SUPERNATURALISM EXPLODED

IN A REVIEW OF THE FAMOUS SIX NIGHTS' CONTROVERSY

BETWEEN THE REV. BREWIN GRANT, CHRISTIAN, AND GEORGE JACOB HOLYOAKE, SECULARIST.

BY CHARLES SOUTHWELL,

First editor of the 'Oracle of Reason,' author of the 'Difficulties of Christianity,' the 'Impossibility of Atheism Demonstrated,' &c.

This is a little book with a large aim. The reader, whether he be Christian or Secularist, Pagan or Jew, will find in these pages some startling truth and very curious materials for thinking.

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EXTRACTS FROM THE

IMPOSSIBILITY OF ATHEISM DEMONSTRATE

By Charles Southwell.

Every man is an Atheist if Atheism consists in the rejection other men's opinions concerning some supernatural and therefo unknown being. Not one of us will deign to accept all the Go that men have preached. Deities worshipped on the shores of t Ganges find no favour on the banks of the Thames.

> The poor Indian, whose untutored mind
> Sees God in clouds and hears him in the wind,

would be shocked at the idea of a God who submits to be nail upon a cross, and even eaten by his worshippers; and yet we he much talk of such substantial Deity among Christians who profe to believe in him. To their God then the poor Indian is atheis just as, and only just as, they are atheists to his; the term Athei meaning absolutely nothing, except upon the hypothesis that t word God means absolutely something. But as no one can *t* what it means, it may fairly be concluded that no one *knows* wh it means. Now, to charge upon any person the impossible crir of being without what no one knows or can more than guess t existence of, is monstrously foolish; yet Atheism is a term of r proach amongst us, as if it really meant something, as if any o man could be more or less Atheist than any other, or as if any us could be reasonably accused of being without Gods, until wh Gods are shall be made reasonably intelligible.

An unintelligible doctrine is what no man should preach; unintelligible doctrine is what no wise Freethinker will comba Unless at heart and by profession a mere stump-orator he w turn with disgust from controversies which mean nothing but ra and fustian sound and fury. Until Freethinkers very clearly s so much, priests may deride, and flout, and abuse, and make mout at them with impunity. There will be hope for the fine old Fre thinking cause when Freethinkers shall come to a right unde standing among themselves. Yes; a right understanding is o best bond of union.

REVIEW OF A CONTROVERSY

BETWEEN

The Rev. Brewin Grant and C. J. Holyoake,

IN THE

COWPER STREET SCHOOL ROOM,

CITY ROAD,

On the question 'What Advantages would accrue to Mankind generally, and to the Working Classes in particular, by the removal of Christianity and the substitution of Secularism in its place?'

BY CHARLES SOUTHWELL,

First Editor of the 'Oracle of Reason,' Author of the 'Impossibility of Atheism Demonstrated,' &c., &c.

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PRINTED BY THE PHILPOT STREET SECULARIST ASSOCIATION FOR THE DIFFUSION OF KNOWLEDGE.

REVIEW OF A CONTROVERSY.

MANY earnest and profoundly speculative thinkers object to Christianity on the ground that a knowledge of supernaturals is unattainable by man. Their theory ignores positive religion as neither more nor less than positive delusion; it denies the possibility of supernatural belief or (to vary with some advantage the mode of expression) the possibility of belief in the supernatural; it pronounces absurd any and every attempt to teach what no mortal *can* know; and, assuming that religion is religion because not science, accepts science as something based upon facts cognizable by human intellect while rejecting religion as something incapable of proof and, at best, ignorance reduced to system. This theory makes open war upon religion whenever religion is palmed off as science by an ignorant or a venal priesthood. Its advocates believe that religion may be true in a non-natural sense. In any other sense they believe it false. To their eyes written or spoken religion is written or spoken blasphemy. Religion, say they, is quite other than matter of fact in source and essence. Worldliness and *other*-worldliness are by these 'incorrigible' people placed in the same category. Nothing our parsons preach—nothing our parsons do—for one moment disturbs their conviction that as regards supernaturals all our wisest of wise men know amounts to very positive knowledge that they know nothing. Pertinaciously they foot it year after year on the 'broad path' heeding not the voice of our sacerdotal charmers charm they never so wisely concerning unknown Being and unknown states of Being. Their text is—*Organised supernaturalism and organised error are one and indivisible.* To that text they stick with wonderful tenacity. Although numerically weak their power to da-

