

defences of human virtue—not of our knowledge of what is virtuous and vicious—not of all the supports and motives which sustain a man in virtuous conduct. The light that shines from heaven and lights every man, shines on, even when dense clouds and mists of unbelief conceal its source. Let me recall the great words of Butler: "There is a superior principle of reflection or conscience in every man which distinguishes between the internal principles of his heart as well as his external actions, which passes judgment upon himself and them—pronounces determinately some actions to be in themselves just, right, good; others to be in themselves evil, wrong, unjust; which without being consulted, without being advised with, magisterially exerts itself and approves or condemns him, the doer of them, accordingly. . . . It is by this faculty, natural to man, that he is a moral agent, that he is a law to himself; but this faculty, I say, is not to be considered merely as a principle in his heart, which is to have some influence as well as others, but considered as a faculty in kind and in nature supreme over all others, and which bears its own authority of being so."

This, I believe, is a true account of the regal power in the human soul. Explain its origin as you please, its claims to supremacy remain. Its voice is the voice of command. We all desire its approval, and shrink from its censure. It has many allies. Some of the affections natural to man are commonly confederate with it. In a country like this it receives strong support from national law, and from the public opinion of society. The great monuments of literature, ancient and modern, are friendly to it. The maxims of expediency often contribute their aid to sustain its authority over conduct. Before the sentence of God is anticipated, conscience itself condemns or approves the inner life and the external actions; and apart from any anticipation of that sentence, her laws and judgments have great force.

Faith in God leaves all the natural powers and resources of conscience unimpaired and unimpooverished, but adds to them a new element of transcendent energy. The belief that a God of perfect righteousness knows from moment to moment, not only our external actions our consummated purposes, but the movements of our secret thought, desire, and passion; that He is always and irrevocably on the side of conscience: that, though by resistance and recklessness the authority of conscience may be enfeebled and her power to chastise us lessened, no resistance or recklessness can enfeeble His authority or lessen His power to punish; the belief that He regards with living and vigorous sympathy all our endeavours to do right, most of which must remain unknown to those who love us best; and that His love for us increases with our righteousness; the belief that whatever may be the losses and misfortunes in which we may be involved by fidelity to conscience and to Himself they will be infinitely outweighed by the eternal rewards which He will confer for patient continuance in well-doing; the belief that, having Him for our strength our resolve to live righteously cannot be defeated by whatever difficulties and hazards we may be exposed; and that this resolve will, through His infinite love, receive ample space to achieve transcendent triumphs in the endless ages of the life to come, however obscure and narrow may be the sphere of our moral activity in this life; such beliefs render possible a heroism of virtue, to which without their aid ordinary men can hardly be equal. The present sympathy and support, and the present authority of the living God, and all that is included in the promise of Eternal life and in the menace of Eternal Destruction—these are among the defences and guarantees of common morality which Atheism destroys.

"Thou believest there is one God: thou doest well:" all these aids to virtue are thine.

But this is not all: our very conceptions of morality are enlarged and exalted—undergo a vital and surprising change under the power of this belief. Believing in God, all the occupations of life become parts of a service rendered to Him—or rendered to mankind in obedience to His will. We are under his authority—not only on Sunday but all the week through: not only in church but in the shop, the factory, and the counting-house, at school and at home, at work and at rest. Our property is not at our own irresponsible disposal, for all things are His. Our relations with other men are greatly modified. Masters learn that they have a Master in heaven: servants that they are to serve their earthly employers as in the eye of God from whom their true wages are to come. The duties to which we are impelled by public spirit, or which we discharge at the impulse of compassion for human misery, have a new aspect, and wider issues and results. In serving the town or the nation we have to build up a divine kingdom, and to translate into the actual order of human society, some fragment at least, of a divine thought. And in the final discovery of the mind and heart of God to our race we learn that the common charities of life are acts of divine service, for at the final judgment the great Judge will say to those who have fed the hungry, clothed the naked, cared for the sick, visited the prisoner, "Inasmuch as ye have done it to one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto Me."

