

SCIENCE AND THEOLOGY:

ANCIENT AND MODERN.

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AND

THE SOVEREIGNTY OF ETHICS.

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I.

EACH generation of mankind thinks highly of its own importance and inclines to believe that it will mark an epoch in human history. All of us who live out our seventy years witness impressive changes. If we add to our personal experience the accounts which we hear from our fathers of the state of things which they remember in their own childhood, the individual recollections of each of us extend back over nearly a century; and every century brings with it alterations of action and sentiment, which are depressing or exhilarating according to the constitution of our minds, but are always on a scale to force upon us a sense of the instability of all opinions and institutions, and of the complicated influences which control the fortunes of our race. The revolutions may be intrinsically less violent than they seem to those who have borne a part in them. Events which at the time of their occurrence appear of world-wide moment, are seen afterward to have been without

real significance. As we look back over history we perceive long periods apparently level and unbroken. Then, as now, perhaps old men drew contrasts between past and present, spoke eloquently of national degeneracy, or warmed into enthusiasm over a better time that had set in. To us, as we survey these periods from a distance, there will appear to have been few changes either for good or evil, and each generation will seem extremely like its predecessors. The English of Shakespeare or Swift were not essentially different from the English of to-day. The accidents of life alter rapidly. The inner nature alters very slowly. We feel acutely the alterations which we have witnessed, because they are close to us; but at least half the impression is due to changes in ourselves rather than in what is round us. We grow old; we look back on the past with affectionate regret, as when we were young we looked to the future with hope and enthusiasm. We do not see the sordid details of vulgar reality; we are unconscious poets and idealize without being aware of it.

Nevertheless, there are times when change is really rapid, so rapid that the character of it cannot be mistaken; times when a Rip van Winkle who went to sleep in his youth would wake in manhood to find himself in a world remade, all habits altered, all the most cherished opinions swept away as in a whirlwind. Some violent convulsion may have done it—a reformation or a French Revolution shaking society like an earthquake—or the same effect may have been produced more quietly by a swift, silent

operation, as if mankind had broken suddenly from the anchorage and were hurried away by some irresistible current from all their bearings and associations.

Allowing for the tendency to exaggerate our self-importance, there is reason to think that we are ourselves living in one of these exceptional epochs; that we have been launched into a current which has already carried us out of sight of most of our old landmarks, and is rushing forward with us with accelerating velocity. For the last fifty years science has conferred upon us new and extraordinary powers of rapid communication. Ideas are interchanged, productions are interchanged, the human inhabitants of the globe can move to and fro with an ease and speed never before known or dreamed of; and we are surrounded with vast political catastrophes, empires rising and falling, races forming new combinations, prejudices breaking down, whole continents opened out for the formation of new and mighty nationalities, a universal levelling of all old distinctions, as if mankind had been resolved into a thousand million units to reorganize in fresh combinations, suited to an altered order of things. Look alone at Great Britain. At the close of the French war Great Britain had but half of its present population and a fifth of its present wealth. Lancashire was still an agricultural county. Our manufacturers were but as the lading of a Thames barge compared to the freight of an ocean steamer. Colonies we had few and those valued by us but as markets for our uncertain commerce. Ships crawled to and fro across the Atlantic, spending six weeks

upon the voyage. As many months were consumed on a voyage to India or China. The landed aristocracy ruled in St. Stephens, and "use and wont" in the length and breadth of the island. Stage-coaches rolled sleepily along the unmacadamized high-roads. The impatient traveller who was not afraid of fatigue, might reach Edinburgh from London in two days and nights. The magnate, who preferred his own carriage and his own horses, was a fortnight on the way.

Each neighbourhood supplied its own necessities and its own amusements. The weaver made cloth at his solitary loom for the tailor to cut into clothes in the adjoining village. The old wife in the cottage spun her own yarn, and knitted her own and her husband's and children's stockings. The gentry confined their visits within a circle of ten miles. Their daughters depended for their larger acquaintance on the balls and races in the county town. Schools there were none, except for the well-to-do. The village boys and girls learnt their catechism at the parish church, and were bound apprentices for the rest of their education. All the country over, from the expense and difficulty of movement, each family was rooted to its own soil, and the summer migrations of the squires and parsons were confined, like that of the Vicar of Wakefield, to a change from the blue room to the brown.

Under these conditions, we who are now turned middle age began our existence; our hopes modest, our ambition limited to one or other of the three black graces; our

horizon bounded, at furthest, by the limits of our own island, and our knowledge of the rest of the globe extending but to names upon maps, huge portions of which remained blank, or to books of travels which were not accurately distinguished from the voyages of Gulliver or Robinson Crusoe, or Sindbad the Sailor.

Our spiritual state was the counterpart of our material state. We learnt what our fathers had learnt before us; Greek and Latin, and arithmetic and geometry, Greek and Roman history, and, in some favoured instances, a little English history, conceived from an insular point of view. Modern languages we despised, and of modern European literature we knew nothing. Physical science was regarded rather as an amusement of dilettanteism than as an occupation for serious men. Of astronomy, we were taught the general results. We knew, in words, that the earth was round; that it travelled round the sun as one of its planets; and that the solar system was perhaps but one of an infinite number of such systems. But the knowledge had not penetrated beyond our memories. For practical purposes, we still believed that our own earth was the most important part of the universe, and man the central object for which all else had been made. Electricity was a toy, geology a paradoxical novelty. Critical history had not commenced its massacre of illusions. School-boys were taught to believe in the Seven Kings' Rome. British antiquarians could insist modestly that Brute of Troy need not be a fable. Chemists still talked of the four elements. The keen, pierc-

ing process by which traditionary teachings on all subjects have since been brought to the bar to answer for themselves, was still unheard of in any single department of human study.

A condition so stationary, so controlled outwardly and inwardly by habit, corresponded to the stable character of the English nation. Below the outward life and the intellectual cultivation lay a foundation of morality based upon authority. We must all live. Children must be taught that a certain conduct is required of them; that there is a rule of duty to which they must conform. In a wholesome condition of society, no questions are asked as to what duty means, or why it is obligatory. The idea of duty lies in the constitution of things, and the source of it is the will of the maker of the world. Sixty years ago speculations on the origin of the universe were confined to a few curious or idle people; the multitude of us believed without the slightest conscious misgiving that the world was made by God—that he had made himself known in a revelation which had been guaranteed by miracles, and had himself declared the law which we were required to obey—and that in the Bible, further, we had a history of God's actions and intentions toward us, every word of which was indisputably true.

