

principle that the certainty of punishment has quite as much to do with giving it its deterrent effect as its severity, it may be argued with some plausibility, that a life-imprisonment with hard labour, inflicted with tolerable certainty, would prove more effective than death in a few cases, with acquittal as its alternative. The criminal who perpetrates a secret crime does not expect to be detected. He is confident that his precautions will render proof impossible. As a natural consequence the more absolute and unequivocal the evidence required for conviction, the stronger will be the expectation of immunity.

THE question of capital punishment has, however, another aspect. While in the case which recently excited so much attention in England the popular feeling was largely due to the prevalent impression that the evidence of guilt was not conclusive, there can be no doubt that it was almost equally due to a natural revulsion from the mode of punishment. There is, unquestionably, something in the idea of death by hanging, especially when the convict is a woman, from which the imagination recoils as incongruous with high civilization. This instinctive shrinking is rendered doubly acute by the newspaper reports of the bungling manner in which the act of execution is often performed, and the accidents which sometimes occur to add to its horrors. It is no wonder that the more sensitive and humane believers in the necessity of inflicting the death penalty are casting about for a less revolting if not more humane mode of inflicting it. Whether the electric fluid will supply the agent required the experiment to be tried in New York State will probably determine. That is, however, but a secondary consideration. The prime and fundamental question is that of the effect of the death penalty in deterring from the crime of murder, as compared with that of other possible modes of punishment. Nearly all thoughtful persons are now agreed, we presume, that this is the main, if not the only, point to be considered; that the idea of retribution, or vengeance, or even punishment proper is one with which the state, as such, has nothing to do. So far as we are aware the experience of all countries which have made the trial has gone to show that the death penalty cannot be safely abolished, that no other has the same terror for the cowardly and cruel class to which the cool-blooded murderer almost invariably belongs. If this be so it should settle the question. The duty of society to protect the lives of its members is one that no sentimental considerations can set aside, and from which no people with whom duty is a paramount motive may shrink.

SIR EDWIN ARNOLD, BUDDHISM, AND THE FUTURE LIFE.

SIR EDWIN ARNOLD'S first visit to this continent, and his recent sojourn in Toronto with his old Oxford tutor, have in literary and social circles raised a flutter of excitement about the distinguished author and his work. Aside from the literary interest which centres in the scholar-poet, to whom we are indebted for the remarkable epic poem, "The Light of Asia," and half a dozen other volumes of melodious Oriental verse, the passing through Canada of a gentleman who is at once Knight-Commander of the Indian Empire, Companion of the Star of India, Officer of the White Elephant of Siam, and the wearer of sundry other decorations and honours, including the Imperial Order of the Medjidie, could hardly fail to excite a lively attention. We are a democratic people, but we are far from indifferent to the seductive influences of a title, though as yet we are not used to distinguish between those conferred upon politicians and those conferred upon scholars. It is as a scholar, we hope, that we receive Sir Edwin Arnold, and as a scholar of high and varied attainments, as well as a most agreeable and accomplished gentleman, he deserves to be received. In appearance, Sir Edwin somewhat resembles Charles Dickens, and in manners he recalls to us Lord Dufferin. But his chief claim to notice is the reputation he has made for himself as a philosophic, though eminently joyous and tuneful, poet. To circumstances, as much perhaps as to natural gifts and mental dispositions, is he indebted for his fame as a singer. In early life he seems to have had a taste for the study of languages, and shortly after he graduated with honours at Oxford he was appointed Principal of the Government Sanscrit College at Poona, in the Presidency of Bombay. This gave Mr. Arnold the opportunity he sought, of making himself practically acquainted with the religious and literary thought of the East. In India, he became versed in Oriental languages, and made an intimate study of the philosophy, the ethics, and the religious systems embodied in her Sacred Books. What poetic gifts he showed himself possessed of during his college career were now to receive a new impulse and direction in his contact with the poetry and romance of India. He drank deeply at the fountains of Eastern legend and filled his poetic mind with the beautiful traditions of an ancient

faith. Nor in this did he do violence to the belief in which he was himself nurtured; for, unlike many who in matters of faith have let go the substance for the shadow, he has remained devout and orthodox, and his poetry is permeated with the spiritual beauty and hallowing influence which he has more or less consciously imbibed from his Christian creed.

