

rejoice. But he is not allowed to rest there. They begin to tell him all about God. Just as he has made up his mind to think of God as the Father of mankind, invisible, yet greatly felt by all His children, as sowing the earth with pleasures, as He has sown the heavens with stars as making provision for the happiness of every disposition and every human taste; as in providence caring for all, and in love saving all; I say just as he has made up his mind to think of God that way, he is startled by a peal of theologic thunder, and blinded by a flash of theologic lightning. He is taught, not by word, never by word, but by implication, which any honest man will find in what they say; he is taught by implication that God is finite, not infinite, is not perfect, but imperfect, imperfect in love, in power, in wisdom and in justice. He is represented as being at times full of mercy, and at other times hot with a vengeful anger. At one place he is taught that God is omnipotent, but is always thwarted by the devil, his purposes ever being broken off: the children of his mind and heart stolen from him never to be restored again, for the roaring lion has divided the world with the Maker of it. Light is eternal, and so is darkness—misery is as immortal as joy—sin as holiness—hell as heaven.

At another place he hears most of this ridiculed as worse than folly. They use such words as Liberality and Breadth and Utility. They talk of love at the root of all things, and love as the arch of all things, but he finds that this love is but weakness, for mercy to be perfect must have an attribute of justice. And it occurs to him to ask, "Why, if Love is God and God is Love—if the universe is ruled upon the principle of tenderness—why is there so much oppression—why so much weeping and woe in the earth—why so much sin and consequent sorrow?" He asks that—that question which at some time or other will break from the lips of every serious man. He asks the why and the wherefore of so much evil—and the moment he does that he has put his finger upon the awful, gaping, bleeding wound of the universe. He goes from school to school of Theology; hears heavy professors talk in a heavy way, as if they had studied the art of dullness; little parties here and there mumbling out their Shibboleth after the pattern of the Fathers. Great parties here and there with minds discordant and hearts opposed. Contradiction everywhere—assertion and contradiction. Each quite sure of himself—his reason and his judgment. But those many theologic palaces made mostly of straw, can give the young enquirer no home, or even resting place. It is an awful time for him. He is beginning to lose himself in this maze. He is in a dense, dark forest, a score of ways seem leading out, but wherever he turns the road is lost again in the thick undergrowth. He can but flounder on, sick at heart because he has had to give up much, and the mind which was once so calm is now a chaos.

But hold!—what is the sound that comes breaking the silence of the forest, for a sound it is now, swelling—sonorous. He goes toward it, eager, hopeful. Perhaps he will find some teachers here who will solve the problems that trouble in his mind. Ah, he is fortunate, for he has happened upon the sacred cloister of the modern sages where all wisdom is taught. They greet him heartily—congratulate him on having broken with theology and applaud him for his manifest desire to seek and find the truth. Enquiry, they say, is good if in the right direction. And this is the right direction. Science and philosophy will tell the secret of life and the universe. Theology is a science falsely so-called: the facts of theology are at variance with the facts of science. The Hebrew story of creation is a beautiful myth—nothing more. See here, this bit of stone, this bone of an old world mammal—tell another story from that of Moses. And the young enquirer is glad. He will find help now, for he is in the place where they teach with authority. He puts his great first question—"See here, my masters, I am troubled. I used to think of God as a familiar friend: to my childish imagination he was near and always smiling. But I have eaten of the fruit of knowledge and all is changed. The old belief is gone, and yet, I would believe in God—in a King of kings and Lord of lords. I have had moments when the vision took a sweep of meditation, and a great mystic presence seemed to wrap me close around—or, I seemed to grasp as upon some granite pillar and climb until my head broke into a bright, silent, spiritual world, and turning this way and that, I saw, or thought I saw, a God. Again and ever again, as it seems to me, there falls upon my ear a voice. I listen, but cannot tell the words. Will you interpret for me my thought and my vision, for I would know the truth, whether I and the world have a God or no. I would know myself, my life and destiny." And they give him lofty answers with lofty air of wisdom. The first to take the teacher's chair is the immortal British Sphinx. He is a well-bred man, no coarse and slovenly scholar, but a man of culture, of refined sentiments—a man who by natural right has inherited all the wisdom of the past, and borrowed a little from the future. So he is sage and prophet all in one. I mean—who else could I mean—Mr. Matthew Arnold. He opens his mouth and says, "Hear instruction, my son, and listen to the voice of the wise man. I will teach you in the way of 'sweet reasonableness.' I will lead you through flowery fields of knowledge until you shall feel restful in possession of the sweetness and the light. I will show you how to look in literature for true and beautiful dogma. But put away your foolish notion as to God—you have learnt it from the Bible—it is coarse, it is not poetic, it is not philosophic—it is simply—anthropomorphism." "What is that—I beg your pardon, I scarcely caught the word." "I said it is simply anthropomorphism—that is to say, in general, as God is said to have formed man in his image—the image of God—man has returned the compliment, inwardly or outwardly, and has made God in the image of man. So you have constructed a non-natural man by dropping out all that in man seems a source of weakness and inserting the contrary. That is your God. Put the notion away. I will tell you what God is—it is the Eternal Power, not ourselves that makes for righteousness." And the young man who has caught something of the teacher's sweetness and is dazzled by the teacher's light, repeats the mighty phrase, "An Eternal Power, not ourselves that makes for righteousness,"—and meekly to his own soul says, "I wonder what it is?" And the great man says, "You do not understand, dullard that you are, then let me put it in a plainer form, 'God is but the unconscious deification by man of natural law.'" Ah, here is puzzledom commenced. God a non-natural man. God the unconscious deification of natural law. But others come to make it easy—and he puts again his question, "Masters of knowledge, tell me have I a God—what is he? who is he?" "Oh yes," makes answer one well known, "You have a God, for there is somewhere in the universe a maximum finite brain—a finite intelligence higher than all others. Oh no, do not talk of an