Such a conviction was for all practical purposes universally received throughout England and America, at least during the first half of this century. Of course we know that there were persons who did not believe; but we were satisfied that in Christian countries disbelief was

caused by moral depravity. There were infidels in religion as there were monsters in crime ; but infidelity, we were assured, was not a mistake, but a sin. It was the result of a culpable misuse of faculties, which if fairly employed could arrive only at an orthodox conclusion. I remember that when I was a little boy, there was a family in the corner of the parish supposed to entertain eccentric opinions on these subjects. They were harmless and respectable, but they did not go to church, and naturally were called atheists. We looked at them with a vague terror. If we passed their door, we hurried by as if the place were haunted. At last the old mother died. The husband asked that the body might be buried without being taken into the church. It would, I believe, have been illegal. At any rate the request was refused, and I recollect, when the matter was talked over, hearing it said that the people who did not believe in God believed often in the devil, and that inside the church the devil had special power to take hold of an atheist. Some months after, one summer evening, I saw the husband stealing down to the churchyard to visit his wife's grave. His look was gentle, sad, abstracted, full of human sorrow and human sensibility. I recollect a sense of startled pity for the poor old man, mixed with doubts whether it was not impious to entertain such a feeling.

We were under the influence of the remnants of a superstition which in other days lit the fires at Smithfield, and of course it was absurd and horrible. Yet when a creed has been made the base on which moral

convictions and moral conduct are rested, it can not be questioned without grave consequences. We can not build our lives on a balance of probabilities; and unless we take for granted the essential principles of duty, we can make nothing out of an existence at all. The clerk in Eastcheap, as Mr. Carlyle says, can not be forever verifying his ready-reckoner. The world, when it is in a healthy state, will always look askance at persons who insist that the ready-reckoners require revision.

Yet times come when the calculation becomes so terribly wrong that the revision can not be put off any longer. It is but necessary to describe such a condition of feeling to be aware how far we have been driven from it—far as the era lies of railroads and telegraphs and ocean steamers from the era of stage-coaches and Rossells waggons. Whither these material changes may be carrying us, it is idle to conjecture. Nothing of the same kind has ever been witnessed on the earth before, and there is no experience to guide us. The spiritual change is not so unexampled. Phenomena occurred most curiously analogous at the time of the rise of Christianity; and from the singularly parallel course in which at these two periods the intellect developed itself, we may infer generally what is likely to come of it.

That we have been started out of our old positions, and that we can never return to positions exactly the same is too plain to be questioned. Theologians no longer speak with authority. They are content to suggest, and to deprecate hasty contradiction. Those who doubted before, now

openly deny. Those who believed on trust have passed into uncertainty. Those who uphold orthodoxy can not agree on what ground to defend it. Throughout Europe, throughout the world, the gravest subjects are freely discussed, and opposite sides may be taken without blame from society. Doctrines once fixed as a rock are now fluid as water. Truth is what men trow. Things are what men think. Certainty neither is nor can be more than the agreement of persons competent to form an opinion, and when competent persons cease to agree the certain has become doubtful—doubtful from the necessity of the case. This is a simple matter of fact. What is generally doubted is doubtful. It is a conclusion from which there is no escape. The universal assent which constitutes certainty has been dissolved into the conflicting sentiments of individual thinkers.

First principles are necessarily assumptions. They can not prove themselves. For three centuries all Protestant communities assumed as a first principle the infallibility of the Bible. They regarded the writers of the various books as the automatic instruments of the Holy Spirit; and pious and simple people held in entire consistency that if the Bible was a rule of faith where each person, learned or unlearned, could find the truth, the translations must be inspired also. These positions were safe so long, and so long only, as it was held to be sinful to challenge them. Wisely do men invest authority, whether of writing or person, with a sacred character. The mass of men can only be made to feel the superiority of what is higher

than themselves when it is surrounded with a certain atmosphere of dignity. It is essential to society that princes and magistrates shall be regarded with respect, for they represent not themselves only, but the law which they administer. The sovereign function is gone if every intruding blockhead may take his sovereign by the hand and examine with his own eyes of what matter kings are composed. The blockhead cannot be made to understand for himself why authority ought to be obeyed. He is therefore properly placed when he can not reach to measure himself against it. The outward protection taken away, the illusion is gone. The judge without his robe may retain his intellectual supremacy, but his intellectual supremacy will inspire no awe in the vulgar crowd. Stripped of robe and ceremony he appears but a common man.

The spell of sanctity once broken, the Bible once approached, examined and studied as other books, an analogous result has followed. The critic has approached tenderly and respectfully, but the approach at all implies an assumption of a right to question the supernatural character of the object of his investigation. Certainty passes into probability, and the difference between certainty and probability is not in degree but in kind. A human witness is substituted for a divine witness, and faith is changed into opinion. The authority of the translation was the first to be shaken. Then variations in the MSS. destroyed the confidence in the original text. If the original language was miraculously communicated,

there was a natural presumption that it would be miraculously preserved. It had not been miraculously preserved, and the inference of doubt extended backward on the inspiration.

The origin of the different books was next inquired into, with their authorship and antiquity. At each step the uncertainty became deeper. The gospel history itself was found to be a labyrinth of perplexities. The divine sanction for accuracy and authenticity once obscured, the popular sense which had cleared the modern world of superstition, and had driven the supernatural out of secular history, begun to ask on what ground the Bible miracles were to be believed if all other miracles were to be rejected. Geology forced itself forward, and declared that the history of the creation in the book of Genesis was irreconcilable with ascertained facts. Along the whole line the defending forces are falling back, not knowing where to make a stand: and materialism all over Europe stands frankly out and is respectfully listened to when it affirms that the war is over, that the claims of revelation can not be maintained, and that the existence of God and of a future state, the origin of man, the nature of conscience, and the meaning of the distinctions between good and evil are all open questions.

No serious consequences, at least in England and America, are as yet outwardly apparent. We are a law-abiding race; the mass of us are little given to unpractical speculation. We are too earnest to tolerate impiety, and the traditions of religion will retain their hold with the

millions long after they have lost their influence over the intellect. Intellect we know is not omniscient. Emotion has a voice in the matter, which is always on the side of faith, and women in such subjects are governed almost wholly by their feelings. The entire generation at present alive may probably pass away before the inward change shows itself markedly in external symptoms. None the less it is quite certain that the ark of religious opinion has drifted from its moorings, that it is moving with increasing speed along a track which it will never retrace, and towards issues infinitely momentous. What are these issues to be? "The thing that hath been, that shall be again."

Once before the civilized nations of Europe had a religion on which their laws were founded, and by which their lives and actions were governed. Once before it failed them, and they were driven back upon philosophy. Allowing for the difference of times, the intellectual phenomena were precisely the same as those which we have ourselves experienced. The philosophic schools passed through the same stages, and the latest of them arrived at the same conclusion, that the universe of things could be explained by natural causes; and as no symptom could be discovered of any special divine interference with the action of those causes, so there was no occasion for supposing that such interference had ever been or ever would be. The scientific triumph, as it was then regarded, was proclaimed as a new message of glad tidings to mankind. It was believed by politicians and philosophers, by poets

and historians. It was never believed by the mass of simple-minded people, who held on in spite of it to the traditions of the old faith, till Christianity rose out of the dying ashes of paganism, restored conscience to its supremacy, and made real belief in God once more possible.

Human nature remains what it always was. The nature of God, and the relation in which man stands to God, are the same now as they were when man first began to be. The truth of fact is what it is, independent, happily, of our notions of it. We do not make truth by recognizing it; we can not unmake truth by denying it. So much of it as it concerns us practically to know we learn by experience, as we learn every natural lesson; and if man is not permitted to live and prosper in this world without an acknowledgment of his Maker, the scientific experiment will fail as it failed before. The existing forms of religion may dissolve, but the truth which is the soul of religion will revive more vigorous than ever. The analogy is the more impressive the more closely we compare the details of the two periods.