Occidental as we are on this continent, it is not a little curious to note how Oriental we have seemingly become in our religious cravings and habits of mental thought. Sometimes we think this is an affectation, else history and tradition are wrong in indicating that the hardy seed of the Church-sheltering tree of the New World was Puritanism, and that the fruit of the mellowing years was Evangelical Christianity. We have no wish here to commit ourselves to a disquisition on so ambitious a subject as the comparative history of religions; but it is to be remarked that the proneness of the age to run after non-Christian systems of religious thought, particularly those of the East, is a disturbing phase of the times. We have fallen upon an era of unsettled beliefs, and of more or less daring and arrogant speculation. Discarding a faith, once cherished, the modern critical mind is unhappy until it can discover or manufacture a substitute. Hence the vogue for ancient or eclectic religions, and the tendency to discredit, and even dethrone, Christianity by setting against it the dogma-shorn creeds and colourless ethics of the East.

As we have hinted, however, Sir Edwin Arnold is not chargeable with leading the orthodox world astray in regard to its faith. It is true he is an enthusiast in the matter of Indian song, and at every step we take with him he tempts us to become enamoured of the tender grace and languorous beauty of Oriental poetry. It is true, also, that he throws round his work the glamour of a rare fancy, and decks it with the garlands of a fine imagery and great beauty of phrase. But it is not sensuousness that takes us captive, nor even the deep joyousness of some of his themes. These exercise their entrancing charm upon the reader; but there is much beside that wins. There is the charm of humanness—akin to that which we find in the New Testament scriptures—and that high ethical teaching that comes of acquaintance with sorrow and suffering, and is the result of meditation on the vanity of things. Much of the philosophy idealized in "The Light of Asia" is of the transcendental type, and not a little rises to the region of bathos or falls to the level of the vapid or grotesque. It is well-nigh impossible to make such commonplace thought poetic; and it is needless to say that in other hands than Sir Edwin's the result would be much other than it is. It is here that we find the gospel of Buddha falling lamentably short of the gospel of Christ. In other respects the parallelism also sadly fails. High as is the motive of the poem—to depict the life and character, and set forth the philosophy, of the founder of Buddhism—how sharp is the contrast between Sir Edwin's ideal and what we otherwise know of the teaching of Guatama. We have written Sir Edwin's ideal, for in his case, as in that of Professor Max Müller, we have an idealized version of Buddha's philosophy, and an exalted estimate of even its ethical value. This is the result, not of conscious perversion of facts, but of an enthusiasm which is extravagant and blinding, and of an admiration which is almost without bounds. In an interpretation of the spirit of Buddha's gospel, poetry may claim the license of exaggerated praise. If we concede this, Sir Edwin Arnold may fairly escape criticism; though, taking advantage of the concession, Christianity should not suffer by being put in the scale with a sublimated Buddhism, or with any religion whose later teachers or impassioned interpreters, to deck it out, have borrowed its plumes.

How far this latter remark is warranted we may see from what Sir Edwin has read into the philosophy and religion of Buddha. In "The Light of Asia" we do not of course, charge the author with taking more than the license of a poet and literary artist; but in much of his epic-picture of the life and teachings of Buddha he has unquestionably taken this license. This is shown not so much in his account of the ethics and vaunted spiritual wisdom of Guatama; though even here poetic appreciation has run into extravagance. A system of ethics, to be salutary, ought to be based on a motive higher than the satisfaction to the individual derived from the exercise of virtue. In the case of well-constituted minds, to exercise self-denial and do good deeds are acts which are no doubt self-pleasing. But these acts, to be worth anything, must have the sanction of law and be done from an intelligent sense of duty. What sense of duty can a man feel whose religion, if it escapes ceremonialism, inculcates no loftier ideal than a contemplative human being, who, if he attains the bliss of Nirvana, enjoys it in the repose of unconsciousness? Again, moral excellence is to be commended, but only where it represents a virtue we have put into exercise, not where it is merely set up for admiration. In Buddha's philosophy his followers are exhorted to cultivate "right aims, right views, right thinking," etc., but chiefly that they may realize that sorrow is inherent in human life, and that happiness, if not wisdom, is attained by deliverance from conscious existence. What is this but a gospel of despair? How much is humanity helped by finding out that life is a struggle and a burden, when no source here of comfort or deliverance is revealed, and no prospect is held out of a hereafter?

