

that natural law was the only thing of which we could be cognizant, and that there was no proof of the existence of a Moral Ruler. That on the second head betrays the sentiment of a solitary man who thought of the effect of actions on society at large, not of the effect on wife and child. Assuming that the philosophy of Hume, which is identical with that of the Agnostics, is true, and that we have no reason for believing that "The Everlasting has fixed his canon against self-slaughter," it seems difficult to devise an argument which shall be morally conclusive against suicide. To talk of "self-murder" is absurd, as it would be to talk of self-theft or self-forgery. Positivists try to frame a moral argument by maintaining that society has a right to react upon the individual, and that the individual wrongs humanity by withdrawing himself from this reaction. But when a man has fallen into his eternal sleep, what need has he to care for the general rights of society, or for the jargon of sociologists? The question seems to be reduced to one of mere expediency; and without running into the bilious extravagances of Schopenhauer, we are constrained to admit, that, in a world so full of failure, disease, want, cruelty, misery, shame, there can hardly fail to be many who would have to answer in the negative the question whether this life is worth living, and to whom, if the sleep which brings an hour's forgetfulness is a blessing, the long sleep would be a greater blessing still. Over the coarser kind of misery the love of life seems generally to prevail, but it does not prevail over the misery of Hamlet. On the other hand, if we have reason, even the slightest reason, for believing in a God and a Hereafter, it is the clear dictate of wisdom, apart from any superstition, to run with resignation the full career of duty in the hope that if we do, it will be well for us in the sum of things. What is success, what is failure; what is mere suffering, what is probation; who can say till the veil is raised? The question is one of those which show that mere Agnosticism is practically impossible as a permanent frame of mind, and that even for the purpose of disposing wisely of the present life, we