No one knows distinctly how the pagan religions began. Some say they were corruptions of patriarchal traditions; some traced them to fear and ignorance; some to consciousness of responsibility; some to the involuntary awe forced upon the mind by the star-spangled sky and the majestic motion through it of sun, moon, and planets. All these influences probably were combined to excite each other, the last, as was most natural, giving shape and form to

the emotion of piety. The number 12 and the number 7, occurring as they do, in all the old mythologies, point unmistakably to the twelve months and to the seven celestial bodies visible from the earth, which have a proper motion of their own among the stars. However the idea was generated, it seized on the minds of men as soon as born with an irresistible fascination, and took direction of their whole being. The nobler nations assigned to God, or the gods, the moral government of mankind. The will of the gods was the foundation of the legislation. Law was to be obeyed because it was so ordered by the maker and master of the world. The early Greek or Roman directed his whole life by the reference of every particle of it to the gods as entirely as the most devout of Catholic Christians. Meanwhile fancy and imagination wandered in the expanse of possibilities, giving these airy creations a local habitation and a name. The law was stern and severe. A brighter aspect was given to religion in music and song and sacrifice, and legends, and heroic tales; and poets watched the changing phenomena of days and nights, and summer and winter, and heat and cold, and rain and thunder, and human life, and wove them all into a mythology, till there was not a river without its god, a grotto without its nymph, a wood without its dryad, a noble, heroic man without a deity for his father. All went flowingly so long as the world was young. The vast fabric of unreality grew on without intention of fraud; but the time came when intellect began to ask questions, and the stories which were related as sacred truths were seen first to be

inconsistent, and then to be incredible. The first resource for defense was allegory. The stories about the gods were not true in themselves, but only figuratively true. Behind the ceremonial of the temples lay "the mysteries" in which the initiated were admitted into the real secret. So interpreted, Homer and Hesiod continued to be tolerable. But the strength of the traditions was weakened insensibly by allegoric dilution. When any thing might mean any thing, men began to ask whether any thing at all was known about the gods. They looked round them, and into their own souls, at the phenomena of real experience, and asked what lessons they could discover in facts which could not be disputed.

So began Greek philosophy. The tone at first was reverent, order and uniformity was manifest throughout the universe, and where order was, it were assumed that there was an ordering mind. Some thought that the origin of things was "spirit," others that it was "matter;" some that spirit and matter were co-eternal, others that matter had been created by spirit out of nothing. It was asked what the nature of spirit was. Was spirit self-existing outside the universe, or was it infused in material substance as the soul of a man is in his body? Was it conscious of itself? or was not the most perfect being a serene automaton which needed no consideration, and therefore never reflected upon itself? Again, was spirit intellectual merely, or was it just and good? and if good, whence came evil? Such questions cut deep, but they were not necessarily irreligious. Plato taught a pure

theism. Aristotle believed matter to be eternal; he believed God to be eternal also, and the phenomena of existence to result from the efforts of matter to shape itself after the all-perfect pattern which it saw in God. Even Epicurus did not deny that the gods existed. He denied only that there was any trace of their interference with human fortunes.

The difficulty was to account for sin and misery, if a conscious Providence immediately directed every thing. The most popular religious solution of the problem was the doctrine of what was called plastic nature. Nature was supposed to be a force developing itself unconsciously and automatically, as the seed develops into the tree, or, as it was ingeniously expressed by Aristotle, "as if the art of the shipwright was in the timbers." Each organ of every living thing corresponded to its functions. But the operations of nature were not mechanical like human contrivances. Organization was governed by laws from within, not by intention directing it from without, and nature being imperfect, and only striving after perfection, being progressive and not yet complete, her creations partook necessarily of her infirmities, and were subject to decay and change. Such a conception of nature was an earlier form of Spinozism. The bird builds its nest, the spider stretches its web automatically. The human craftsman, as he becomes skilled in any art, does his work more and more spontaneously, and with less and less conscious reflection. When he is a master of his business, he makes each stroke as surely, yet with as little thought about it, as he lifts his food to his mouth.

With these and the like ingenious speculations, philosophers endeavoured to answer the questions which they put to themselves about their own nature and the world they lived in ; religion and the religious rituals all the while being neither abandoned nor denied, but remaining as a dress or a custom which each day was wearing thinner. And human life all the while was real, as it is now, brief, struggling, painful, the plaything of accident, a fire-fly flashing out of the darkness, and again disappearing into it ; coming none knew whence, going none knew whither : yet while it lasted, with its passions and its affections, its crimes and its virtues, its high aspirations, its mean degradations, its enthusiasms and its remorse, its wild bursts of joy and agonies of pain, it was an important possession to the owner of it, and speculations about plastic nature would not be likely to satisfy him when he demanded the meaning of it. Yet demand the meaning of it man will and must. Life is too stern to be played with, and as the old creed died into a form, and philosophy proved so indifferent a substitute, dark and terrible notions can be seen rising in Greek poetry : notions that there were gods, but not good gods ; notions of an inexorable fate ; notions that men were creatures and playthings of powerful and malignant beings who required to be flattered and propitiated, and that beyond the grave lay gloomy possibilities of eternal and horrible suffering. Gone the sunshine of Homer, this healthy vigor, unconscious of itself. Gone the frank and simple courage which met the storm and the sunshine as they came, untroubled

with sickly spiritual terrors. In Æschylus, in Sophocles, in Euripides, even in Plato himself, the prevailing thought is gloomy and desponding. Philosophy, it was plain, had no anodyne to offer against the sad conviction of the nature of man's life on earth, or availed to allay anxiety for what might happen to him hereafter.

In this condition the Romans came into the inheritance of the world, and became its spiritual as well as administrative trustees. Their religion, too, had gone like the Greek. They had allowed the national divinities of Italy to be identified with the gods of Hellas. They had modelled their literature on the Athenian type. They had accepted Greek poetry and philosophy as containing the best which could be felt or known on the great questions which most concerned humanity. But for them some practical theory of life was necessary by which they could rule the present, and face the future. They were not a people to be troubled with subjective sorrows. They were earthly, unideal, material in all that they thought and in all that they did. The Roman proconsul, when reminded of "truth," asked scornfully, "What *is* truth?" That men had bodies he knew well; whether they had souls or not, was no matter of present concern.

