanted circle of the elect John Sterling was partly born, and partly manipulated by those agents of the Church who are always on the look-out to allure talented youths into its pale, to keep it from mouldering away. “Have they not,” cried he

in the Debating Club at Cambridge, when discussing the Church Articles, "a black dragoon in every parish, on good pay and rations, horse-meat and man's-meat, to patrol and battle for these things?" He little deemed in those days that he himself would ever become a valuable recruit of the same patrol, and one may estimate what kind and degree of force must have been brought to bear in transforming the clear-seeing radical of Cambridge to the curate of Herstmonceux. But I cannot go into the details of his life. His friend Carlyle has written the biography with an inspiration which makes the book one chapter of England's Holy Scriptures. No one can realise completely the religious conditions amid which he or she is born, without reading that wonderful *Life of Sterling*. I think any mind which reaches to the sense of that book, will realise how serious are the dangers besetting thought in this age. We read in ancient fables of youth walking between good and evil genii; of Hercules between Virtue and Vice, and the like; and we recognise their meaning when we see the young passing amid the temptations and the good influences of the world. But we are apt to think of the scholar, thinker, poet, if we know that they have risen above the coarse forms of evil, as freed from the worst dangers of life. But it is not so. There is a mental vice corresponding to every moral vice. Beside every thinker, however pure his outward life, walk the lark and the luminous powers. At every step they are allured by the proud estate of Error, and by the

bribes of Falsehood. Temptations to utter smooth things instead of right things ; to leave the lonely path of individual conviction for the gay bazaar where opinions are bought and sold ; temptations to hypocrisy and cant, and conformity to social prejudice ; these waylay the thinker at every step, and in most cases prove too strong for the pleading of the faithful intellect within.

These contrary influences, towards the close of the last generation, were in a sense embodied in two remarkable men who appeared in London. When I say that the evil intellectual influence of that period was represented by Coleridge, I do not wish to say anything to the personal discredit of that eminent man. Had he not been a richly-endowed intellect, and a man of high spiritual feeling, he could not indeed have exerted the influence over the young men around him that he did exert. But he had not courage ; he dimmed his light with opium ; and opinions which were only morbid with him, and of whose evil tendencies he was partly unconscious, unfortunately chimed in with sluggishness of conscience and temptations to untruth in the less peculiar minds around him. He had spun a shining web of speculations out of his brain, in which all the dogmas managed to nestle, and to appear what they were not. He threw the disguise of philosophy around the Trinity, plated over the Vicarious Atonement until its base metal was no longer discernible, and so persuaded young men who were commissioned to ra-

tionalise the world, that the foolish systems of belief around them might, by a little modification, become the dicta of pure reason. All this, true to his drugged intellect, became false in nearly every mind that was inoculated by it.

The contrary spirit, which had already animated the brave protest of Shelley, was ultimately more fully embodied in Thomas Carlyle. Whatever may be thought of particular views of Mr. Carlyle, no one can trace his long career without seeing that he has been a type of the truthful and truth-speaking man. During his long life there is no falsity he has seen and not stigmatised, no sham with which he has not bravely grappled. Amid pretences, servilities, trucklings to popular prejudice, abasements before fashionable idols, he has for nearly half a century pursued, amid early poverty as amid later success, the unsullied path of intellectual rectitude, and never suffered a lie to be wrung from his tongue. In the days when many of the thinkers, who now fill the high places of the country, were choosing what Power they would serve, Carlyle appeared as the prophet of fidelity to conviction, as the eloquent witness to self-truthfulness and self-faithfulness, calling on each to bear his burthen, and accomplish his task on earth. He spoke to young men, says Emerson, with an emphasis that deprived them of sleep. This Voice in the wilderness was not less revolutionary because it was unconscious—perhaps has always been to some extent unconscious—of its own practical bearings upon established

dogmas and superstitions; but, at its tremendous affirmation of the reality and grandeur of life, a hand of flame appeared on every wall of church or cathedral, with authentic warning to the scholars in their fine livings that they must hasten to the side of Truth, who had no bishops' palaces or even parsonages to bestow, but camel-hair for raiment and wild-honey for food. Carlyle and Coleridge we know often met, conversed not unkindly however warmly, parted as friends; neither saw in himself the St. George, or in the other the Dragon, of any moral conflict, nor could the young men who gathered with equal reverence to the oracles at Highgate and Chelsea recognise their fatal and eternal antagonism; but true it is that for those cultivated youths, as time has shown, the two men were really the reappearance of Indra and Ahi, Apollo and Python, Siegfried and Fafnir, in the sphere of Thought—the arrow of Light piercing once more the Cloud-monster!

Between these two voices—that of Coleridge trying to patch up old dogmas so that young thinkers might subscribe them, and that of Carlyle calling them to a height from which the Church stood revealed as a City of Destruction—many a youth made the bed whereon he has since had to lie in peace or pain.

