

which after what has been said above can be affirmed only in a modified form, Science and Art and Politics are all Greek, and to these a constantly larger share of energy and attention is being devoted. But reactions are apt to be blind and stupid things: surely the time has come at which it is possible for thoughtful men, who aim to direct the progress of humanity, to strive towards a definite goal by paths carefully surveyed and chosen. And certainly, so far as religion is concerned (and with religion alone we have chiefly to do in this place), that goal will not be the crude revival of any form of faith hitherto recognized as flowing from a Hebrew fountain. There can, indeed, be nothing truer and deeper than the fundamental truths of religion and morality as enunciated by Christ; but they are far fewer and simpler than most men take them to be, and much less mark off Christianity from other forms of faith than bind them all together in one great and comprehensive unity. Still, while the religion of the future will not become, in the best sense of the word, less Christian, it will certainly grow less Jewish. Yet we hardly think it will be Greek, after the fashion in which the Nicene Creed is Greek. The Hellenism which it must embrace, or run the risk of shrinking into a narrow and obsolete sect, will be that of an earlier and better time—the Hellenism which, turning a frank face to the universe, strives to pierce the mystery of its wonders, and is not reluctant to learn their lesson—the Hellenism which aims at the complete development of humanity from the side not merely of reverence and of right, but of beauty—the Hellenism which seeks in the constitution of human nature for the secret of its perfection, and finds in what is truly natural what is seemly at once and good. The world is growing too old, knowledge too vast, humanity too conscious of its unity, for race-religions: the only kingdom of heaven henceforth possible is one in which Jew and Gentile, Semite, Aryan and Turanian, can find an equal and a rightful place.

CHARLES BEARD.

VI.—HISTORIES OF THE DEVIL.

Demonology and Devil-lore. By Moncure Daniel Conway, M.A., B.D., of Divinity College, Harvard University, &c. With numerous Illustrations. London: Chatto and Windus, Piccadilly. 1879.

ANY work which deals with the Devil or his angels and ministers may reckon upon exciting considerable initial curiosity and interest.

Many of the current stories about the Devil are sufficiently quaint and amusing to evoke a desire to hear more of their hero, and perhaps we retain just enough reverence for his majesty to give a zest to the flippant familiarity with which he is often treated in the legends.

Again, the weird and extravagant fancies represented by the words *witchcraft* and *magic*, so closely connected with Demonology, still command a speculative interest which reflects, however faintly, the terrific fascination which they must have often exercised over the minds of those who believed in them as veritably existing. Now and then we have cast a momentary glance down the long line of grotesque and fearful images which these words call up before us, and there is something almost irresistibly attractive in the offer to reveal the whole system and machinery of the infernal actions and agents which have only flitted through our general reading, like the witches in *Macbeth*, to leave us with an awakened but utterly unsatisfied curiosity.

Yet again, while promising to satisfy an irrepressible curiosity and to provide considerable amusement on the one side, books of devilry seem to draw us on the other side close to one of the deepest and most absorbing of the ever-recurring problems of the universe—the origin of evil. And even if we are sufficiently strong-minded to relegate speculations upon such subjects to the limbo of "lunar politics" so far as we ourselves are concerned, we can hardly fail to recognize the varying solutions of this great problem which have been given or attempted

through the ages, as possessing a deep historical interest, and as throwing a light on the development of moral conceptions which cannot fail to secure them respectful attention.

On these and many other grounds, any attempt to write a history of the Devil or a treatise on Demonology is almost sure to find that initial interest which is often the one thing needful to secure success.

And yet, though scholars and writers of very varied qualifications have in late years written from the most diverse points of view upon this class of subjects, it would probably be impossible to point out a single recent work on the Devil which has succeeded in establishing itself as a really valuable and permanent addition to the library of the historical and philosophical student.

M. Réville's ingenious epitome of Roskoff's *Geschichte des Teufels** is probably the best known of them all, but even that is rather a disappointing book.

The fault seems to lie after all with the subject. It by no means fulfils its promise. The dulness and monotony of the devil stories soon pall on the wearied attention, and the nearer we get to their original forms the more totally devoid of humour and imagination on the one hand, and of all serious significance on the other, do they appear.

