

the belief in Providence belongs, indeed, to the most sensible deprivations which are connected with a renunciation of Christianity. In the enormous machine of the universe, amid the incessant whirl and hiss of its jagged iron wheels, amid the deafening crash of its ponderous stamps and hammers, in the midst of this whole terrific commotion, man—a helpless and defenceless creature—finds himself placed, not secure for a moment that on some imprudent motion a wheel may not seize him and rend him, a hammer crush him to powder. This sense of abandonment is at first something awful.\* This is Atheism as described by an Atheist. And a gloomy creed it is—enough to blast all hope and cause deep despair to settle on universal humanity. For this wretched, miserable, mockery of life, shall we exchange the sweet joy and happiness of religion, that can cheer amid direst distress, and console under heaviest afflictions? That would, indeed, be a madman's act. Spoke not David truly when he described the man who denies God as foolish? The Atheist can see nothing in the universe but huge wheels, ponderous hammers, and heavy beams of iron, governed by an irresistible destiny, which at any moment may grind him to powder, and can in no case afford him either help or sympathy. To the Christian, all external things are seen to be full of beauty and redolent of life. The carolling of the birds, the whisperings of the trees, and the balmy breezes, all tell of a wondrous Love by which earthly things were created and are upheld. Every opening bud, every blooming flower, the busy insect on the wing, and the mellowed golden beauty of the landscape under the rays of the setting sun, all point to the Everlasting Father and the better country. The blue mountains, with their crests of snow and the calm azure of heaven's arch overhead, proclaim that man is loved by God and cared for by the Infinite One. The following fable from Thomas Carlyle aptly describes the Atheist's position: "Gentlemen," said a conjuror one fine starry evening, "those heavens are a *deceptio visus*: what you call stars are nothing but fiery motes in the air. Wait a little. I will clear them off, and show you how the matter is." Where-

\* The Old Faith and the New.