But what I say of these two men must not be pressed too closely in a chronological sense. There was a foreground to them, or, we may say, the internecine Coleridge-element and Carlyle-element struggled for some time before they took that personal shape in

cultivated society, which especially influenced Sterling and Maurice, and the youth of their time.

II.

It is near fifty years since that beautiful vision first visited the young and reverent thinkers of the English Church, whose outer signs the prosaic world has in these last days recognised and named "The Broad Church." As of old, when its morning-stars appeared, the watchers by night were sore afraid. But to those who dreamed that dream of a Church broad enough for Humanity, wide enough to include every thought, every truth of the living age, it was as the consummate flower of the Ages of Faith. Amid crumbling creeds, and mouldering altars, they saw a National Church emerging to be the home of all souls, the nest in which the freest and purest minds might lay their young. In this new Church all the old fetters were to turn to wings. A soft mystical mist for them enveloped the ancient formulas, and through it loomed in attractive grandeur one central idea into which Christianity was to pour its flood of life—the Incarnation. To this one doctrine they saw the great religions of all races pointing; around it they saw the Heavenly Kingdom revolving; and to it they beheld mankind gravitating, as the unifying principle of the world. Just so soon as the dogmas which encrusted and deformed it were all

cleared away, that doctrine of the manifestation of God in Christ was to become the spiritual axis of Humanity.

The fine enthusiasm which this idea kindled in ardent and cultivated minds made the Broad Church movement in its earlier years a romance. So true is this that its first love could only express itself in the language of fable and poetry. Nearly every prominent man in the movement began his career by writing a religious novel. Some of these productions have been suppressed, others altered, as one after another their writers have fallen away from following the dreams of their youth ; but there is no other way in which a student of this time can get so near to the heart that then beat in the Broad Church revival, as by reading such books as Sterling's " Arthur Coningsby," Maurice's " Eustace Conway," Froude's " Nemesis of Faith," Arnold's " Oakfield," Kingsley's " Yeast," Smith's " Thorndale," and Clough's " Bothie of Tober-na-Vuolich." These works are not, indeed, all representative of the Broad Church, but they all help to indicate the conditions of thought out of which it arose, and together constitute an impressive chapter in the religious history of England. In them we see the old, hard, dogmatic strata softening, crumbling off into tender stems and buds, and struggling to mingle in the life-blood of man.

Notwithstanding the varieties of scene and character represented in these novels, and the various literary ability in them, they are, with one or two exceptions,

really one book with two endings. They tell the story of the modern Pilgrim's Progress. In each we meet the same hero—the young man of genius who has abandoned the old creed as a City of Destruction, and is pressing forward to the Celestial City of Truth. The end of this pilgrimage is always, whoever be the pensman, written by either Coleridge or Carlyle, or by the Coleridge or Carlyle principle in the universe. When Coleridge is inspirer the young pilgrim having wandered in wildernesses of doubt, and through the deeps and bye-ways of speculation, is sure to end at last in the old church—its ancient furniture somewhat repaired—to dwell there comfortably for the rest of his life. His devious ways, his rationalising episodes, have all led up to the grand discovery that by a little metaphysical alchemy all he once saw as dross is transmutable to pure reason and much fine gold. But, on the other hand, where Carlyle inspires the story's end, the pilgrim's way leads to something more tragical, so far as worldly result is concerned, but something more heroic than a snug parsonage and a comfortable living. The young man ends in the wilderness, under the cold night, his little lamp, fed with borrowed oil, burnt out; a sufficiently bleak region he has reached, but the holy stars are over him, not a mere "smoke-canopy" mistaken for a heavenly vault, and he can look up to the unattainable worlds of light with no falsehood over his eyes, and follow their leading with a steadfastness equal to their own.

As the embryologist can read an animal's future in

its egg—prophesy, this will move on the ground, that will soar in the air—so may one in these religious novels find described the various careers of those who wrote them. This is particularly true of those which in 1827, Sterling and Maurice both began writing. Sterling's appeared in 1833, under the title of "Arthur Coningsby;" Maurice's appeared a year or so later, under the title of "Eustace Conway;" each was a prophetic chart of the spiritual voyage its writer was destined to pursue.

