

students of Knox Collogo that conscience was an *intelligent* faculty, *knowing* right from wrong; and then regaled his audience at the Shaftesbury Hall with the decaying doctrine of the absolute *inertia*—utter deadness—of matter. Pope says:—

"See thro' this air, this ocean, and this earth,
All matter quick and bursting into birth."

But, as there is perhaps more poetry than prose about this authority, let us have Tyndall on the subject. In his Belfast Address he says he "discerns in matter the promise and potency of every form and quality of life." He also quotes Bruno approvingly to the effect that matter is not "that zero empty *capacity* which philosophers have pictured her to be, but the universal mother who brings forth all things as the fruit of her own womb," and Lucretius that "nature is seen to do all things spontaneously of herself without the meddling of the gods."

The theologian is exceedingly anxious that matter should still remain that "mere empty capacity" it was formerly supposed to be, so that it would always require "soul" or "spirit" or "God" behind it to mould and move it. But, unfortunately for theology that *vis inertia* has fled from it, and that which was utterly "dead" is surely come to life! The theological notion of matter requires a God behind it, or within it, to move it; but there is absolutely no room for the gods in modern philosophy. After a lugubrious effort to show that life *preceded* organization, with great confidence Mr. Cook exclaims, "If, then, organization did not begin life, how dared any man assert that disorganization ended all? If he proved that organization did not begin life, then he thought the burden of proof with regard to a future existence was thrown on the materialist." Bravo! If Mr. Cook proves what nobody denies, then we are, forsooth, bound to prove a negative! This is, indeed, queer logic—albeit it is strictly theological. No one denies that life exists before the body—that is, unconscious life, mere force. The sperm and ovum, before they are brought together by copulation, are no doubt alive in a certain sense; but will Mr. Cook say there is any *conscious* life, even for months after embryogenic vivification. There is life in the kernel of wheat and in the acorn, and there is life in the "speck of *albumen* floating upon the water," but no *conscious* life. "If organization does not begin life, how dare any man assert that disorganization ends all?" Now, this is what we "dare" assert,—That organization begins *conscious* life and disorganization ends it. We do not say that disorganization ends the *unconscious* force which preceded *conscious* life. We simply say that as conscious, intelligent life begins with the body it ends with the body. Whatever *begins to be* will *cease to be* is a truism which Mr. Cook will scarcely deny. The mind or soul begins to be with the body, therefore it ceases to be with the dissolution of the body. We are conscious of no existence before birth, we have therefore no guarantee of a conscious existence after death. The unconscious life or force which inheres in the sperm and ovum, and in the nutritious elements from which they came, may still persist in another form of force after the death of the body, but that is all. If a future existence of that description is any consolation we have it; but that the personal, individual, conscious intelligence which we call mind or soul, constituting the only *ego*, is indestructible and survives the dissolution of its organs, is unphilosophical and absurd, and we have no faith in it, as there seems no substantial evidence whatever to support it.

There is, however, a conception of a future life entertained—indeed, cherished as a religion—by many noble and cultured minds who cannot believe in a personal immortality; and that is, the immortality of our thoughts and noble acts which will continually persist forever in their influence. And this really appears a much higher and less selfish view than the desire for a personal future life of personal never-ending enjoyments and indulgences.

Selby, December, 1878.

P.S.—To our readers, one and all, I beg to wish all the compliments of the approaching holiday season, and all the possible happiness they can legitimately secure during the whole of *this* life—the only one we are certain of, or know anything about.

Fraternally,

A. P.

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TORONTO, DECEMBER, 1878.

The Princess Alice, our readers are aware, departed this life on the 14th December, and it has been remarked as a curious coincidence, though surely it is a very trifling one, that the 14th is the anniversary of her father's death, in 1861. The event will, we have no doubt, try the fortitude of our revered and beloved Queen; but as, besides being a queen, perhaps we should say, *in spite of being a queen*, she is a woman of good sense, she has not now to take in the idea, as a surprise, that she and her children, like the meanest of her subjects, are subject to the great law of mortality. We entirely sympathise with Her Majesty, and not less with our "own" Princess Louise, who will naturally feel the loss of her sister, and be, perhaps, inclined to wish that she were now by her mother's side to share her grief, and solace her in her hour of bereavement. But when they come, these things must be borne. Death is the great leveler, and over-rides all distinctions. It is in no spirit of levity, but in all seriousness and honesty that we wish to "improve the occasion," and we, therefore, raise the question, *why* such an event has been permitted to occur, if it was within human power to prevent it. We do not wish to be understood as entertaining any doubt that the Grand Duchess had the best medical advice that could be had, and every attention that the most anxious solicitude could procure for her. These things go without saying. But we cannot help asking, why the Church's prayers were not invoked and made use of to avert the impending calamity. When the six hundred victims of the *Princess Alice*—another coincidence—sunk beneath the wave, there was no time for intercession; but, in this case, it was known for eight or ten days, that the Grand Duchess was in danger, and yet no effort was made to save her. Some years ago, it will be recollected, her brother, the Prince of Wales, was supposed to be at death's door, and, then, all the churches in England and in her colonies lifted up their voices, and prayed for his recovery.