Witches, again, are only interesting as long as they are shadowy, and the titillation of curiosity soon yields to overpowering somnolence in face of the endless repetition of trivial absurdities of which the annals of witchcraft consist; while the ghastly chronicles of persecution, the only substantial outcome of the whole inquiry, turn the heart sick with horror.

In a word, if any one wishes to find amusement in devilry and witchcraft, he cannot do better than stick to the "Ingoldsby Legends" and the "Lancashire Witches," and set all serious study aside.

But of course the grave authors who write elaborate works on these subjects aim at something far more than amusing

* See Theological Review, Vol. VIII. (1871), pp. 30 sqq.

their readers. It may be presumed that their purpose is to present a systematic survey of a distinct and important branch of human thought, to trace it to its origin, to follow it into its manifold developments, and to indicate its practical bearing upon life and character ; and if, one after another, they fail to accomplish anything really noteworthy, we may perhaps learn from their failure a lesson quite as important and considerably more encouraging than anything that their success would have been likely to teach us.

For the inherently chaotic and parasitic nature of evil is impressed upon us afresh by every fresh failure to present a systematic view of the attempts that have constantly been made to erect it into an organism possessing its own laws of development and expression. Mr. Conway remarks,* with more than usual profundity, that the conception of an absolute fiend, or personified Principle of Evil, has always evaded, and must always evade, the popular grasp, remaining at best the exclusive possession of a small circle of speculative thinkers ; for a personified being, to be popular, must act upon principles roughly appreciable by the average human mind ; and the principle of absolute and intrinsic preference for evil is unintelligible and unrealizable ; it falls to pieces by its own incoherence. Elsewhere the same or a kindred thought is tersely put as follows :

“Spinoza’s aphorism, ‘From the perfection of a thing proceeds its power of continuance,’ is the earliest modern statement of the doctrine now called ‘survival of the fittest.’ The notion of a Devil involves the solecism of a being surviving through its unfitness for survival.”†

In the same spirit, St. Augustine, in his keen analysis of the motives to sinful action,‡ resolves even the most seemingly gratuitous vice into some kind of corrupt and perverted pursuit of good and imitation of God ; and in this sense the well-known aphorism that Satan is the ape of God, frequently alluded to by Mr. Conway, gains a far more profound signifi-

* Vol. II. pp. 8, 9.

† Vol. II. p. 441.

‡ Confessions, Book ii.

cance than was originally put into it, and goes far towards demonstrating the impossibility, not only of the Devil's existence, but even of systematic treatises on his supposed significance.

This necessity of attributing an adequate motive to any personal being, makes it simply impossible to conceive of a fundamental dualism as at once *personal* and *moral*. If the great Spirit of Evil has no plan or ultimate purpose whatever, but is simply obstructive, he loses all dignity, and ceases to be in any sense co-ordinate with the Spirit of Good. And, conversely, as soon as he is raised to any independence and dignity, we are forced to credit him with some statesmanlike object, so to speak, and he ceases to be wholly evil. Even Ahriman, as expounded by Mr. Conway,* very often seems to be a defeated candidate for the throne, indulging a natural though reprehensible love of thwarting his successful rival, rather than the absolute Principle of Evil.

In fact, the only fundamental dualism conceivable is that between God and Matter, not between God and the Devil. A stubborn and chaotic $\nu\lambda\eta$ (whether material or spiritual in the ordinary sense of the words), yielding or failing to yield to the evolving spirit, a chaos ever threatening to engulf the cosmos and defeat its designer, is conceivable enough; and we may likewise imagine a mighty spirit, impelled by wounded ambition or any other personal motive, throwing all his power on the side of chaos, and giving a kind of direction to the blind and mutinous resistance of the intractable $\nu\lambda\eta$; but when we reach even this point, the antithesis, in becoming to some extent personal, has ceased to be wholly moral, inasmuch as the opposing spirit already acts from some motive other than gratuitous love of evil, and is, in fact, the great "Second Best," as Mr. Conway is rather fond of calling him.