Mr. Carlyle in his "Life of Sterling," referred to "Arthur Coningsby," unfortunately, from memory. "It was," he writes, "in the sunny days, perhaps in May or June of this year (1833), that "Arthur Coningsby" reached my own hand far off amid the heathy wildernesses; sent by John Mill; and I can still remember the pleasant little episode it made in my solitude there. The general impression, it left on me, which has never since been renewed by a second reading in whole or in part, was the certain prefigurement to myself, more or less distinct, of an opulent, genial, and sunny mind, but misdirected, disappointed, experienced in misery, nay crude and hasty; mistaking for a solid outcome from its woes what was only to me a gilded vacuity. The hero an ardent youth, representing Sterling himself, plunges into life such as we now have it in these anarchic times, with the radical, utilitarian, or mutinous heathen theory, which is the readiest for inquiring souls; finds, by various courses of adventure, utter shipwreck in

this; lies broken, very wretched; that is the tragic nodus, or apogee of his life-course. In this mood of mind he clutches desperately towards some new method (recognisable as Coleridge's) of laying hand again on the old Church, which has hitherto been extraneous as if non-extant to his way of thought; makes out by some Coleridgean legerdemain, that there actually is a Church for him; that this extant Church, which he long took for an extinct shadow, is not such but a substance; upon which he can anchor himself amid the storms of fate; and he does so, even taking orders in it, I think. Such could by no means seem to me the true or tenable solution."

Nor had any such solution presented itself to Sterling when he wrote "Arthur Coningsby." Mr. Carlyle's memory has, for once, misled him. Arthur Coningsby, the hero of the story, does indeed suffer the wreck, as told in the passage I have just quoted, and it is sad enough; but he does not suffer the last tragedy, of recovery through the intervention of self-deception and moonshine. He returns from the Reign of Terror in Paris, where his radical hopes and dreams went down like sunken argosies, to try to find, not his old faith, but his old heart, in England. But she, who through all had held it, was hopelessly in the power of "tyrannous fanaticism," estranged as if she had been a nun from this uncomprehended Bird of the Desert. Then his heart breaks. He betakes himself to a mouldering ruin on the sea-side, there amid crumbling walls which symbolise his perished

visions, to consider whither he will fly from a world which has become to him a valley of desolation. Thence he writes to his nearest friend a bitter letter of farewell. "A man," so he writes, "can propose to himself but one of two objects—the world without and the world within. I have almost equal contempt for both.....Of religion, poetry, philosophy, formerly in my eyes the three great subjects of human study, and elements of human power, I think but as of fine dreams, from which I have wakened and found myself in darkness.....What can I hope for in all Europe when there is scarcely one of its provinces in which I have not heard the very same dull desperation which I feel, expressed alike by its starving peasants and its surfeited nobles? Our formal creeds and conventional systems, and worn-out modes of existence, contain no seed of strength or happiness.....There is another continent, Henry, than ours, in which, for a time at least, I may perhaps find peace. I came hither after a life of artificial society in fields and cities, and found myself amid a lonely wilderness of ruin, in which there is scarcely a breath of actual life, or a shadow of present meaning. I sat one evening upon the mouldering wall of the terrace. The hum of insects, the occasional chirp of birds, the wide, continuous whisper of the forests, and the faint regular murmur of the dreaming ocean were the only sounds that reached me. The black woods sank on either hand to the waters, and the sky before me was steeped in splendour.....The

West, in which glades of delicate primrose were mingled with wide fields of the richest crimson, seemed an island of the immortals, and broad garlands and scattered flowers, of the same effulgent hues, encircled it, and were relieved upon the blue and quiet sky. One faint star, the star of the West, rose trembling into view; and I thought, in the extravagance of lawless fancy, Is not that the genius, and are not those the meadows, of a happier region than any I have wandered in? Why cannot I pursue that radiance to its fountain, and win for myself a heritage in that occidental paradise? This was idle dreaming. But in that instant there dawned upon my mind, and piled itself against the heavens, a vision of the American wilderness.....Your civilisation seems to me a long, busy play, without plot or end, and in which none of the characters perform their parts even tolerably, except the confidants and lacqueys. I will go and gaze upon another mode of humanity.....Consider me henceforth a sachem, a hermit, an exile, a madman, what you will; as lost, dead, gone for ever, but not as forgetful of your long and undeserved kindness. Some future wanderer in the western forests will perhaps stumble or pause at a low mound in some dark thicket, but there will be neither inscription nor emblem to inform him that the bones of an English outcast were there laid in earth by the hands of the red warriors." So ends one of the most impressive and eloquent books ever written. But no, even that last wild sentence is not

the end ; for on the blank beneath there is copied a fatal sentence from Æschylus : " And evermore shall the burthen of the agony of thy present evil wear thee down ; for he that shall deliver thee exists not in nature."

With such sad spiritual convulsion had the morbid religious conditions of his time afflicted this young man, even in the preface of his life. In fulfilling the dreary destiny so prefigured, he did indeed shrink from the bleak path for a brief space, as we have seen, thereby losing perhaps the joy of gaining inwardly the blessed Isles of Light which his hero followed in the West. But this swerving was not enough to mar the intellectual and moral integrity of his life, whatever it may have cost him in health, happiness, and repose.