Roman statesmen, called as they were to govern the human race from the British Channel to the Euphrates, had no leisure for such idle disquisitions. Their only care was that their subjects should obey their magistrates, live peaceably, thrive, and cultivate the earth. For the rest, each individual, so long as he indulged in no political illu-

sions or enthusiasms, was free to dream or fancy what he pleased. Their own convictions followed the pattern of their government. They had no illusions. The material welfare of man was all that they understood or were interested in, and the creed on which they settled down found an exponent in the greatest of their poets. The practical misery of mankind had risen from wars and crimes. The Romans bade war and crime to cease. The spiritual misery of men had been self-caused by fantastic imaginations, by groundless terrors, by dreams of supernatural powers, whose caprice persecuted them in this world, and whose vindictive malice threatened to make them wretched in the next. Religion had been the curse of the earth, and though fools might still torture themselves with a belief in it, if they so pleased, Lucretius, speaking the very inmost conviction of the imperial Roman mind, informed them that religion was a phantom begotten of fear and ignorance. The universe, of which man was a part, was a system of things which had been generated by natural forces. Gods there might be, somewhere in space, created by nature also, but not gods who troubled themselves about men. All things proceeded from eternity in one unchanging sequence of cause and effect, and man had but to understand nature and follow her directions to create his own prosperity and his own happiness, undisturbed by fear of supernatural disturbance. If the sufferings and enjoyments of this world were distributed by superintending providence, it was a providence which showed no regard for moral worth or worthlessness. The

good were often miserable, the wicked flourished, and a power so careless of justice, even if it existed, did not deserve to be revered. But it existed only in the brain of man. Evils, or what were called evils, were a necessary part of an imperfect existence. But evil was disarmed of half its power to hurt when its origin was known, and the more carefully the laws of nature were studied, the more successfully man could contend against it.

Long before Rome became the world's mistress, the theory had been thrown out by Democritus: Epicurus had worked it into shape, and it had been the creed of a sect among the Greeks. As soon as it had become practically embodied in the Roman system of government, it was developed into a plain confession of faith, and as the legions struck down the nationalities of Asia and Europe, the intellect of Lucretius declared the overthrow of their superstitions and proclaimed the sovereignty of science.

Unlike the Greek mythology, the system of Lucretius was not a thing of imagination. Splendidly as his genius illustrated the details of the Epicurean philosophy, the system itself was based on observation of facts astonishingly accurate, if we consider the age at which he lived; and his inferences were drawn in the strictest scientific method. Within the proper limits of physical science he anticipated many of the generalizations of the best modern scientific thinkers. His moral and spiritual conclusions are almost exactly the same as theirs. Spiritual philosophy grows out of general principles, and whether those principles be derived from a wide or limited induc-

tion, whether the facts appealed to be completely known or only imperfectly, when once the principles are assumed the same deductions will follow.

Lucretius opens with the most beautiful lines in Latin poetry, describing the sacrifice of Iphigenia at Aulis. His object was to create at once and indelibly the impression which he most desired to convey, of the horrors which had been occasioned by religion and the dread of the unknown. Had he lived in our time, he would have referred to the massacre of St. Bartholomew, to an auto-da-fe, or to the burning of a witch. Ignorant of the real causes of things, men had ascribed the calamities from which they suffered to evil spirits, whom it was necessary to flatter and appease. They were frightened as children were frightened at the dark. Their terrors would disappear with sounder and clearer knowledge.

As the modern astronomer believes that the solar, and perhaps the sidereal system, was once a mist of fiery dust which became condensed by motion into suns and planets, Lucretius conceives that space was originally filled with atoms like the motes which we see floating in a sunbeam in a dark room. The modern philosopher derives the first motion from a tendency of floating particles of unequal density to rotate. Lucretius postulates a downward tendency with lateral declinations from the properties of the atoms themselves. Motion once given, coherence begins, and matter in combination develops the phenomena which we experience. Atoms, germs, monads—call them what we please—are not things without

function or property. They tend to assume forms, and in those forms to acquire new powers. The universe exists, and we exist. To say that it exists, because God willed it so, is to say nothing. God is only a name for our ignorance. We conceive of him as more perfect than matter, as being the cause of matter, and we find no difficulty in making so large an assumption. But it is more easy to conceive that matter may exist with less perfect functions, than God with entirely perfect functions.

The earth, when first formed, was fertile, like a woman in her youth. She produced freely all kinds of living creatures, and in the exuberance of natural fecundity she threw out of herself every variety of combination which could consist with the nature of things. She produced plants, she produced animals: some strong, some weak some with power to propagate their species in their own likeness, some without that power, some able to support themselves with ease, others with difficulty or not at all. Infinite varieties of living things were thus brought into existence to take their chance of continuance. The most vigorous survived. Lions were preserved by their fierceness and strength, foxes by their cunning, stags by swiftness of foot, man by superior intelligence, and other animals again by man's help, because he found them useful to him, as dogs and horses, sheep and oxen. While assigning to the earth these vast powers of productiveness, Lucretius, nevertheless, limits those powers with curious caution. The earth could create only beings consistent with themselves. Rivers could not be made to

run with gold. Trees must bear fruit, not sapphires and emeralds. Horses might be made of many kinds, and men of many kinds; but Centaurs, half horse and half man, could not be made, because a horse grows to maturity with five times the rapidity with which a man can grow.

The readers of Darwin will miss the theory of the modification of species, which it was impossible for Lucretius to have guessed; but they will find nowhere the modern doctrine of the survival of the fittest stated more clearly and carefully. Those who deny most earnestly that any elemental power of spontaneous generation can be traced in operation at present, are less confident that it may not have existed under earlier conditions of this planet, or may not exist at present in other planets. The theory of Lucretius is not in the least more extravagant than the suggestion of Sir William Thompson, that the first living germ was introduced by an aerolite.

THE SOVEREIGNTY OF ETHICS.

SINCE the discovery of Oersted that galvanism and electricity and magnetism are only forms of one and the same force, and convertible each into the other, we have continually suggested to us a larger generalization: that each of the great departments of Nature—chemistry, vegetation, the animal life—exhibits the same laws on a different plane; that the intellectual and moral worlds are analogous to the material. There is a kind of latent omniscience not only in every man but in every particle. That convertibility we so admire in plants and animal structures, whereby the repairs and the ulterior uses are subserved, when one part is wounded or deficient, by another; this self-help and self-creation proceed from the same original power which works remotely in grandest and meanest structures by the same design,—works in a lobster or a mite-worm as a wise man would if imprisoned in that poor form. 'Tis the effort of God, of the Supreme Intellect, in the extremest frontier of his universe.

As this unity exists in the organization of insect, beast and bird, still ascending to man, and from lower type of man to the highest yet attained, so it does not less declare itself in the spirit or intelligence of the brute. In igno-

rant ages it was common to vaunt the human superiority by underrating the instinct of other animals ; but a better discernment finds that the difference is only of less and more. Experiment shows that the bird and the dog reason as the hunter does, that all the animals show the same good sense in their humble walk that the man who is their enemy or friend does ; and, if it be in smaller measure, yet it is not diminished, as his often is by freak and folly. St. Pierre says of the animals that a moral sentiment seems to have determined their physical organization.

