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SECULARISM: WHAT IS IT, AND WHAT IS ITS WORTH?

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II.

“Ad populum phaleras, ego te intus et in cute novi.”—*Persius*.

NOW on the question of Atheism, as we have seen already, there is a considerable difference of opinion among Secular leaders, not, perhaps, as to whether there is a God, because they seem all to have made up their minds that there is not; but as to how far this disbelief should constitute the basis of Secular action. That Secularism is Atheism, indeed that it is nothing else worth speaking of, will be conclusively proved hereafter; but at the present time I am only concerned with pointing out the fact that the men who occupy the most conspicuous positions in the movement, and whose utterances may, in fact, be said to constitute the Secular philosophy, are utterly at variance as to the fundamental principles of the system. Mr. Holyoake, as has been said, maintains that Secularism and Atheism are perfectly distinct, and that in fact the sphere of operation of the two are altogether different. The following passage will explain Mr. Holyoake's position in reference to this matter:—

In controverting Theism, the Secularist is lost in the Atheist; in denying the truth of Scripture, the Secularist is merged in the “Infidel.” The Secularist, as such, confines himself, like the geometer or chemist, to his proper field of study. The geologist, for instance, may, as an individual, dispute the discovery of a comet, but as a member of a geological society, the essay he reads to his co-members must relate rather to the discovery of fossils. In the same manner a Secularist, as an individual, may enter upon Anti-Scriptural or Anti-Theistical arguments; but in his capacity as a Secularist, his business is with the exposition and defence of the principles which constitute the points of agreement with his colleagues.*

* *Reasoner*, No. 625.

Mr. Holyoake seems to have a crochet that there ought to be a number of different departments in Secularism devoted to different purposes. He even suggested in the debate with Mr. Bradlaugh, with that quiet sarcasm which must have cut his antagonist to the quick, that they might have a "howling department" especially provided for those persons who make "loft and demonstrative speeches"* which department, if it existed, would probably be the most largely patronised of any, and should certainly find favour in the eyes of the President of the "National Secular Society." Mr. Holyoake, it will be seen, therefore, while he does not object to the introduction of Atheism into Secularism, or in fact the having a department devoted to its investigation, contends that neither Atheism nor Theism has any real connection with Secularism, and that consequently those who attempt to make a disbelief in God, the basis of Secular organization, completely misrepresent the principles that they profess to advocate. Mr. John Watts, for some years the editor of the *National Reformer*, and at that time one of the most prominent leaders of the movement, held very much the same views as those advocated by Mr. Holyoake, and treated Atheism as "an obstructive form of Sectarianism," incapable of being made the "ground of wide co-operation," and with no claim, therefore, to be considered a part of Secularism. In a pamphlet of his, containing a very clear and able exposition of Secular principles, he observes:—

Exclusive Atheism is an obstructive form of sectarianism—it not only requires that conduct shall be regulated on Secular principles, but insists that the Secular principles shall proceed from Atheistic convictions. The Atheist holds that morality is founded on the laws of Nature, and this is the positive side of his negation of Theism. But many eminent Theists also hold that morality is founded on the nature of things, as well as sanctioned by religion. Bishop Butler taught this doctrine. Archbishop Whately, Dr. Chalmers, and Thomas Binney, among Dissenters, not to mention many others, hold the same principles. Professor Newman and Mazzini, whose Theism is unquestionable, deep, and passionate, hold the common ground of Secular morality. Orthodox ministers, indeed, have begun to proclaim a "Christian Secularism," which means attention to human as well as spiritual welfare. Now this kind of Secularism, so far as it promotes human welfare by material means, is identical with Atheistic Secularism—the only difference being this, that Christian Secularism is founded on the Bible, and Atheistic Secularism on Nature. Then there is a large and increasing class of Deists and Pantheists, who believe, with Tindal and Emerson, that the laws of Nature are the voice of God, and that to obey the laws of Nature is the first dictate of natural piety. These persons are so far Secularists, with a Theistical reason for their Secularism. Others hold clearly and firmly to the belief in the Immortality of the Soul, yet regard that use of this life which conduces to the purest human happiness as the best preparation for a world to come. Now what is to hinder, except bigotry and narrowness, all these persons from acting together on great public questions for the Secular improvement of society? Though nine-tenths of them hold principles adverse to Atheism, they all hold sentiments common to humanity. This

* *Vide Debate between G. J. Holyoake and C. Bradlaugh*, p. 25.

common ground is Secular ground. The difference between Atheism and Secularism is this—Atheism insists upon its point of difference from all being made the bond of union. Secularism proposes that its agreement with all shall be a ground of common action. Atheism, however true in itself, can never be a ground of wide co-operation until it has effected the conversion of society. It must, therefore, delay universal moral union for many generations yet.*

This view is, no doubt, held by a considerable number of the most able men in the movement—men of a calm, dispassionate turn of mind, and with a disposition to place Secularism on a sort of philosophic basis. That such men are entirely wrong in their views, and that they are guilty of wasting their valuable time in endeavouring to hammer into shape an utterly worthless scheme, destitute of fixed principles, and with no sound basis on which a superstructure can be raised, there can be no kind of doubt. Still such men, if they had weight in the movement, might succeed, perhaps, for a time in saving it from that speedy destruction to which it is being hastened by the rash and reckless advocacy of those who occupy the most conspicuous positions in its ranks, is quite possible. Of course, in the end, any attempt to place on a solid foundation this sham thing, called Secularism, must necessarily fail, since the whole thing consists of a series of negations, which cannot be made the basis of positive work. The talk about the laws of Nature is utterly beside the question; because Nature is, assuredly, not the special property of the Secularist (so-called), nor her laws likely to be better understood by getting rid of a belief in their Divine Author. The resolution said to have been come to by the New England Puritans, we cannot do better than adhere to to-day, "*Resolved*—That we obey the Laws of God, until we find time, and are able to make better." Now, this is worth more than all the so-called Secular philosophy that has ever been written, or is likely to be written. Any attempt, however, made by such men as G. J. Holyoake and John Watts to bridge over the chasm between religion and infidelity, by attempting to discover a common basis of action in vague generalities, is at once disposed of by the teaching of the leading men of their own party. Mr. Bradlaugh has proclaimed, through the length and breadth of the land, that Secularism is Atheism; and that, consequently, none but Atheists can work harmoniously together in attempting to carry out its principles. This he has done in much more positive language than in the elegant extract already quoted, in which he ascribes all difference of opinion, from his oracular *ipse dixit*, to be due to a lack of brains. In a discussion which he held with the Rev. A. J. Harrison, at

* *Secularism, the One Thing Needful*, p. 4.

Newcastle (and in which he cut a most sorry figure), he remarked:—

Then there is another point, that I do not know that I need trouble to discuss, whether Secularism is Atheism or not, because I think it is. I have always said so, I believe, for the last thirteen years of my life, whenever I have had an opportunity of doing so; and it is hardly likely, therefore, that I should come here to-night, without any reason for so doing, to recant all my previous convictions, and to make an allegation utterly inconsistent with all my previous arguments.*

Here, therefore, we see, that according to Mr. Bradlaugh—who certainly has a larger following among Secularists than any other man in the movement—Secularism is Atheism. In my recent Middlesborough debate, Mr. Foote was at great pains to point out to the audience that Mr. Bradlaugh had simply said, not that Secularism was Atheism, but that it was the high road that led to that desirable goal, a view which I have frequently heard put forward by Secularists who disclaim atheistic opinions. I replied by reading this passage and another, which I will now give. In the Replies to Correspondents in the *National Reformer* I find the following:—

H. S., Liverpool.—We cannot discuss with the journal you refer to; its articles have been personally malicious. A Secularist, who holds the principles of the National Secular Society, cannot also hold that “None of the principles of Secularism afford the premises from which a conclusion of an Atheistic nature can be deduced; a man may accept them all and still remain, consistently and logically, a Theist or a Pantheist.” A Secularist must be opposed to the theological teachings of the world, as destructive of human happiness; and, although a Pantheist may reject many of these theological teachings, and a Theist, rejecting Revelation, does reject some of them, the Atheist rejects all. Milk-and-water Do-nothingists had better take back seats, under the Rev. Charles Voysey, or enrol themselves with the projectors of a new “Universal Religious Company.”†

Now, here you have a clear, distinct, and unmistakable statement, that a Secularist, to be true to his principles, must be an Atheist; and that, in fact, the promulgation of Atheism, or, in other words, opposition to the “theological teachings of the world,” is the main business of the Society. With these conflicting views as to the fundamental features of the scheme, with what consistency can men talk about Secular principles and Secular organisation.

Take, again, Christianity. What does Secularism profess to do with the Christian religion? This is a question of the most momentous import. Whether Christianity be true or not, it is a tremendous fact, the source of the greatest consolation to millions of men, their moral guide, their comfort in distress,

* *Debate between C. Bradlaugh and the Rev. A. J. Harrison, at Newcastle,* p. 13.

† *National Reformer*, February 20th, 1875.

and the basis of all their hopes of the hereafter. Now, Secularism should give no uncertain sound on this question. Her attitude towards the cherished faith of the large majority of mankind, in the nation where she commenced her propagandism, must be described in terms about which there can be no mistake. At the outset of this movement, Mr. Holyoake declared that he meant no antagonism whatever to Christianity; indeed, one of the most active members—I think a vice-president of the first Secular Society formed—was a Christian, by name Robert Le Blond. To most of the Secularists of to-day his name will be new; but I remember him well; and, as far as I recollect—while he was certainly one of the most energetic co-workers with Mr. Holyoake in his new Secular scheme—he never relinquished his belief in Christianity. In fact, it was a pet idea, both with Mr. Holyoake and with those who worked with him at that time, that they could make the Secular platform broad enough to admit great numbers of good pious Christian men, who, sinking their differences of opinion, might work together for some definite and specified temporal end. And this view has been advocated by Mr. Holyoake ever since, unless it should happen that since he consented to become Mr. Bradlaugh's lieutenant—and serve under a man for whom he always previously manifested the greatest possible contempt—he should have changed his views in this respect. Not many years since he expressed himself as follows:—

Secularism is not an argument against Christianity, it is one independent of it. It does not question the pretensions of Christianity, it advances others. Secularism does not say there is no light or guidance elsewhere, but maintains that there is light and guidance in Secular truth whose conditions and sanctions exist independently, act independently, and act for ever. Secular knowledge is manifestly that kind of knowledge which is founded in this life, which relates to the conduct of this life, conduces to the welfare of this life, and is capable of being tested by the experience of this life.*

From this it will be seen that no real opposition to Christianity is intended, but simply the advocacy of a new set of principles of a perfectly distinct character, which it is held may be accepted by men whose desire is to work for the good of the Commonwealth regardless of their views on the subject of religion. Mr. Bradlaugh, however, has made the discovery that it is utterly impossible to establish Secularism until not only Christianity, but every form of Theism is completely destroyed. There is no mistaking his language, nor the object that he has in view. He exclaims:

I find the preached ideas of God interfering with the children in their cradles, with the children in their schools, with the grown-up children in their

* Article on Secularism in *Chamber's Encyclopædia*, quoted by the Author in his *Debate with Bradlaugh*, p. 74.

churches, and in their daily avocations of life, and I am obliged to destroy Theism to make way for Secularism.*

We don't want to meddle with Christianity, says Holyoake. Secularism has a work of its own to do, which it can perform without in any way interfering with the speculative opinions of mankind. We desire to work in harmony with all, and so promote unity in society. Nonsense, bawls out Bradlaugh; such Secularism is no Secularism at all, but a vile pandering to the opinions of opponents. Our whole course of action must consist of a vilipending of religion in every shape and form. The very idea of God must be rooted out of the human mind before we can begin our Secular work. It is worthy of remark that Mr. Bradlaugh has never had the courage to speak in this way in America, in his various visits paid to that country, nor does he ever tell the people of Northampton, upon whose backs he hopes to ride into the British Parliament, that he must destroy their belief in God before he can properly commence his Secular work. Such silence is very significant. Mr. Charles Watts, next to Mr. Bradlaugh, perhaps the most popular man in the movement, recently issued a small book explanatory of Secular principles from his point of view, and in his violent opposition to religion, he proves himself a worthy disciple of his "chief." In a four nights' debate which I held with Mr. Watts at Newcastle-on-Tyne in April last, when I spoke of his violent antagonism to religion, he replied that he never attacked Christianity unless it came in his way. I answered: "Then it must always be in your way, for you never cease denouncing it." And in truth, I daresay, he and all his class find it very much in their way; and in their way I fancy it is likely to remain for many a day to come. Mr. Watts is now working hand in hand in the same society with Mr. Holyoake—a sort of peace between the rival factions having been patched up for a time, but the probability is that it cannot last six months. Mr. Holyoake, does not desire to "question the pretensions of Christianity," nor to destroy other people's faith in religion, but Mr. Watts's sentiments on the subject are expressed as follows:—

Well, we have still a priestly army of occupation in broad provinces of our Secular life, who are fed on us, billeted on us, paid by us, and who, in return, commonly insult and despise us: we can't ignore them, but having strength and heart we will fight them, and will never cease fighting till they or we are extinct. Directly we go out into the public streets, we find that the churches stop the way.†

What does Mr. Holyoake think of this? Christianity so far from being left alone is to be attacked might and main, and

* *Discussion between G. J. Holyoake and C. Bradlaugh*, p. 13.