Nor do we find treasure-houses of wisdom in either Brahminical or Zoroastrian gospels. In none of these ancient religions do we find the resemblance to Christianity worth a moment's consideration. Here and there, it is true, there are beautiful and often touching passages that

seem to recall the words of the Master; but for the most part they are the mere expressions of humanity's weakness and need, without the healing balm of Divine sympathy and succour. In nothing more is there a sharper contrast between these lauded Eastern religions and Christianity than in the doctrine of a future life. Particularly is this the case with the religion of Buddha. What is it to renounce the world and cultivate the ideal virtues of gentleness and calm, if these graces have no future field for their exercise than a state of torpor qualified by annihilation? To do Sir Edwin Arnold justice, it must be said that this is not his reading of Buddha's gospel: both his moral sense and his literary faculty revolt from such an interpretation of Guatama's creed. But will what is known of the doctrinal system of Buddhism bear out Sir Edwin's poetical rendering of it? We venture to doubt it. Is it affirmed that it recognizes a Supreme Being, and teaches that man has a soul and has relations with that Being? Does it inculcate belief in a personal immortality, or has it practically anything to say of a future life? "When the soul enters Nirvana, is it not extinguished like a lamp blown out?"

Sir Edwin Arnold does his best to read a future life, if not immortality, into the creed of Buddha. It is this, together with his apotheosis of the ethics of Buddhism, that gives the special charm to "The Light of Asia." Elsewhere, however, he admits that man is not by any means convinced as yet of his immortality. Does not this seem to hint that Buddhism, at least, has failed to inculcate the doctrine? As if in doubt on the point, Sir Edwin has written a thoughtful essay advocating, upon natural grounds, the reasonable hope of a future life. The little brochure—"Death and Afterwards"—is, we fear, not so well known as its merits deserve. With the reader's permission, we shall utilize the little space we have left in its examination. We do so the more readily as there is not only a peculiar fascination in the subject, but there is an idyllic grace in the way in which it is presented.

"If we were all sure," says Sir Edwin, "what a difference it would make! A simple 'yes,' pronounced by the edict of immensely developed science; one word from the lips of some clearly accredited herald sent on convincing authority, would turn nine-tenths of the sorrows of earth into glorious joys, and abolish quite as large a proportion of the faults and vices of mankind." Can we doubt this? Yet is there not a purpose in leaving man, as a responsible moral agent, in the dark, free to work out his salvation as the Deity evidently intended, through the exercise of faith and trust? Revelation, it has been well said, does not affect to provide mathematical demonstration of immortality. It will give assurance of a future life only upon its own terms. It has been the divine purpose, evidently, that we should know here only such an amount of truth as Omniscience saw was best for us; and, read in the light of revelation, the arguments for a future life afford powerful confirmation of those derived from reason.

Independently of Christian revelation, it is interesting to enquire how belief in a future life originated. Can we say that it is more than an intuition, an instinct? Can we go further and claim it as "one of the primary certainties of the human mind?" "No safe logic proves it," exclaims Sir Edwin Arnold, "and no entirely accepted voice from some farther world proclaims it. There is a restless instinct, an unquenchable hope, a silent discontent with the very best of transitory pleasures, which perpetually disturb our scepticism or shake our resignation; but only a few feel quite certain that they will never cease to exist." Yet on the other hand, our author points out, there are assurances, "worth nothing, perhaps, philosophically, and rendered no whit more valuable if one had studied all the creeds and mastered all the systems of earth, which none of all these can give or take away." The conviction that death does not end all lies deep in the foundation of human nature. Does our reason delude us when we wonder why matter and motion, which the scientists tell us are indestructible, should be preserved, if consciousness and intelligence, when the earthly career is over, are to be blotted out? Besides the universal recoil from the very thought of extinction, there are abundant reasons for deeming it utterly inconsistent with the apparent scheme of things. Why, it is asked, are we endowed with aspirations and longings if it is not intended that we should have the means of satisfying them? Man, admittedly, is endowed with powers far beyond the necessary requirements of this earthly existence; why? if not that the time and field will come for their ample employment. Our innate sense of justice, which calls for compensation in another world for inequalities in the present life, has supplied another and by no means insufficient argument for a future existence. Why is it, in this world, that any of us are content to suffer pain, hardship, ingratitude, neglect, wrong? How is it that we resign ourselves so submissively to disappointment, and rebel not when deprived of the things others enjoy or are possessed of? Is it not in the hope that the inequalities of the moral government in the present sphere will be redressed in the next? What consoles us for partings here if not the assurance of reunions hereafter?

But let us return to our author. "Disjoined from all conventional assertions and religious dogmas," says Sir Edwin, "there are some reflections [about the future life] which may be worth inditing, rather as suggestions to other minds than argument; rather as indications of fresh paths of thought than as presuming to guide along them." These he proceeds to set forth. We can but briefly refer to them. The first is the great mistake of refusing to