

up the earth in glory, and every falling shower that cheers and waters the earth, tells of a God of love and reproaches that man with hard and ungracious views of his Father, who dares believe that all these are the deceptive workings of a malignant spirit who conceals behind these smiles, dark and revengeful designs of endless and remorseless cruelty.

There is another view to be taken of this part of the subject. The good providence of God has provided for the wants of all the creatures that he has made.—He feeds the human race and fills their storehouses with food. He hears also the dark raven when he screams from the desolate rock, and he giveth to the beast his food in due season, for he openeth his hand and satisfieth the desire of every living thing. In all that vast and untold variety of creatures that God has made, there are none for whose wants he has not provided. Every part of the creation is swarming with life. And yet none are overlooked, but the meanest reptile that crawls in the dust is provided with means of sustenance and sources of enjoyment. From him who stately treads, to him that lowly creeps, all are fed and blessed by the wise and gracious arrangements of nature, and nature's God. Now if we see in these things the Government of God at all, we see that it is benevolent and kind. We see here a rule of that government from which no exception can be found in nature. The rule is, that wherever God has given life he has coupled it with enjoyment, and made it a blessing; and why in the name of reason should man be made an exception to this rule? Or why should it be thought that the same God who has given life and enjoyment to the beasts of the field, the fowls of the air, and fishes of the sea, should when he came to man, his last and noblest work, depart from the rule that runs through all animated nature, and bind him over to hopeless and endless woe, or even make him run the fearful hazard of that dreadful end? It is easy to see that on the supposition of the truth of the doctrine of endless misery, the meanest worm holds the tenure of existence on better terms than man; and I frankly say, had it been left to my choice, I would not for worlds have accepted the gift of life, even with a possibility of its coming to such a horrid catastrophe. Thus the matter appears when viewed in connection with the reasonable doctrine of a God who rules over all. But even if we lay that sentiment out of the question, and consider all the provisions for the comfort of animated existence as the result of the laws of nature, still the supposition that man alone, of all creatures, is destined to suffer in endless woe, is a violation of all nature's laws, and an utter denial of that uniformity which is seen in all her operations, and which lodges in every human heart the confidence that nature walks by rules that know no abatement. It would suppose that nature, in some unaccountable freak had produced in man an abortion, and made him an exception to her uniform and established laws. While in all her works she has coupled life with enjoyment, and thus made it a blessing, in man's case she has reversed her accustomed order, and in conferring on him life, has conferred a bitter curse, and made him the subject of a fate over which angels may well weep, and

good men mourn in bitter anguish of spirit.

Nay; but nature through all her works cries aloud that she has done no such thing. Her ways are uniform and equal, and all her children are blessed and made happy in her gifts. More than this: she bears the impress of her Maker's hand, and speaks out in language too plain to be mistaken, that her mighty Author is kind. Loudly does she call upon man to "look through nature up to nature's God," and while he traces in her ample pages the power and wisdom of the great I AM, to see there the footsteps of his goodness also, and to confess, that while he reigns, all will be well.

I say, then, that the doctrine of endless misery is opposed to the teachings of nature as seen in things around us; and as God wrote that volume he never can write another that can contradict its teachings. But there are higher developments of nature's laws, and those which are more worthy of our consideration, as they approximate more nearly to the voice of God himself.

The parent loves the child, and cannot look with composure upon its sufferings, either present or prospective. Why yearns the father's heart over the sufferings of his child? Why heaves the mother's breast with anguish when her darling is in danger? It is the voice of nature uttered at the resistless command of nature's God, and that voice low and deep, condemns the doctrine of ceaseless woe as unjust and cruel. Nay, in nine cases out of ten it prevails, and gives hope that its object is safe; for, rarely will you find a mother who believes her children are in hell. It is the testimony of nature stamping the seal of falsehood upon the creed that would damn a child.

This same voice, perhaps in fainter and more feeble tones, yet clearly, cries out against the doctrine through all the earth. Man is so made that he feels an interest in the welfare of his kindred race, and he cannot look with composure upon the sufferings of his fellow man. Let there be a fire in a city and consume ten men; and you will see a vast multitude assemble with downcast looks, and as the blackened remains are drawn from the smouldering ruins, you shall see tears falling from many an eye. It is the voice of nature speaking out and echoing the benevolence of God. This voice is not silent, and it cannot be hushed in view of the prospective miseries presented in the doctrine in question. Go where that sentiment is preached; and you shall hear its pleadings. The minister takes his stand upon the mount that "burneth with fire and smoke," and as he describes in living words the torments of the pit of despair, an involuntary shudder will pass through the whole congregation. Some will sigh, and others weep, some will shriek outright in the agony of their spirits, and others sit in sullen gloom cursing God in their hearts, and a vast multitude will be convulsed, and rendered miserable.

