

## XIX.

Ah, yes—I have had some glimmer, at times, in my gloomiest woe,  
 Of a God behind all—after all—the Great God for aught that I know ;  
 But the God of Love and of Hell together—they cannot be thought.  
 If there be such a God, may the Great God curse him and bring him to naught !

## XX.

Blasphemy ! Whose is the fault ? Is it mine ? For why would you save  
 A madman to vex you with wretched words, who is best in his grave ?  
 Blasphemy ! Ay, why not, being damn'd beyond hope of grace ?  
 Oh, would I were yonder with her, and away from your faith and your face !  
 Blasphemy ! True, I have scared you pale with my scandalous talk,  
 But, to my mind, the blasphemy lies all in the way that you walk.

## XXI.

Hence ! She is gone ! Can I stay ? Can I breathe divorced from the Past ?  
 You needs must have good lynx-eyes if I do not escape you at last.  
 Our orthodox coroner doubtless will find it a *felo-de-se*,  
 And the stake and the cross-road, fool, if you will : does it matter to me ?

---

## AN ATHEIST ON TENNYSON'S "DESPAIR."

BY DR. EDWARD B. AVELING.

ALL Freethinkers owe a debt of gratitude to Alfred Tennyson. His latest poem is an invaluable aid to the cause that they hold dear. To study "Despair" will repay them not only from the literary side. They will derive from its study so much encouragement, so much new strength for their battle. The dramatic monologue named "Despair" is headed thus: "A man and his wife, having lost faith in a God and hope of a life to come, and being utterly miserable in this, resolve to end themselves by drowning. The woman is drowned, but the man is rescued by a member of the sect he had abandoned." At first, as we read these words, we are tempted to imagine that Tennyson wholly misunderstands Freethinkers, after the fashion of the many. And, indeed, there is no doubt that he does not fully understand the beauty and the joy of Atheism. The man and woman have lost faith in a god. They have lost, also, the terrible idea of an individual immortality, with all its inevitable confusions, contradictions, irreconcilabilities, unhappinesses. Thus far they represent Atheism, and may be taken as types. But when our poet represents them as utterly miserable in this