

to admit that the laws underwent every forty or fifty years a strange disturbance; that then an unknown, gigantic being, an intermittent, inexplicable force, passed by and destroyed everything. If the ants were philosophers, they would not at all confound the passage of such a being with a tempest or a water-spout, phenomena which are entirely mechanical and with which no personal intention is concerned. Man, conceived of more or less vaguely, would be for these ants what the Deity was for antiquity,—a being more powerful than mankind interrupting occasionally the world's affairs. Now it has never been proven that such a being existed above man. No phenomenon like that which the ants were supposed to have beheld ever takes place among mankind. Volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, epidemics,—these were formerly believed to be effects of this sort, evincing the wrath of God. At present, however, no educated person entertains such an idea. These events are now regarded as perfectly natural. Among the causes of the eruptions of Zorullo and Hecla, no academy of science would consent to reckon, as having even the slightest influence, the sins of the Mexicans or Icelanders. There are countries very much less moral than Iceland which are never troubled with earthquakes!

ON COWARDICE.

BY WM. M'DONNELL, AUTHOR OF "EXTER HALL," "HEATHEN OF THE HEATH," ETC.

[Extract from an unpublished work.]

A coward is defined to be "a person who lacks courage to meet danger." This definition is generally supposed to mean danger mostly of a physical kind. The man who will follow in the train of a tyrant and submit to oppression rather than resist, and who will suffer a wrong rather than risk a struggle for the right, is a coward.

Many now will even say—no matter from whom the exhortation to the contrary—that he who will "resist not evil," or who being struck on one cheek will submissively turn the other to receive a blow, is also a coward.

In all ages and among all people the man with a craven heart has been most thoroughly despised, for a genuine coward can be moulded into one of the basest of characters, and he can be used for any purpose, no matter how mean or how degrading. There is nothing lower, more contemptible, or more cowardly than cowardice.

There is yet, however, a more despicable kind of cowardice than that which arises from a dread of physical danger. A man may be so far without fear as to be reckless of life and limb and yet be without true bravery; he may be a hero in one respect and a poltroon in another. It is only when he becomes a moral coward that he sinks every trace of true manhood into the polluting slough of mental slavery. Moral cowardice is therefore the most shameful and most to be deplored, for its example is contaminating and its corrupting influence almost unbounded.

The moral coward is he who while afraid to oppose false principles or utter his own honest convictions in favor of what is good or true, becomes subservient, for his own elevation or aggrandizement, to popular opinion which he knows to be wrong, and who is willing to bow down to illusions and prostrate himself before venerable myths even while he sees truth kept shivering in some cold, dark corner.

Thousands who should otherwise remain unknown attain the highest positions in society by such mean subserviency. Among rulers, legislators, teachers, preachers, and editors—especially among the latter—cowards of this class can be found who represent the very meanest type of the pusillanimous. For personal reasons many of them denounce that which they know to be real, while they exalt that which they believe to be imaginary. It is truly pitiable to see some who should be exponents of truth lagging behind, afraid to take a single step in advance lest they should come into collision with some popular absurdity. What a spectacle to see men who are even half ashamed of their own cowardice trying to assert an assumed independence, and making wild, ostentatious flourishes in behalf of mental freedom while they are chained and fettered to a dogmatism from which they cannot or dare not move an inch. It is a humiliating sight to see intelligent men in such a position, but the most pitiful and humiliating of all is to be obliged to look at a public writer go into feigned ecstasies over the silly utterances and puerile platitudes of some feeble "successor" who can never get beyond orthodox nonsense, or to witness the genuflections, and prostrations, and adorations of the public press of the land before some mammoth fraud which audaciously uprears its brazen head to assume pre-eminence.

This is the kind of cowardice or subserviency most to be deplored. Freethought must be circumscribed and new ideas pronounced illegitimate. Every innovation dreaded by certain intellectual pigmies

is arraigned as being in conflict with past experience. No new ventures must be made beyond certain old-time boundaries, and all progress would be brought almost to an end were it not for the independent few—the really independent—who, indifferent to the scorn, the ridicule, the reproaches, and the misrepresentations which are so lavishly bestowed on them, still refuse to aid in the dethronement of truth, or assist in the apotheosis of error, or to join in the throng of its unreasoning, infatuated worshippers.

What cowards chill penury makes of some! If any plea can be offered for those who almost hate themselves for the sorry part which they are obliged to take in giving a seeming assent to false principles, or by yielding a seeming belief in old wives' fables, it may be the plea of their dire poverty. Alas that such should exist! But it does exist. Are not the poverty-stricken to be found on every side—men, women, and children—who have scarcely a place to lay their heads, and are often obliged from day to day to solicit in the humblest manner every mouthful they may get to eat. Who can expect manhood, or independence, or even honesty from a race of starvelings, the continuation of whose wretched existence may be dependent on the uncertain charity of those who claim their submission. There may be, and ought to be, pity for a class of persons so situated, many of whom might be willing to worship Jupiter or Juggernaut for a single meal. There may even be a plea offered for their apparent conformity to principles or doctrines which they neither care for nor understand, but what excuse can be made for those in affluence, for those beyond the reach of want, or for the well-to-do writers, or teachers, or preachers who will persistently prostitute reason in defense of error, who refuse to investigate, and who would, in subservience to the powerful or influential, domineer over and even persecute thoughtful men and women who dare to judge for themselves.

If there can be joy among angels in heaven, or increased felicity among the guileless on earth, or among the pure in heart anywhere else, it must be when some sturdy, honest thinker, spurning dictation and bursting through every barrier, leaves the beaten track of conformity and takes up his cross prepared to hear himself reproached and calumniated; and while mocked and despised on every side to go on and on and forever on in a sincere and determined search after truth.

ANSWER THE LITTLE PEOPLE.—Children are undoubtedly very troublesome at times in asking questions, and should without doubt be taught not to interrupt conversation in company; but, this resolution made, we question the policy of withholding an answer at any time from the active mind which must find so many unexplained daily and hourly mysteries. They who have either learned to solve these mysteries, or have become indifferent as to an explanation, are not apt to look compassionately enough upon this eager restlessness on the part of children to penetrate causes and trace effects. By giving due attention to those "troublesome questions," a child's truest education may be carried on. Have a little patience, then, and think how welcome to you would be a translator if you were suddenly dropped into some foreign country where the language was for the most part unintelligible to you, and you were bursting with curiosity about every strange object that met your eye.—Scribner.

IMPORTANT DISCOVERY.—A most important archaeological discovery is reported to have been made in the Maremma of Tuscany, an extensive vast district of Western Italy. Here, on the forest-covered flanks of Monte Leone, upon the estate of Count Corsi Salviani, ancient walls of massive size have been found and traced for miles through a part of the country usually visited only by sportsmen—a fact which goes far to account for their existence having so long remained unknown. These walls have recently been examined by Mr. Pullan, an Englishman, at the request of Mr. Charles Heath Wilson, and they think they have found here the ruins of a pre-historic city as large as Rome now is, and which existed before Rome was even a collection of huts on Palatine Hill.