† *Secularism in its Various Relations*, p. 16.

a persistent fight to be carried on with the clergy until they or their Secular antagonists become extinct. Well, we think we know which of the belligerents it is that is likely to be annihilated in this war that is to be prosecuted to the death. Directly the Secularists go out "into the public streets," they "find that the churches stop the way." Just so; and the churches are likely to stop the way, for they form a breakwater against the flood of Infidelity, which might otherwise inundate society. The point to be particularly noticed here, however, is in the first place the utter and entire disagreement among these men as to what it is they intend to do, and what is the end and aim of their society; and in the second place that there can be no peace between them and us. They challenge us to a fight which is to continue until one of us is exterminated. We accept the challenge and fling ourselves into the contest, knowing that as God lives He will defend His cause, and bring to naught all opposition, even though it were backed by great erudition, vast knowledge, severe logic, powerful argument, matchless eloquence, and profound thought, which this Secularism assuredly is not, being on the whole as insignificant and contemptible a sect as has yet arisen. Mr. Watts is particularly complimentary towards his opponents who believe in Christianity. He remarks:

Not only are the cardinal doctrines of Christianity intellectually absurd and self-contradictory, they are also morally degrading. Not only do they soften and confuse the brain which tries to believe them, they also harden and pervert the heart which tries to justify them.*

So then all the great and illustrious men of the past, whose names will live long as our language endures, and the light of whose glorious intellects will shine through all the coming ages the men who have shed a lustre on the human race, and by their mighty thoughts proved how God-like is humanity—Shakespeare, Milton, Newton, Kepler, Galileo, Bacon, Locke, and a catalogue of others, far too long to quote here, but whose names are familiar to every school-boy—all humble and devout Christians, had their brains softened and confused by this religion; and the men whose deeds of benevolence and philanthropy are ever appealed to as proofs of the heights of disinterested goodness to which human nature can climb—Clarkson, Wilberforce, Howard, Channing, and a hundred more—had their hearts hardened and perverted by the same cause. And the only men whose brains are sound, and whose hearts are open to gentle and holy influences, are a few Secularists whose principal characteristic is that they are utterly ignorant alike of science and philosophy, have never been known to engage in any great

* *Secularism in its Various Relations*, p. 23.

and noble deeds for the benefit of mankind at large, but are generally found quarelling among themselves like the celebrated Kilkenny cats. Ye gods! where will impudence and audacity end?

When men are tost
On tides of strange opinion, and not sure
Of their own selves, they are wrath with their own selves,
And thence with others.*

Secularism, then, as described by these different writers, each of whom occupies a conspicuous position in its ranks, is the chameleon, out-chameled. It is one thing to one of them and the very opposite to another. You cannot grasp it, for the moment you attempt to take hold of it, it eludes your touch, and changes into something else. It has no fixed principles, and no authority to which it can appeal. It is Atheism, or Theism, or Pantheism, or may be Polytheism, as occasion may require. It takes Christianity under its protecting wing; it fights Christianity to the death. It wages an everlasting war against the Supernatural; it admits that there may be a Supernatural power, and even a Providence, operating beneficially upon mankind. It sneers at prayer as the supremest of follies; it thinks it possible that prayer may have been the means of bringing help to man. Do you doubt that it has ever conceded this much in favour of prayer and Providence. Take the following passage from one of the best books that Mr. Holyoake has written on the subject:—

There may be help from prayer or from Providence. Upon these points the members of the Secular Society form such opinions as to them, the facts may seem to warrant, and they are equally free to affirm or deny the existence or availability of supernatural aid.†

So there may, after all, be help from prayer or from Providence? What then becomes of that favourite maxim of Mr. Holyoake's, which runs through all his teaching, and which again and again turns up in the literature of the movement—that science is the only Providence. What becomes of the perpetual war against the supernatural in which Secularism finds itself continually engaged? If a Secularist may pray, may believe in the supernatural, may rely on Providence, and may obtain help thereby, why, then, pray tell us wherein Secularism differs from that Christianity which it proposes to supplant. But, assuredly, never before in the history of the world was there any attempt to blend such utterly incongruous elements as we meet with here. Such a dish of hodge-podge has surely never been served up before to satisfy the appetites of human beings. A Bampton lecturer has remarked, and I quite agree with him,

* *Queen Mary*, Act III. Scene iv.

† *Trial of Theism*, p. 174.

that it must be "emphatically understood that the opponents of Doubt and Denial, in their modern forms—from dogmatic Atheism to moral and religious know-nothingness—do, with uncompromising purpose, accuse those airy shapes, one and all of an incoherence thorough enough to make them, while glittering as soap bubbles, like soap-bubbles, disappointingly unsubstantial."* We have a right to demand of these Secular teachers before they come to us, calling upon us to accept their new-fangled whimsies, that they shall settle among themselves what it is they have to offer. No doubt they consider that the gift to society of their scheme displays great generosity on their part; but society demands to know the nature of the dotation thus proffered before it will consent to receive the questionable treasure. And this is just the information which Secular leaders are incapable of furnishing. For not only do we find no two of them agreed as to what their Secularism is, but it is difficult to make the teaching of any one of them in harmony with itself. Mr. Holyoake, while maintaining as one of the fundamental doctrines of his system that there is no Providence but Science, admits, as we have seen, that there may be a Providence of God, and that help may come from an appeal by prayer to him. And Mr. Charles Watts, who has written a pamphlet giving sundry reasons why he is an Atheist,† does not hesitate to prate about Secularists committing themselves to "an infinitely wise and good God—the loving Father of all his children." His words are :

If we act honestly and manfully according to the best light we can attain. If we love our fellow men whom we know, and try to be just in all our dealings, surely we are making the best preparation for any future life; the best preparation for appearance before the tribunal of the Most High God, who has chosen to conceal Himself from us here; the best preparation for the higher knowledge, the clearer vision, the eternal Heavenly beatitudes. Though we are execrated and condemned by the tender mercies of human bigots, we may, if we have lived as true Secularists, commit ourselves without dread to an infinitely good and wise God—the loving Father of all his children.‡

What can an Atheist have to do with an infinitely wise and good God, whose very existence he denies? And on what principle does he talk of a loving Father when he holds that there is no such parent, but that the human race is composed entirely of poor and destitute orphans, washed on to the blank shores of existence by the ever-rolling tempestuous Sea of Chance, whose illimitable expanse no man knows, and the blind fury of whose waters no intelligence controls. The Christian believer in God knows that he sustains a certain relationship to God, that there

* *Jackson's Doctrine of Retribution*, p. xi.

† *Why am I an Atheist? or, Theism Criticised*.

‡ *Secularism in its Various Relations*, p. 54.

are duties arising out of that relationship, and responsibilities incurred in connection with these duties. He has trust in God, but that trust is obtained through obedience to certain laws which God himself has given; and full of faith and hope arising out of this, but to be found nowhere else, he crosses the black waters of death, and enters on the glorious Hereafter on the other side. But what can all this have to do with the Atheist who has no ground for hope, because no faith in Him who alone is the source and foundation of hope? Upon what principle can he repose trust in a God whose existence he denies, and whose laws, therefore, he persistently violates? The love to man which he professes, cannot serve him if it be true that that very love must owe its existence to a higher love, which he neither practises nor believes possible; and the talk about acting "according to the best light" will not prevent him from groping his way in the darkness. If there be a God, then certain responsibilities to man arise out of the fact, and it is idle for him who rejects the former and ignores the latter, to claim the benefits arising from the acceptance of both. But why all this talk about God at all? Mr. Watts is an Atheist; he has told us so, and given us his reasons for being one, in sixteen pages of print. Why, then, does he, in violation of his cheerless creed, thus try to let into his soul the glow of hope which that creed extinguishes. Why try to lighten up the darkness of Atheism with rays from the sun, which it aims at blotting out of the heavens? Terribly inconsistent all this, and yet it but shews the struggles of the soul after a light professedly despised. Atheism never did and never can satisfy the soul; nor is it consistent with itself. In truth, the habit of talking of God, and even appealing to him, is not at all uncommon amongst Atheists. At the recent Secular Conference, held at Leeds, one of the delegates in his extreme independence and antagonism to the leading authorities present, informed the meeting that he would not take the advice of anybody; "he would not take it from God Almighty,"* which declaration seem to have provoked a good deal of laughter, the speaker having evidently forgotten for the moment that he was an Atheist, addressing an assembly of disbelievers in "God Almighty." There are a score of cases on record of the inconsistency of Atheists in this respect. The following has appeared frequently in print:—

A Society of Atheists has been formed at Venice. They recently sent an address to Victor Emanuel, congratulating him on the escape of his son and daughter from assassination. Oddly enough, forgetting they were Atheists, they thanked Divine Providence for the miraculous escape.†

* *Vide the Secularist,*

† *Jewish Chronicle*, quoted in *Dr. Hessey's Boyle Lectures on Moral Difficulties connected with the Bible*. Third Series, p. 4.

Now, whether this particular case be strictly correct or not, I have no means of knowing ; but at all events it is quite in keeping with a score of instances that I have met with, of which the one recently happening at Leeds may be taken as a sample. Atheism is so foreign to human nature that it cannot preserve consistency with itself even in the language it employs. How true was the remark of the Roman poet !—

Naturam expellas furcâ, tamen usque recurret.*

Now, I think I have clearly shown you that Secularism has no fixed principles about which its advocates are agreed, and which they can make the basis of an organization for the purpose of accomplishing real positive results. Each one has a Secularism of his own, which he parades to the world as the only true and genuine article, and everything else that takes its name he denounces as spurious.

Soon their crude notions with each other fought ;
The adverse sect denied what this had taught ;
And he at last the amplest triumph gained,
Who contradicted what the last maintained.†

Does any one suppose for a moment that this miserable “thing of shreds and patches,” this hetroegenious compound of absurdity, this collection of contradictory teachings, in which even its most ardent advocates fail to discover any point of agreement, can endanger in the smallest possible degree the grand and everlasting truths of Christianity. The man who allows such an idea to take root in his mind can surely never have carefully considered the matter. Turn we to the sacred volume ; all is clear there as the sun at noon-day. There stands out in bold relief the everlasting truth of God, which no scepticism can destroy. There we learn what we are, what is our mission here, and how we can best prepare for the eternity that awaits us. One great and eternal principle ever comes uppermost in this book—one that concerns every one of us most intimately, and one which we must all face some day, however we may neglect to realise it now, *viz.*, that “whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.”

* *Horace.* Epistle I.

† *Prior.*

LADY GUION, MYSTIC AND SPIRITUALIST.

I.

"Prayer in itself considered is discourse with God . . . If it be from love and faith, and only for celestial and spiritual things that a man prays, then there exists a something resembling revelation in the prayer, which is manifested in the affection of him who prays, in respect to hope, consolation or some internal joy. Hence it is that prayer, in the internal sense, signifies revelation."

Swedenborg, (A.C. 2,535).

Religion, Religiosity, Quietism,—such are the terms which perhaps best characterize by a word the piety of Fenelon, Bossuet and Madame Guion respectively. Of the lady and her peculiarities we purpose speaking at some length: the two archbishops cannot be wholly passed over in the history of her sorrows. Two of the greatest of France's many great men,—sons of the same church, yet generally standing in opposition to each other in matters of utmost moment—their enthusiasm here furnishes a singular example of the mystery of Faith as intensified by magnanimity, by ambition, and by interestedness. Fenelon carried into the activities of daily life a catholicity benignant, scholarly and persuasive: was an affectionate friend, a gentle teacher, a merciful judge;—yet to the last he was an Ultramontanist, preferring Rome to France. Bossuet confronted life with a Napoleonic audacity that compelled devotion to carry out with exactitude its routine of ritual in fullest precision of form: he made the church's authority the supreme arbiter and, in its favour, only too readily sacrificed friendship to imperiousness;—yet to the last he remained a firm defender of the Gallican Church in its mistrust and independence of Romish Ultramontanism.

Between him of the faith which lived in God's abiding presence and him who felt content in the ability to believe he believed what the Church decreed, stood lady Guion, with a Quietism which was a passion, an inspiration—an agony. What this Quietism was; how Fenelon and Bossuet dealt with it, and how the whole business stands related to Christian Spiritualism we have now to show.

In the year 1685 there came forth from the Grenoble press a book entitled "*A Short and very Easy Method of Praying*." It provoked the most opposite opinions, and for a time, held the ecclesiastical mind of France in suspense. The most unpretentious of volumes, revolution was encouraged in every page. It was to the Church what Rousseau's "*Contrat Social*" afterwards was to society,—a declaration of war by a non-combatant. The utmost simplicity of internal worship was set in open contrast with a ritual noisy, sensuous and theatrical.

The work had for its author, Jeanne Marie Guion, a pious widow in easy circumstances, and 37 years of age. A wife at 16; bereft of her husband at 28 (when she was left with three children), she had given herself up to a solemn pietism, which at length attained such supremacy that it subdued everything to itself, and brought her to the conviction, that "it is on the Nothing in man that God establishes His greatest works;" thus, that "it is requisite to look at all things on the side of God."