It was perhaps the saddest day of Carlyle's life when he heard that John Sterling had fallen a victim to the Coleridgean "moonshine" as he called it, and entered the Church as a clergyman. For he knew well that it was not his friend's true place, and that the penalty to be suffered must be inevitable. Friends of Sterling have told me that this step was in good part due to Sterling's ill-health. Once in helping to put out a fire, he had stood in the water for some time, and so contracted disease of the lungs. This weakness prevented his giving his mind very patiently and thoroughly to a subject, so that he was liable to stop at a mere resting place of inquiry as if he had reached the goal. His mind, too, was troubled with many doubts, and in a

moment of weakness he imagined that he could escape them if he threw himself into ministerial work. Moreover there occurred a disastrous episode in Sterling's life at this time connected with a Spanish revolution, which had brought on a momentary reaction in his mind favourable to all kinds of Conservatism. He was under the shadow not only of doubt, but of a dreary failure which caused the military execution of two of his friends, and torturing considerations to himself. In after years, Sterling, with a sad humour, said his case at the time he entered the Church was like that of "a young lady who has tragically lost her lover, and is willing to be half-hoodwinked into a convent, or in any noble or quasi-noble way to escape from a world which has become intolerable." The results of this false step could not be avoided. John Sterling had not been long inside of the Church before he found the utter hollowness of it ; he found that instead of leaving his doubts outside he had multiplied them, and made their solution more difficult ; he found himself there as in the halls of Eblis, where the silent figures move about with forced serenity, each hiding an incurable disease which none would name or confess. But Sterling could not suppress his cry ; he escaped from the dwelling-place of the slowly perishing. After a ministerial career of exactly eight months, he discontinued his functions through illness, but it proved to be his eternal Adieu to the Church.

But, alas, it was years before he could disentangle himself, and clear his relationship with men, of all the

consequences of that eight-months' error. He must encounter the old patrol of "black dragoons," which was not so bad ; but he must untwine the withholding arms of affection, and reach the path of truth over the bruised hearts of those to whom he had in one weak moment, committed himself. And thus in weary explanations of his reasons for believing light to be not darkness, nor two to be three, and in polite defence against the plaintively pious who wished to convert him (once two gentle ladies, whose "timid omniscience" he found reason to admire !)—were passed time and strength which might have been bearing him onward to clear and solid results of life. When through this painful labyrinth he had at length made his way, he started eagerly on the old path from which he had swerved, and resumed that literary task which waited for his beautiful genius, but the brief morning was past, its roses already fading, and the untimely night at hand !

The great lesson of Sterling's life is the solemn warning it gives against the perils of intellectual wastefulness. Most impressively has it been enforced, while with the tenderness due to the memory of one who was rather a victim of his time than a falterer on the path, by his friend and biographer, Carlyle. "Poor Sterling, he was by nature appointed for a Poet, then, — a Poet after his sort, or recogniser and delineator of the Beautiful ; and not for a Priest at all ! Striving towards the sunny heights, out of such a level and through such an element as ours in these days is, he had strange aberrations appointed him, and painful wander-

ings amid the miserable gas-lights, bog-fires, dancing meteors, and putrid phosphorences which form the guidance of a young human soul at present ! Nor till after trying all manner of sublimely illuminated places, and finding that the basis of them was putridity, artificial gas and quaking bog, did he, when his strength was all done, discover his true sacred hill, and passionately climb thither when life was fast ebbing ! A tragic history, as all histories are ; yet a gallant, brave, and noble one, as not many are. It is what to a radiant son of the Muses, and bright messenger of the harmonious Wisdoms, this poor world, if he himself have not strength enough, and *inertia* enough, and amid his harmonious eloquences silence enough, has provided at present. Many a high-striving, too-hasty soul, seeking guidance towards eternal-excellence from the official black-artists, and successful professors of political, ecclesiastical, philosophical, commercial, general and particular legerdemain, will recognise his own history in this image of a fellow pilgrim's."

Years ago I sought the grave of John Sterling, in that beautiful ground of Bonchurch, beside the sea, an emblem of his purity, his freedom, but also, alas, of his unrest. Beside his grave I read the letter he wrote to his friend Carlyle, from his death-bed : " I tread the common road into the great darkness, without any thought of fear, and with very much of hope. Certainty indeed I have none. If I can lend a hand THERE, that shall not be wanting." I read, too, his letter to his eldest son, written also with the shadow of death upon him :