mage time-honoured superstitions is considerable. Amid the ever surging, often tempest-tost, waves of popular passion and popular phrensy they stand like everlasting rock. Their strength lies in the profoundest possible conviction that Christians, no less than other religionists, do literally search for unsearchable riches, and in their wild-goose chase after unattainable truth are mad as that visionary enthusiast who undertook a 'Three Years' Mission' in search of his own soul. Moreover, they are thinkers, 'with power to add to their numbers'—a power they freely exercise. They are every day beating up for recruits and every day obtaining them. In writers and orators of every positive school they find recruiting sergeants. Their best friends are parsons with 'an itch for dispute,' because controversy ever tends to discredit positive religion by exhibiting in a clear point of view and very bold relief the hollowness of its assumption, the traditional character of its history, the incomprehensibility of its principle, the senselessness of its jargon, and the insolence of its ministers.

Evidence of this is at hand. I have it tantalizingly profuse in the published report of a recent discussion between the Rev. Mr. Grant and Mr. Holyoake. My review of that controversy will at least prove the folly of those Christians who insist upon ventilating opinions which, born of ignorance and rooted in error, are naturally disturbed by every wind of free and enlightened opinion. With a disposition to be brief it is nevertheless my determination to be just—just to the disputants—just also to myself.

Now, doing justice 'all round' in respect of this controversy in which the controversialists, both undeniably good talkers and one of a school very 'fast,' disputed for six nights on at least sixty subjects, is a task the due performance of which will render indispensable more words than may be agreeable to some readers who like information and 'saving wisdom,' but are disappointed when they find that these, like many other good things, are only obtainable 'under penalties.' No controversy of modern times has a better claim to our attention, whether we consider the topics discussed, the manner in which they were handled, or the character of the disputants. Both claim to be considered 'victor'—a result quite natural. It is seldom one meets with a controver-

sialist who thinks he is beaten, and a controversialist who will publicly acknowledge himself so, still more seldom. I have seen an account of certain controversialists who, in the course of a debate, were reciprocally converted, each defending at its close precisely the principles he had denounced at the outset—but the story is apocryphal. We all know that they who engage in a dispute are the very last persons to be changed by it. Neither Mr. Grant nor Mr. Holyoake can be cited as examples to the contrary. As they commenced so they ended—Mr. Holyoake quite satisfied with Secularism, and 'willing to be judged by a fair report of the controversy'—Mr. Grant quite persuaded that he had blown Secularism to the four winds of Heaven (which in one sense he unquestionably has), and expressing his readiness for another contest with his formidable antagonist. Of the two it must be confessed that Mr. Grant was by much the more confident and self-satisfied looking; and I happen to know that he 'counted spoil' long 'before the field was won.' While this great controversy was pending he went to Walthamstow, and there delivered a lecture in which he assured his delighted audience that two-thirds of the Report would consist of his speeches, he having talked just three times as fast as Mr. Holyoake, whom he had killed outright—and *would do it again*. In a talent for vain-glorious boasting it must be allowed that Holyoake is no match for Grant. Their respective partizans exhibit a like marked difference of spirit. Only a few of the Secularists seem thoroughly satisfied. They all admit the ability of their champion—they admire the cool dignity of his bearing—but very many dispute the wisdom of his tactics, and consider that though the discussion will have a decidedly rationalistic and humanizing tendency Secularism is still an enigma to the general public. On the whole, however, it may be said that, considering the line taken by each disputant and the difficulties appertaining to their several systems, neither Secularists nor Christians have reason to be ashamed of their champion. Mr. Holyoake astonished many—myself amongst the rest—by a combination of wit and eloquence rarely if ever surpassed. He seemed thoroughly in earnest. There was no straining after effect—no vulgar claptrap—no semblance