Five years before the appearance of her book on Prayer, the fame of lady Guion's virtues, learning and mysticism had reached the Bishop of Geneva's ears: he invited her to Gex, there to co-operate with other ladies in converting Protestant females to Catholicism. Here she was introduced to the Superior of the New Community—Father Lacombe—and found in him a depth of mysticism abysmal as her own. Imagination however was more fervent even than piety, and so dominated every other faculty of his mind, that this had become a sort of circumference without any discoverable centre: yet was the man pure in heart, and in no small degree useful in his sphere. Unfortunately he had many masters and was pledged to implicit obedience unto Rome.

The Gex community finding that Lady Guion had property sought to induce her to relinquish this to the common weal. She refused to do so, and a separation was at length the result. Soon afterwards we find her in a Convent of Ursulines in the Chablais. Hither too comes Father Lacombe; her disciple now rather than her director. Public disputations also take place, but though our lady can de-Protestantize she cannot exactly convert into Catholicism. Her method, by its spirituality, strikes at forms as well as at formality and heresy;—and Popery without forms would in many places be but as a cask without sides or ends; thus the labours of the good sister make her enemies as well as friends. She is dislodged: Rome and revolution are incompatible.

Vercell, Turin, Grenoble are places whither she next carries her evangel of Quietism—fresh foes only too regularly rising on her track and spreading forth the most absurd statements respecting the woman's infatuation, heresies and misdeeds. To give these stories the worst possible colouring the name of Lacombe is linked with her own. The spirit of mischief is victorious: Lacombe is, in 1687, committed to the Bastile. A little later and Lady Guion is also put under arrest. She is hurried away to a Convent where, after several examinations, her judges feel constrained to admit that no stain can be found upon her character—her only sin is Quietism with its doctrine of

mystical prayer—"a prayer of rejoicing and possessing, devoid of all busy imaginations and forced reflections; a prayer of the will and not of the head; a prayer wherein the task of God was so pure, unblended and uninterrupted, that it drew and absorbed the soul's powers into a profound recollection, without act or discourse." It was a *Will-worship*—"simple love and pure adherence"—as is shown, for instance, in her mystical proem-prayer to the "Holy Jesus" where the secret of regeneration is revealed in the doctrine of absolute self-surrender. Considering prayer to be "the application of the heart to God and the internal exercise of love," she would eternize the practice and the Quietism it produced. "When once we have tasted of God and of the sweetness of His love," she would say, "we shall find it impossible to relish aught but Himself." Of her treatise she thus prayed to the Lord, "Thou silent and Eternal Word, it belongeth unto Thee to awaken, attract and convert; to make Thyself be heard, tasted and beloved! I know Thou canst do it, and I trust Thou wilt do it by this humble work, which belongeth entirely to Thee, proceedeth wholly from Thee, and only to Thee tendeth:" it was a book purely mediumistic and Divine. No insignificant claim this; involving as it does nothing less than control, illumination and inspiration from first to last: we will look more closely then at its doctrine of mystical prayer and the philosophy by which it is here supported.

Divine union, according to Lady Guion, has its commencement, its progression and its consummation. It is first an inclination and tendency towards God. The soul becomes *introverted*; gets within the influence of the central attraction and acquires an eager desire after union. Onward is its approach until it adheres to Him, where, "growing stronger and stronger in its adhesion, it finally becomes one with Him." Thus the spirit of Divine filiation becomes at last the spirit of Divine action.

I.—Prayer is thus of various degrees; to the first of which, we are told, *meditation* is the surest conducive. Should an act of lively faith place you in the presence of God some truth should be recalled to mind, and on that you should pause gently and sweetly—not to employ the reason but merely to calm and fix the mind. Faith will thus become intensified; will produce an eager and vehement pressing inwardly, and a restraining of all your senses from wandering abroad. So shall you be speedily extricated from numberless distractions, removed from external objects and brought "Nigh unto our God, who is only to be found in our inmost centre—the Holy of Holies wherein He dwelleth."

When thus fully introverted and warmly penetrated through-

out with a living sense of the Divine presence, and your senses are all drawn from the circumference to the centre, you must then allow your affections "Sweetly to repose and drink in peacefully that of which they have tasted." Evidently, even at the very first degree, this Quietism is, in all but name, Quakerism, at this time some forty years old, and George Fox and a few others now remaining out of all that band of Commonwealth heroes whose piety, purity and zeal had made Cromwell himself cower in the efflux of spiritual truth.

II.—The second degree of prayer, the *Prayer of Simplicity*, being thus attained unto by frequent and sustained communion, the soul finds herself enabled gradually to approach God with facility and, finding herself in His presence, becomes "recollected" before Him, and remains thus for a while in a profound and respectful silence. "The smothered fire must be gently fanned, but as soon as it is kindled, we must cease that effort, lest we extinguish it by our own activity." Mere enjoyment, however, must not be the chief consideration here: "Go to prayer," says Lady Guion, "not that ye may enjoy spiritual delights but that ye may be either full or empty, just as it pleaseth God. This will preserve you in an evenness of spirit, in desertion as well as in consolation, and will prevent your being surprised at aridity or at the seeming repulses of God." These apparent withdrawals were sure to be succeeded by the sense of communion: thus there must be no misgivings. "With patient love and the reiterated breathings of an ardent but peaceful affection, and with silence full of the most profound reverence, you must wait the return of the Beloved."

III.—A third degree of Quietism is thus at length reached; *Self-abandonment*. You surrender your whole existence unto God, in the strong and positive conviction that the occurrences of every moment are agreeable to His immediate will and permission, and are just such as your state requires. You lose your own will in the will of God. What is past is left to oblivion; what is to come is entrusted to Providence; the present is devoted to God: "it thus brings with itself God's eternal order and is as infallible a declaration to you of His will as it is inevitable and common to all." But by being thus led in the will of God is not meant that you should cease from action, but that you should act through the internal agency of His grace. "When a wheel rolls slowly we can distinguish its parts," says Lady Guion, "but when its motion is rapid we can distinguish nothing: so the soul which rests in God hath an activity exceedingly noble and elevated yet altogether peaceful; and the more peaceful she is, the swifter is her course, because she is proportionably given up to that spirit by which she is

moved and directed." The soul regards all things as being in God and looks upon all (excepting only our sins) as infallibly proceeding from Him.

Sufferings then are counted as nothing. "If your love to God be pure you will not seek Him less on Calvary than on Tabor: and surely He should be as much loved on that as on this, since it was on Calvary He made the greater display of His own love for you." Through weakness and strength you must persevere, so all shall be equal to you in the will of God. All then shall come to the light: "when we lie in full exposure before the Sun of Righteousness, His Divine beams render the smallest atoms visible." Thus is attained the true and complete conversion. Yielding to "the internal drawings" you are "averted" wholly from the creature and turned wholly to the Lord, who is then found to have an attractive virtue which draws the soul more and more powerfully to Himself the nearer she approaches, and in attracting purifies and refines her,—the soul "co-operating with the attractions of her God by a free and affectionate correspondence." She now enjoys a continual sense of the Divine presence; it has become as it were natural to her. Silence now wholly constitutes her prayer, whilst God communicates an infused love which is the beginning of blessedness. Altogether Divine is then the work,—"the creature may indeed open the window, but it is the Sun Himself that must give the light:" if you would hear you must listen: for "Christ, the Eternal Word, without whose Divine inspeaking the soul is dead, dark and barren, when He would speak within you, He requires the most silent attention to His all-quickening and efficacious voice."

IV.—Through self-abandonment comes the prayer of *Self-annihilation*. The Word hath the life in Himself, and being communicative of His nature desireth to impart it to the soul. Room is made for the unhindered influx and impletion of the Christ-life: and this is effected only "by the ejection of the Adamical life,—the suppression of the activity of self. Unless you cease to exist in self, the spirit of the Eternal Word cannot exist in you. By giving up your own life, you give place for His coming. "We should indeed surrender our whole being unto Jesus Christ that He Himself may become our life;—that being dead our life may be hid with Christ in God. We leave and forsake ourselves that we may be lost in Him, and this can be effected only by annihilation." It is worshipping God in spirit and in truth: "*in Spirit* because we enter into the purity of that spirit which prayeth within us, and are drawn forth and freed from our own carnal and corrupt manner of praying: *in Truth* because we are thereby placed in the great truth of the

All of God and the nothing of the creature. There can be but these two truths,—the All and the Nothing; everything else is falsehood. We can pay due honour to the All of God only in our own annihilation; which is no sooner accomplished than He, who never suffers a void in nature,—instantly fills us with Himself.” The key, this statement, to the many mysterious passages concerning death we come across in Lady Guion’s poems, as for instance, where (in Cowper’s translation) she exclaims

“ Live Thou and reign for ever, glorious Lord !
 My last, least offering I present Thee now—
 Renounce me, leave me, and be still adored !
 Slay me, my God, and I applaud the blow.”

The nothing of the creature being annihilated God was necessarily the ALL *in all*.

Strange as these teachings are, there is a something in them that is familiar to us! We readily half believe them. Is not this because of that duality of our being, in virtue of which we live in two worlds at once? While as mortals we need the aliments of earth; as angels we require, and sense the want of, angel food, celestial wisdom. Only too generally do we seek to concentrate our thoughts upon outward things and limit our survey to the realm of nature, but “high thoughts come and go,” an inner spiritual universe reveals itself to our own inner spirit. In moments, it may be, “few and far between”—a divine light pours down its radiance into the lower levels of mind and quickens perception while raising it into the higher possibilities of insight. We stand on the Delectable Mountains and partake of the food of immortals. The reality of an interior cosmos is made evident awhile to our spirit-sight. Amid the cares of the world the vision is outcrowded and forgotten, but the knowledge that such fruition and insight are possible and have been in some rare interval of prayerful ecstasy, is never wholly eradicated from our thought. *The reality of past possession and the irrepressible cravings of the Religious Sentiment* alike forbid that; but lead us, rather, dimly to realize the strange yet half-anticipated statement of Thomas Lake Harris, where, in telling us of angelical intercourse he writes (in a book printed in the year 1857):—

While engaged in these meditations, a sense of hunger, or rather not hunger, but desire for spiritual food, began to make itself felt; and I now discovered that the strange and undefined longing for something which the world cannot give, and which oppresses the soul on earth, even in the midst of every natural enjoyment, springs in reality from the desire in the interiors for the food of angels. I had felt it, thousands of times, while in the natural sphere, but was never able to analyze it until now. It is this desire which prompts men and women to meet together in church organizations on the earth-plane.

I now knew what the Lord meant, though it always had been a mystery before, when He said, “Unless ye eat of my flesh and drink of my blood, ye

have no life in you ;" for by His flesh is signified divine good, and by His blood is signified divine truth ; and unless we eat and drink of divine good and divine truth, we sink into conditions of spiritual death." (W. of A., 184, 185).

The secret of true prayer then lies in true possession. Where there is a healthy balance of faculty with faculty all may be thus sanctified by the gift received in the enjoyment. Creedal and other peculiarities set aside it is still possible to livingly demonstrate the genuine character of Lady Guion's doctrine as a *normal* spiritual reality. Thus to a scornful or sceptical world the Christian Spiritualists may say to-day, as this saintly woman (in her book on Spiritual Torrents) said two centuries ago: "As much as they seem poor, vile and contemptible in the eyes of men, so much the more are they [as rivers] enriched, not with their own riches, like other rivers, but with the riches of the sea itself. For being soon lost in the sea and become one with it, they then bear ships of the heaviest burthen. . . . O poor souls which seek any divine repose in this life ! ye will never find any but in GOD. Try to return to Him : and in Him all your anxieties and agitations will be *reduced into divine unity and a calm repose*, a heavenly hope, a joy unspeakable and full of glory."

It was when brought into this state that Swedenborg wrote his *Arcana Cœlestia*—"an influx like a most gentle and almost imperceptible stream, the vein of which does not appear, but still leads and draws ; that which flowed in from the Lord leading all the series of his thoughts into consequences, gently yet powerfully, so that he could not in anywise wander into other thoughts," (A. C., 6,474). This is heavenly mediumship and has its ground of possibility in entire submission to the Lord. Under a like divine leading Lady Guion now wrote a book of heavenly secrets (indeed some twenty books) ! Into these "Arcana Cœlestia" we will next look for awhile.

RICHD. McCULLY.

ABSOLUTION.

THE long day waned, when spent with pain, I seemed
To drift on softly toward the restful shore,
So near, I breathed in balm, and caught faint gleams
Of lotus-blooms that fringe the waves of Death,
And breathless palms that crown the heights of God.

Then I bethought me how dear hands would close
These wistful eyes in welcome night, and fold
These poor tired hands in blameless idleness.
In tender mood I pictured forth the spot
Wherein I should be laid to take my rest.

