

sequence, which adds to sin the fruits of sin, and leaves no room for escape. And it was because man had upset God's balance, and subordinated advancing freedom to the old law of natural sequence, that it needed a manifestation of God, in which His free agency should triumph over natural sequence, to set the matter right. Hence the whole human economy becomes a system of most gracious interposition; for what is it we call grace and mercy, but God's direct interference with natural results? He interposes no less between cause and effect when He frees his enslaved creatures, and saves them from the fruit of their own sin, than when he saved their bodies from the Red Sea by causing the waters to stand on either side. We marvel that those who own the greater wonder should shrink to grant the less; as if God might dare to interfere with immortal nature, yet hesitate to meddle with that of the physical world. He has not destroyed the system of natural law;—why should He, when it reflects half of Himself?—but He has chosen to arrest its uniform action by special interference. By grace, by providence, by miracle, He proclaims our whole economy to be one of merciful interposition, even while He permits the general operation of his laws to go on undisturbed. His compassion does not shrink from the stern behests of famine and pestilence. He strikes down His most useful servants, if they neglect the laws of health. He carries retribution with a high hand over the world, to remind us that His free interference shall not always arrest the course of law. As yet, it is forcibly arrested; the two principles are not now in harmony, but are working out their separate results in sheer defiance of each other. God saves by free interference with law, law inexorably destroys in spite of God's interference. But a time will come when the balance of law and liberty will be restored, when, standing before our just Judge, we receive the complex result of God's free mercy and our own life's doings. But whether we are advanced to the throne of God, or thrust out from His presence, the award of law will be given, not because we had been bound onward by development to either fate, but because we had been free to choose between them; because the Son of God had interposed between man and his natural destiny, and given back to His creatures a renewed power of choice, by which, when His Spirit called, they might have followed Him and been free. More than that even the Son of God could not do; for though it is conceivable that an Almighty Being might force men to be righteous, it is inconceivable, nay, it is a contradiction in terms, that any power could force men to be free. In our share of that essential attribute of Deity doubtless lies the whole mystery of good and evil. We catch a glimpse of moral necessity; a 'needs must be' that the creature which rises above the enslaved brute towards the free God, shall share the attribute of freedom, not as an arbitrary gift of the Creator, but as a necessity of our nearer approach to him. Then cometh the end. We know not yet how the union of perfect stability with perfect freedom will be secured in a higher sphere; but this we know, that we shall share the nature of him who is equally the source of liberty and the origin of law,—the Sovereign Ruler who is *bound* by righteousness, the Almighty One who *cannot* err.

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