of cant—no truckling to prejudice—no paltering in a double sense. In tone and spirit his discourses were infinitely superior to those of his clever antagonist. He was sarcastic without rudeness and impassioned without affectation. Occasionally he enlivened by brilliant sallies, and ever and anon spread pallor over the face of his antagonist by satire so airy and delicate, yet cutting, that though one might say 'it was like a polished razor keen,' no one could believe it 'scarcely felt or seen.' While discussing the Atonement he fairly rose to the height of his great argument, and created such a *furor*, that for some time poor Grant was extinguished—put quite and very lamentably *hors de combat*. But it is true nevertheless that very many even of those Secularists who approved the general tactics of their chief watched the contest with evident uneasiness, and at its close muttered audibly their dissatisfaction. They thought that the 'rising young minister' deserved a sound castigation, and that sparing the rod was not good policy. Christians, on the other hand, are heaping no end of praises on Mr. Grant, who, according to the *British Banner*, is a 'terrible antagonist.' In him I see very much to admire. The 'rising young minister' is no ordinary man. Amid all the excitement of this controversy he was cool, wary, and self-possessed, discussing an orange *or* Mr. Holyoake with resolute purpose and a fine sense of enjoyment. The *Banner* may well call him a 'terrible antagonist,' for he denounced Secularism and Secularists in a style which showed him terribly in earnest. Less reckless than *Brindley* he is quite as bitter and much more skilful. What he says he means and what he means he says. A desperately hard hitter, when he does plant a blow the effects are obvious enough. To rank him with Woodmans and Townleys would be unjust. What Walter Scott said of the imitators of Dr. Johnson will apply to the mob of Christian advocates who preceded Mr. Grant, for although many of them make his *reports* not one of them carries his *bullet*. Secularists think lightly of him, but Secularists, like other sectaries, are apt to underrate opponents. Nothing more rare than just appreciation of those who oppose us. I suspect, however, that many Secularists thought that catching Mr. Grant was very like

catching a Tartar. But whatever may be thought by Secularists of the 'rising young minister' his own party consider him shrewd, clever, bold, unvanquished, and unvanquishable. If Mr. Grant, like Themistocles—another great man—loves best the voice which most loudly sings his praises, he will be at a loss on which of all his noisy admirers to bestow supreme affection. When such prints as the *Christian Times*, the *Patriot*, and the *British Banner*, agree, their unanimity is wonderful. Now, those organs are unanimous in pronouncing Mr. Holyoake 'a very superior man, with great oratorical powers;' and Mr. Grant incomparably superior to said 'very superior man with great orstorical powers.' They talk triumphantly of their *razzia* in the territory of Secularism. They say their 'terrible' champion disposed of never so many Secularists no less effectually than did Pelissier of the miserable Arabs whom he stifled in the caves of Dara. On the strength of their 'great victory' many a Christian whose 'name' until now 'was never heard' in connection with mundane affairs is preaching up the 'Secular Aspects of Christianity.' No less than thirty-eight discourses on that interesting subject were delivered on the evening of Sunday, February 27th, by as many preachers in various parts of the metropolis *alone*. They will allow Mr. Holyoake is king of debate, modestly stipulating for nothing more than that Mr. Grant shall be viceroy *over* him. So great is the noise made by these people that one is tempted to suspect their sincerity; for had a decisive victory been obtained by their 'terrible' hero there would have been no occasion so noisily to proclaim it, and all the world knows that loud boasting is frequently resorted to by the friends of a damaged cause for the same reason that the cunning pickpocket will cry 'Stop thief!' while the crowd are in hot pursuit. Thus much, however, is certain: by both disputants, and by friends of both disputants, the honors of this controversy have been claimed. In consequence there is much of confused, feverish and unsettled opinion as to what has been gained or lost by either party in a contest which, however meagre as to results, will constitute an epoch in the history of mystical speculation, and has caused an excitement scarcely equalled as regards enthusiastic

intensity since the memorable discussion between Pope and M'Guire.

Under these circumstances I feel that a cool, searching, impartial piece of criticism may be useful to the partizans of both disputants, and possibly to the disputants themselves. My sympathies, I confess, are with Secularists, and that circumstance may, in the eyes of certain Christians, disqualify me for this self-imposed task of severe, yet thoroughly impartial criticism; but then I am tabooed alike by Secularists and Christians—certainly am not one whom the promised Board of Examiners would deem orthodox, or a man at all inclined to sink the critic in the sectary. Daniel Defoe's 'short hint to impartial writers' is fresh in my memory, and that the reader may know how fully it is appreciated, nothing more is necessary than just to say that for undertaking this piece of criticism I expect no better reward than may proceed from conscious rectitude, and 'martyrdom on both sides.'