"Thou believest that there is one God: thou doest well;" but the belief instead of being in any sense a relief from ordinary duties or a set-off against the neglect of them, imposes upon a man by his own acknowledgment new and infinite obligations. The man who believes in God confesses the authority of

"the first and great commandment." His duty to God takes precedence of all other duties—takes precedence of his duties to his family, to his friends, to society, and to the State. For him it is the most appalling moral offence not to love God with all his heart, and mind, and soul, and strength. For him the common moralities of life are enlarged and transfigured; he knows that he is under a moral law which gives a new breadth to all ordinary moral precepts, and requires of him a height of virtue which is beyond the vision of those to whom God is unknown. For him the ordinary obligations of every common duty are re-enforced by the authority of God, and are defended by glorious and terrible sanctions drawn from the invisible and eternal world. Faith in God is the most august, the most beneficent, the most energetic of the forces by which the life of man is formed and controlled.

(To be continued.)

GOSSIP AND SCANDAL.

That is not a bad notion of duty which boys are taught in the Catechism,—that they should keep their tongues from evil speaking, lying, and slander; and although many people kick against the Catechism, and the children make sad havoc of the Queen's English as they draw it out, we all think of it. It is a good resolve, often repeated, seldom earnestly or thoughtfully made, never truly kept. And yet how good it is! Talk about the "evil eye" which the Easterns fear, what is that to the evil tongue? It is our worst enemy, and not one of us can keep it closely shut between our teeth. It will wag, wag, wag. We do so like to hear the sounds that it makes; it rattles away quicker than a clapper in a high wind; but if we could only pull ourselves up sharp with a text, whenever we repeat a slander, we should do good.

Of a truth—let us say it piously—we need not call upon God to curse a false tongue, for it curses itself. It makes many a bitter enemy; it tickles its owner, but it earns him hatred, discomfort, trouble and disgust. When a man is a good talker, he will need something to talk about; in gossiping, the listeners do more than half, or half at least; and no one will listen—'tis not in the nature of humanity—unless his ear and his understanding be tickled. Thence arises the insinuation: When news is not to be had, a good talker will invent it. "If," says Lord Chesterfield, "some solemn prig bores you with a quotation, invent some aphorism in the manner of his favourite author which is plainly against him, and quote it as the author's." So gossipers must invent; they must be piquant, fresh, startling, and new. They cannot dwell in decencies for ever. That Jones should marry Miss Smith merely for love or common convenience is every-day talk; that he should marry her because Mr. Smith, her father, swore that if he did not, &c. &c., is startling. To know the surface truth is very common; but to be behind the scenes, to know the acute why and wherefore, to read by owl's light, to see the man who plays, the puppets who pull the wires—to be amongst those who are wire-pullers, dodgers, the real actors, the masters of the situation—that is the ambition of the gossip. A friend who knows a lady who is a friend of a gentleman who dines with a live Knight or a member of the Government, and can tell the very latest, freshest *on dit*, that is the person to know. He would make the fortune of a newspaper correspondent; and upon the testimony of at least as many hands or tongues as these we receive our gossip. Such news has two tendencies which serve to make it corrupt—the first is that of exaggeration, and the second is that which always "spices" it with ill-nature.

When Dr. Johnson was talking with a learned mathematician at Cambridge, he startled his opponent by saying that "the Devil was the first Whig, for he wished to set up a reform in Heaven." The suggestion and parallel were ingenious, but they are less true than that the Devil was the first scandaliser, as his name shows. If we call scandal a diabolical report, we are right enough in the application of the adjective, for the Greek *diabolos* and Latin *diabolus* are derived from the verb *diabolo*—to calumniate, to slander, to accuse—and the Devil himself stands prominently forward in some of the Apostolic writings as the accuser. Perhaps anything more diabolical than some scandals, made up in the very wantonness of a wish for something to say, can hardly be conceived; for it is to be noted that the reports spread are often about persons indifferent to, and often indeed unknown to, the scandalisers save by name.

It must be allowed—for while treating on this subject we have no right to run into the folly and fault condemned—that the world presents many instances of men, and women too, who always put a good-natured construction on what they hear and repeat, and others who try to do their best to stop the current of a scandal. Moreover, it is well to remember that the gossip is a much more genial and good-natured person than the mere scandaliser; that is, when the characters are found separate, which they seldom are. Gossip has its amiable side; even scandal-loving journalists intend to be pleasant, and wish to divert while they photograph the manners of the day. What the gossipier wishes to do is to please his listeners, for a gossip cannot exist without an audience. The "city correspondent" of the country paper collects, poor fellow! with an infinite deal of work and trouble, the news that he hears at clubs, parties, hotels, or "on the street." It is but fair to say of these writers that they do their work decently, quite as well as can be expected, for society is running after