" It shall be in some paradise of graves,
 Where sun and shade do hold alternate watch :
 Where willows sad trail low their tender green,
 And pious elms build arches worshipful,
 O'ertowered by solemn pines, in whose dark tops
 Enchanted storm-winds sigh through summer nights ;
 The stalwart exile from fair Lombardy,
 And slender aspens, whose quick, watchful leaves
 Give silver challenge to the passing breeze,
 And softly flash and clash like fairy shields,
 Shall sentinel that quiet camping ground :
 The glow and grace of flowers will flood those mounds
 An ever-widening sea of billowy bloom ;
 And not least lovely shall *my* grave-sod be,
 With myrtles fair and nestling violets,
 And star-flowers pale with watching—pansies, dark
 With mourning thoughts, and lilies saintly pure ;
 Deep-hearted roses, sweet as buried love,
 And woodbine-blossoms, dripping honeyed dew
 Over a tablet and a sculptured name.
 There little song-birds, careless of my sleep,
 Shall shake fine raptures from their throats and thrill
 With life's triumphant joy the ear of Death ;
 And lovely, gauzy creatures of an hour
 Preach immortality among the graves.
 The chime of silvery waters shall be there—
 A pleasant stream that winds among the flowers,
 But lingers not, for that it ever hears,
 Through leagues of wood and field and towered town,
 The great sea calling from his secret deeps."

'Twas here, methought or dreamed, an angel came
 And stood beside my couch, and bent on me
 A face of solemn questioning, still and stern,
 But passing beautiful, and searched my soul
 With steady eyes, the while he seemed to say :

" What hast thou done here, child, that thy poor dust
 Should lie embosomed in such loveliness ?
 Why should the gracious trees stand guard o'er thee ?
 Hast thou aspired, like them, through all thy life,
 And rest and healing with thy shadow cast ?
 Have deeds of thine brightened the world like flowers
 And sweetened it with holiest charities ?
 Hast thou made music in sad hearts of men,
 That tender little choristers of Heaven
 Should trill o'er thee their ecstasies of praise ?
 And has thy life in glad obedience flowed,
 And broadened, deepened ever ? has it heard
 In shade and shine, bright field, and busy town,
 The solemn sea-call of the Infinite ?"

" Ah, no ! ah, no ! " I cried ; " unworthy I
 Mid light and bloom and melody to rest ;
 But let them lay me in some lonely glade,
 Among rude rocks and dim and silent shade,—
 No stone to mark the spot, no rare, sweet flowers ;
 And if to give me room, they should break up
 A white encampment of fair daisy-blooms,
 The kindly grass would soon bind up the wounds
 In the forgiving earth, or some wild brier
 Lace down the turf and deck it with broad leaves,

Perhaps wild violets, with piteous grace,
 Would year by year creep up the mound and make
 A little brightness in the sombre spot."
 And here I paused, and hid my face and wept,—
 But unappeased, the angel made reply :

"Why should the silence of the wood be pained
 By plunge of spade, or fall of earth to earth,
 To give thee housing choice? Why in their bloom
 Should daisies perish to make room for thee?
 Might not the humble wild-briar seek to climb
 A little higher than thy grave? Might not
 The violet seem to flower in soft rebuke,
 For that she meekly waits upon the sky
 For light and love, devoutly wears its hue,
 And every dewy morn is brimmed with Heaven?
 Hast thou so laboured for the coming in
 Of God's great day of peace? hast thou so toiled
 Through thy best years, to give thy brother rest,
 That nature's self should guard thy dear repose,
 And curtain thy low couch with balmy shades?"

"Ah, no! ah, no!" I cried; "but let them make
 A lonely grave upon some storm-swept shore
 Beside the toiling sea where restless sands
 Shall drift across it, and the shy sea-bird
 Flit high above it, hurrying down the wind,—
 And pleasure sails gleam past, far ships go by.
 And all things leave me to forgetfulness!
 For I have sinned, and squandered my bright days,
 The golden days of God who trusted me!
 The wine of song, the purple joy of life,
 Trod from the vintage of my happy youth,
 That might have cheered sad hearts, young hearts that failed
 In stress of fortune and untimely fate,
 And reddened lips that paled from secret pain.
 I careless wasted, while it yet was new,
 The precious manna of great hopes and truths,
 Star-fallen to my hands in life's pure morn,
 That should have gone to nourish prophet-souls,
 And strengthened heroes for their strife sublime,
 I faithless kept, until it turned to dust!
 But, oh! stern angel, I have fed the lambs,
 And they have followed me, and I have loved
 My full heart out, through all life's good and ill,
 I have outloved the lovingest of friends;
 Have loved, not claiming love—oft in despite
 Of change, disloyalty, and utter loss,
 I have, alas! dissolved the pearl of peace
 In draughts of mortal passion, swift and keen,
 And made my loving costly to my soul,
 Yet have I loved all pure and holy things,
 All gracious, tender and heroic souls,
 All poor, and helpless, and unfriended things—
 The suffering, and the sinful, and the lost,
 And in them all have seen and loved my Lord."

Again I ceased, and lower bowed my head,
 And there was silence for a little space.
 Then something drew my face up from my hands,
 And I beheld the angel's face o'erswept
 By such divine relenting that I held
 My very heart-beats silent while he spake :

"Poor, bruised reed!" he said, "be comforted;
 By thy much loving, thou hast earned thy grave
 Wherever love may make it; and such flowers
 As love may plant there, have Heaven's leave to bloom
 In dear remembrance of thy buried heart.
 And trees may fling their sun-dropped shadows there,
 Birds sing their sweetest, and bright waters chime;
 For love itself, shall round thy broken life,
 And love shall justify thee in the dust,
 Where naught shall vex thee, or rebuke thee more;
 So shalt thou sleep in God's deep peace at last."

GRACE GREENWOOD.

"WHAT IS TRUTH?"

THE following excellent report of Dr. Sexton's sermon on the above subject, preached in the Free Christian Church, Swindon, on Sunday, September 3rd, appeared in the *Swindon Express* under the heading of "Sabbath Echoes from the Pulpits."

"On Sunday last, two most eloquent sermons were preached in the above church by the Rev. Dr. Sexton of London, and we are glad to say the congregations were very good, especially in the evening, when the church was tolerably well filled. The text in the morning was from Proverbs xiv. 10.—'The heart knoweth his own bitterness, and a stranger intermeddleth not with his joy,' and in the sermon the Doctor described at some length what may be termed the loneliness of man, pointing out that there was a portion of each man's nature which was only known to himself and to God. This he described as being the point where man came more closely into communion with God; and from that fact several important lessons were deduced. The sermon was a very able one, containing much original thought. In the evening the text taken was Pilate's question to the Lord, 'What is truth?' John xviii. 38. Many different opinions had been propounded with regard to the spirit in which this question was asked. Lord Bacon thought it was put in a jesting mood, but Archbishop Whately disagreed with this, and held that Pilate was perfectly serious. The preacher thought the question was asked in a spirit of scepticism, and arose to a large extent from the fact that Pilate had no faith whatever in truth being attainable upon any subject. There was evidently a large amount of vacillation in his conduct, since he wished to please the people by condemning Christ, and yet not to take upon himself the responsibility of so doing. The whole account displayed the conduct of a man of great indecision of character. The age in which Pilate lived was an extremely sceptical age;

all faith in God, in religion, and even in morality had died out. There never was in the world's history so terrible a condition of civilized society as existed then; acts tolerated by the people at large were of such a character that they could not now be spoken of in a general assembly. Faith in the old mythology had disappeared, and no new light had as yet come to lighten up the gloom. Pilate was no doubt acquainted with the philosophies of the preceding ages, and utterly despised them. His question to the Lord, 'Art thou a King?' elicited the reply that He came to bear witness to the truth. In Pilate's mind He would be instantly classed with the philosophers, and hence in the spirit of scepticism came the question, 'What is Truth?' evidently from a thorough disbelief in the possibility of arriving at it. The professions of liberality in that age arose, the preacher thought, more from disbelief in the reality of any goodness or virtue, than from any feeling of charity towards the opinions of others. As to Pilate, he cared neither for Jehovah nor for Jupiter, but only for Cæsar. The condition of that age was very largely repeated to-day. The old foundations were loosened; doubt and unbelief were spreading amongst us like an epidemic; and the result was that large classes of men were indifferent, not only to religious faith, but to truth itself. On the one hand were scientists with their scepticism; and on the other the men of business, immersed in the cares and anxieties of trade; and from both, divine light appeared almost to have departed. Hence again the question, 'What is Truth?' was shouted by sages and re-echoed by the mob, in utter scepticism of the possibility of any answer being given.

"The importance of the search for truth was enlarged upon at some length and the various means of obtaining knowledge described. The preacher stated that men as a rule saw in nature just what they brought to nature; that every scene witnessed presented an entirely different appearance to the mind, according to the character of the person who gazed upon it. Hence the evils that existed in the physical universe. An old Calvinist had said that the fall of man was so terrible that it brought down a portion of the physical universe with it. This was no doubt a very exaggerated way of putting the case; but it nevertheless contained some truth, because the shadow of man's mental character was thrown upon external nature. Scepticism, the Doctor described as a very unhappy state of mind. He had himself experienced it, and knew therefore practically what it was, and he had no hesitation in saying that doubt was extremely painful. Harriet Martineau had somewhere written in favour of doubt, on the ground that it left the mind open to receive fresh truth. But then, when the fresh truth came, of course there

would be no longer doubt, and hence according to her own showing the state of scepticism was the lowest. In fact the argument itself was a paradox, because doubt would appear only valuable inasmuch as it left you the chance of getting out of it. Every one knew perfectly well the painful state of mind produced by doubting upon ordinary every-day subjects. Let a man doubt his wife's honour, or the uprightness of his children's conduct, or the integrity of a friend, or any other matter of a like kind, and the result of this was far more painful than that of knowing the worst. In religion, therefore, it was of the greatest possible importance that we should have definite and correct views with regard to God, the Future Life, and Christianity. It was fashionable now-a-days on the part of certain schools of philosophers to ignore these questions, and to say we had better leave them until we reached the future world. Such a theory was preposterous, because clearly, questions of this character were of the greatest moment, and the solution of the problems they presented was demanded by the very fact of the mode in which they pressed themselves upon the mind. We might not be in a position to learn all the truth, because man must ever be fallible; but some portion of truth must be obtained, and he was the wisest who procured the largest amount.

"The teaching of Christ with regard to truth was very clear and distinct. He taught the truth because He was truth. In the age in which He lived, truth was supposed to be a nonentity, whereas it was the most real of all things. Jesus told Pilate that He was born to bear witness to the truth, that is to Reality itself. Truth with the Lord was not a speculative opinion, nor even an infallible mandate; it was Himself. This of course Pilate failed to understand, and men failed to understand it to-day. It was so nevertheless. Christ was not a witness to certain theological dogmas; but to the reality of Divine Truth in Himself. Humanity was a reflection of God, for man had been made at first in the image of God, which image had been sadly disfigured since. In this case however it was a true reflection of God, for here Humanity itself was the Incarnation of God. The Divine had so blended with the Human, that the reflection was perfect. Perfect truth was to be found only in God, yet Christ declared Himself to be 'the Way, the Truth, and the Life.' The teaching of Christ was unlike the teaching of any other man that had ever lived. It was customary to-day to make comparisons between Him and other great teachers, religious and philosophic, such as Plato, Socrates, Buddha, Confucius, and others. No such comparison was possible, and to prove this you had only to put the words of Christ into the mouths of any one of these men to see how absurd it would

make them appear. Plato, 'the divine Plato,' as he was sometimes called, the greatest man, as a man, probably, that the world had seen, never spoke of himself in terms like those to be found used by Christ in the New Testament. Had Plato stated he *was* the Truth and the Life, that those who had seen him had seen God, he would have been laughed at by his most devout disciples; for the whole thing would have appeared ludicrous. Yet in such language Christ spoke, and did not appear ridiculous; and for 1,800 years generations that had been unusually keen in detecting imposition and false pretences had seen nothing absurd in the use by Christ of this language. He proclaimed Himself the 'Light of the World,' the 'Bread of Life,' the 'Living Bread which came down from Heaven,' the one 'Good Shepherd,' the 'Door of the Sheepfold;' claimed to raise Himself from death, to be the only means of approach to God, and hereafter to be the Judge of mankind. The demands He made upon the human soul were such as to set forth the Supreme Authority which He held. Men were to give themselves unreservedly to Him, to love Him more than father, mother, wife, or the nearest relatives, and to honour Him as they honoured God. The teaching of Jesus was never argumentative. He always spoke with authority, and the sum total of His teachings was Himself. The Truth with Him was not an abstraction as it had been with other teachers, but it was a Divine Person, that Person Himself; His language was 'he that is of the truth heareth my voice;' 'Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my word shall not pass away.' And why? Because it was Divine Truth itself. 'The words which I speak unto you they are spirit, and they are life.'

All the truth then that we wanted was here, and here was the answer to Pilate's question. If this was required to be put into a philosophy, let it be so. The Truth incarnate was Christ, and from Him all Truth must flow.