The proposition which served as basis of this great controversy —the proposition to which every argument had reference, and on the truth or falsehood of which much, if not everything, depended, was, I believe, drawn up by Mr. Grant, and without doubt placed Mr. Holyoake at a disadvantage. Throughout the debate it hampered him grievously. If Mr. Grant framed it, all I can say is that he showed himself a master in the art of obliging opponents by framing propositions no wit of man could logically defend. This proposition, or question rather, is textually as follows:

WHAT ADVANTAGES WOULD ACCRUE TO MANKIND GENERALLY, AND TO THE WORKING CLASSES IN PARTICULAR, BY THE REMOVAL OF CHRISTIANITY AND THE SUBSTITUTION OF SECULARISM IN ITS PLACE?

These are precisely the terms of the general proposition or topic selected for discussion, with which it appears that Mr. Holyoake was ill satisfied, for in the course of a second speech on the second night he declined 'being held responsible for the extravagance implied in a literal interpretation of the words of the proposition.' Now, it did appear to me that a proposition so momentous—a proposition on which, as on a pivot, the whole controversy might be expected to turn, ought not to have implied any extravagance,

however 'literal' the interpretation. Having to deal with a casuist who knows the value of terms, and is given to an ingenious splitting of something infinitely less than hairs, Mr. Holyoake should have stoutly refused to discuss a general proposition so *very* general as to imply an amount of 'extravagance' for which he was not prepared to be 'responsible.' Of course both parties agreed in the selection of that question which formed the topic at once fundamental and pivotal of a six nights' debate; not, however, until after a correspondence which threatened to be eternal, and dragged its slow length so drearily along that readers of the *Reasoner*

'Uttered doleful groans,
And printers' devils shook their weary bones.'

If it be true that—

'One drop of ink
Makes thousands think,'

the correspondence will be marvellously prolific of thoughtfulness, for the expenditure of ink was enormous. Controversialists who are in earnest seldom consume half a year and whole reams of foolscap in the discussion of preliminaries. Where truth is their *sole* object they speedily come to close quarters. Our Cowper Street controversialists are both open to the charge of *finessing* a little and *mystifying* a great deal. The grand result of their clever 'beating about the bush' was a proposition for discussion so vague and general in its terms that one of the disputants declined to be responsible for anything so extravagant as is implied in a literal interpretation thereof. Grant being 'a rising young minister,' with 'a position to win' by the error which 'lurks in generalities,' is excusable. When Voltaire was shown a lyric epistle, by Rousseau, addressed to posterity, the cruel wit said—'*My friend, I am afraid this letter will never be delivered according to its direction.*' The ambitious and 'rising young minister,' about to start on a 'Three Years' Mission,' had everything to gain and nothing to lose by a long-winded epistolary correspondence, which is most evidently not addressed to posterity but to 'live Christians,' whom it *will* reach 'according to its di-

rection.' Being beguiled into this worse than idle correspondence was, on Mr. Holyoake's part, a grave error, that Grant triumphantly referred to during the debate, for the double purpose of lauding himself and bewildering his antagonist. Had it eventuated in the selection of a proposition so framed as to admit but of *one* interpretation, it would scarcely have been worth while to say one sentence regarding it. But the proposition actually discussed was objectionable on many grounds other than those already indicated. So ill-worded a proposition rendered it absolutely imperative that Mr. Holyoake should take up a defensive position, and, as it were, submit to be put upon his trial. Now, I allow that in the kind of warfare we call *physical* a defensive position is almost always the safest—attacking parties, in a large majority of instances, attacking at disadvantage. But in the *mental* contest—that contest in which principles are vanquished or victorious—we should take the lead, make the first onslaught, and instead of volunteering explanations of *our* principles compel opponents to explain *theirs*. On the Christian side there have been many writers, some of them rather voluminous—like Peter D'Alva, who published forty-eight folios on the 'Mysteries of the Conception;' others very precise—like Chevreau, who, in his 'History of the World,' tells us it was created the sixth of September, on a Friday, about four o'clock in the afternoon; but up to this hour no writer has succeeded in explaining the supposed principles of Christianity. Until they *are* explained, and satisfactorily too, it is worse than idle to assume in debate with 'rising young ministers,' self-styled Christian—very wrong to tolerate the assumption that any one *can* know and therefore *may* explain—what Christianity is. Our Grants and Woodmans are ready enough to take it for granted that Christianity is intelligible, but they cannot prove it so. Compel them to make the attempt, and at once not their positive but their weak side 'turns up.' No human thought can reach to supernaturals. Hence the folly, or rather the impossibility, of a positive religion with bases no better than is afforded by principles positively unintelligible. Unintelligibility seems a queer foundation on which to build an intelligible system. Now, the fact is that no religion, as such, can be intelligible.

