

Now does it never occur to you that there is something very cruel in this treatment of the belief of your fellow-creatures, on whose hope of another life hangs all that relieves the darkness of their present existence? To many of them life is a burden to carry, and they need all the helps to carry it that can be found in reason, in philosophy, or in religion. But what support does your hollow creed supply? Its teachers put it forward as the friend of the poor man. In France and Germany it allies itself with Socialism and Communism. It "parades" as the cause of the lower classes, whom it would raise up to the level of the highest. And yet infidelity is the poor man's worst enemy, as it makes his poverty only more galling and bitter, because without hope. Here is a contradiction which strikes me painfully in you. You are a man of warm heart, of the tenderest sympathies. Those who know you best and love you most, tell me that you cannot bear the sight of suffering even in animals; that your natural sensibility is such that you find no pleasure in sports, in hunting or fishing; to shoot a robin would make you feel like a murderer. If you see a poor man in trouble, your first impulse is to help him. You cannot see a child in tears but you want to take up the little fellow in your arms, and make him smile again. And yet, with all your sensibility, you hold the most remorseless and pitiless creed in the world—a creed in which there is not a gleam of mercy or of hope. A mother has lost her only son. She goes to his grave, and throws herself upon it, the very picture of woe. One thought only keeps her from despair: it is that beyond this life there is a world where she may once more clasp her boy in her arms. What will you say to that mother? You are silent, and your silence is like a sentence of death to her hopes. By that grave you cannot speak: for if you were to open your lips, and tell that mother what you really believe, it would be that her son is blotted out of existence, and that she can never look upon his face again. Thus with your iron heel do you trample down and crush the last hope of a broken heart.

When such sorrow comes to you, you feel it as keenly as any man. With your strong domestic attachments, one cannot pass out of your little circle without leaving a great void in your heart, and your grief is as eloquent as it is hopeless. No

sadder words ever fell from human lips than these, spoken over the coffin of one to whom you were tenderly attached: "Life is but a narrow vale, between the cold and barren peaks of two eternities!" This is a sentence of annihilation, which strikes a chill to the stoutest heart. Even you must envy the faith which, as it looks upward, sees those "peaks of two eternities," not "cold and barren," but warm with the glow of the setting sun, which gives promise of a happier to-morrow?

I think I hear you say, "So might it be! Would that I could believe it!" for no one recognizes more the emptiness of life as it is. I do not forget the tone in which you said: "Life is very sad to me; it is very pitiful; there isn't much to it." True indeed! With your belief, or want of belief, there is very little to it; and if this were all, it would be a fair question whether life were worth living. In the name of humanity, let us cling to all that is left us that can bring a ray of hope into its darkness, and thus lighten its otherwise impenetrable gloom.

#### CARICATURE OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINES.

I observe that you not unfrequently entertain yourself and your audiences by caricaturing certain doctrines of the Christian Religion. The "Atonement," as you look upon it, is simply "punishing the wrong man"—letting the guilty escape, and putting the innocent to death. This is vindicating justice by permitting injustice.

But is there not another side to this? Does not the idea of sacrifice run through human life, and ennoble human character? you see a mother denying herself for her children, foregoing every comfort, enduring every hardship, till at last, worn out by her labour and her privation, she folds her hands upon her breast. May it not be said truly that she gives her life for the life of her children? History is full of sacrifice, and it is the best part of history. I will not speak of "the noble army of martyrs," but of heroes who have died for their own country or for liberty—what is it but this element of devotion for the good of others, that gives such glory to their immortal names? How then should it be thought a thing without reason that a deliverer of the race should give his life for the life of the world?

So too you find subject for caricature in the doctrine of "Regeneration." But what is regeneration but a change of char-