I see the unity of thought and of morals running through all animated Nature ; there is no difference of quality, but only of more and less. The animal who is wholly kept down in Nature has no anxieties. By yielding, as he must do, to it, he is enlarged and reaches his highest point. The poor grub in the hole of a tree, by yielding itself to Nature, goes blameless through its low part, and is rewarded at last, casts its filthy hull, expands into a beautiful form with rainbow wings, and makes a part of the summer day. The Greeks call it Psyche, a manifest emblem of the soul. The man down in Nature occupies himself in guarding, in feeding, in warming, and multiplying his body, and, as long as he knows no more, we justify him ; but presently a mystic change is wrought, a new perception opens, and he is made a citizen of the world of souls ; he feels what is called duty ; he is aware that he owes a higher allegiance to do and live as a good member of this universe. In the measure in which he

has this sense he is a man, rises to the universal life. The high intellect is absolutely at one with moral nature. A thought is imbosomed in a sentiment, and the attempt to detach and blazon the thought is like a show of cut-throats. The moral is the measure of health, and in the voice of Genius I hear invariably the moral tone, even when it is disowned in words—health, melody, and a wider horizon, belong to moral sensibility. The finer the sense of justice, the better poet. The believer says to the skeptic :

“ One avenue was shaded from thine eyes
Through which I wandered to eternal truth.”

Humility is the avenue. To be sure, we exaggerate when we represent these two elements as disunited : every man shares them both ; but it is true that men generally are marked by a decided predominance of one or of the other element.

In youth and in age we are moralists, and in mature life the moral element steadily rises in the regard of all reasonable men.

’Tis a sort of proverbial dying speech of scholars, at least it is attributed to many, that which Anthony Wood reports of Nathaniel Carpenter, an Oxford Fellow. “ It did repent him,” he said, “ that he had formerly so much courted the maid instead of the mistress ” (meaning philosophy and mathematics) “ to the neglect of divinity.” This, in the language of our time, would be ethics.

And when I say that the world is made up of moral

forces, these are not separate. All forces are found in Nature united with that which they move: heat is not separate, light is not massed aloof, nor electricity, nor gravity, but they are always in combination. And so moral powers: they are thirsts for action, and, the more you accumulate, the more they mould and form.

'Tis in the stomach of plants that development begins and ends in the circles of the universe. 'Tis a long scale from the gorilla to the gentleman—from the gorilla to Plato, Newton, Shakespeare—to the sanctities of religion, the refinement of legislation, the summits of science, art, and poetry. The beginnings are slow and infirm, but 'tis an always-accelerated march. The geologic world is chronicled by the growing ripeness of the strata from lower to higher, as it becomes the abode of more highly-organized plants and animals. The civil history of men might be traced by the successive meliorations as marked in higher moral generalizations—virtue meaning physical courage, then chastity and temperance, then justice and love—bargains of kings with peoples of certain rights to certain classes—then of rights to masses—then at last came the day when, as the historians rightly tell, the nerves of the world were electrified by the proclamation that all men are born free and equal.

Every truth leads in another. The bud extrudes the old leaf, and every truth brings that which will supplant it. In the court of law the judge sits over the culprit, but in the court of life in the same hour the judge also stands as culprit before a true tribunal. Every judge is

a culprit, every law an abuse. Montaigne kills off bigots, as cowage kills worms; but there is a higher muse there sitting where he durst not soar, of eye so keen that it can report of a realm in which all the wit and learning of the Frenchman is no more than the cunning of a fox.

It is the same fact existing as sentiment and as will in the mind, which works in Nature as irresistible law, exerting influence over nations, intelligent beings, or down in the kingdoms of brute or of chemical atoms. Nature is a tropical swamp in sunshine, on whose purlieus we hear the song of summer birds, and see prismatic dew-drops—but her interiors are terrific, full of hydras and crocodiles. In the preadamite she bred valour only; by-and-by she gets on to man, and adds tenderness, and thus raises virtue piecemeal.

When we trace from the beginning, that ferocity has uses; only so are the conditions of the then world met, and these monsters are the scavengers, executioners, diggers, pioneers, and fertilizers, destroying what is more destructive than they, and making better life possible. We see the steady aim of Benefit in view from the first. Melioration is the law. The cruelest foe is a masked benefactor. The wars, which make history so dreary, have served the cause of truth and virtue. There is always an instinctive sense of right, an obscure idea which animates either party, and which in long periods vindicates itself at last. Thus a sublime confidence is fed at the bottom of the heart that, in spite of appearances, in spite of malignity and blind self-interest, living

for the moment, an eternal, beneficent necessity is always bringing things right; and though we should fold our arms—which we cannot do, for our duty requires us to be the very hands of this guiding sentiment, and work in the present moment—the evils we suffer will at last end themselves through the incessant opposition of Nature to everything hurtful.

The excellence of men consists in the completeness with which the lower system is taken up into the higher—a process of much time and delicacy, but in which no point of the lower should be left untranslated; so that the warfare of beasts should be renewed in a finer field, for more excellent victories. Savage war gives place to that of Turenne and Wellington, which has limitations and a code. This war again gives place to the finer quarrel of property, where the victory is wealth and the defeat poverty.

The inevitabilities are always sapping every seeming prosperity built on a wrong. No matter how you seem to fatten on a crime, that can never be good for the bee which is bad for the swarm. See how these things look in the page of history. Nations come and go, cities rise and fall, all the instincts of man, good and bad, work, and every wish, appetite, and passion, rushes into act and embodies itself in usages, protects itself with laws. Some of them are useful and universally acceptable, hinder none, help all, and these are honoured and perpetuated. Others are noxious. Community of property is tried, as when a Tartar horde or an Indian tribe roam over a vast

tract for pasturage or hunting ; but it is found at last that some establishment of property, allowing each, on some distinct terms, to fence and cultivate a piece of land, is best for all.

Nature is not so helpless but it can rid itself at last of every crime. An eastern poet, in describing the golden age, said that God had made justice so dear to the heart of Nature that, if any injustice lurked anywhere under the sky, the blue vault would shrivel to a snake-skin and cast it out by spasms. But the spasms of nature are years and centuries, and it will tax the faith of man to wait so long.

“For my part,” said Napoleon, “it is not the mystery of the incarnation which I discover in religion, but the mystery of social order, which associates with heaven that idea of equality which prevents the rich from destroying the poor.”

Shall I say, then, it were truer to see Necessity calm, beautiful and passionless, without a smile, covered with ensigns of woe, stretching her dark warp across the universe? These threads are Nature's pernicious elements, her deluges, miasma, disease, poison ; her curdling cold, her hideous reptiles, and worse men, cannibals, and the depravities of civilization ; the secrets of the prisons of tyranny, the slave and his master, the proud man's scorn, the orphan's tears, the vices of men, lust, cruelty, and pitiless avarice. These make the gloomy warp of ages. Humanity sits at the dread loom and throws the shuttle and fills it with joyful rainbows, until the sable ground

is flowered all over with a woof of human industry and wisdom, virtuous examples, symbols of useful and generous arts, with beauty and pure love, courage, and the victories of the just and wise over malice and wrong.