"The Doctor then dwelt at some length on the spirit in which truth should be sought. Pilate got no answer because he asked the question in a sceptical tone, and men in this day who sought for truth in the spirit of scepticism and cynicism would most likely miss it. In this search one must wish to be on the side of truth, not to have truth on his side. We heard a great deal of talk about honest doubt; and honest doubt there unquestionably was: but the preacher feared that a great deal of the doubt was voluntary, and had to be traced to the fact that truth was not sought in a proper spirit. He who did not place himself in the attitude of a learner in this school was not likely to gain much information. The assumption of egotism and superiority would present an insuperable barrier to the discovery of truth. Humility was one of the greatest of Christian virtues, and it was a virtue

to be found nowhere else but in Christianity. The very word was unknown to the ancient philosophers excepting as a synonym of serfdom and slavery; and to have preached humility to the Romans would have been to make oneself ridiculous. This humility was an essential of the Christian life, and without it the search for truth would be fruitless. There must also be in this search the determination to do as well as seek. The best way to judge of a religion was by doing our duty. Christianity was not a set of dogmas, nor even a code of morals but a divine life. 'If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God,' were words which could not be too strongly impressed upon their minds. This was the one plain and simple rule which the Lord had laid down, and as such must be followed.

"The application of all this to the wants of the age was also pointed out. The preacher said you could not have a better illustration of the necessity of Christianity than was to be found in the fact that the men who rejected it and professed to have outgrown it had gone back again to the condition of mankind 1800 years ago. When Paul went to Athens he found the people worshipping the 'unknown God;' and that was exactly what scientific men were doing again to-day. The Tyndalls, Huxleys, and others proclaimed a god that was unknowable; and they were right from their standpoint, for there could be no knowledge of God out of Christ. In Him was the solution of all the problems this age presented. To-day the question was echoed and re-echoed on every hand, 'What is Truth?' The answer was here, 'I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life.' 'What is God?' was a question which philosophy could not answer, which science could not answer, and to which even natural theology could give no reply. The astronomer might tell you of a great Being who created worlds, and framed the universe, and whose infinite existence awed us into silence; but all this was useless to reach the heart. Christ gave the only answer that was of the least possible value to mankind, 'he that hath seen Me hath seen the Father.' The problem presented itself to-day, 'Is man immortal?' and the answer was here, 'I am the Resurrection and the Life.' In the vast turmoil of business, and amongst the thousand cares and anxieties that pressed us down on every hand, we wanted rest, and where was it to be obtained? Here was the answer, 'Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' Around us there was dense darkness, shutting out the bright light of the sun, and obscuring our gaze on every hand; the remedy was here, 'I am the Light of the World.' The soul needed to be satisfied with food, and it had it in the 'Bread of

Life which came down from Heaven.' They were perplexed about the future, and they had this consolation 'In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so I would have told you.' The intense loneliness one felt in the world when friends had proved treacherous, associates and companions had forsaken him, was relieved by the glorious promise, 'Lo! I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world!' And when sin crushed them down, and there appeared to be no escape, there was still the grand proclamation made by John, 'Behold the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world!'"

NIGH AT HAND.

THROUGH mists that hide from me my God, I see
 A shapeless form: Death comes, and beckons me:
 I scent the odours of the Spirit-land:
 And, with commingled joy and terror, hear
 The far-off whispers of a white-robed band:—
 Nearer they come—yet nearer—yet more near:
 Is it rehearsal of a "Welcome" song
 That will be in my heart and ear, ere long?
 Do these bright spirits wait till Death may give
 The soul its franchise—and I die to live?
 Does Fancy send the breeze from yon green mountain?
 (I am not dreaming when it cools my brow.)
 Are they the sparkles of an actual fountain
 That gladden and refresh my spirit now?
 How beautiful the burst of holy light!
 How beautiful the day that has no night!
 Open! ye everlasting gates! I pray—
 Waiting, but yearning—for that perfect day!
 Hark! to these Allelujahs! "Hail! all hail!"
 Shall *they* be echoed by a sob and wail?
 Friends "gone before," these are your happy voices:
 The old, sweet sounds: my very soul rejoices!
 Ah! through the mist, the great white throne I see:
 And now a Saint in Glory beckons me.
 Is Death a foe to dread? the Death who giveth
 Life—the unburthened Life that ever liveth!
 Who shrinks from Death? Come when he will or may,
 The night he brings will bring the risen day:
 His call—his touch—we neither seek nor shun:
 His life is ended, when his work is done.
 Our spear and shield no cloud of Death can dim:
 He triumphs not o'er us—we conquer him!
 How long, O Lord, how long ere I shall see
 The myriad glories of a holier sphere?
 And worship in Thy presence;—not as here
 In chains that keep the shackled Soul from Thee!
 My God! let that Eternal Home be near!
 Master! I bring to Thee a Soul opprest;
 Weary and heavy laden: seeking rest:
 Strengthen my Faith: that, with my latest breath,
 I greet thy messenger of mercy—Death!

S. C. HALL.

Notices of New Books.

MR. G. F. GREEN'S PRIZE ESSAY ON SPIRITUALISM.*

HAVING reviewed Miss Blackwell's Prize Essay in the August number of this Magazine, I wish to try to do equal justice to the second Essay published by the Association.

This Green-tract illustrates in a conspicuous way what in the Blackwell critique had been said about the different way in which woman deals with rational topics. While Miss B. is dabbling with her protoplasmic ancestry in the chaotic primordial mud, and is wavering hither and thither without knowing how to reach the ultimate goal of becoming a luminous spark in the Infinite—the Nirvanah of Rivail's Re-incarnation, Mr. Green establishes, in a sternly logical way, his empyrical stand-point as coinciding with that of the actual Times. He states Spiritualism to be a fact, or a science of facts; and as its facts cannot reasonably be doubted, the simple inference is, that there is a continuation of human personal life in a spiritual world. He thinks that man, as he now is, scarcely could communicate or associate with other spirits than those who are like himself, perhaps a little in advance of him, and thus we cannot expect much light from them. He answers the problem of the Association as if it had asked, what is the effect of a re-established faith in immortality? and as he is a matter-of-fact man, knowing perfectly that people of Old, in some way or other, have believed in a continuity of personal life, without allowing this belief virtually to improve their maxims of life or their line of conduct, he thinks the effect of such restored belief to be rather uncertain. Mr. G. himself appears to belong to that intelligent enlightened class of well-to-do gentlemen who represent the spirit of our age. No assumptions, prejudices, no enthusiastic feelings trouble their brains, in which the acme of reason, *viz.*, sceptical nothingness, and a cool consideration of the casualties of our time, prevails. The spirit who denies won't be caught. This spirit, *blasé*, as it is, could scarcely arrive at another conclusion than Mr. G., who says, "When we form Associations we always try to modify the condition of our social life by some notions and aims beyond present urgent necessity, by regards to something *ideal*, whatever it may be. The unexpected demonstration of a

* *The Probable Effect of Spiritualism upon the Social, Moral, and Religious Conditions of Society.* Second Prize Essay. By G. F. GREEN. London: 38, Great Russell Street.

spiritual existence in future life may suppeditate some further new regards of such an ideal sort. It is likely that common people who do not know the Times—the *ignotum genus plebs* beneath us,—are not equally aware of that surplus of ideal considerations which this regard of a future state affords; but when they perceive that standard-people admit such ideal regards, they, of course, will follow the track of our superiority. This is what we may expect as the real effect of Spiritualism.” And this appears to be the main answer Mr. G. has given to the Association’s questions. The negative sceptic position in which men of worldly experience, of a variety of learning, and even of genius, wrap themselves up, is very common even in the highly cultivated classes. Feeling conscious of their superior intelligence, they, notwithstanding their tolerant indifference to those who think otherwise, valiantly defend themselves against inroads, which might threaten the enjoyment of their quiet, neutral position. They feel themselves in possession of some *natural truth*, and it would be unjust not to suppose that some *natural good* also is present even with those who only admit motives derived from actual natural life, though exclusive confidence in their own prudence and sagacity aims at destroying that good. We might leave them alone. The time is sure to come when the conflicts in life, passions, interests, or adversities, or a state of deeper reflection, invade their neutral ground. Such being the standpoint of super-eminent political and clerical statesmen, of worldly diplomatists and commanding warriors, we cannot wonder if men of science and learning, even of great renown, are caught in the same meshes of sensuous perplexities. We may venture to account for the fact of the adjudication of the two prizes by supposing that the adjudicators occupy a similar position of comprehensive, proper intelligence, which virtually sticks to the external sphere of the senses. The presumed affinity of neutrality as to spiritual truth appears to have won their favour and approbation, and this would probably have secured the first prize to the spiritually void essay were it not that in the mere phantasmagoric imagery of Miss Blackwell’s materialistic exuberance some sort of idealistic compound had been discovered which might fill up the Spiritualistic vacuum without violating the negative sceptic ground. Thence the first prize did remunerate this getting rid of the inanity of spiritual nihilism, while the second prize shows the sympathy with the loneliness of spiritual isolation. I, of course, do not pretend to say that it is so; but, as both the essays move on merely hypothetical ground, I may, in a similar hypothetical way, venture to state my impressions about the state of mind in that sphere.

Having thus in a general way tried to explain the standpoint of this essayist, and to shew the gist and the character of his views as being ideal progress without really moving upward, without leaving the empyrical ground, which, I think so, falsely is called Baconian, we may look at the specialities of the Essay.

The essayist defines Spiritualism to be the science of future life. Would it not be wiser, before establishing a science, to observe and examine, and critically to sift the facts, in order first of all to arrive at a sound, correct notion or knowledge of them, and to avoid a chaotic "*omnium gatherum*" (as Mr. Howitt has it), of dubious, contradictory statements, which are a sore impediment to true science? There is the more reason for going on "*tute et cautè*," because we are aware of a spurious pretension of confining truth to the experience of the external senses. Sticking to the knowledge of nature, or to material principles, is still reputed to be the only true and reliable Science. The human mind being now generally imbezzled into this stupid fallacy—stupid, because it is tantamount to explaining music and harmony as being based in the strings and in the bottom of your violin—we ought to take care not to confound *Spiritualism* with this universally still prevalent would-be science, its mission of the facts being rather to extirpate the faith in this sort of science. The essayist admits that a living faith in the supernatural ought to be the consequence of Spiritualism. Such faith cannot live within the borders of phenomenal observation of nature and matter. Nevertheless the essayist appears to respect these imaginary borders instead of acknowledging that science without spiritual truth and light, working "*per se*" and "*à priori*," its evidence being absolutely independent of the vessel in which it works, is a vain illusion, a frail work of our selfhood produced in order to confirm and corroborate our "*proprium*." From whatever source man derives his external knowledge, whether it is from natural observation or from instruction, from reflecting, or from the letter of the Word, this, his science either elicits and confirms spiritual truth, vivifying germs of spiritual internal conviction in him, or it does not. In the first case science derives real life from its genuine source, and its intellectual form is called Faith; in the latter case spiritual vacuity and nothingness usurps the name of Truth.

The Essay repudiates such empty nothingness. It speaks "of a predominance of the *ideal* over the real, (p. 54.) and of the influence of the scope and truthfulness of the ideal upon the community. (p. 55.) It makes conscience the true basis of religion, (p. 64.) the highest ideal being to seek after truth and practise charity." It would be uncharitable to depreciate the

real working and the efficacy of such ideal views and tendencies. I am happy in feeling persuaded that the essayist, in honestly pursuing his way, is sure to emancipate his mind from the fetters of empirical science ; but his still being bound by these fetters is apparent not only by the inadmissible *vagueness* of his reference to something *ideal*, which has neither form nor distinct shape, nor applicability, but may be arbitrarily interpreted, and in the most contradictory way be asserted to be the very principle in whatever extravagant system or spurious doctrine ; but, if self-evident spiritual truth with its divine everlasting glory had found that embodiment in the essayist's mind, for which it ought to be the inviolable receptacle, he never could have spoken of the Gospel as being "a doubtful message in humanly transmitted dogmas," (p. 63.) or of "the possible fallibility of the Revelator," confounding spiritual messages with the Divine Word. How could he make "the continuance of Christian religion due alone to the acknowledged perfection of its ethical teachings," (p. 47.) or "deride verbal inspiration as absurd," (p. 46.) though he knows that a spiritual ideal never could substantiate itself in external nature without an external letter as its basis. His prediction "of a rapid ultimate extinction of Christianity," (p. 45.) shews that his natural intelligence still is far from conceiving the essentials of spiritual truth. He declares "a revelation of God's will to man to be an impossibility, because it would be incomprehensible ;" (p. 60.) and he *neither* perceives that, by conveying such incomprehensible truth through a humanly speaking external letter, at which he scoffs, spiritual truth is, through increasing vitality, providentially made attainable and accessible, *nor* that the main practical and essential point, the *Will of God*, in the Gospel is made so easily discernible even in its letter, that he himself who rejects that letter, is aware of its showing that Divine Will ! Without entering into further discussions about the real scope and gist of the essayist's vague views, and their conflict with spiritual truth, I only mention the ambiguity of his pronouncing "our ideal of happiness to be the basis of all morality," which ambiguity is not to be got rid of, unless the different kinds and notions of happiness are compared, distinguished and elucidated. I believe satisfactorily to have justified my critique of this essay, and my opinion about its being an unsatisfactory answer to the proposed questions. Its affirming the immortality of man has some value for naturalistic spheres, but the consequences of such restored belief are too feebly traced to be of real value for Spiritualists. Its merit consists in not giving way to such deplorable errors as those which are rewarded with a first prize. We are inclined to autumate that it is the deficiency as to spiritual principles, and

the rejection of their Divine source, or the negative sceptical character in the essay, which has met a remunerating appreciation. Such award is a sign of the still blindly muddling Times, the spirit of which ought to be defeated and repelled by Spiritualism.

