

SIR ISAAC NEWTON.

BY DR. CHALMERS.\*

If you have gone along with me in the preceding observations, you will perceive that they are calculated to disarm of all its point, and of all its energy, that slipshod Voltaire; when in the examples he gives of the dotage of the human understanding, he tells us of Bacon having believed in witchcraft, and Sir Isaac Newton having written a Commentary on the Book of Revelation. The former instance we shall not undertake to vindicate; but in the latter instance we perceive what this brilliant and specious, but withal superficial apostle of Infidelity, either did not see, or refused to acknowledge. We see in this intellectual labour of our great philosopher, the working of the very same principles which carried him through the profoundest and the most successful of his investigations; and how he kept most sacredly and most consistently by those very maxims, the authority of which, he, even in the full vigour and manhood of his faculties, ever recognized. We see in the theology of Newton, the very spirit and principle which gave all its stability, and all its sureness, to the philosophy of Newton. We see the same tenacious adherence to every one doctrine, that had such valid proof to uphold it, as could be gathered from the field of human experience; and we see the same firm resistance of every one argument, that had nothing to recommend it, but such plausibilities as could easily be devised by the genius of man, when he expatiated abroad on those fields of creation which the eye never witnessed, and from which no messenger ever came to us with any credible information. Now, it was on the former of these two principles that Newton clung so determinedly to his Bible, as the record of an actual annunciation from God to the inhabitants of this world. When he turned his attention to this book, he came to it with a mind tutored to the philosophy of facts—and, when he looked at its credentials, he saw the stamp and the impress of this philosophy on every one of them. He saw the fact of Christ being a messenger from heaven, in the audible language by which it was conveyed from heaven's canopy to human ears. He saw the fact of his being an approved ambassador of God, in those miracles which carried their own resistless evidence along with them to human eyes. He saw the truth of this whole history brought home to his own conviction, by a sound and substantial vehicle of human testimony. He saw the reality of that supernatural light, which inspired the prophecies he himself illustrated, by such an agreement with the events of a various and distant futurity as could be taken cognizance of by human observation. He saw the wisdom of God pervading the whole substance of the written message, in such manifold adaptations to the circumstances of man, and to the whole secrecy of his thoughts, and his affections, and his spiritual wants, and his moral sensibilities, as even in the mind of an ordinary and unlettered peasant, can be attested by human consciousness. These formed the solid materials of the basis on which our experimental philosopher stood; and there was nothing in the whole compass of his own astronomy to dazzle him away from it; and he was too well aware of the limit between what he knew, and what he did not know, to be seduced from the ground he had taken, by any of those brilliancies, which have since led so many of his humbler successors into the track of Infidelity. He had measured the distances of these planets. He had calculated their periods. He had estimated their figures and their bulk, and their densities, and he had subordinated the whole intricacy of their movements to the simple and sublime agency of one commanding principle. But he had too much of the ballast of a substantial under-

\* In his Preface, Dr. Chalmers makes the following allusion to Sir Isaac Newton and his theology:—

"In the course of this Sermon I have offered a tribute of acknowledgment to the theology of Sir Isaac Newton; and in such terms as, if not further explained, may be liable to misconstruction. The grand circumstance of applause in the character of this great man, is, that unseduced by all the magnificence of his own discoveries, he had a solidity of mind which could resist their fascination; and keep him in steady attachment to that book, whose general evidences stamped upon it the impress of a real communication from heaven. This was the sole attribute of his theology which I had in my eye when I presumed to eulogize it. I do not think, that, amid the distraction and the engrossment of his other pursuits, he has at all times succeeded in his interpretation of the book; else he would never, in my apprehension, have abetted the leading doctrine of a sect or a system, which has now nearly dwindled away from public observation."

Sir Isaac Newton was a Unitarian, and the Unitarians are but an inconsiderable body in Scotland. Hence this remark of the distinguished Scotch clergyman.

standing about him, to be thrown afloat by all this success among the plausibilities of wanton and unauthorized speculation. He knew the boundary which hemmed him in. He knew that he had not thrown one particle of light on the moral or religious history of these planetary regions. He had not ascertained what visits of communication they received from the God who upholds them. But he knew that the fact of a real visit made to this planet, had such evidence to rest upon, that it was not to be dispensed by any aerial imagination. And when I look at the steady and unmoved Christianity of this wonderful man; so far from seeing any symptom of dotage and unbecomingly, or any forgetfulness of those principles on which the fabric of his philosophy is reared; do I see, that in sitting down to the work of a Bible Commentator, he hath given us their most beautiful and most consistent exemplification.