“When I fancy how you are walking in the same streets, and moving along the same river, that I used to watch so intently, as if in a dream, when younger than you are, I could gladly burst into tears, not of grief, but with a feeling that there is no name for. Everything is so wonderful, great and holy, so sad and yet not bitter, so full of Death, and so bordering on Heaven. Can you understand anything of this? If you can, you will begin to know what a serious matter our life is; how unworthy and stupid it is to trifle it away without heed; what a wretched, insignificant, worthless creature any one comes to be, who does not as soon as possible bend his whole strength, as in stringing a stiff bow, to doing whatever task lies first before him.” Every word is wrung from his own experience. He is feeding his son with red drops from his heart. Out of his grave grew a graceful fuchsia whose tints seemed to me the red of his deep-veined breast and the whiteness of his purity. I brought away a bloom to press in some sacred volume of his thoughts; but I bore away also the lesson, that life is long enough for all who live it truly, but is too short for us to do over again what has been already done for us. I have sometimes met with the notion that there is a certain advantage in beginning with the popular superstitions for the sake of the experience gained in growing out of them. Even so great a man as the historian Niebuhr, on the birth of his son Marcus, writes to a friend that he means to teach little Marcus all that he (the father) had unlearned,

and will make him believe all of Homer's Mythology, in order that his mind may be an epitome of the history of the human mind. But the wise economy of life is to start from the advanced ground won for us by those who have gone before. The astronomer does not need to discover over again every planet that has been discovered, but uses the accumulated knowledge of the past as the basis and point for a new departure. And in no region of life can men afford to throw away experience. Poor Sterling takes his backward step, puts on the customary chains, and then spends the best strength of his life in breaking those chains and recovering the old free ground he had left. Arriving there he finds all the old problems from which he shrank still to be dealt with, but the time and means of dealing with them are gone. So he wanders on without attaining any solid rest for his mind; the idol falls, but he is unable to raise the true God in its place; and so he can only say to his son, and say to us, with his last breath: "Bend your whole strength as soon as possible to doing whatever task lies first before you."

III.

We have seen that while John Sterling was unconsciously tracing out the path of his own destiny forty-five years ago in "Arthur Coningsby," his nearest friend, Frederick Maurice, was also writing a romance

of similar character—"Eustace Conway." This, too, is an ominous book. The account which Mr. Carlyle, under a mistaken impression, has given of Sterling's novel is closely applicable to that of Maurice, with which indeed he would almost seem to have confused it. This is indeed the apotheosis of the Coleridgean Moonshine! Eustace Conway, wandering amid the same desolations of heart and brain as Arthur Coningsby, meets a German metaphysician—meets him in Newgate prison!—who sprinkles the phosphorescent light of decaying creeds over him, and the work is completed by an exceedingly monotonous and endless clergyman, the book ending with marriage-bells for Eustace, and the embowered parsonage easily imaginable just beyond. The story is fatally familiar; it lives, moves, preaches around us daily: we need not dwell on it. That Pure Reason naturally branches out into thirty-nine great truths, and that these, by a happy coincidence, are precisely the thirty-nine articles of the Church which commands the religious authority and endowments of the country,—this is the Rock upon which the pious fictions of England are based, from Maurice's novel to the Establishment itself. But no casuistry can make it other than the abdication of Truth from the throne of the heart; to one who has painfully and faithfully followed the leading of Reason, its marriage-bells break out into a wild clangour of despair, compared with which the spiritual loneliness of Coningsby were Paradise.

But there is one thing notable about the novel with

which Mr. Maurice began his literary life, that is the view of human nature implied in it. There is an amount of wickedness in the book quite appalling. Desperadoes and libertines, abductions and seductions, Newgate and other doubtful places, follow each other in quick succession through the book, and one feels at first as if its author had never known honest people. But as one reads further it becomes sufficiently plain that all this wickedness is theoretical. The temptations are fanciful, the sins unreal, the crimes ludicrous; they prove not only the innocence of the author, but of the Cantabs, who manifestly furnished him with inadequate models for the vices depicted. Nevertheless, the generally disparaging view of human nature implied in "Eustace Conway," has a certain interest in connection with the author's change of faith which must have occurred about the time that it was written. It seems to me clear that the author of the novel in question had received by inheritance some kind of dogma of Human Depravity. And I think that it is of the utmost importance that Unitarians of the present day should be careful to weigh well, not only this, but several expressions directly concerning Unitarianism in Dr. Maurice's writings, if they would fairly estimate his abandonment of that faith. In a majority of cases there would, perhaps, be reason to suspect the motives of a scholar who should pass from a Unitarian family to the Church. But in the case of Maurice we find that after suffering the chief crosses of heresy, and surrendering the college prizes whose loss it en-

tailed, he enters the least popular wing of the Church. He was never a seeker of popularity or wealth; and his fidelity to conviction, while he has seen men inferior to him in every way promoted over his head, himself ignored by a Church which could neither bend nor bribe him, compels us to admit that his abandonment of Unitarianism was due rather to its defects than to his. At the time the change was made, it was by no means a downward step that he made; and it is a fair criticism upon the average Unitarianism of that period, surviving now as a mere party in the same denomination, that it could not satisfy a man so devout and disinterested as Maurice. It was a critical, scholarly religion; but passionless, bloodless, without any ardour of humanity. It was timid too, and made a virtue of not prejudicing the minds of children, but leaving them to grope their way to liberty, so that each generation of Unitarians were expected to do their fathers' work over again. Then it was ever afraid of being compromised by some brave mind. "I could never," said Sterling, to a friend who mentioned it to me, "I could never be a Unitarian. They take two bites at a cherry." His friend Maurice seems to have disliked them because they tried to bite the cherry at all. What kind of Unitarianism he was acquainted with may be gathered from the following passage from his "Kingdom of Christ," vol. i. p. 184:—"The more thoughtful disciples of Unitarianism began to be struck with another strange contradiction between the principles on which it rested, and the system in which