DIRCKINCK HOLMFELD.

"THE COMING MILLENNIUM." *

DEMOCRITUS RISU PULMONEM AGITARE SOLEBAT was our *involuntary* mental ejaculation, on reading the title of the above pamphlet. And no wonder! Not only is the word Millennium used to denote the thousand years mentioned in "Revelation," attributed to the spiritually-minded son of Zebedee, when released from Domitian's cauldron of boiling oil, and banished to the Grecian Archipelago, but it is associated rather unpleasantly with all kinds of gratuitous, if not *insane*, doctrines of would-be Millenarians themselves. It is simply monstrous to suppose, for an instant, that the coming reign of Christ, on the planet earth, has aught to do with such an incongruous heap of disordered cerebral action, false prophecies, subjective notions, illusions, delusions—in a word, *dreams*. In common justice to Mr. Frank Starr, however—who kindly favoured us with a copy of the work in question, several months since—we affirm, with much pleasure, that, notwithstanding our unqualified dissent from *some* of the eccentric author's views and conclusions, especially his alleged interview with the "Lord God Almighty," on the fifth morning of his confinement in a lunatic asylum (p. 39), the mysterious figure of a Jew, singularly habited in a turbaned cap, closely folded garment, peculiar girdle fastened round the waist, with *explanatory spirit-voice*, &c.—independently of all these sad blemishes, we repeat, that truth and justice demand from each lover of Humanity, as well as Spiritualism, a fair and impartial examination of many statements with which they cannot but cordially sympathise. For example, what happened to Mr. Starr—who is clearly a developed medium, or instrument of truthful and "lying spirits" (as Scripture says)—may happen, any moment, in certain districts of England, now abounding in rabid anti-Spiritualists, ready to believe in the actual, not alleged unsoundness of mind, of every luckless wight in the whole neighbourhood, that was ever known to credit the fact of Angel-

* *The Coming Millennium; a Special Revelation to Frank Starr, author of Twenty Years of a Traveller's Life, &c.* SMART & ALLEN, Paternoster Row, E.C.

Communion, or, to use their own favourite phraseology, the "*religion of ghosts!*" Such extraordinary illusions are of special psychological interest to the enlightened readers of the *Spiritual Magazine*, since, we opine, they are often associated with soundness of brain, and therefore quite compatible with perfect sanity, mentally and morally. Many world-renowned men have been subject to the same *genus* of false impressions as we think befel Mr. Starr, when temporarily suffering from exhaustion of nervous power, without *obvious* watching, fasting, privation, excitement, or even religious enthusiasm. Transference of profound thought to some organ of sense is, in these cases, involuntary, and beauteous or hideous spectres frequently result. Silvio Pellico is one of many remarkable men that might swell the list of those sons of genius, which already includes the names of Cromwell, Goethe, Cellini, Pascal, Scott, Byron, Shelley, and a host of others, and afford prototypes of those pictures on the *retina*, which dazzle and delude not a few pseudo Spiritualists, or Millenarians, A.D. 1876. At the same time every medical psychologist is fully aware that innumerable specimens of (so-called) natural magic, demonology, witchcraft, Spiritualism, or those spectral illusions due to a MORBID group of nervous symptoms, known to physicians as *mimosi inquieta*, are really illusions of eye and ear, and the fact is often demonstrated by successful medical treatment, which eventually reveals their true nature to sufferers themselves. Of course, persistent human *imagination* has the most overwhelming influence upon emotions and passions, or even the faculties of sensation, perception, comparison, reasoning, and other intellectual operations, affecting body, mind, and spirit, collectively, when morbid sensibility becomes intensified, the propensities and sentiments peculiar to such organic individuality, being inadequately controlled by that soundness of philosophic *judgment*, which belongs to the exercise of scientific logic and mathematics. We had marked several important passages of Mr. Starr's *Coming Millennium* for special quotation on this occasion, but as space presses, we content ourselves with one further remark only, in conclusion, and it is this, *viz.* : to the youngest beginner, as well as to the experienced student in psychology or Spiritualism, the "Special Revelation" to which we have drawn the observer's attention is, with all its defects, both noteworthy and fascinating.

W. HITCHMAN.

OCCASIONAL LEAVES FROM MY NOTE BOOK.

THERE is so little public lecturing done in the hot weather of summer, that during the past two months I have had hardly anything to chronicle in these "Notes." At the end of June I spent a few days with my friend, Mr. Young of Swindon, with a view to get a little relaxation from the arduous labours in which I am generally engaged. On the Sunday that I was there (June 25th) I preached for him in the evening on the subject of "Religion essential to Humanity," the outline of which sermon appeared in our July issue. The congregation was good, and a very long report of the sermon appeared in the *Swindon Express*. During July I have no public work to chronicle.

On Monday and Tuesday, August 28 and 29, I gave two lectures on Spiritualism, at Leigh, in Lancashire, my subjects being the "Claims of Spiritualism upon Public Attention," and "Objections to Spritualism Stated and Examined." These lectures were brought about in consequence of a discussion which had been held in the town between Mr. Mahoney of Birmingham, and Mr. Lees the "ex-medium." Mr. Lees in fact, had been making himself extremely active in Leigh for some time before I went. He had been giving lectures and sham *séances*, and on the whole seemingly driving a rather flourishing trade, although as his *séances* had been mostly failures, a good deal of dissatisfaction was felt by those who at first had taken him warmly by the hand and energetically supported his claims. When I got in the railway at the Victoria Station, Manchester, on the Monday evening, to make my way to Leigh, whom should I see standing on the platform close to the train, but this same celebrated "ex-medium." "Aha!" thought I, "so you are going down with a view to offer opposition at the close of my lecture I suppose. Well, we shall see." Sure enough my anticipations were realised, for when I emerged from the carriage at Leigh, there was also the redoubtable Mr. Lees. Some friends met me at the station, took me to the house of one of them where I had some tea, after which I made my way to the Hall. On mounting the platform I saw the "ex-medium," note book in hand, preparing for an attack as soon as the opportunity should offer. The chair was taken by Samuel Henshall, Esq., of Cheetwood, a gentleman connected with the New Church Society in Peter Street, Manchester.

Before the commencement of the lecture a paper was handed to me containing a preposterous challenge from Lees, setting forth that "Mr. Mahoney having recently failed in a three

nights' debate to prove that Spiritualism is what it is represented by its advocates," I was challenged to discuss the question in the same place where it had suffered defeat, signed of course "Robt. Jas. Lees." Taking no notice of this for the time being I delivered my lecture, which was admirably received by a moderately good, and very intelligent audience. There had been no announcement made that anything like discussion would be allowed, but as soon as the applause had subsided, after I had sat down, up jumped Mr. Lees begging to be allowed to put a question. As I agreed to this, the "ex-medium," with a good deal of swagger said, "Dr. Sexton denies unconscious thinking. I should like to know whether a man doesn't think unconsciously when he dreams, and whether there is not unconscious thinking in the case of the medium in a state of trance?" I replied, "It is quite clear that Mr. Lees has not been thinking, either consciously or unconsciously about the questions that he has put, or he would not have put them. To say that a man is unconscious when he dreams is to say that he is not conscious of his dream; and how, in that case, could he know anything about it? As to the persons in a trance, Mr. Lees knows perfectly well that according to the Spiritualist's theory, they do not think either consciously or unconsciously, their own minds being in a state of abeyance for the time being, and that the thinking that is done through them is effected by another spiritual agent." Mr. Lees then proceeded to announce that he should give a lecture in reply to me during the following week. I remarked that it was hardly gentlemanly for Mr. Lees to come to my lectures and advertise his own. As he had done so, however, I might just refer to the ridiculous challenge which I had received from him—a challenge which commenced with a grand flourish of trumpets about the challenger having defeated Mr. Mahoney. "Now," said I, "I am not quite sure that Mr. Mahoney was defeated. In any case, if he was, I don't think it becomes Mr. Lees to say so; he should leave that to be judged of by the people who heard the debate." I told the audience that I was perfectly ready to meet any representative man, to discuss the truth of my opinions on this or other subjects; but that before I would agree to debate with Mr. Lees, I would put to him a straightforward question, the answer to which I thought would show them that a discussion with him was unnecessary or undesirable. Addressing Mr. Lees, I said, "I find you call yourself an 'ex-medium.' Please tell me in a straightforward way, were you ever a medium or not? Because if you were, Spiritualism is true, and there is no need for us to discuss it; and if you were not, then when you pretended to be one you were an impostor, and therefore, certainly not a man to enter into a discussion with." He got

up and said that the Spiritualists had called him a medium, but that he had never called himself one, or an "ex-medium." I replied, "I have bills in my possession in which you describe yourself as an 'ex-medium;' but you have not answered the question. I don't care what the Spiritualists called you. Were you a medium or not?" Driven thus into a corner he replied that he was a medium, but that Spiritualism was still not true, because the effects that he experienced were not produced by spirits. "Why," said I, "You don't appear to know the meaning of the word medium; you had better go home and consult a dictionary. A medium is the channel through which one agent acts upon another—a vehicle of transmission. If you were a medium and not of spiritual agency, what then were you a medium of?" I need hardly say that I got no reply to this direct question. As I was leaving the Hall, the editor of the *Leigh Chronicle* came up to me, and said, "Look here, that man said, he never called himself an 'ex-medium.' Here is a photograph which he has given me this very night, on the back of which he so describes himself." And sure enough there it was:—"R. J. Lees, ex-medium," in his own handwriting, probably written just before coming to the meeting, where he declared he had never called himself an "ex-medium" at all.

On the following evening Mr. Lees was again present. In this lecture, while dealing with the objections urged against Spiritualism, I took occasion to notice a statement that Mr. Lees had made in the town, but without referring to him personally, to the effect that the lunatic asylums of America were filled to overflowing with Spiritualists, the inference to be drawn from which fact was of course that Spiritualism was a most fruitful source of insanity. I said I would characterise this statement by using the plainest words that I could employ. It was simply an audacious lie. Spiritualists had perhaps furnished a fewer number of inmates of lunatic asylums than any class of people that could be named. A man might of course go mad on the question of Spiritualism as he might on that of religion. Undue and excessive attention to one subject, whatever might be its nature, frequently produced insanity; but the number of Spiritualists who had gone mad was remarkably small. It had been suggested by the chairman at the commencement of this lecture that it would be better to allow Mr. Lees to have ten minutes at the close to say what he had got to say on the subject. I was perfectly agreeable to this and consequently after the lecture, which was most enthusiastically received, Mr. Lees was called upon to give his objections to Spiritualism. When he got up, which he did somewhat reluctantly, he complained that ten minutes was too short a time to deal with so large a question,

but curiously enough he got through all he had to say and sat down before the ten minutes had expired. His principal arguments were that spirits contradicted each other and said what was not true, and that spiritual beings could not act on material things. I replied that I hardly saw how the fact of the messages being contradictory could prove there were no spirits, else the statements made by Mr. Lees would prove that he didn't exist. I fancied that I had seen contradictory statements made, and heard lies told by human beings in the flesh very often, and I did not see why human beings out of the flesh could not be guilty of the same fault. As to the statement that spiritual beings couldn't act on matter, I was certainly very much astonished to hear that assertion from a gentleman who came to that town I believed by the invitation of the Young Men's Christian Association. I might beg to draw their attention to a very old book in which Christians were usually supposed to have some faith, and in the pages of which several accounts would be found of spiritual beings acting directly on matter. There was a case in which an angel rolled back a stone from the door of a well-known sepulchre, and there was a case in which a spirit took Ezekiel by the hair of his head and carried him a long distance to Jerusalem. Several other instances of a similar kind I pointed out as being described in the Bible and asked whether Mr. Lees disbelieved these, and if so what the Young Men's Christian Association thought of him? When I had sat down and the applause which was long and loud had subsided, a gentleman rose, whose name I afterwards learned was Norbury, and stated that he was a member of the Young Men's Christian Association, and in that capacity he begged to repudiate all connection with Mr. Lees, and said that he did not consider the Young Men's Christian Association at all honoured by being associated with such a man. To this I replied that I was very glad to hear it, for as I was myself frequently in the habit of lecturing for Young Men's Christian Associations, and had a very high opinion of the work in which they were engaged, I was sorry to find that they had lent any countenance to such a man as the "ex-medium." On a vote of thanks afterwards being proposed to me it was seconded by Mr. Lees, who proceeded to speak in most eulogistic terms of the lecture I had delivered and of my ability in general, which certainly did strike me as somewhat novel. The lectures were tolerably well attended and were admirably received. A long report of them extending over more than three columns appeared in the *Leigh Chronicle* of the Saturday following.

