

Association of Central and Western New York" as a worthy sister of the Canadian Freethought Association. We will take an early opportunity to publish its platform, which we fully endorse.

## "FREE WILL," AND "FREE MORAL AGENCY," NOT TRUE.

BY ALLEN PRINGLE, SELBY, ONT.

It is true that these doctrines are time-honored, that they are venerable with age. For centuries they have been elaborated in hundreds of volumes, and preached from thousands of pulpits, and they are generally believed to-day. Neither age, however, nor general acceptance prove their truthfulness.

It is proposed here to show that the doctrines of Free Will and Free Moral Agency, as defined by theology, are contrary to obvious and well established facts, and in opposition to a true mental philosophy. They are in conflict with the developments of modern science. It will first be necessary to glance at the two philosophies in which these doctrines of Will and Moral Agency are involved.

The two rival schools of metaphysics, the Intuitionist, at whose head, as an exponent, stands, perhaps, Sir William Hamilton, and the Experimental well represented by Bain and J. S. Mill, seem both to give more or less standing to these doctrines, either tacitly or directly. Though it is not purposed here to examine the merits or demerits of metaphysical systems, it may be noticed that in the Intuitionist philosophy, as elaborated by Hamilton, the feelings and moral facts of human nature are regarded as *innate*, and as being ultimate elements of the mind. Deep-seated doctrines or beliefs are regarded as instinctive, intuitive *truths*; while Mill's school of Experience and Association regards them as being the results of circumstances, and capable of being originated and developed. Now it will doubtless transpire that there is much truth and not a little error in both these systems. That there are innate *tendencies*, is unfrequently true, but it is equally certain that there can be no innate ideas or doctrines as such, for these are all acquired. And, although feelings or propensities may become in a sense intuitive by being inherited and becoming fixed in the organization by antecedent experiences, yet they are not necessarily primarily innate, and are hence without that divine impress or sanction ascribed to them by the intuitionist philosophy manipulated by acute theologians. On the other hand there are certain propensities and tendencies which cannot be produced or originated in the individual by any circumstances, though when having a nascent existence, they may, by favouring circumstances, be developed and strengthened, for it is a patent fact that two persons reared as nearly as may be under the same circumstances and training, will often turn out possessed of widely different capacities, dispositions and character.

According to Hamilton's philosophy, a doctrine or belief which generally obtains—being innate—would have the authority of God or nature behind it, and hence would be true and unquestionable. For example, if we find a belief in a personal God, or immortality, well grounded in human nature and extensively accepted, we must not question it, as it is forsooth *innate*, and hence divinely stamped. On the contrary, the system of Locke, Mill and others based upon experience and association, undertakes to account for the existence of given tendencies, beliefs and feelings in the human mind, and explain their origin, repudiating the notion of their being essentially or primarily innate. But as neither of these systems, fundamentally considered, warrants the assumption of a Free Will or Free Moral Agency in man, as the theologians define it, my present concern is not with the relative merits of the two systems. If according to the Intuitionist hypothesis, *ideas* were *innate*, then obviously we would have no violation or will in the matter of their existence or non-existence in us, and hence would not be responsible therefor, nor for the inevitable results following from them. Likewise if *propensities* and *tendencies* are absolutely innate and constitutional their is, of course, neither violation or responsibility as to their existence in us, or for the consequences which inevitably proceed from them, for, as I shall show further on, Will is simply

desire, and is identical with Mind, and not a separate entity or even condition. Then, on the other hand, according to the Experimental philosophy, if ideas are not innate, but acquired, and if given propensities and tendencies (in embryo it may be) are evolved and developed into ruling desires and motives by surroundings which are *not* under our control, then neither have we in this case freedom in the matter, nor responsibility for their legitimate consequences and fruits.

On the subject of the Human Will, there has been a vast deal of both learned and unlearned nonsense written, not only by theologians but by some philosophers as well. The old systems of metaphysics are full of incongruous definitions and vague dissertations on the "Human Understanding and Will." This stricture would also seem to include not a few late writers; as illustrations of this we will glance at some of the utterances of Schopenhauer and Dr. Carpenter, on the recondite problem, the Human Will. In Schopenhauer's great work is a chapter on the "Preamble of the Will," which is filled with opaque vagueness. We are lucidly told that the Will is metaphysical, the Intelligence is physical; the Intelligence is a semblance, the Will the thing in itself, and in a still more metaphysical sense; Will is the substance of the man, Intelligence, the accident; Will is the matter, Intelligence, the form; Will is the heat, Intelligence, the light." This "confusion worse confounded," results from starting with an erroneous premise, that the Will is something distinct from the Mind. Dr. Carpenter starts with the same false premises and comes to conclusions even more absurd. The *Popular Science Monthly*, some time since republished a lecture delivered in England by Dr. Carpenter, on "Epidemic Delusions," in which the Will is assumed to be something distinct from the Mind and independent of it. Dr. Carpenter compares the Will to the rider, while the Mind is the horse, and the Mind, sometimes, like the horse, runs away from its rider, the Will. In consequence of reasoning from erroneous premises, Dr. C. leaves himself open to much criticism in this lecture. He speaks of "a solution presenting itself while our minds are inactive," sometimes, when we have perhaps previously "put the problem aside in a sort of *dehors*." Now, when we consider that a "solution" is in itself a mental action, the absurdity of supposing that the solution (act of the mind) could take place while the mind is "inactive," becomes sufficiently apparent. It is assumed that the solution is a sort of entity which goes into the mind or brain, while the truth is, it is simply a *process* of mind. Schopenhauer further speaks of the virtues and faults of Intelligence, and those of Will, and asserts that history and experience teach that they are entirely independent of each other. Now I would respectfully submit that history and experience teach exactly the contrary—that instead of being independent of each other, they are utterly dependent and inseparable. The great stumbling-block of all such metaphysicians is the assumption already noticed that Will and Mind are distinct and separate. But is there any proof of this? On the contrary, all the facts and experiences of human consciousness point to an opposite conclusion. What is this thing or condition we call Will, of which we have heard so much, and of whose manifestations we are every day cognizant? It is the mind itself—the language or function of the faculties. In its ultimate analysis it is simply *desire*. If any faculty of the mind is constitutionally strong, the *desire* of that faculty is strong, and such desire constitutes the will-power of that faculty. It follows, therefore, that Will is of different grades and degrees of strength, as minds differ and the faculties of mind differ. It also follows that there are as many kinds of Will and degrees of Will-power as there are mental faculties and degrees of faculty. Will is strong or weak as the mind is strong or weak, or any particular faculty strong or weak. By Mind, is, of course, meant, not simply intellect, but the whole mental constitution, including the sentiments and propensities. In a given subject the intellect may be weak and the passions strong, in which case the intellectual will-power is correspondingly weak and the animal will-power correspondingly strong. In observing the mainsprings of human action, we see this illustrated and exemplified every day. Let us look, for example, at the miser—the man whose chief desire and delight is the acquisition