they are embodied. The Unitarians were the great assertors of the absolute unqualified love of God, in opposition to all mythologies and theologies which had preceded. And Unitarianism was the first of all theologies or mythologies which *denied* that the Almighty had, in his own person, by some act of condescension and sacrifice, interfered to redress the evils and miseries of his creatures! Every pagan religion had acknowledged the need of an incarnation; the modern Jew and Mahometan, nominally rejecting it, is yet continually dreaming of it, and testifying to its necessity—it was reserved for this religion, to make it the greatest evidence and proof of love in a Divine Being, that He merely pardons those who have filled the world with misery; that He has never shared in it; never wrestled with it; never devised any means save that of sending a wise teacher, for delivering mankind out of it.”

It would appear from this that the doctrine of the love of God taught by the Unitarians, among whom Mr. Maurice was born, was an oasis amid a desert of orthodoxy. It was held along with the incongruous concession that the universe is an arena for the struggle of hostile camps. There is need that God should wrestle with somebody or something; that the misery and sin in the world are here without his consent, and that he is driven to “devise” means of deliverance. The depravity of so many characters in “Eustace Conway” here appears in theological distinctness, as if Unitarianism had never conveyed any

other impression. Nay, the doctrine of the Unity of God must have been a mere arithmetical statement in his conception of Unitarian tenets, else it could hardly have admitted of the proximity of the quiet assumption of a Universe of antagonistic, irreconcilable moral Powers. In contrast with this dry, fragmentary form of belief, there stood before him the new movement or revival in the Church, then in its first glow of enthusiasm; its very greatness of promise concealing the hard fatal lines which it could not overpass. Undefined, an unevolved point of light suggesting endless possibilities, arose that dream; it has preceded a sad awakening, but it was a grand one, and, until heart and flesh failed, was bravely pursued.

By none more bravely pursued than by Frederick Maurice. My belief is that his life casts a new and less favourable light upon Coleridge than even that of Sterling does. Maurice could never forgive Carlyle for having called Coleridge's teaching "moonshine," and yet his own embodiment in warm, sincere life of what had been mere metaphysics with Coleridge, suggests an aptness in Carlyle's word. One day, when Leigh Hunt and Charles Lamb had been listening to a long talk from Coleridge about the high reasonableness of Trinitarian dogmas, the former remarked, as they were coming away, what a dreadful thing it is to hear a man like Coleridge preaching such pious falsehoods. "Ah," said Lamb, "Coleridge always will have his fun." This is not the only story one hears

current among the old friends of Coleridge which suggests the superficiality which some felt in his utterances. But in Maurice there was no fun in the Highgate oracle; in him the Moonshine took flesh and dwelt among us. To him fell the sad task of pressing the Coleridgean doctrine that white is black, and that the blacker black is the more is it white, to the last logical extreme. For he was sincere. And through his sincerity and bravery the intellectual phantasm has been urged until it has dissolved into thin air.

Perhaps the theological literature of this century contains no writing more remarkable than one in which Mr. Maurice defended the damnatory clauses of the Athanasian Creed, in the name of charity. "To the best of my knowledge and recollection," he says, "I never have felt tempted while reading this Creed, however I may have felt tempted at other times, to indulge one hard thought about the state of any man who is living now, or has lived in former times. I do not think that the Creed calls upon me to do this; nay, I think that its awful language forbids me to do it. I dare not ask myself who has committed the fearful sin of 'confounding the Persons and dividing the Substance,' which it denounces. It may not be the man who has used the most confused and heretical forms of expression; it may not be the man who has even seemed to the Church to be most self-willed and refractory; it may be the man who is resting most contentedly in his orthodoxy; it may be

myself. Nay, have I not a witness within, that every wrong act which I have done, or wrong thought which I have cherished, so far as it has diminished my sense of the distinction between truth and falsehood, right and wrong, has been of the nature of that sin which I describe by the words 'Confounding the Persons,' and has brought me into the danger of committing it; that every self-willed, unkind, schismatical act or thought has been of the nature of that sin which I describe by the words 'Dividing the Substance,' and has tended to bring me into it?"