From the same paper of a week later I learn that Mr. Lees gave his lecture in reply to me, and in doing so indulged in a

good many reckless statements. He said he had seen Dr. Lynn perform feats in every sense "equal to those performed by the Spiritualists, and perhaps superior." This is utterly untrue, and Dr. Lynn has himself again and again admitted to me his inability to do anything more than give a crude imitation of the spiritual manifestations. Dr. Lynn is known to me intimately, he is the cleverest conjuror living, and withal a man of honour and a gentleman; and were he appealed to he would not for one moment defend the preposterous statement made about him by Mr. Lees. But suppose it were so? Does not Mr. Lees see that the argument is as powerful against his own pretended mediumship as against that of the Spiritualists, seeing that he even now claims to get manifestations by some sort of occult power. He denied, too, that Mr. Crookes was a Spiritualist, whereas Mr. Crookes does not hesitate to speak of himself as a believer in Spiritualism, as may be seen from his recent speech at the meeting of the British Association at Glasgow. Of myself personally, Mr. Lees said I was first "a Congregationalist, afterwards an Atheist, and subsequently a Spiritualist," and that consequently I had "changed three times." Now I most certainly never was a Congregationalist unless I might be considered one now, and in the strict sense of the word was never an Atheist. Even if I had, however, it is difficult to see where the three changes can be brought in, since I remain a Spiritualist, and must be considered to have commenced with one of the shades of thought referred to as soon as I was capable of forming any opinion. But if it were true, that I had changed three times, I have yet to learn that that is either a crime or a disadvantage. The statements made in my lecture were wilfully misrepresented. Take the following, which I copy from the *Leigh Chronicle*:—"Dr. Sexton contended that this was the lowest sphere of existence, and that Spiritualism recognized the grand doctrine of progress. At that rate if there were no punishment hereafter, but a system of progress, a man might be a liar, thief or murderer in this world without fear." When and where did I contend for any such preposterous theory as this? I have never stated that the present was the lowest sphere of existence, because I am very far from thinking that it is; and to make me represent that liars, thieves and murderers will share the same fate hereafter as the virtuous and the good is a mendacious calumny. Why, I have been again and again blamed by Progressionalists for speaking so frequently of the hells; and of the reality of these hells I have no kind of doubt whatever. However, I suppose I must take the most charitable view of the question and conclude that Mr. Lees has given himself no trouble to learn what my opinions are. He significantly remarked in his lecture

that "he considered Dr. Sexton's reasoning beautiful, if you could but understand it." Well, I daresay there are many people who could not understand it—a misfortune which all public teachers have to contend with. I supply arguments but can't, unfortunately, furnish my hearers with brains. Amongst other misrepresentations may be mentioned the statement that "Dr. Randolph and Dr. Potter (America) were formerly Spiritualists, but after examining it left it, having found it out to be a delusion." Now, Dr. Randolph died only last year, as firm a believer in Spiritualism as he had ever been in his life. The statement about the lunatic asylums again turns up and Mr. Lees being pressed for his authority falls back upon a reckless assertion of Mr. David King of Birmingham. And upon such evidence as this it is, this man goes about the country repeating false and slanderous statements respecting Spiritualists. Probably if David King were asked for his authority he would refer to Mr. Lees. The Baptist minister who took the chair, has about as strange a notion of evidence as the "ex-medium" himself. He remarked, "As regards Mr. David King, I know him as being second to none as a good Christian, and if we had this statement corroborated by Mr. King, so far as I am concerned I should take it as satisfactory." What would Mr. Wareing think of a person who went through the country slandering the Baptists, and who when asked for the authority upon which he made his statements should refer to some bitter opponent of that denomination. Nor is the truthfulness of Mr. David King all that is requisite in this case, we must know the evidence on which he makes the assertion. Suffice it to say that it is as reckless and false a slander as ever went forth to the world.

On Sunday, September 3rd, I preached two sermons in the Free Christian Church, Swindon, for my friend Mr. Young, who is away from home. The congregations were large, and I think good was done. A long report appeared in the *Swindon Express*, which will be found in another part of the Magazine.

The announcement that I would preach two sermons in the Rev. Dr. Thomas' Church, Clapham Road, on Sunday the 10th, and that I would describe the course of thought which had led me to renounce infidelity and return to Christ, brought large numbers of people together, some of whom came long distances. In the morning the church was well filled, and in the evening it was crowded. I need not here say anything respecting the line of argument that I adopted, as the sermons themselves are published and may be had at 75, Fleet Street. Reports of them appeared in most of the religious papers, the one from the *Christian World* is printed on another page. Some of the secular papers also gave notices, with of course, adverse criticism. In the *Secular*

Chronicle, edited by Mrs. Harriet Law, is an article devoted to the subject, headed "In Church," and commencing, "Little did we think it would ever be our fate to chronicle a discourse of Dr. Sexton's under this heading, at least until the pulpit becomes as free as the secular platform, when we might expect to see him vindicating our principles. But destiny has ordained it otherwise." The article is ably written, and the criticism which it contains fair as far as it goes. It would have been better, however, for Mrs. Law to have waited until she had the discourses in print before she proceeded to discuss them, since she would then have seen that her replies do not meet the question at issue.

Next month I shall be in Lancashire, having to preach on two Sundays at the New Jerusalem Church, Peter Street, Manchester, and on another in the Congregational Chapel, Darwen. On the 29th I shall preach two more sermons in Augustine Independent Church, Clapham, London.

GEO. SEXTON.

London, September 16th, 1876.

DR. SLADE.

DR. SLADE is taking the place so long vacated by D. D. Home. Visible phenomena are seen, not from the pit, box, or gallery of a theatre; at a convenient distance from the operators and machinery to simulate the good and the true, but seen in the ordinary parlour, at an ordinary table without cover. In Mr. Home's case, he refused to take fees, and as a rule the sittings were in the evening in the quiet of domestic life; but in Dr. Slade's case, it is any time during the day, in one of the rooms he occupies at a boarding house. The fee of twenty shillings is charged, and he prefers that only one person be present in the large room he uses. No time is lost; as soon as the visitor sits down the incidents commence, are continued, and in say fifteen minutes are ended. You are then bowed out and the Doctor sits down in the front room waiting the coming of some one else, who doubtless will in his turn, have something like the same phenomena which show that an intelligent ghost with power is at work. The narrative of my personal seeings and hearings will to many be useful.

Dr. Slade and I sat on chairs at an ordinary parlour table. An ordinary school slate was on it which he took up, gave me,

and I passed over it a wetted sponge, so that no writing could be on it. He then placed on it a piece of slate pencil, about the size of a corn grain, and put both under the table with one hand. At once I heard writing. On the sound ceasing, the slate was brought up, and on it was a long message well written and punctuated. That writing was then sponged out, and the corn grain piece of slate pencil was placed *on* the table, the slate over it, Dr. Slade's hand on the slate and mine on his; at once I heard the writing sound as before, and again a message, or rather kindly worded sentence was found clearly written. I was then frequently touched with great rapidity on various parts of the legs, my feet being at the time on Dr. Slade's feet and my hands on his hands on the table. Once during the sitting I saw rise between my knees, up to about my chest, and between me and the table, a hand and wrist. I plainly saw the wrist, the palm and the fingers. It quivered with great rapidity and then disappeared. A vacant chair at the further end of the table moved and rose in the air, and in answer to a question, it again rose and bowed towards us. Of course, no ordinary human being was near it. Music: I asked if any of our spirit-friends could play on an accordeon as I had heard in years gone by. Dr. Slade rose, brought his accordeon, held it by the valve end, and at once there was played the Scotch song "Auld Lang Syne," and there was also played "Home, Sweet Home." They were both well and correctly played. My feet were on his feet, and my hand on his disengaged hand on the table. I saw the instrument moving. I heard the musical sounds; but my eyes were too opaque to see the ghost who had so much musical talent in him, and who so cleverly fingered the keys. Conversation was carried on for a minute or two, and the sitting was closed. Of course the room was light, as it was about one o'clock in the day, and no effort of any kind made to conceal or control the phenomena. Personally I rejoice that the nightmare of dark circles is passing off; that the protests are doing their work; that there are several mediums in England who are now finding the power in the one word—LIGHT.

J. ENMORE JONES,

Enmore Park, *S.E.*

[Since the above was in type we have been to see Dr. Slade, and witnessed on the occasion some very marvellous manifestations. As it was late in the month when we went, we are unable to give a report of what we saw in this number, but will do so in our next issue. In the meantime we have no hesitation in saying that Dr. Slade is the most remarkable medium of modern times.—ED.]

DR. JAMES GARTH WILKINSON ON
RE-INCARNATION.

IN the recent able and profound work of Dr. Garth Wilkinson, on *Human Science and Divine Revelation*, there is a chapter on Re-incarnation, the importance of which, just at the present time, can hardly be over-estimated. Now that this absurd and antiquated fallacy is being revived both in England and America, we cannot do better than introduce to our readers what so eminent an authority has to say on the subject.

Having remarked that Swedenborg has brought the fact of the hells breaking forth to devastate the spiritual life of man into correspondence with common rational thought, Dr. Wilkinson proceeds:—

“The men in the hells have lost such a world of appearances, and are so reduced to their own dimensions; in quitting nature and the natural body they have put off such fatness, and put on such leanness; in being separated from the good and the true they have lost such keen incentives to life; as atheists they miss so much the lusts of their propaganda; and as selfish they lose such golden opportunity of preying upon the innocent and the simple; that it follows of necessity that they burn to emerge, and to be again in their former haunts. Like dens of robbers now in a country where no travellers will come, they tend, by the gravity of their lust, to the former high roads. In a word, the *nisus* of the hells is directed towards the natural world. The prevalent desire may be summed up in *one* word,—*Re-incarnation*. If their soothsayers prophesy to them that in future states a time of happiness will come, the end of prophecy is: Re-incarnation. The “comparative mythologies” of the abyss must end in avatars of their people into nature again. It stands to reason. And Scripture, especially the Apocalypse, is full of attestations of the desire of the hells to burst their boundaries, and pour their lava of lusts upon the earth. If this is an inevitable design in the empire of evil, it is represented in a false faith; and this faith has come upon earth in a formal doctrine of Re-incarnation, preached by sundry spirits to men. The re-incarnation has sometimes come subjectively by demoniacal possession; but the more complete doctrine at present is, that it is effected by a second birth. The spiritual world itself is virtually denied in this, save as a room for a man to turn fairly round in, and come back again as a little child. So that past generations of imperfect, or of evil men and women reappear in the innocent aliases of infants in our nurseries. And up and down, like buckets on a wheel they go continually, from sinner

to his spirit, and from thence to a new-looking baby ; and then through a new lifetime ; and another death and another birth. Here the hells lay hold on the form of innocence, of infancy, as their device for getting back to earth. The doctrine is diabolically true, and that is all that need be said of it. The existence of the hells, and their attempt to ascend, rationally account for it. A bloody infant came up out of the witches' cauldron in Macbeth ; a representative of violated innocence projected from infernal lusts. So also Swedenborg mentions an infernal society which sent forth as an emissary the apparition of such an infant. And as surely as vice wears virtue for a cloak, and violation puts on benevolent smiles, so surely will all the hells desire to wear infancy for their garb ; in other words, desire to be born again in their own way, or to be re-incarnated.

“ In this sense, no man has ever been incarnated, much less, re-incarnated : Incarnation belongs to the Lord alone. No man, as a conscious soul, has ever pre-existed to his body. His spirit awaits him when he dies, to be of quality as his life has been : but it has not been spiritually extant above his flesh in this world, and entered it as a body, as Jehovah was above the human nature, and plenarily entered it. In the finite man new germs of faculties have been given in conception and birth, and from within, on prepared organisms, by spiritual influx meeting the world of sense, have been developed into a mind, which becomes an image of a spiritual mind forming within ; and in this way a new special man is built up from above and from below, and traverses a new career and identity, and becomes a new character determinant of a future. When death takes place the scaffolding is taken from this, and the spirit, which has received form and capacity from it, becomes the conscious man in a second life. This spirit-man is a powerful personality for good or for evil, and his adoption into sonship and angelhood by the Lord, or his reduction into the form of his own selfhood, are then effected as final states. Especially in the latter case, the characteristic form resists change, and cannot be born again, either by regeneration, or by the mode suggested by Nicodemus, of entering again into the mother's womb. The reduction of such a mind, itself the savourless salt of destruction, into its seeds and protomorphs, would destroy its essentials, and its infusion into natural seed, were that possible, would burn up generation in a furnace of evil fire. Nero, not as a hereditary tendency, but as a personal possession in the seed, is impossible : especially since there is no part of Nero that has not had a full chance of regeneration ; no other side to Nero which is not Nero for he has fully murdered his infancy, and can be an infant no more.

"This doctrine, of Re-incarnation, has no support in any field of knowledge; it shows no way of fulfilment; nor has any root but the desire of the worst estate to possess the best; it is a form of infernal lusts, and revolts the human race like the first rumour of a bodily invasion from below. It is as false as it is evil, teaching that little children are old sinners under the mask of childhood, and that their angels do not behold the face of the Lord. This of its deeper grounds. Among the minds here which are fascinated by the doctrine, and connect it with the more innocent mythus of metempsychosis, it is a baseless unagination, if not a spiritual disease, and it ministers confusion to the heart upon the main subjects of affection and hope for the future.

