

Literary.

For the Wesleyan.
Mental Science.
NO. XV.

THE EXISTENCE OF THE HUMAN MIND.

CONSCIOUSNESS cannot be a quality superadded to matter. A mere quality, considered as such, can have no possible abstract existence. Whatever is a quality, must be a quality of some substance; and the existence of that substance of which it is a quality, must be admitted. If consciousness be a quality superadded to matter, the question naturally arises, What is consciousness a quality of? It must be either a quality of matter, or it must not. If of matter, it ceases to be superadded. It becomes essential to its nature. If not a quality of matter, its existence is thus ascertained to be distinct from matter. If both matter and consciousness existed from their union, it follows, that this new quality in matter, the previous existence of which must be admitted, does not depend for its existence upon its union with matter. Consciousness may as well exist after its separation from matter, as it did previously to its union with it. And if the superadded quality be *conscious* in itself, there can be no necessity for its union with a substance which is *unconscious* in order to its existence; if not conscious, consciousness can never arise from the mere union of any quality with an unconscious substance.

As consciousness is not a property essential to matter, nor can result from it, as such; as it cannot arise from any particular modification of the particles of matter, of which any body is composed; and as it cannot be a quality superadded to matter; it is, consequently, a property of the human mind, and it can inhere in nothing but an indivisible and immaterial substance. It is evident therefore, that there is an inward living principle implanted in us, distinct from matter, and which is capable of existing independent of it, by which we become conscious of anything.

That faculty of the soul designated *Association*, may be produced in proof of the existence of the human mind. Association may be considered that law of the mind by which two or more sensations or ideas are so connected, that any one of them impressed upon the mind, introduce all the sensations or ideas, connected with it. Thus the mere sight of a handkerchief, gold ring, watch, or any other substance, given to us by an intimate friend, whom we love, though far distant from us, will, sometimes, excite a train of pleasing thoughts, anxious hopes, and tender recollections, relative to the individual and ourselves, when with this individual, which it is altogether impossible to describe. Now matter cannot associate ideas, so as to connect two or more of them together, as to produce either sensation, recollection, or reflection; therefore the soul cannot be matter, nor matter the soul, because one can associate ideas and the other cannot.

The existence of the human mind may be proved from that primary attribute of the soul, designated the *understanding*. By the understanding is not now merely meant the mind's perception, or comprehension of any subject or idea of which it takes cognizance; but the *intellect*, or that faculty of the mind, by which it judges of the truth or falsehood, the connexion or repugnancy of the agreement, the agreement or disagreement, that there actually is between certain positions or ideas. By the understanding the soul not only acquires knowledge; but also is enabled to judge of the character of that knowledge. Knowledge, then, in its acquisition or character, is either an operation of the mind, or the result of that operation. In the first sense, it is the clear perception of truth; that is, "I know," or clearly perceive, "that the whole is equal to all its parts taken together." The second sense is the treasure of associated ideas stored up in the mind in consequence of clear perception. By the first we attain knowledge; by the second we acquire the materials for thought and reflection. Here the understanding is presented to us in obtaining and treasuring up information, and judging of its character. It is the eye of the mind perceiving things distinctly; or that intellectual faculty or power of the

mind, by which we arrive at a proper idea or judgment of things. It is then, an undeniable fact that man is endued with understanding, which, as the great Wesley states, "if not the essence, seems to be the most essential property of spirit."

The understanding of man is, in itself, sufficient to convince us of the essential difference between him and the inferior animals. It must be admitted that they are endued with a degree of understanding; but the specific difference between man and brutes is immensely vast. Brutes have no consciousness of identity; no guide to action but their natural instinct, given to them in the place of rationality; nor have they a capacity to know and worship God, as is the case with man. We have no ground to believe that they are, in any degree, capable of knowing, loving, or obeying God. Hence we discover a great and impassable gulf between man and brutes. But more of this hereafter.

The intellectual powers of men are various. This diversity is manifested in both barbarous and civilized nations, literary and polished circles, and among the uneducated population of every country under heaven. The mental capabilities of some are exceedingly dull and limited; of others quick and widely extended; and there is, between these extremes, a regular gradation from the lowest to the highest order. Some possess, such as Bacon, Newton and Locke, universal genius. They have a quick penetration, and a mighty grasp of intellect; and they can understand, with perfect ease, everything which comes within the sphere of human comprehension. This astonishing variety may partly arise from the natural strength or weakness of the human mind; God having created different ranks and orders of spirits in both the visible and invisible world; or it may arise from some physical imperfection of those organs of the body through which the mind performs its various operations.