Even those who did not know the entire sincerity of the writer of the above sentences, might be convinced of it by the absence from them of any consciousness of the amusing, not to say grotesque, disregard of any law of connection between means and ends. With all the resources of language at command, to enjoin truthfulness and rectitude on the congregation by describing falsehood and iniquity as "Confounding the Persons," and to inveigh against self-will and unkindness as "Dividing the Substance," would seem to be a touch beyond the old grammarian's curse, "May God confound thee for thy theory of irregular verbs!" Would Mr. Maurice have selected just those phrases to hurl against moral wrong? Were they the natural physiognomy of his own face when it grew awful in the contemplation of wrong? Were "confounding the Persons and dividing the Substance" his own language against injustice, cruelty, licentiousness? It is impossible not to see that

Nature made one Maurice, Coleridge another. But the latter was a real product, too—not a mercenary one by any means—and it can only be explained, as I think, by reference to that law of natural selection which gradually evolves the paradox of the animal world, and the paradox of the theological world, under the long pressure of anomalous environment.

We who now live are witnessing the fading of the fine dream of a Regenerated Church into emptiness. It all ends in the barring of the doors against Reason and the opening of them to Rome. Instead of becoming more liberal, the Church has steadily become more intolerant; instead of becoming more rational, it has become more completely entangled in incredibilities. The young men whom the leaders of the revival allured into the Church, find themselves in a prison; the thinkers who upheld for them the standard "Subscription No Bondage," are vainly endeavouring to tear off the creeds with which they find themselves freshly labelled, labels not to be torn off but with the surplices to which they adhere! The early, hopeful successes of these earnest and large-minded men have already begun to reveal their unreality. Dr. Arnold, and after him his pupil Dr. Temple, build up Rugby School into a centre of liberal thought; and when they have passed away, the Church puts a stupid Puseyite at the head of the School, to undo all they have done. Maurice is set to teach Moral Philosophy at Cambridge, and is followed by a mere dogmatist. Such is the overpowering might of

organised Error, that in the end it surely grinds up all individual truth and force to its own behest. The history of the Broad Church is a simple record of the waste for our generation of some of the finest intellects of the country.

One of the most startling exemplifications of this was afforded by the ministry of Dr. Maurice himself. After he had adopted the Coleridgean notion that the Church creed and pure reason are harmonious, and that a man need only preach popular superstitions profoundly to teach advanced philosophy; he was settled at Vere Street Chapel where his impressive ministrations were continued for many years. When, on becoming a Professor at Cambridge, he resigned his Vere Street pulpit, the event was deemed one of public importance, and a great deal was written about him in the press. Among other things there appeared in one of the papers a letter written by one who had always attended the Church, and he gave a statement of what had been the doctrines and teachings which he had heard during those years. The doctrines which this writer represented as those taught by Dr. Maurice, were not very different from those which are familiar to the hearers of Mr. Martineau. Well, this letter was immediately followed by one from another of Dr. Maurice's parishioners, who had listened to him with the same reverence during the same length of time, and he declared that the teachings had been precisely the reverse of what the first letter-writer had stated, in

every particular ! The two letters were written with equal ability, and both in evident good faith ; and it was plain that during the whole time these intelligent hearers had been listening to two preachers as different as the Archbishop of Canterbury from Bishop Colenso ! Startling as such a discrepancy is, it is after all natural. The new wine had been put into old skins, and while a few recognised the wine as new, more tasted only the savour of the old skins. It is very rare that a clergyman can preach as vigorously as his gown. I heard Dean Stanley preach a very heretical kind of Darwinism years ago, but the seed, wrapped in Scriptural phrases, fell on the solemn arches of the Abbey, fell on numerous prayer-books and choristers, and when it sprang up it was as orthodox as if it had been sown by the dullest Evangelical parson.

It seems to me astounding that, with such experiences as these behind them, some thinkers of the present day should indulge the notion that the Church can be reformed, and therefore, ought not to be disestablished. With the Voysey decision paralysing every tongue in the Church, with the Athanasian Creed put in new repair for use on heretics, we are told that we are to hold on to the Church and transform it into the Temple of Pure Reason ! For that very object the Broad Church arose ; and the monument of its effort is built of the wasted intellects of men who have seen the Church steadily growing not broad but narrower ; of minds which having uttered their thought (however uncon-

sciously) through a mask of dead formulas leave behind a sharp debate whether they held the doctrine that two and two make four or amount to ten !