Man is always throwing his praise or blame on events, and does not see that he only is real, and the world his mirror and echo. He imputes the stroke to fortune, which in reality himself strikes. The student discovers one day that he lives in enchantment: the house, the works, the persons, the days, the weathers—all that he calls Nature, all that he calls institutions, when once his mind is active, are visions merely—wonderful allegories, significant pictures of the laws of the mind, and through this enchanted gallery he is led by unseen guides to read and learn the laws of Heaven. This discovery may come early—sometimes in the nursery, to a rare child; later in the school, but oftener when the mind is more mature; and to multitudes of men wanting in mental activity it never comes—any more than poetry or art. But it ought to come; it belongs to the human intellect, and is an insight which we cannot spare.

The idea of right exists in the human mind, and lays itself out in the equilibrium of Nature, in the equalities and periods of our system, in the level of seas, in the action and reaction of forces. Nothing is allowed to exceed or absorb the rest; if it do, it is disease, and as quickly destroyed. It was an early discovery of the mind—this beneficent rule. Strength enters just as much as the moral element prevails. The strength of the animal to eat

and to be luxurious and to usurp is rudeness and imbecility. The law is : To each shall be rendered his own. As thou sowest, thou shalt reap. Smite, and thou shalt smart. Serve, and thou shalt be served. If you love and serve men, you cannot, by any hiding or stratagem, escape the remuneration. Secret retributions are always restoring the level, when disturbed, of the Divine justice. It is impossible to tilt the beam. All the tyrants, and proprietors, and monopolists of the world, in vain set their shoulders to heave the bar. Settles for evermore the ponderous equator to its line, and man and mote and star and sun must range with it, or be pulverized by the recoil.

It is a doctrine of unspeakable comfort. He that plants his foot here, passes at once out of the kingdom of illusions. Others may well suffer in the hideous picture of crime with which earth is filled and the life of society threatened, but the habit of respecting that great order which certainly contains and will dispose of our little system, will take all fear from the heart. It did itself create and distribute all that is created and distributed, and, trusting to its power, we cease to care for what it will certainly order well. To good men, as we call good men, this doctrine of Trust is an unsounded secret. They use the word, they have accepted the notion of a mechanical supervision of human life, by which that certain wonderful being whom they call God does take up their affairs where their intelligence leaves them, and somehow knits and coördinates the issues of them in all that is

beyond the reach of private faculty. They do not see that *He*, that *It*, is there, next and within; the thought of the thought; the affair of affairs; that he is existence, and take him from them and they would not be. They do not see that particulars are sacred to him, as well as the scope and outline; that these passages of daily life are his work; that in the moment when they desist from interference, these particulars take sweetness and grandeur, and become the language of mighty principles.

A man should be a guest in his own house, and a guest in his own thought. He is there to speak for truth; but who is he? Some clod the truth has snatched from the ground, and with fire has fashioned to a momentary man. Without the truth, he is a clod again. Let him find his superiority in not wishing superiority; find the riches of love which possesses that which it adores; the riches of poverty; the height of lowliness, the immensity of to-day; and, in the passing hour, the age of ages. Wondrous state of man! never so happy as when he has lost all private interests and regards, and exists only in obedience and love of the Author.

The fiery soul said: "Let me be a blot on this fair world, the obscurest, the loneliest sufferer, with one proviso—that I know it is His agency. I will love him, though he shed frost and darkness on every way of mine." The emphasis of that blessed doctrine lay in lowliness. The new saint glorified in infirmities. Who or what was he? His rise and his recovery were vicarious. He has fallen in another; he rises in another.

We perish, and perish gladly, if the law remains. I hope it is conceivable that a man may go to ruin gladly, if he see that thereby no shade falls on that he loves and adores. We need not always be stipulating for our clean shirt and roast-joint *per diem*. We do not believe the less in astronomy and vegetation, because we are writhing and roaring in our beds with rheumatism. Cripples and invalids, we doubt not there are bounding fawns in the forest, and lilies with graceful, springing stem; so neither do we doubt or fail to love the eternal law, of which we are such shabby practisers. Truth gathers itself spotless and unhurt after all our surrenders, and concealments, and partisanship—never hurt by the treachery or ruin of its best defenders, whether Luther, or William Penn, or St. Paul. We answer, when they tell us of the bad behaviour of Luther or Paul: “Well, what if he did? Who was more pained than Luther or Paul?” We attach ourselves violently to our teachers and historical personalities, and think the foundation shaken if any fault is shown in their record. But how is the truth hurt by their falling from it? The law of gravity is not hurt by every accident, though our leg be broken. No more is the law of justice by our departure from it.

We are to know that we are never without a pilot. When we know not how to steer, and dare not hoist a sail, we can drift. The current knows the way, though we do not. When the stars and sun appear; when we have conversed with navigators who know the coast, we may begin to put out an oar and trim a sail. The ship of heaven guides itself, and will not accept a wooden rudder.

Have you said to yourself ever: "I abdicate all choice, I see it is not for me to interfere. I see that I have been one of the crowd; that I have been a pitiful person, because I have wished to be my own master, and to dress and order my whole way and system of living. I thought I managed it very well. I see that my neighbours think so. I have heard prayers. I have prayed even, but I have never until now dreamed that this undertaking the entire management of my own affairs was not commendable. I have never seen, until now, that it dwarfed me. I have not discovered, until this blessed ray flashed just now through my soul, that there dwelt any power in Nature that would relieve me of my load. But now I see."

What is this intoxicating sentiment that allies this scrap of dust to the whole of Nature and the whole of Fate—that makes this doll a dweller in ages, mocker at time, able to spurn all outward advantages, peer and master of the elements? I am taught by it that what touches any thread in the vast web of being, touches me. I am representative of the whole, and the good of the whole, or what I call the right, makes me invulnerable.

How came this creation so magically woven that nothing can do me mischief but myself—that an invisible fence surrounds my being which screens me from all harm that I will to resist? If I will stand upright, the creation cannot bend me. But if I violate myself, if I commit a crime, the lightening loiters by the speed of retribution, and every act is not hereafter, but instantaneously rewarded according to its quality. Virtue is the adopting of this

dictate of the universal mind by the individual will. Character is the habit of this obedience, and religion is the accompanying emotion, the emotion of reverence which the presence of the universal mind ever excites in the individual.

We go to famous books for our examples of character, just as we send to England for shrubs, which grow as well in our own door-yards and cow-pastures. Life is always rich, and spontaneous graces and forces elevate it in every domestic circle, which are overlooked while we are reading something less excellent in old authors. From the obscurity and casualty of those which I know, I infer the obscurity and casualty of the like balm and consolation and immortality in a thousand homes which I do not know, all round the world. And I see not why to these simple instincts—simple yet grand—all the heights and transcendencies of virtue and of enthusiasm are not open. There is power enough in them to move the world; and it is not any sterility or defect in ethics, but our negligence of these fine monitors, of these world-embracing sentiments, that makes religion cold and life low.