Let philosophers and theologians do what they will, therefore, it remains a fact that no personification of Evil can be even approximately complete. The Evil Principle must exist

* Vol. II. pp. 20 sqq.

independently of the Devil, and, what is more, the Devil's own alliance with evil can only be incidental and partial, can only be a means to an end.

Any *Will* absolutely identified with evil must itself be a kind of unorganized spiritual $\nu\lambda\eta$, and must stand in the same relations of mingled subjection and resistance to the Supreme Organizer as those in which the rest of his unfinished creation or evolution are supposed to exist.

True Devils, then, are only conceivable at that low stage of nature and development which is simply mutinous, which never looks beyond its blind and vulgar instincts of lawless and heartless rebellion, or asks itself the question, "What should I do if successful?" No sooner is any internal discipline or definite purpose imported into the diabolical ranks, than they cease to be wholly diabolical.

This fact, which probably lies at the root of the failure of books on the Devil, is strikingly illustrated by what may be called the poetical history of Devils.

If, for instance, we pass under review the representations of Dante, Tasso and Milton, we shall find that just in proportion as the poets allow the diabolical agents in their dramas to rise into independent significance and interest, and constitute one of the true "motives" in the development, they are compelled to divest them of their purely diabolical character.

To begin with Dante. The devils in his great poem take an absolutely subordinate place. In a general sketch of the Inferno, it would hardly be necessary even to mention them. Hell is not in any strict sense their own domain; nor do we feel that they would for a moment sustain its hideous order and discipline, were not their own brutal and senseless recalcitrance itself held under sternest and most immediate discipline, even within the boundaries of Hell. No organization whatever depends upon them; and it is possible, therefore, to represent them as true devils, without any single impulse of a potentially constructive character in their composition. They have no self-discipline, no loyalty, no purpose. Resenting the pressure of the yoke they cannot break, they have nevertheless

learnt, perforce, to bear it, and to find what scope they can for their infernal energies within the limits prescribed them ; but anything which reminds them afresh of their subjection, invariably leads to a burst of wildest fury, that only yields to abject terror.* In spite of the demon garrison of the city of Dis, in spite of the Malebranche, in spite of all the other devils that have their parts assigned to them, we feel throughout this awful poem that a Higher Power reigns even here, and holds in their places forces which if left to themselves would instantly lapse into wildest chaos.

Dante's devils, with their obscene gestures, their brutal ferocity and their low wit, chopping logic over the dismayed sinner, snarling at the delivering angel that carries off the soul saved "by a sorry tear," taunting the doomed wretch as he falls into their boiling pitch, or screaming defiance at the poet and his guide, are as ready to fall out amongst themselves as to torture their victims, and the momentary agreement of the Malebranche (aptly signified by the line of tongues thrust through the mocking teeth), though inspired by a purpose to deceive, has not cohesion enough to keep them together for an hour ; and when last we see them, two of them have fallen into the pitch as they buffet and tear one another, and the rest are madly pursuing the two poets with a baffled fury that has forgotten even the dreadful penalties that would surely wait upon its indulgence ! †

These are real devils, and for that very reason they could not take any place except an entirely subordinate one in Dante's conception of Hell itself.

Satan, the great arch-fiend, looms fearfully over the central lake of ice, and champs in his eternal jaws the three great traitors ; but we are scarcely allowed a glimpse into his psychology after his fall, and find no traces in Hell of the action of his mind or will. ‡

When we turn to Tasso, we find a very different order of

* Compare, e. g., *Inf.* viii. 82—ix. 105, xxi. 64—87.

† See *Inf.* xxi.—xxiii. 57, xxvii. 112—123 ; *Purg.* v. 103—129.