Although there are, undoubtedly, a great diversity of mental powers among men, yet we are disposed to believe that this difference is not naturally so vast as is generally supposed. Education furnishes man with many arts of manifesting his intellectual capabilities. Polite literature supplies him with materials for eloquence; mathematics enables him to arrange his ideas; and thus to appear before the world, superior in abilities to the man who never tried to arrange his ideas upon any subject. And, doubtless, there have been many minds, equal to a Locke or a Newton, who for the want of an education have never been developed.

"Nature, just to all her children dear,
Gives them at first with almost equal care,
Collision strikes the blaze which rests supine,
'Tis care which makes the human thought divine."

GEORGE JOHNSON.

Point de Bute, Oct. 20, 1851.

Correspondence.

For the Wesleyan.

MR. EDITOR,—

With pleasure, I prefix an adjective to your noun of dignity, calling you dear Doctor, at the same time intending, thereby, to congratulate you on your recent promotion to this literary honour. Having recently returned from a visit to the northern section of my District, where I have attended a series of Missionary Meetings, presuming, too, that I may avail myself of a privilege, your usual kindness will readily concede, I forward for the purpose of insertion in your increasingly popular journal, some few observations relating to my tour.

On the first day of the past month my mission was commenced under auspices, to say the best of them, not very bright. There is nothing very taking, in having to sit up till midnight, nodding and indistinctly pondering, until the moment comes when a journey has to be commenced, either by Stage or Steamer. This especially, if by the latter, one has to wend one's way through pitchy darkness, and sinuous passages, to wharves encumbering the pathway, by sundry loose substances on every hand, threatening the infliction of bruises on one's person, despite of all precaution and care to ensure protection against all such unpleasant occurrences. And then—to consummate an en-

try, by an increasingly hazardous descent to the deck of a dingy old steamer, where, on the arrival, will be certainly found comforts and conveniences, to say the best of them, but "few and far between." Such was my position on the night alluded to,—destined to be big with events, which had not been classified with my anticipations.

The object which first attracted my attention on my descent to the cabin, was a man with his head lying on the table, as I supposed wrapped up in refreshing slumbers after the toils of the day; but soon, to my annoyance and disgust, I found that he was steeped in the debasing dregs of drunkenness.—Of this I could not but be convinced, when I perceived the first movement of his body was a downward tendency to the floor, where he fell in *senseless prostration*, there lying, as an *apparently lifeless lump, of really degraded humanity*. I called on the persons belonging to the concern to see to this nuisance, and could but think, that unless brighter events lay before me, I should be the subject of a cheerless destiny.

I seated myself somewhat at a distance from the loathsome object to which I have alluded. The scenery with which I was surrounded, though literally "*cribbed, cabin-ed and confined*," presented a vast variety. There were things visible and invisible, tangible, and intangible. Here a hat, there a trunk; yonder a top-coat, and by it a carpet bag; the variety still extending to things too numerous to mention, while nasal sounds, from a mere murmur to what was really uproarious, unpromptingly breathed and boomed forth from behind the cabin curtains, successfully contesting the rights of slumbering nature to carry on the process of respiration, in accordance with her more decorous, and generally established law. Added to all which, was the dull monotonous slashing of the tide against the wharf-head—the whewing and whizzing of the furnace operations, the now and then mutterings of the half asleep, and half awake crew—and the teasing, anxious, "*I wonder when they intend actually to start*."

It was now past the noon of night. Hours had to pass away before the peep of stirring daylight would come to enliven the scene.—How in the meantime should I dispose of myself? This was for the moment the critical question. Should I sit, and test the powers of endurance amid strange sights, and strange sounds, or take the alternative of *turning in, where, from whence*. I knew not *who* had last turned out. So to impose on patience under such circumstances could not be conceded. To take the only other step, was hardly entitled to preference. Not able to accomplish the both, a virtue had to be made of necessity, and therefore I secreted myself in a place for which courtesy claims the appellation of a berth. Possibly, to take the most favourable view, thereby adding, to the list of the harmonious, who were already engaged in giving life to the nocturnal scene.