While the immense energy of the sentiment of duty and the awe of the supernatural exert incomparable influence on the mind—yet it is often perverted, and the tradition received with awe, but without correspondent action of the receiver. Then you find so many men infatuated on that topic! Wise on all other, they lose their head the moment they talk of religion. It is the sturdiest prejudice in the public mind that religion is something

by itself ; a department distinct from all other experiences, and to which the tests and judgment men are ready enough to show on other things, do not apply. You may sometimes talk with the gravest and best citizen, and, the moment the topic of religion is broached, he runs into a childish superstition. His face looks infatuated, and his conversation is. When I talked with an ardent missionary, and pointed out to him that his creed found no support in my experience, he replied, "It is not so in your experience, but is so in the other world." I answer; Other world ! there is no other world. God is one and omnipresent ; here or nowhere is the whole fact. The one miracle which God works evermore is in Nature, and imparting himself to the mind. When we ask simply "What is true in thought ? what is just in action ?" it is the yielding of the private heart to the Divine mind and all personal preferences, and all requiring of wonders, are profane.

The word miracle, as it is used, only indicates the ignorance of the devotee, staring with wonder to see water turned into wine, and heedless of the stupendous fact of his own personality. Here he stands, a lonely thought harmoniously organised into correspondence with the universe of mind and matter. What narrative of wonders coming down from a thousand years ought to charm his attention like this ? Certainly it is human to value a general consent, a fraternity of believers, a crowded church ; but as the sentiment purifies and rises, it leaves crowds. It makes churches of two, churches of one. A

fatal disservice does this Swedenborg or other who offers to do my thinking for me. It seems as if, when the Spirit of God speaks so plainly to each soul, it were an impiety to be listening to one or another saint. Jesus was better than others, because he refused to listen to others, and listened at home.

You are really interested in your thought. You have meditated in silent wonder on your existence in this world. You have perceived in the first fact of your conscious life here a miracle so astounding—a miracle comprehending all the universe of miracles to which your intelligent life gives you access—as to exhaust wonder, and leave you no need of hunting here or there for any particular exhibitions of power. Then up comes a man with a text of 1 John v. 7, or a knotty sentence from St Paul, which he considers as the axe at the root of your tree. You cannot bring yourself to care for it. You say: "Cut away; my tree is Ygdrasil—the tree of life." He interrupts for the moment your peaceful trust in the Divine Providence. Let him know by your security that your conviction is clear and sufficient, and if he were Paul himself, you also are here, and with your Creator. We all give way to superstitions. The house in which we were born is not quite mere timber and stone; is still haunted by parents and progenitors. The creeds into which we are initiated in childhood and youth no longer hold their old place in the minds of thoughtful men, but they are not nothing to us, and we hate to have them treated with contempt. There is so much that we do not know, that we give to these suggestions the benefit of the doubt.

It is a necessity of the human mind that he who looks at one object should look away from all other objects. He may throw himself upon some sharp statement of one fact, some verbal creed, with such concentration as to hide the universe from him : but the stars roll above ; the sun warms him. With patience and fidelity to truth he may work his way through, if only by coming against somebody who believes more fables than he does ; and, in trying to dispel the illusions of his neighbour, he opens his own eyes.

In the Christianity of this country there is wide difference of opinion in regard to inspiration, prophecy, miracles, the future state of the soul ; every variety of opinion, and rapid revolution in opinions, in the last half-century. It is simply impossible to read the old history of the first century as it was read in the ninth ; to do so, you must abolish in your mind the lessons of all the centuries from the ninth to the nineteenth.

Shall I make the mistake of baptizing the daylight, and time, and space, by the name of John or Joshua, in whose tent I chance to behold daylight, and space, and time ? What anthropomorphists we are in this, that we cannot let moral distinctions be, but must mould them into human shape ! “ Mere morality ” means—not put into a personal master of morals. Our religion is geographical, belongs to our time and place ; respects and mythologizes some one time, and place, and person, and people. So it is occasional. It visits us only on some exceptional and ceremonial occasion, on a wedding or a baptism, on a sick-

bed, or at a funeral, or perhaps on a sublime national victory or a peace. But that be sure is not the religion of the universal unsleeping providence which lurks in trifles, in still, small voices, in the secrets of the heart, and our closest thoughts, as efficiently as in our proclamations and successes.

Far be it from me to underrate the men or the churches that have fixed the hearts of men and organized their devout impulses or oracles into good institutions. The Church of Rome had its saints, and inspired the conscience of Europe—St. Augustine, and Thomas à Kempis, and Fénelon; the piety of the English Church in Cranmer, and Herbert, and Taylor; the Reformed Church, Scougal; the mystics, Behmen and Swedenborg; the Quakers, Fox and James Naylor. I confess our later generation appears ungirt, frivolous, compared with the religions of the last or Calvinistic age. There was in the last century a serious habitual reference to the spiritual world, running through diaries, letters, and conversation—yes, and into wills and legal instruments also, compared with which our liberation looks a little foppish and dapper.

The religion of seventy years ago was an iron belt to the mind, giving it concentration and force. A rude people were kept respectable by the determination of thought on the eternal world. Now men fall abroad—want polarity—suffer in character and intellect. A sleep creeps over the great functions of man. Enthusiasm goes out. In its stead a low prudence seeks to hold society staunch;

but its arms are too short ; cordage and machinery never supply the place of life.

Luther would cut his hand off sooner than write theses against the pope if he suspected that he was bringing on with all his might the pale negations of Boston Unitarianism. I will not now go into the metaphysics of that reaction by which in history a period of belief is followed by an age of criticism, in [which wit takes the place of faith in the leading spirits, and an excessive respect for forms out of which the heart has departed becomes most obvious in the least religious minds. I will not now explore the causes of the result, but the fact must be conceded as of frequent recurrence, and never more evident than in our American church. To a self-denying, ardent church, delighting in rites and ordinances, has succeeded a cold, intellectual race, who analyze the prayer and psalm of their forefathers, and the more intellectual reject every yoke of authority and custom with a petulance unprecedented. It is a sort of mark of probity and sincerity to declare how little you believe, while the mass of the community indolently follow the old forms with childish scrupulosity, and we have punctuality for faith, and good taste for character.

But I hope the defect of faith with us is only apparent. We shall find that freedom has its own guards, and, as soon as in the vulgar it runs to license, sets all reasonable men on exploring those guards. I do not think the summit of this age truly reached or expressed unless it attain the height which religion and philosophy reached in any

former age. If I miss the inspiration of the saints of Calvinism, or of Platonism, or Buddhism, our times are not up to theirs, or, more truly, have not yet their own legitimate force.

Worship is the regard for what is above us. Men are respectable only as they respect. We delight in children because of that religious eye which belongs to them; because of their reverence for their seniors, and for their objects of belief. The poor Irish labourer one sees with respect, because he believes in something, in his church, and in his employers. Superstitious persons we see with respect, because their whole existence is not bounded by their hats and their shoes; but they walk attended by pictures of the imagination, to which they pay homage. You cannot impoverish man by taking away these objects above him without ruin. It is very sad to see men who think their goodness made of themselves; it is very grateful to see those who hold an opinion the reverse of this. The old poet Daniel said:

"Unless above himself he can
Erect himself, how poor a thing is man!"