Infinite Mind and Will, there is no such thing, there can be no such thing. God is simply the biggest Biologist—the most prodigious Protoplastologist." Confusion worse confounded. What can it be, what will the young man do? He wants bread, and they feed him with wind. He asks for simple answers which a plain man might understand, and they mock his desire with show of wisdom and high sounding words. And what is worse, he finds infinite confusion and endless contradiction in their schools. Talk of the strife of theology and churches—it is a heaven of sweet harmony compared with the clash and jangle and discordant noise in the camps of philosophy and science. What and who is God? is his eager question—is He here—is He father and brother to me—all wise, all powerful, all loving—does goodness go forth from Him to bless and beautify the all of things? Oh no, says Matthew Arnold, speaking for philosophy—"God is only the deification of natural law by ancient Hebrews, only the Eternal Power, not ourselves that makes for righteousness." "Oh, no," says Huxley, speaking for science, "Don't speak of a conscious being, God is simply the greatest scientist of life, which we call Biology. He is simply the great Originator, which we call protoplasm." "It is nonsense to talk of it at all," says S. Mill, "There is no God of any kind, don't use the word except for public purposes to compel decency and order." "Oh yes," says Tyndall, the greatest charlatan of the age, who has just brains enough to appropriate to himself the work of other men. "Oh yes, there is some being you must call God, for in my healthy moments of contemplation, when I see the buds at Spring time bursting into leaf or flower, I feel that there is a mind somewhere greater than my mind, a vast, informing and energizing power working at the roots of all things." So atheism has more theories than theology. Science speaks with the confused tongues of Babel. They all bear eager testimony for negation, but as when Christ stood before his accusers, "neither so doth their witness agree together." "And what about man," asks our young enquirer, now made desperate by bewilderment, "what about man, his origin, his life of intellect and emotion, and his future destiny?" "Oh," says Mr. Herbert Spencer, "it is simple enough; man has evolved himself out of the primary inert unconscious pulp. He is the first—the protoplastological evolution of all consciousness." "Nothing of the kind," says Prof. Tyndall, "Man has been developed by the operation of an insoluble mystery." "You are not correct," speaks out our Darwin, "I have traced man back step by step, process by process, and I find that man has been evolved from a monkey. The multitude of ages have been silently but surely working hard to flatten his face a bit and take his tail away." "Bah," says Carlyle, the great worshipper of force, though it lie in the boots of Peter the Great, "I am weary of that, what a poor, miserable, stinking thing it is, Darwin's philosophy of dirt." "See here, I will show you all about it," says Auguste Comte, the science and philosophy of human life, "Read these my books, they are only 94, and you will find that man has three stages; first, the theologic, in which you probably are—a time of childhood, when he must have a God and form of worship; then, the metaphysic stage, to which these gentlemen, the men of science and philosophy have reached; and then, the third stage, which is the positive stage, and which I have reached, in which knowledge is perfect and God is needless. Reach after that and in wisdom find peace." And so they jangle and jar, and use great words to blind the unsuspecting—and build up pretentious looking phrases which, when examined, have of one God, who in Kingdom rules all—and in Providence cares for all—and belts the earth around and touches all with power and will to bless—he has two heartless, pulseless and passionless brother, and "must be" his grim and cruel truth? Discord everywhere. Do you wonder that he begins to doubt it all? man's life—when the soul begins to find that many of the props it has blindly rested on are not only old, but rotten, and all of them to be suspected: when the soul begins to feel that horrible insecurity which springs from the fact that the hand has loosed its hold upon things once dear, and now the hand is empty, and so is the aching heart. It is an awful hour; let him who has passed span: when the sad mysterious Here seems to point to no Hereafter—when the grave appears the end of all—God dead and all men orphans—human life but as a floating bubble on the wave, to clash against some rock and break and pass quickly out of sight; when the sky above is but a dead expanse, black with the void from which hope, and even God himself have disappeared. From the edge of rest in unquestioning assent to some creed that is called infallible. With New-depts, and then in fear and tenderness recoil back and back, to rest in the arms of a tyrant Romanism. They will give up the intellect nor venture further in the way of search. But others like this young prodigal will take the plunge. It looks like liberty beyond. No shadowed gloomy land at all, but smiling fields, and waving forests, and running rivers and singing birds, and feasting men and women. No bewildering theology, no puzzling theories of scientific truth, but liberty and joy, and joy and liberty. So they go crashing over the barrier and into the land of the alien. That is the next stage, among the harlots and riotous

livers. It is not difficult to know what is meant by that. Some of you can recall passages in your past life that will answer to it. The casting off of all restraint, the complete abandonment of mind to all that can intoxicate and bewitch, the God, whose love shall grieve or anger wax hot, no heaven to seek, no hell to shun, no cords of moral law to bind to duty; no outcry of the conscience, no violence done to reason, but liberty, full and perfect liberty. Then if ever it is that the passions are let loose, for why should they be restrained. Then if ever that honour is made less than gain, and pleasure is the only duty. Then, if ever the profligate in mind becomes profligate in life, the inward evil bursts out in sinful deed: the polluted fountain gives forth a dark and bitter and deadly stream. Oh a grand time has come to the wanderer, a time of freedom and of joy: how he laughs at the old scarecrows and bugbears that used to make him tremble! He wonders that his brother can be such a fool and stay in such a narrow home. What a farce all the forms of worship are. What hypocrites the