I slept more soundly than circumstances would seem to warrant. The proof of this lies in the fact, that I was some hours after awakened to consciousness by noise, confusion, and the certainty that the old *Herald* steamer was on a rock. For, as though tired of the sea, she has lately evinced an extraordinary liking for the land, and *has* actually, while I write this, taken up her location, again on some portion of *terra firma* between this and the Bend of the Petitedodiac. As though endowed with the power of instinct, she seems desirous of telling the public that the days of her maritime life, are well nigh ended, and that her infirm hulk should no longer be exposed to the expansive power of steam from within, and the lash of the wave and the fury of the storm from without. The rock on which our vessel rested was a prominent one on the Quacco reef, but a small distance from the lighthouse. Aroused, as above stated, from my slumbers by the mingling sounds of human voices, among which the loudest, and oft-repeated was—"Oh Mick, oh Mick, what shall we do, come here Mick"—the best of my way was made to the more immediate scene of action. What the so frequently invoked "*Mick had done, or was to do*, I had yet to learn. That he had been the cause of our danger, or was to be the instrument of our deliverance, was an inference naturally to be drawn. Leaving inferences however to themselves, the unmistakable fact was, we

were hard and fast upon the rock! Providentially indeed, for us was it, that the sea presented an unruffled surface, save the all but imperceptible motion, caused by the just then returning tide. We had rested on the reef about the time of high water. Had the wind been blowing, its action on the rapid flow of the retiring flood would have rendered our situation, peculiarly perilous, if not hopeless. There was however no immediate appearance of danger. Our only ground of fear was, the probability that the returning rapid flow would bring down the steamer on some shelving, or uneven part of the reef, in which case, the consequence would be her falling over on her side. This possible, not to say probable result, had not become the subject of consideration on the part of "Mick" and his ardent suppliant. Supposing therefore that there was no danger to be apprehended, they freely indulged themselves in the use of low unmanly slang, to the manifest disgust of all who heard them. The small birds of the forest sing in the winter for sorrow. In a dark night little boys whistle to frighten off fear, and soon was it found that these worthies cracked their low jokes for no other purpose than that of a covering for the cowardice they had so manifestly betrayed. Their forced mirth was of short duration. The retreating waters soon exposed the higher rocks to view. We were now able to form some opinion as to our state. The result however was still highly problematical. Under the bow the water was deep. About one-fourth of the entire length of our vessel was hanging over this liquid gulph. On the starboard side the tide had well nigh left us. On the larboard there was a considerable depth of water. This too was the case over the stern, as far as the eye could take the survey.—These circumstances rendered the safety of our situation increasingly dubious. It was more and more uncertain how the old *Herald* in settling down would form her escutcheon. Every now and then there was an ominous crack. The butts began to open inches apart. The casings around the engine room began to split asunder. Anxiety was deposited in the Captain's countenance. The freight was removed forward, and the cabin stripped of its furniture. The mate kindly informed me where in all probability I could take up the safest position. Matters now in fact, wore the aspect of reality. Amid the bustle and confusion I mentally committed myself and the whole to God; and submissively awaited the issue. There was not, however, as far as I could judge, serious ground of apprehension that there would be the loss of life, admitting all the above-named ominous appearances. Still, unless we could soon effect a landing, I was persuaded, as things were going on, the steamer must inevitably break asunder, and then there would be a scramble for self-preservation, at the probable expense at least, of bruises, and the certainty of a temporary submersion.

Among the passengers and crew now huddled together on the forepart of the Steamer's deck, none presented either physically or mentally, more prominence, than "Mick" and his confiding companion. Above every human sound, arose the beseeching note of "Oh! oh! Mick, come here Mick!" while every surge, and crack, and groan of the veteran old *Herald*, gave louder tone to the cowardice-betraying accent. Turning to this pale face specimen of trembling human nature, I asked, Why do you call on "Mick," he cannot save you. Sir, asked he, is there danger? The disgusting slang in which he had indulged when he thought there was none had banished, as far as he was concerned, well nigh all sympathy from my bosom—"There is," said I, "and in all probability should lives be lost, your's will be the first—your cowardice will seal your fate." Oh! thought I, a man's courage after all, must not be measured by his magnitude. "Mick," and his *aspens* companion were little, if anything, less than six feet each, with their latitude in keeping with their longitude.

Suddenly the old *Herald* ceased to furnish symptoms of speedy dissolution. The Captain and the mate, whose conduct through the whole was marked by due consideration, sympathy, and the most prudent course of action, embraced this opportunity to launch, and bring forward the boat for the purpose of landing the passengers on an adjacent rock, which the tide had just abandoned.