All ages of belief have been great; all of unbelief have been mean. The Orientals believe in Fate. That which shall befall them is written on the iron leaf; they will not turn on their heel to avoid famine, plague, or the sword of the enemy. That is great, and gives a great air to the people. We in America are charged with a great deficiency in worship; that reverence does not belong to

our character ; that our institutions, our politics, and our trade, have fostered a self-reliance which is small, liliputian, full of fuss and bustle ; we look at and will bear nothing above us in the state, and do exceedingly applaud and admire ourselves, and believe in our senses and understandings, while our imagination and our moral sentiment are desolated. In religion, too, we want objects above ; we are fast losing or have already lost our old reverence ; new views of inspiration, of miracles, of the saints, have supplanted the old opinions, and it is vain to bring them again. Revolutions never go backward, and in all churches a certain decay of ancient piety is lamented, and all threatens to lapse into apathy and indifferentism. It becomes us to consider whether we cannot have a real faith and real objects in lieu of these false ones. The human mind, when it is trusted, is never false to itself. If there be sincerity and good meaning—if there be really in us the wish to seek for our superiors, for that which is lawfully above us, we shall not long look in vain.

Meantime there is a great centrality, a centripetence equal to the centrifugence. The mystic or theist is never scared by any startling materialism. He knows the laws of gravitation and of repulsion are deaf to French talkers, be they never so witty. If theology shows that opinions are fast changing, it is not so with the convictions of men with regard to conduct. These remain. The most daring heroism, the most accomplished culture or rapt holiness, never exhausted the claim of these lowly duties—never penetrated to their origin, or was able to look be-

hind their source. We cannot disenchant, we cannot impoverish ourselves, by obedience; but by humility we rise, by obedience we command, by poverty we are rich, by dying we live.

We are thrown back on rectitude forever and ever, only rectitude—to mend one; that is all we can do. But *that* the zealot stigmatises as a sterile chimney-corner philosophy. Now, the first position I make is that natural religion supplies still all the facts which are disguised under the dogma of popular creeds. The progress of religion is steadily to its identity with morals.

How is the new generation to be edified? How should it not! The life of those once omnipotent traditions was really not in the legend, but in the moral sentiment and the metaphysical fact which the legends enclosed—and these survive. A new Socrates, or Zeno, or Swedenborg, or Pascal, or a new crop of geniuses like those of the Elizabethan age, may be born in this age, and, with happy heart and a bias for theism, bring asceticism, duty, and magnanimity into vogue again.

It is true that Stoicism, always attractive to the intellectual and cultivated, has now no temples, no academy, no commanding Zeno or Antoninus. It accuses us that it has none: that pure ethics is not now formulated and concreted into a *cultus*, a fraternity with assemblings and holy-days, with song and book, with brick and stone. Why have not those who believe in it and love it left all for this, and dedicated themselves to write out its scientific scriptures to become its Vulgate for millions? I

answer for one that the inspirations we catch of this law are not continuous and technical, but joyful sparkles, and are recorded for their beauty, for the delight they give not for their obligation ; and that is their priceless good to men, that they charm and uplift, not that they are imposed.

It has not yet its first hymn. But, that every line and word may be coals of true fire, ages must roll, ere these casual wide-falling cinders can be gathered into broad and steady altar-flame.

It does not yet appear what forms the religious feeling will take. It prepares to rise out of all forms to an absolute justice and healthy perception. Here is now a new feeling of humanity infused into public action. Here is contribution of money on a more extended and systematic scale than ever before to repair public disasters at a distance, and of political support to oppressed parties. Then there are the new conventions of social science, before which the questions of the rights of women, the laws of trade, the treatment of crime, regulation of labour. If these are tokens of the steady currents of thought and will in these directions, one might well anticipate a new nation.

I know how delicate this principle is—how difficult of adaptation to practical and social arrangements. It cannot be profaned ; it cannot be forced ; to draw it out of its natural current is to lose at once all its power. Such experiments as we recall are those in which some sect or dogma made the tie, and that was an artificial element,

which chilled and checked the union. But is it quite impossible to believe that men should be drawn to each other by the simple respect which each man feels for another in whom he discovers absolute honesty; the respect he feels for one who thinks life is quite too coarse and frivolous, and that he should like to lift it a little, should like to be the friend of some man's virtue; for another who, underneath his compliances with artificial society, would dearly like to serve somebody, —to test his own reality by making himself useful and indispensable?

Man does not live by bread alone, but by faith, by admiration, by sympathy. 'Tis very shallow to say that cotton, or iron, or silver and gold, are kings of the world; there are rulers that will at any moment make these forgotten. Fear will. Love will. Character will. Men live by their credence. Governments stand by it—by the faith that the people share—whether it comes from the religion in which they were bred, or from an original conscience in themselves, which the popular religion echoes. If government could only stand by force, if the instinct of the people was to resist the government, it is plain the government must be two to one in order to be secure, and then it would not be safe from desperate individuals. But no; the old commandment, "Thou shalt not kill," holds down New York, and London, and Paris, and not a police, or horse-guards.

The credence of men it is that moulds them, and creates at will one or another surface. The mind as it opens transfers very fast its choice from the circumstance to the

cause ; from courtesy to love, from inventions to science, from London or Washington law, or public opinion, to the self-revealing idea ; from all that talent executes to the sentiment that fills the heart and dictates the future of nations.

The commanding fact which I never do not see, is the sufficiency of the moral sentiment. We buttress it up, in shallow hours or ages, with legends, traditions, and forms, each good for the one moment in which it was a happy type or symbol of the Power, but the Power sends in the next moment a new lesson, which we lose while our eyes are reverted and striving to perpetuate the old.

America shall introduce a pure religion. Ethics are thought not to satisfy affection. But all the religion we have is the ethics of one or another holy person ; as soon as character appears, be sure love will, and veneration, and anecdotes, and fables about him, and delight of good men and women in him. And what deeps of grandeur and beauty are known to us in ethical truth, what divination or insight belongs to it ? For innocence is a wonderful electuary for purging the eyes to search the nature of those souls that pass before it. What armour it is to protect the good from outward or inward harm, and with what power it converts evil accidents into benefits ; the power of its countenance ; the power of its presence ! To it alone comes true friendship ; to it come grandeur of situation and poetic perception, enriching all it deals with.

Once men thought Spirit divine, and Matter diabolic : one Ormuzd, the other Ahriman. Now science and phil-

osophy recognize the parallelism, the approximation, the unity of the two : how each reflects the other as face answers to face in a glass : nay, how the laws of both are one, or how one is the realization. We are learning not to fear truth.

The man of this age must be matriculated in the university of science and tendencies flowing from all past periods. He must not be one who can be surprised and shipwrecked by every bold or subtle word which malignant and acute men may utter in his hearing, but should be taught all skepticisms and unbeliefs, and made the destroyer of all card-houses and paper walls, and the sifter of all opinions, by being put face to face from his infancy with Reality.

A man who has accustomed himself to look at all his circumstances as very mutable, to carry his possessions, his relations to persons, and even his opinions, in his hand, and in all these to pierce to the principle and moral law, and everywhere to find that,—has put himself out of the reach of all skepticism ; and it seems as if whatever is most affecting and sublime in our intercourse, in our happiness, and in our losses, tended steadily to uplift us to a life so extraordinary and, one might say, superhuman.