‡ See *Inf.* xxxiv., and compare *Par.* xix. 46—48, xxvii. 22—27, xxix. 55—57.

conceptions. Hell is with him the kingdom of the devils, and there at least they are free to govern and combine on their own principles. We find them capable of deliberation and of concerted action; and their attempts to thwart Godfrey and his host, whether on their own motion or under the potent spells of Ismeno,* rise into one of the principal motives of the epic development of the poem. But all this necessitates a complete change in the manner in which they are represented. At the terrific blast of the arch-fiend's horn, the legions of Hell assemble to deliberate, and their leader addresses them with passionate eloquence, reminding them of all their sufferings and wrongs, appealing to the still unconquered daring that had once armed them against Heaven, and which still maintained them, even in the face of their defeat, in the glory of invincible courage. Finally, with a pathetic cry to them as his faithful companions, as his only strength, he urges them to the fray. And before the words are fully out of his mouth, his legions burst from Hell and speed to do his bidding.

The mere fact that they are capable of such enthusiasm removes them more than half-way from Dante's sheer devils to Milton's infernal demi-gods.

It is in vain that Tasso attempts, by loathsome physical descriptions, to make his devils hateful. It is in vain that he speaks of their hoofs and horns and knotted tails; in vain that he subjects them to the ignominious treatment they tamely endure from the archangel Michael;† in vain that he makes stench and smoke and gore issue from the Devil's jaws as he harangues his followers; for in order to enable them to take a leading part in his drama, he has been compelled to give them some measure of discipline, of loyalty, of enthusiasm; and having given them these, he cannot make them simple devils again in virtue of physical repulsiveness, or even submission to archangelic insolence.

Passing now to Milton, we find Tasso's conceptions developed

* See, e. g., *Gerusalemme Liberata*, Canto iv. Stt. i.—xix., and Canto xiii. Stt. i.—xii., and subsequent cantos.

† Canto ix. St. lrv.

and exalted, and almost all attempt to disarm or qualify them practically abandoned. To all intents and purposes, Satan is the hero of *Paradise Lost*; and in order to qualify him for holding such a place, Milton has been compelled to endow him with such noble attributes that he rivals Prometheus as the type of heroic fortitude; and whenever he stoops to ungenerous or undignified conduct, the poet feels constrained to explain and apologize!* On the other hand, he is satisfied with the barest formal attempts to maintain his hero's infernal character, and, with truer instincts than Tasso's, perceives that, having once made the Devil a hero, he must be sparing in his use of undignified physical adjuncts.†

Thus we see that devils cannot be raised to the dignity of serious treatment without, so far, ceasing to be devils. Once let a clear purpose command their assent, and introduce cohesion and discipline into their ranks, and they are no longer devils.

Is not this the real explanation of the utter insignificance of the great mass of stories of the Devil? We look in vain for the vast embodiment of Evil, the grand proportions of the incarnate opposition to God, and find nothing but pettifogging and often stupid cunning or mere animal ferocity.

In the great dualism of good and evil, of truth and error, of order and chaos, of discipline and licence, of self-sacrifice and self-seeking, the power of order and development can be conceived as personal, the power of disorder and inertness cannot. The Devil cannot really be made the author and embodiment of evil. At the very most he can only be a being who has made himself the champion of evil for some intelligible and therefore not wholly evil purpose.

Mr. Conway himself would, I think, quite endorse all this. Indeed, he gives very striking utterance to one aspect of the

* See, for instance, the celebrated passages, *Paradise Lost*, Book iv. 32 sqq., 358 sqq.

† See, however, Book x. 504 sqq.; compare Dante, *Inf.* xxv. 34—144, where the description excels Milton's as much in appropriateness as it does in power. Such scenes have no true place amongst Milton's devils.

central conception I have been trying to illustrate, in the words: "The fact of evil is permanent. . . . Were starry Lucifer to be restored to his heavenly sphere, he would be one great brand plucked from the burning, but the burning might still go on."*

It is this "burning," this resistance to the divine evolution, this shadow that haunts the divine creation, this rebellion against the discipline involved in the divine order, this parasitical growth of evil which has no principle of life or being of its own, and gnaws into the life which supports it,—it is this that constitutes the really absorbing problem, but it is this that histories of the Devil and treatises on Devil-lore do not touch.