What meaneth all this? I will tell you. It is the uprising of humanity, the heaving of nature, whose laws have been outraged and violated, and whose voice cannot be hushed by the whirlwind of fanaticism, and the noise of angry superstition. In one case, she sighs and weeps like a

grieved infant; in another she utters her protest in the shudder of horror; in another, she rouses herself like a lion from her lair, when robbed of her whelps, and is ready to tear and rend the cause of the offence; and in all, the testimony is clear that nature, ever true to herself, is outraged by the unnatural dogma. When we read of the cruelty of a Nero and Caligula, nature rises up and condemns the procedure, and we shudder. And so when we hear of endless tortures, and for one moment realize what it means, our souls revolt at the idea, and our very natures stamp it with dishonor and falsehood.

It is, also, worthy of remark that those feelings which thus revolt against the doctrine, are not those which are called corruptions of human nature, but they are the kindest, best and holiest feelings, such as God commands us to exercise, and to whose guidance, we are required to submit ourselves at all times. Hence then, I say, that the doctrine of endless misery is opposed to the most clear and emphatic teachings of nature, and of course is untrue, for the God who gave nature all her laws never gave a revelation to contradict those laws.

I remark, once more, that this doctrine is opposed to the lessons of experience, as far as experience goes. It is an old and trite maxim that experience is the best school master. The lessons of this great teacher are sometimes dearly bought, but they are nevertheless valuable. Now I say, that in the experience of six thousand years the world has seen no one fact to justify the principle of endless woe. If we begin with ourselves we shall find abundant evidence that God has been our friend, in time past, and reason for believing that he will be in all time to come. And suppose we ask others what is the result of their experience in this matter; whether they have not found, on the whole, that there is something in this world to live for? The answer would be, O yes.—Each individual will say, God has blessed me far beyond what I could claim or even expect. Well, what has God ever done to you, from which you can reasonably infer that he intends to torment you in the future world? Nothing; absolutely nothing. But on the contrary, he has smiled upon you in all your ways, and poured down his blessings continually upon your unworthy head; from all which the inference is plain, that he is your friend, and will do you good and not evil. Well, did you ever see any one that God had not blessed? Nay, for he maketh the sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain upon the just and the unjust.—Over all the earth he has diffused abroad his blessings, and man every where feeds upon his bounty and is happy. Why else is it that all men love to live, and cling with such tenacity to life, if that life be not a blessing? The truth is, in all the grades and conditions of human life, there is a broad and deep stream of happiness flowing to one and all. That stream flows through the depths of nature's wilds, and lights up the smile of joy upon the face of the red man, as he pursues his game with quiver and bow, or rests in his humble wigwam. It reaches the sable African on the burning sands, and his swarthy brow is radiant with joy as he dances to the music of a reed under the spreading palm.

It reaches the pale children of the north and its influence sits upon the countenance of the Laplander, as he wraps himself in his furs, and drives with arrowy speed over frosts and snows, with his deer and sledge. These all are well pleased to live, and do testify every day that experience has lodged in their hearts the great truth that life is a blessed boon from which they cannot part without a pang. True, there are trials and afflictions through which all must pass: there are pages in the book of human experience wet with tears. But these are the exceptions to the general rule, and we mark and remember them the extraordinary events of life, while we are apt to forget our joys, for the same reason that we forget a thousand pleasant days, and register in the book of remembrance a single storm. The one is common, the other uncommon; the one the rule, the other only the exception.—More brightly does the page of our joy shine, from the fact that it is occasionally contrasted with a shade of sorrow.

But the subject ends not here. We may go back to the beginning of the world when the new creation was laid out in its freshness and beauty, and God pronounced it all very good; and you may trace the history of man from that to the present moment, and you can lay your hand upon no fact, that will justify the anticipation of endless wrath from God. Six thousand years has the earth rolled upon its axis, and during all that time generation has been treading close upon the heel of generation, and the earth has been peopled more than twice ten thousand times; and of each and every one of this vast multitude, it may be said in truth, that God has blessed him, and proved that he was his friend. Here then you have your own experience, the experience of your fellow creatures, beginning at the present moment and running back through six thousand years, and it all rises up before you and condemns as opposed to all its teaching, the doctrine that the same God who has stood by us and so faithfully blessed us in time past, will in the future reverse the whole order of his government, and curse with endless wrath and cruelty.

What can we reason but from what we know? I confess I know of no better, or safer way of judging the future than by the past. And judging by that rule, I would most gladly be informed, what there has been in God's dealings with man for six thousand years, to justify those fears of his endless ire, with which his professed messengers so much torment the world?

For me, I say, before I can believe the sentiment, I must disregard all laws of cause and effect, forget that there is such a thing as proportion between crime and punishment, and confound all distinctions between reason and superstitious fear. I must close my eyes against all the beauties of creation, and see in the sun and moon and stars above, and in the beautiful earth below, no testimony of a Maker's goodness, but the footsteps of infinite and unforgiving hatred. Nay, more; I must shut out from my vision the whole history of the past; I must forget that I have ever received a blessing from God, and cease to feel that one obligation of gratitude binds me to him as a benefactor. Then and not till then, shall I be prepared to believe that the God of all the earth will suffer myriads