

MATERIALISM.

Materialism is based on the assumption that no satisfactory or conclusive proof can be offered of the existence of mind. This is the old Sadducean doctrine, but its modern advocates put it forward in the form of discovery, as a new thing, and profess to establish it upon the ruins of all other systems of mental Science and Theology. It was taught in substance by Epicurus long before its appearance in Germany as the offspring of Hegelian Philosophy. It was promoted, unintentionally no doubt, by Locke in his attempt to account for the origin of all our ideas through Sensation and Reflection. And recently John Stuart Mill in his theory of Association, Prof. Bain by tracing our thoughts and even our moral apprehensions very much to our bodily organism, Herbert Spencer by his Evolution theory, and Prof. Huxley in his discussion of Protoplasm or the physical basis of life, have lent powerful aid to Materialism. Along with these and other popular writers may be classed certain divines who profess to have read extensively in Science and Theology without finding any proof of the independent and continued existence of the human soul, or of spirit. On the contrary they confidently appeal to God's Word and to Philosophy to show that at death what is popularly called the soul becomes instantly and utterly extinct.

You can easily see how such opinions are fitted to make havoc of Theology and to set aside our most cherished hopes for time and eternity. If there is no soul to be saved or lost then manifestly the activities of the Christian world have been hitherto misdirected and worse than useless. The record of the gospel cannot be accepted as anything more than a romance and its fundamental doctrines as to sin, atonement, eternal glory, or eternal punishment must be treated as empty delusions. If man is an animal and nothing more, destined to be utterly annihilated at death, then why the restraints of morality, why this struggle to escape the tyranny of what is coarse and base and unholy? Nothing can be unholy. There is neither right nor wrong. The best thing for man is to gratify his desires in all respects,—“to eat, drink and be merry,”—to give loose rein to all his passions. If there exists no independent Creative Spirit apart from matter how are we to account for the phenomena of the universe? We must ascribe to blind “molecular force,” the forethought, the wisdom and the power usually attributed to God in producing his innumerable and marvellous works. Our whole religious vocabulary must be changed; we must learn to speak of a good, a wise, a holy, and a powerful “force,” and cease to apply such terms to an Infinite, Intelligent Spirit. But it may be asked, is our country being invaded by such opinions as these? Most assuredly. They come to us from European and American sources. Any false science, or Theological opinion, which becomes dominant in the Old World is sure gradually to reach our homes and corrupt our faith; and already much that is unsafe and positively injurious is in free circulation among the reading classes of our people. I propose, therefore, to state and criticise a few of the positions of modern Materialists. The limits as-