And even if they did, the history of the Devil would still remain an abortive and preposterous study. It would be something like a Parliamentary history which should take cognizance of nothing but the Opposition. Theories of chaos have no meaning except in connection with and in subjection to theories of the cosmos. Theories of evil cannot be the centre of any coherent exposition, for they are but the reflex of theories of good. A history of non-development, a chart and plan of chaos, is an impossibility.

Mr. Conway's own theory of Good, it need hardly be said, is summed up in the two words "Evolution" and "Science." If people would only believe in these two, they would instantly be saved. We should therefore expect the Unevolved to be our author's Evil; but as a matter of fact he seems rather to like it, as supplying material for Evolution.

"To the artist, nature is never seen in petrification; it is really as well as literally *a becoming*. The evil he sees is 'good in the making;' what others call vices are voices in the wilderness preparing the way of the highest."†

Again, our author quotes, from a poem by Cranch,‡ the following fine lines, put into the mouth of Satan:

* Vol. II. p. 393.

† Vol. II. p. 447.

‡ Satan: a Libretto. Boston: Roberts Brothers. 1874.

“ I symbolize the wild and deep
And unregenerated wastes of life,
Dark with transmitted tendencies of race
And blind mischance ; all crude mistakes of will
And tendency unbalanced by due weight
Of favouring circumstance ; all passion blown
By wandering winds ; all surplusage of force
Piled up for use, but slipping from its base
Of law and order.”

On which he observes :

“ This is the very realm in which the poet and the artist find their pure-veined quarries ; whence arise the forms transfigured in their vision.”*

All this prepares us for the optimistic view of things in general which Mr. Conway's two talismans, “ Evolution ” and “ Science,” enable him to take.

“ The hare-lip, which we sometimes see in the human face, is there an arrested development. Every lip is at some embryonic period a hare-lip. The development of man's visible part has gone on much longer than his intellectual and moral evolution, and abnormalities in it are rare in comparison with the number of survivals from the animal world in his temper, his faith, and his manners. Criminals are men living out their arrested moral developments. They who regard them as instigated by a devil are those whose arrest is mental. The eye of reason will deal with both all the more effectively, because with as little wrath as a surgeon feels towards a hare-lip he endeavours to humanize.”†

And yet we have fancied in reading these volumes that when the Unevolved, the arrested mental growth, takes the form of disbelief in Evolution and Science, or belief in an Omnipotent Will, or, above all, faith in a Priesthood, Mr. Conway's caustic is applied with a little more “ wrath ” than suits his philosophical creed, and his knife is brandished in a style not strictly surgical.

We are very far from complaining of this. A surgical calmness in the face of what we regard as pernicious error is happily

* Vol. II. p. 447. † Vol. II. p. 439. Query : is “ he ” ‘ the eye of reason ’ ?

impossible, and we are all of us practical dualists at heart. All earnest men have their moral antipathies, rising, if not into wrath, at least into indignation.

Even Mr. Conway, philosopher as he is, cannot deal with priests quite as graciously as he does with serpents. "Taught by Science," he says, when speaking of the latter,

"Man may, with a freedom the barbarian cannot feel, exterminate the Serpent; with a freedom the christian cannot know, he may see in that reptile the perfection of that economy in nature which has ever defended the advancing forms of life. It [i. e. Science] judges the good and evil of every form with reference to its adaptation to its own purposes."*

But when he is speaking of priests, Mr. Conway seems to feel no desire to "justify their place in nature," or to "judge the good and evil" of this special form of existence solely "with reference to its adaptation to its own purposes."

Superstition, then, in Mr. Conway's mind, appears to be that form of the Unevolved which approaches most nearly to a positive principle of Evil, and a desire to reclaim this wasteland appears to have inspired the more serious purpose of his volumes.

"The natural world is overlaid by an unnatural religion, breeding bitterness around simplest thoughts, obstructions to science, estrangements not more reasonable than if they resulted from varying notions of lunar figures,—all derived from the Devil-bequeathed dogma that certain beliefs and disbeliefs are of infernal instigation. Dogmas moulded in a fossil Demonology make the foundation of institutions which divert wealth, learning, enterprize, to fictitious ends. It has not, therefore, been mere intellectual curiosity which has kept me working at this subject these many years, but an increasing conviction that the sequelæ of such superstitions are exercising a still formidable influence."†

Elsewhere Mr. Conway gives us an elaborate allegory founded on the fate of a certain holy tree in Travancore :

"Why should that particular tree—of a species common in the district and not usually very large—have grown so huge? 'Because

* Vol. I. pp. 418 sq.

