

acter shown in a change of life? Is that so very absurd? Have you never seen a drunkard reformed? Have you never seen a man of impure life, who, after running his evil course, had, like the prodigal, "come to himself"—that is, awakened to his shame, and turning from it, come back to the path of purity, and finally regained a true and noble manhood? Probably you would admit this, but say that the change was the result of reflection, and of the man's own strength of will. The doctrine of regeneration only adds to the will of man the power of God. We believe that man is weak, but that God is mighty; and that when man tries to raise himself, an arm is stretched out to lift him up to a height which he could not attain alone. Sometimes one who has led the worst life, after being plunged into such remorse and despair that he feels as if he were enduring the agonies of hell, turns back and takes another course: he becomes "a new creature," whom his friends can hardly recognize as he "aits clothed" and in his right mind." The change is from darkness to light, from death to life; and he who has known but one such case will never say that the language is too strong which describes that man as "born again."

If you think that I pass lightly over these doctrines, not bringing out all the meaning which they bear, I admit it. I am not writing an essay on theology, but would only show, in passing, by your favourite method of illustration, that the principles involved are the same with which you are familiar in every day life.

THE DOCTRINE OF FUTURE RETRIBUTION.

But the doctrine which excites your bitterest animosity is that of future Retribution. The prospect of another life, reaching on into an unknown futurity, you would contemplate with composure, were it not for the dark shadow hanging over it. But to live only to suffer; to live when asking to die; to "long for death, and not be able to find it"—is a prospect which rouses one who would look upon death as an eternal sleep with calmness and peace. The doctrine loses none of its terrors in passing through your hands: for it is one of the means by which you work upon the feelings of your hearers. You pronounce it "the most horrible belief that ever entered the human mind: that the Creator should bring beings into existence to destroy them! This would make him the most

fearful tyrant in the universe—a Moloch devouring his own children"! I shudder when I recall the fierce energy with which you spoke as you said, "Such a God I hate with all the intensity of my being!"

But gently, gently, Sir! We will let this burst of fury pass before we resume the conversation. When you are a little more tranquil, I would modestly suggest that perhaps you are fighting a figment of your imagination. I never heard of any Christian teacher who said that "the Creator brought beings into the world to destroy them"? Is it not better to moderate yourself to exact statements, especially when, with all modifications, the subject is one to awaken a feeling the most solemn and profound?

Now I am not going to enter into a discussion of this doctrine. I will not quote a single text. I only ask you whether it is not a scientific truth that the effect of everything which is of the nature of a cause is eternal? Science has opened our eyes to some very strange facts in nature. The theory of vibrations is carried by the physicists to an alarming extent. They tell us that it is literally and mathematically true that you cannot throw a ball in the air but it shakes the solar system. Thus all things act upon all. What is true in space may be true in time, and the law of physics may hold in the spiritual realm. When the soul of man departs out of the body, being released from the grossness of the flesh, it may enter on a life a thousand times more intense than this: in which it will not need the dull senses as avenues of knowledge, because the spirit itself will be all eye, all ear, all intelligence; while memory, like an electric flash, will in an instant bring the whole of the past in view; and the moral sense will be quickened as never before. Here then we have all the conditions of retribution—a world which, however shadowy it may seem, is yet as real as the homes and habitations and activities of our present state; with memory trailing the deeds of lifetime behind it; and conscience, more inexorable than any judge, giving its solemn and final verdict.

With such conditions assumed, let us take a case which would awaken your just indignation—that of a selfish, hard-hearted and cruel man; who sacrifices the interests of everybody to his own, who grinds the faces of the poor, robbing the widow and orphan of their little all; and who, so far from making restitution, dies with his ill-