I did not anticipate such a length of time, and of illustration, in this stage of my argument. But I will not regret it, if I have familiarized the minds of any of my readers to the reigning principle of this Discourse. We are strongly disposed to think, that it is a principle which might be made to apply to every argument of every unbeliever—and so to serve not merely as an antidote against the infidelity of astronomers, but to serve as an antidote against all infidelity. We are well aware of the diversity of complexion which Infidelity puts on. It looks one thing in the man of science and liberal accomplishments. It looks another thing in the refined voluptuary. It looks still another thing in the common-place railer against the artifices of priestly domination. It looks another thing in the dark and unsettled spirit of him, whose every reflection is tinged with gall, and who casts his envious and malignant scowl at all that stands associated with the established order of society. It looks another thing in the prosperous man of business, who has neither time nor patience for the details of the Christian evidence—but who, amid the hurry of his other occupations, has gathered as many of the lighter petulancies of the Infidel writers, and caught from the perusal of them as contemptuous a tone towards the religion of the New Testament, as to set him at large from all the decencies of religious observation, and to give him the disdain of an elevated complacency over all the follies of what he counts a vulgar superstition. And, lastly, for Infidelity has now got down amongst us to the humblest walks of life; may it occasionally be seen lowering on the forehead of the resolute and hardy artificer, who can lift his menacing voice against the priesthood, and, looking on the Bible as a jugglery of theirs, can bid stout defiance to all its denunciations. Now, under all these varieties, we think there might be detected the one and universal principle which we have attempted to expose. The something, whatever it is, which has dispossessed all these people of their Christianity, exists in their minds, in the shape of a position, which they hold to be true, but which, by no legitimate evidence, they have ever realized—and a position, which lodges within them as a wilful fancy or presumption of their own, but which could not stand the touchstone of that wise and solid principle, in virtue of which, the followers of Newton give to observation the precedence over theory. It is a principle altogether worthy of being laboured—as, if carried round in faithful and consistent application amongst these numerous varieties, it is able to break up all the existing infidelity of the world.

PHYSICAL LABOUR.

BY ELIHU BURRITT, THE BLACKSMITH.

But the mere sustenance of animal life, and the gratifications of sense, are the humblest, meanest objects of physical labour. Its necessity was introduced into the organization of man for a higher destiny. Its chief work and dignity was to educate the immortal mind into a character and capacity of activity, which it should retain after its dissolution from flesh and blood. If man sustained a mere vegetable communication with the earth, and if his system might derive all its necessary nutrition by a process of capillary induction through the pores in the soles of his feet, even in that case, his mind would require for its development all the physical labour of which he is so disposed to complain. The divinity of this arrangement is even perceptible in the disposition of rivers, mountains, seas, and oceans, around the globe. Between us and the slightest gratification of sense, Divine Providence has interposed a condition of mental as well as physical action. Man was provided with no instinct or mechanical intuition to relieve his mind from action, in anything he did for his physical comfort. "The amorous bird of night that sang spousal over the nuptial bower" of our first pa-

rents, "and hid haste the evening star to light their bridal lamp," that bird built its first nest as perfectly as it did its last; and its offspring's first attempt was as successful as the maturest effort of the parent. No opposition of thought, no deduction of experience, ever improved their instinct. Every living thing endowed with an instinct, instead of a reasoning mind, came into the world with its tools already made, and it never added a new one to its stock. Every being endowed with a living, thinking soul, had to make his own tools; and Adam found that he could not even dress and prune the garden of Eden, without first exercising all his mental faculties in the invention and manufacture of some instrument to help him on his work. Every beast, and bird, and creeping thing, wherever it found its food, found it already prepared to satisfy its hunger. Not so with man. The provision for the constant occupation of his mind was so vitally incorporated with the necessities of his physical nature, that there was nothing that could sustain his animal life which he had not to change, combine, or prepare into food by some invention or artificial process. He found, therefore, that his hands and feet, and all his members and organs of sense, were merely a set of primary faculties, with which to make others of more powerful capacity to ameliorate his social condition. The first rude plough he made to turn the soil, the first rude axe of stone with which he felled the stalwart pine, the first rude canoe he scooped from its trunk, to cross the river which kept him from greener fields, were each a human faculty, that brought within his reach a physical comfort he never enjoyed before. Nay, they were more: they were a part of himself. He transferred to each of them a piece of his own body and part of his mind, which were never dissolved. We are taught by Divine authority, that *good works are the human body of faith*; and that they are as immortal, too, as "the substance of things hoped for." We have similar testimony that the invention of every implement that increases the capacity of labour and the comfort of human life, is the immortal body of a living thought, that will breathe and speak through all coming time. Adam died long before the flood, but his wooden plough survived the deluge. It never died, it never will die but on the grave of time. It has ploughed through the rubbish of fallen empires; it will plough on as long as there is anything left to plough on this planet; and when it stops in the last furrow to be made on earth, it will retain the living thought that Adam breathed into it, though a thousand generations may have forgotten the connection.

THE AGE OF PRACTICE.

The Age of Practice is now at hand. The true credentials are deeds. The genuine test is performance.

The doctrine of Works has been too much neglected in this Protestant age of sectarian opinions. "Faith without works," rightly said the Apostle James, "is dead." Mere expression of belief is not true faith. Simple assent to a verbal creed is of no avail. True faith is a practical confidence operating in good works.