† Vol. I. p. vii.

it is holy,' said the priest. 'Because it was believed holy,' says the fact. For ages the blood and ashes of victims fed its roots and swelled its trunk; until, by an argument not confined to India, the dimensions of the superstition were assumed to prove its truth. When the people complained that all their offerings and worship did not bring any returns, the priest replied, You stint the gods and they stint you. The people offered the fattest of their flocks and fruits: More yet! said the priest. They built fine altars and temples for the gods: More yet! said the priest. They built fine houses for the priests, and taxed themselves to support them. And when thus, fed by popular sacrifices and toils, the religion had grown to vast power, the priest was able to call to his side the theologian for further explanation. The theologian and the priest said—'Of course there must be good reasons why the gods do not answer all your prayers (if they did not answer some, you would be utterly consumed): mere mortals must not dare to inquire into their mysteries: but that there are gods, and that they do attend to human affairs, is made perfectly plain by this magnificent array of temples, and by the care with which they have supplied all the wants of us, their particular friends, whose cheeks, as you see, hang down with fatness.'"*

Evolutionist as he is, Mr. Conway can really look upon this as an adequate view of ecclesiastical history!

But to go on with the tree. In the end it was cut down by an English missionary to make the planks and beams of his own church, and, continues our author,

"The victorious missionary may be pointing out in his chapel the cut-up planks which reveal the impotence of the deity so long feared by the natives; and perhaps he is telling them of the bigness of *his* tree, and claiming its flourishing condition in Europe as proof of its supernatural character. Possibly he may omit to mention the blood and ashes which have fattened the root and enlarged the trunk of *his* holy tree."†

If we ask what this holy tree of the Europeans is, we cannot clearly ascertain whether it is belief in God or in the Devil, because Mr. Conway has a confirmed habit of mixing

* Vol. I. pp. 301, 302.

† P. 303.

up the two ; but it is evidently one or both of these beliefs, as appears from the following very powerful passage :

“All that man ever won of courage or moral freedom, by conquering his dragons in detail, he surrenders again to the phantom forces they typified when he gives up his mind to belief in a power not himself that makes for evil. The terrible conclusion that Evil is a positive and imperishable Principle in the universe carries in it the poisonous breath of every Dragon. It lurks in all theology which represents the universe as an arena of struggle between good and evil Principles, and human life as a war of the soul against the flesh. It animates all the pious horrors which identify Materialism with wickedness. It nestles in the mind which imagines a personal deity opposed by any part of nature. It coils around every heart which adores absolute sovereign Will, however apotheosised. . . .

“. . . Happily the notion of a universe held at the mercy of a personal decree is suicidal in a world full of sorrows and agonies, which, on such a theory, can only be traced to some individual caprice or malevolence. However long abject fear may silence the lips of the suffering, rebellion is in their hearts. Every blow inflicted directly or permissively by mere Will, however omnipotent, every agony that is consciously detached from universal organic necessity, in order that it may be called ‘providential,’ can arouse no natural feeling in man nobler than indignation. . . . The heart’s protest may be throttled for a time by the lingering coil of terror, but it is there.”*

We have now, perhaps, a pretty clear idea of Mr. Conway’s purpose in writing this book, and may see more clearly than ever that a history or systematic survey of the most objectionable portion of the Unevolved, can only rise to importance in proportion as it forsakes its own impossible centre of vision, and becomes a chapter in the history of Evolution. Demonology and Devil-lore are only interesting when they become branches of folk-lore, or hover in constant retreat upon the margin of theology, philosophy or science. The attempt to isolate them and treat them as independent centres of interest, must inevitably fail.

This, then, is the lesson taught by the failure of books on

* Vol. I. pp. 426, 427.