Well do I remember the mornings I have passed listening to Dr. Maurice, now nine years ago. There was indeed vagueness in the theological statements, and sometimes even ambiguity. I remember to have thought once that the preacher was proclaiming the sanctity of human reason, till he came out with a conventional phrase to the effect that the necessity of humbling the intellect of man constituted one of the great purposes of the Incarnation. Again, while dwelling on what seemed to me the hope of final salvation for all men, he broke in with mysterious utterances implying the eternal nature of evil, if not the existence of a personal Devil. Whenever he became theological, it was to my eyes like a lamp trying to shine through a London fog. I felt that he was at heart a rationalist and a transcendentalist, but the spell under which he laboured of expressing himself through the language of the second or the third century, rendered the translation of his terms into plain English difficult. This was, however, but incidental—the occasional knot which the stem reached and passed in climbing to its beautiful flower. There was a charm in Maurice's preaching which made one forget that it had faults. The very face of the man was one on which every high aim had impressed itself. It was the look of one who had got every base passion under foot. The white silken hair falling about a forehead radiant with

noble purity; the blonde face, smooth as a woman's, the soft luminous eye beaming through the sombre Church like a bit of blue sky; the voice, tender and flexible, now deep and sonorous with emotion, now clear and argumentative, again affectionate and cordial—these all helped to feather and direct the arrows of light which the orator sent deep into the heart, to defend its angels and slay its dragons. When I passed from the Church after hearing him, I might feel puzzled if asked just what doctrines he had been enforcing, but invariably felt that I had been enriched, enlarged, uplifted under a quickening and refining influence. His earnestness roused, his spirituality raised, his hopefulness cheered, the listener's mind. As he rose to the higher strain, the dark old pulpit seemed to vanish away, and he stood upon the pure pedestal of his own character.

It was impossible not to recognise that it was not alone the lofty mind of Maurice which cast its charm around those who listened, but even more the singularly noble and devoted life he was living before us. In his service to mankind he was lowly; but a city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. There was no true cause, no high purpose, which he did not aid. He had a sympathy as wide as human sorrow. One of our finest artists, Mr. Madox Brown, has painted a remarkable picture entitled "Work." In it rough labourers are engaged on the street in all manner of work—with brick and mortar, wheelbarrow and pick. Some fine ladies are trying to pass the confusion they

have made without soiling their dainty dresses. There are two spectators of this scene—Maurice and Carlyle—who stand side by side. Carlyle's face is breaking into laughter at the scene, especially, we may suppose, at the ladies holding their silks ; but Maurice's face is full of sadness as he gazes on the toiling men. The expressions are characteristic. Carlyle sees in hard work only so much happiness ; the implements of toil are so many pinions bearing the labourer upward. Maurice felt to the end that all this toil meant a hard, weary lot ; he recognised in it some mysterious curse ; and as he passed his life amid the labouring poor, trying to uplift them, the doctrine of the descent of the Son of God among men to save them was congenial to him. He was not a sad man ; he was ever a hoper, with face set to the sunrise ; but he had a sympathetic nature, which could never see any hardship without feeling some of its weight on his own shoulders.

The reputation Dr. Maurice has won is that of a heretic. I believe this is due not only to the fact that he was rudely ejected from his professorship at King's College by the Principal, Dr. Jelf, for denying Eternal Punishment, but to the emphasis which his life gave to practical truth. His theology is read by the light of his humanity. He would never sacrifice man to creeds, and he was willing to work with an Atheist in a good cause. He has written many theological books, but his more real monument is that Working Men's College which he built

up with aid of many a heretic ; and after the controversies he has aroused are forgotten, it will be remembered that around his grave there gathered the aristocratic and the poor, the learned and the unlearned, the orthodox and the sceptical, all drawn by the sweet attraction of a soul which dwelt with God as a child, with man as a brother.

That man should live such a life became at the last John Sterling's only creed ; and by that creed these two friends, whose minds Theology sundered, are reunited in the memory they both leave. The grave will hide more and more the incompleteness of the one and the theological entanglements of the other ; the common spirit of humanity by which they were animated survives to remind us again, that though Dogma may have power to divide noble intellects, and to waste many energies in the struggle with incredible creeds, or in the vain attempt to give them life, Dogma has not the power to prevent every faithful soul from blending with every other in the real service of Humanity.

Let me apply to these brother-spirits a poem written by Arthur Hugh Clough, when he too was parting from a dear friend, who left him on the path of inquiry to find in Romanism a refuge from thought :

Qua cursum ventus.

As ships, becalmed at eve, that lay
With canvas drooping, side by side,
Two towers of sail at dawn of day,
Are scarce, long leagues apart, descried ;

When fell the night, upsprung the breeze,
And all the darkling hours they plied,
Nor dreamt but each the self-same seas
By each was cleaving, side by side :

E'en so—but why the tale reveal
Of those whom, year by year unchanged,
Brief absence joined anew to feel,
Astounded, soul from soul estranged ?

At dead of night their sails were filled,
And onward each rejoicing steered ;
Ah, neither blame, for neither willed,
Or wist, what first with dawn appeared !

To veer, how vain ! On, onward strain,
Brave barks ! In light, in darkness too,
Through winds and tides one compass guides—
To that, and your own selves, be true.

But O blithe breeze, and O great seas,
Though ne'er, that earliest parting past,
On your wide plain they join again,
Together lead them home at last !

One port methought alike they sought,
One purpose hold where'er they fare,
O bounding breeze, O rushing seas,
At last, at last, unite them there !

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