"The doctrine of a second personal appearance of the Lord on earth, derived as it is from the letter of Scripture not spiritually understood, has some relation to this doctrine of the Re-incarnation of men in second mortal bodies. His second coming is not indeed supposed to take place by birth again, but it is a personal natural advent, and under a finite form. The same impossibility occurs here as in the former case, but aggravated. The reason why no man once born here can enter nature a second time, is that he is too large for nature: flesh and blood can hold a mind, and suffer spiritual influences, but they cannot hold a spirit. The reason why the Lord comes by no second personal coming is, that since His conquest over all the hells, and over all the heavens, He is clothed with the spiritual sun, in the midst of which His Divine Manhood lives; and were He to descend thus, even were it but a little descent, He would burn up creation with His ardours. His distance is the exact mathematics of His mercy; His person is mighty beyond universes, and can be seen on no planet by the natural eye. Moreover, He can come by the impartation of a new Divine *truth* which is Himself, and by which he touches all minds; He can come, and has come, to the prepared rational mind of a man, from which His open and guiding light will extend until it fills the world with its glory. This is a second coming in divine wisdom from divine love, oppugnant as a doctrine to a second coming of a divine material form: it is a second coming as the teacher of all things, even sciences, as the one educator of free men."

NOTES AND GLEANINGS.

"THE CHRISTIAN WORLD" ON DR. SEXTON'S SERMONS AT
AUGUSTINE INDEPENDENT CHURCH, CLAPHAM.

A LARGE congregation was attracted to Augustine Independent Church, Clapham Road, on Sunday morning, it having become known that Dr. Sexton would explain the reasons which led to his renouncing infidelity, and accepting Christian truth. The discourse was a careful analysis of modern Atheism, and received additional force, coming as it did from one who so long held a foremost place in the ranks of Scepticism. Dr. Sexton based his remarks on the words, "Without God in the world" (Ephesians ii. 12). It is impossible, said the preacher, for a man, in the strictest sense, to be altogether without God in the world, and the chapter, carefully read, revealed the fact that a man who is out of Christ is without God in the world. The aliens referred to by the apostle were not entirely without God. There are, however, various classes of people in the world who come under the designation of being without God in the world. In the first place, there are those who deny the existence of God altogether. This is a very small sect. Atheism—even were it not absurd, which it is, even though it did not drive us back at every step when we attempt to investigate it—is so opposed to the instincts of man, that it is not likely to make much progress in the world. Human beings, even in a savage, state have a vague notion of the supernatural. Atheism is absurd and irrational, because there must be a cause for every effect. The scientific philosophy of the day says that all nature is simply a manifestation of force, that what is called spirit has no existence, that what is called matter is probably also non-existent, and that all we know is the operation of the forces such as life, heat, light, and motion. Where does this line lead us? The form of force which was in existence first must have been the highest, and have contained within itself all other forces. The highest form of force must be intelligence, and there can be no intelligence without consciousness. Thus we have infinite intelligence and infinite personality, which is only another name for God. The masses of mankind do not deny God altogether, but say He is not a person. If the personality of God is got rid of we merge into Pantheism, and are altogether without God in the world. Another school of men hold that there *may* be a God. This school includes such men as Tyndall and Huxley, and Dr. Sexton himself held the same views for twenty years. Then comes the school of Positivists,

who cannot conceive of God, but are driven to find an object of worship somewhere else. Even Comte, the founder of the school, discovered that everywhere men will worship. There is in the mind of the sceptic a tendency to pray and bow down before a superior power. He (the speaker) had felt this again and again when overwhelmed with trouble, and had almost instinctively cried to God, and then would rebuke himself by saying, There is no God. This shows where human nature would lead us. Comte saw this, and invented a religion known as the worship of humanity in the abstract, whatever that might be. Dr. Sexton said he had a hundred times put the doctrine of the existence of God aside as a closed question, and there would immediately come back in his soul an overwhelming pressure of the problem, compelling him to investigate it anew. The problem is one which demands solution, and cannot be got rid of. The Scientists tell us that law has produced everything, but they never ask themselves, What is this law? There must be behind this phenomenon called law an agent which is capable of producing it, and what they call law may be what men call God. To enthrone God in law, or embody Him in the whole universe, or worship Him in the abstraction, is practically being "without God in the world." What does this being without God involve? The state of mind of the unbeliever is of the most lamentable character, and is full of painful anxiety and doubt. It is of no moment whether there be a God who created the universe ages back; but the great question is, If there be a God, what is the relation man sustains to Him, and what is the duty on the part of man which arises out of this? What man wants is a God he can realise and lay hold of. It is absurd to say Atheists meet death philosophically. To say there is no world to come places man in an inferior position to the brutes of the field. The horror of sinking into non-being had risen before the speaker, till he shuddered at the very thought, and envied the beetle as it crawled along with no aspiration for a future life. The creeping insect did not realise death; wherefore have we been endowed with this longing for another life, if we are to sink into a grave and be forgotten? In conclusion, Dr. Sexton asked, What is the remedy for all this? The apostle explains that being without God is being out of Christ. The man is struck dumbfounded who attempts to realise what God is. We must come to the one grand truth, the truth of truths, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself. That is the only conception of God which is of value to mankind.*—"Christian World," Sept. 15.

* The two Sermons (the one delivered in the evening dealing with the Evidences of Christianity) are published and may be had of G. S. SEXTON, 75, Fleet Street, London, E.C. Price 1s., by post 1s. 1d.

"A MAN IN EARNEST."

The above is the title of a Biography of the Rev. A. H. Conant by the Rev. Robert Collyer, and the work contains some most interesting facts with regard to Mr. Conant's life. He seems to have been a minister who knew how to perform a variety of uses besides that of preaching, and certainly must have been a man worth knowing. In his "Diary" there is a curious blending of the sacred with the secular, as the following extracts will show:—

"Made a plan of a sermon on the Prodigal Son; a pair of quilting frames; and an argument at the Lyceum against capital punishment."

"Read Neander, Made a chair."

"Worked on a sermon. Drew straw."

"Worked on a sermon. Made a partition for the stable."

"Worked on a sermon and drew wood. Snow two feet deep."

"Commenced a sermon and worked in the woods."

"Read Neander. Horse died."

"Read Neander. Mended a pump."

"Wrote on a sermon. Read Neander. Made a wheelbarrow."

"Began a sermon. Planted potatoes."

"Wrote a sermon on Episcopacy. Built an ice house."

"Read the Methodist discipline. Helped my wife to wash."

"Finished sermon and haying."

Correspondence.

THE DISCUSSION IN THE *TIMES* NEWSPAPER.

To the Editor of the "Spiritual Magazine."

SIR,—The following letter was addressed to the *Times* newspaper during the recent discussion on Spiritualism in its columns. It is almost unnecessary to observe that my communication was not accepted, and I therefore beg you to insert it, as it will probably be found to contain some hints which may prove useful in any future controversy.

Yours, &c.,

London, 20th September, 1876.

NEWTON CROSLAND.

"As one of those who, more than 20 years ago, were instrumental in introducing into this country a knowledge of modern Spiritualism, perhaps you will permit me to make a few curt remarks on some of the letters which have appeared in your columns.

"While perusing the communication of Professor Lankester, I was struck with amazement at the superficial, incomplete and flippant style of investigation which he has thought proper to bring to the discussion of a subject of

the gravest importance. If he will devote at least three months to the patient and careful examination of the so-called spiritual phenomena, his opinion of them, after such a spell of attentive labour, will then be entitled to some respect.

"He tells us that the 'first message' received was exceptional, and 'he believes' that it was written with one finger of Dr. Slade's hand. We desire to know in what respect this first message was 'exceptional,' and we want facts, not 'beliefs.' He paid 'no attention to the raps,' although in the absence of any accurate observation on this point, he does not hesitate to state that they 'were produced by the medium's legs and feet.' He 'simulated an ardent belief' in the manifestations, apparently not being aware that to attempt to play tricks with the spirits is precisely the most effectual mode of inviting the presence and co-operation of a mischievous class of spirits who deceive the investigator and even the medium also. The character and disposition of the ruling persons at a *séance* determine the character and disposition of the spirits who are attracted by an affinity of nature. The presence of an important and potent fool will sometimes throw the manifestations into the most hopeless state of nonsensical disorder.

"With regard to Mr. John Algernon Clarke I am at a loss to know why his letter was written, as it proves nothing in particular, except that he was one of the inventors of that mysterious toy 'Psycho.' He appears to have been so unfortunately situated that he was unable to observe the phenomena thoroughly, and he found 'it impossible to see' how they were produced; nevertheless with characteristic acumen he feels himself justified in arriving at the conclusion that they were the result of trickery; and, without any proof, he assumes that the slate was a 'trick-slate,' and the table a 'trick-table.' If this style and temper of investigation are 'scientific method,' what, I should like to ask, is 'scientific folly?'

"Mr. Clarke thinks and states that he succeeded in playing off a trick upon the medium by writing on the slate a 'fictitious name,' and that the initials of such name, 'M. W.,' were afterwards found rudely scrawled on the other side of the slate, whereupon Mr. Clarke crows mightily over what he considers to be the discomfiture of the medium. Here I would venture to suggest that Mr. Clarke was mistaken, and that he did not, as he fancies he did, invent the 'fictitious name.' If a spirit were present it might inspire its name into the mind of the investigator, and also through a medium be able to produce its own veritable initials on the slate.

"This kind of manifestation is among the most elementary and vulgar of the spiritual phenomena. It is rather unfortunate for the process of arriving at any sound conclusions on the subject, that these phenomena do not at first readily lend themselves to the ordinary methods of scientific inquiry; but after months of toil, the investigator will be rewarded for his pains by attaining a knowledge of the most special and surprising revelations which have ever been vouchsafed to the world. Super-nature, like nature, will not disclose her secrets to every curious, idle and unqualified questioner of her mysteries. He who has once become familiarized with the higher phenomena of Spiritualism would regard such an incident as the 'apparition at Lourdes,' as too common-place an affair to make a fuss about."

MATTER, SPIRIT AND SPIRITUALITY.

To the Editor of the "Spiritual Magazine."

SIR,—The noblest of men and greatest philosophers from Democratus "the father of experimental philosophy," to Bacon "the father of inductive philosophy," have all referred to matter as the cause and source of all phenomena whatever, and if we believe that this matter was the creation of a wise, benevolent, and almighty being, it is sheer blasphemy to speak of it as too many still do; and I do all I can to shame them from such folly and uncritical thought. And when we find that our greatest poets have held the same view in respect to matter as Democratus and Lord Bacon, it should make us reflect and pause before

we disparage nature, and the nature of things as we do. I will ask you then to allow me to follow up those lines from Milton, with a noble passage from Shakespeare's philosophical play of *Timon of Athens*:—

Timon. "Common mother, thou, (*digging*)
 Whose womb unmeasurable, and infinite breast,
 Teems, and feeds all; whose self-same mettle,
 Whereof thy proud child, arrogant man, is puff'd,
 Engenders the black toad and adder blue,
 The gilded newt and eyeless venom'd worm,
 With all the abhorred births below crisp heaven
 Whereon Hyperion's quickening fire doth shine;
 Yield him, who all thy human sons doth hate,
 From forth thy plenteous bosom, one poor root!
 Ensear thy fertile and conception womb,
 Let it no more bring out ingrateful man!" &c.

Ingrateful indeed! and I would have men reflect on their ingratitude towards our "Common mother"—the substance—the wondrous source from which all things spring, and by which all things are supported and nourished. And again let them reflect that in spirit and in truth the belief in "spirit" and in spirits is not necessarily Spirituality, nor their idle and uncritical thoughts heaven's truth. And as Plato said, "Truth is the body of God, and light is His shadow," then, according to Plato, in knowledge and truthfulness we have both worship and religion, when in the view of the elevation of the human fall. Sydney Smith finely said, "Add to the power of discovering truth, the desire of using it for the promotion of human happiness, and you have the great end and object of our existence. This is the immaculate model of excellence that every human being should fix in the chambers of his heart; which he should place before his mind's eye from the rising to the setting of the sun—to strengthen his understanding that he may dissect his benevolence, and to exhibit to the world the most beautiful spectacle the world *can* behold—of consummate virtue guided by consummate talents." This is Spirituality indeed! and without which all else is but as the sounding brass, and tinkling cymbal—nay, their very faith may cause men to commit the greatest brutalities, as we see in what is now going on in the East—the value of a thing is not in our fancies about what it is, but in the fact of what it does and effects.

HENRY G. ATKINSON.

HYMNS FOR THE SPIRITUAL CHURCH.

DAY BY DAY.

<p>THE day glooms dark, yon threatening cloud In pent-up fury black and large, The foremost of a gathering crowd, Hangs heavy on the horizon's marge. How changed from yesterday the view? The fleecy landscape of the sky, Like floating islets in a blue Translucent sea, went sailing by.</p>	<p>So chequered is our mortal life, Dark cloud and sunshine alternate; To-day the sky with portent rife, Lowering, and bleak, and desolate. The morrow comes, and lo! the morn In joy leads forth the laughing hours; Nature is once again new-born, Her life and gladness all are ours.</p>
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And when the stars troop forth at night,
 How welcome the sweet hour of rest!
 Alike in darkness and in light,
 Our loving God is manifest!

T. S.