The union of Church and State—not the formal worthless thing of politicians, but a truer, a diviner idea—is the societary actualization of the sacredness of good works. We should sanctify and hallow art, science, and industry. Our fields and our houses should become to us as portions of the common temple of God. Each effort should be a prayer; each rest as a thanksgiving. Every function of work should be holy; each department of labor honorable, each portion of industry attractive. The priesthood of industry should commence. The hierarchy of labor should be installed. Every one should be a worker; every one a priest. This would be the true union of Church and State. This is the required combined reform in temporals and spirituals.

The true practice of good works does not consist in mere alms-giving. Justice above charity, O, pharisaic and ever good intentioned but unenlightened alms-givers! Put that spade into the hands of yon beggar, take one in thine own, go there both together on that field and dig. This is better than putting money into a pocket full of holes. This is better than sending Charity with half-pence to the gin-palace. This is better than alms-giving. It is grander than Charity, for it is love and justice. It is as fraternity above patronage. It is as community, above slavery. It is the land and the tool; it is the spade and the acre which every Christian, every human being, ought to have with which to work. By the lazy rich and by the idle

poor, and by those unemployed, the Divine command is not obeyed: "by the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat bread."

Wo unto those by whom this Divine and benevolent command is obeyed not. By the contracted chest, by the weak and undeveloped frame, by the flaccid muscle, by the hellish pang of ennui, are those who will not work punished. By increased pauper rates, by dread of incendiary torch and smoking homestead, by fear of red riot and flaming rebellion, are those damned who will not let others work. No sin under God's heaven escapes without a punishment. Those who transgress God's laws in human nature or in human society, are condemned by their transgression.

Mightily let us invoke the Age of Practice; its credentials, deeds; its test, performance. Nothing is too loving for the heart. Nothing is too thoughtful for the mind. Nothing is too powerful for the hand. There cannot be too much piety, too much patriotism, too much philanthropy. One cannot be too much a saint or a hero. "Be ye perfect as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." Never too high the kebla in the mosques of the true Islam. The higher the endeavor, the more likely the effort. Shoot at the rush candle, and thou shalt hit the table. Wing thy shaft at the Pole Star, and thou shalt pierce the Lion or the Great Bear. That which is most wanting should be the most tried after. All things are possible to faith. The thought of annihilation approximates Atheism. "Perhaps" should be banished the dictionary. The more we try, the more shall we gain. Trial itself is a gain. If we reach not at first the thing attempted, we shall yet acquire more strength for another endeavor.

Let the future era be the Age of Practice; we have had enough of mere doctrine. If we cannot, however, ourselves become practical, let us at any rate write in favor of practice. Let our poets sing its laud. Let our orators speak its praises. So sung and so spoken, assuredly it will then be done.—*Douglas Jerrold's Magazine.*

WAR.

What, speaking in quite unofficial language, is the net purport and upshot of war? To my own knowledge, for example, there dwell and toil, in the British village of Drumdrudge, usually some five hundred souls. From these, by certain "natural enemies" of the French, there are successfully selected, during the French war, say thirty able-bodied men. Drumdrudge, at her own expense, has suckled and nursed them; she has not without difficulty and sorrow, fed them up to manhood, and even trained them to crafts, so that one can weave, another build, another hammer, and the weakest can stand under thirty stone avoirdupois. Nevertheless, amid much weeping and swearing, they are selected; all dressed in red, and shipped away, at the public charge, some two thousand miles, or say only to the south of Spain; and fed there till wanted. And now, to that same spot in the south of Spain, are thirty similar French artisans, from a French Drumdrudge, in like manner vending; till at length, after infinite effort, the two parties come into actual juxtaposition; and thirty stand fronting thirty, each with a gun in his hand. Straightway the word "Fire!" is given; and they blow the souls out of one another; and in place of sixty brisk, useful craftsmen, the world has sixty dead carcasses, which it must bury, and anew shed tears for. Had these men any quarrel? Busy as the devil is, not the smallest. They lived far enough apart, were the entirest strangers; nay, in so wide a universe, there was even unconsciously; by commerce, some mutual helpfulness between them. How, then? Simpleton! their governors had fallen out; and, instead of shooting one another, had the cunning to make these poor blockheads shoot. Alas! so it is in Deutschland, and hitherto in all lands; still, as of old, "what devilry soever kings do, the Greeks must pay the piper!" In that fiction of the English Smollett, it is true, the final cessation of war is perhaps prophetically shadowed forth; where the two natural enemies, in person, take each a tobacco pipe, filled with brimstone, light the same, and smoke in one another's faces, till the weaker gives in. But from such predicted peace-era, what blood-filled trenches, and contentious centuries, may still divide us!—*Thomas Carlyle.*

Printed for the Committee of THE MONTREAL UNITARIAN SOCIETY AND PUBLISHED MONTHLY.

DONOHUE AND MANTZ, PRINTERS.