Its ‘ central belief ’ is sham, not real. We are told, indeed, that Divine perfection is the *rationale* of human virtue; but where are the teachers to teach in what ‘ Divine perfection’ consists? If promoters of the ‘ Three Years Mission’ can tell us the meaning of ‘ Divine perfection,’ then their three years’ mission may be accomplished in three days; but if they can’t, three centuries will not suffice for its accomplishment. Satisfied of human incompetency to explain or in any sens ender intelligible any one ‘ religious principle,’ it seems to me that ‘ attempting the removal of Christianity,’ until we know what Christianity is being a hopeless task Mr. Holyoake played Grant’s game in committing himself to its performance. The ‘ rising young minister’ not being pushed for a definition of his nominal creed warily kept any such definition to himself. At one part of the debate he seemed to be growing reckless, and so far laid aside prudence as to lecture Mr. Holyoake on the inexpediency of wasting our breath in talking of things with respect to which we have no idea. Ah ! friend Grant, that was the height of imprudence on your part, for had your opponent been so minded he might have retorted that all talk concerning supernaturals — yea, all talk concerning the God of your idolatry is talk of nothing, and therefore means nothing—and meaning nothing, is breath wasted. Methinks the ‘ rising young minister’ would have found it hard to reconcile a profession of faith in Christianity with his dogma concerning the expediency of ceasing to assert when we cease to have ideas. That any finite being can have any ideas of an ‘ infinite’ God it would be ridiculous to suppose. We cannot think of more than the natural, and *according to Mr. Grant’s own showing;* ought never to speak of more than the natural. Because religion is quite other than science any approach to positivism in religion is to be deprecated. Instead of undertaking to ‘ remove Christianity’ Mr. Holyoake could, with great propriety and effect, have demanded that Christianity should be rendered intelligible. He ought to have put Grant on the defensive, and forced from him a recognition of the grand truth that though belief in the utterly incomprehensible may be professed, may be preached up and about as the ‘ central belief ’

of every 'religious system,' no such belief is possible to man, who can only believe what in some way or other operates upon his organs of sense. They who imagine a confessedly incomprehensible God can be *thought* as well as *spoken* of are well refuted by Dr. Benson. *To assent, without comprehending*, observes the Doctor, *is to assent without ideas, to assent without ideas is to assent to nothing, and to assent to nothing is as good as not to assent at all.*

It is precisely because Secularism 'implies' positivism in religion that the Secularist disputant must defend his own 'system,' instead of demolishing the 'system' of his adversary, and plead for principle like a criminal in the dock rather than pronounce upon principle like a judge on the bench. A controversialist without 'system' could not have been called upon, as Mr. Holyoake was, to defend his 'system,' by proving the benefits of Secularism were really such that they were the logical results of his principles, and were 'retarded by Christianity.' The weak side of a doctrine is its positive side. In all contests with the *parti-prêtre* concerning 'spiritual things,' we should decline being dragged into the defence of any positive principles but insist upon those who positively assert furnishing positive evidence in support of their assertions. The only positive declaration that a wary tactician will commit himself to is the declaration that positive truth concerning more than natural Being or Power is positively unattainable, and that they who affect acquaintance with such positive truth are dogmatic errorists, whose 'system,' being founded upon positive assumption and *nothing else* crumbles to dust before the faintest blow of reason.

These views were undesignedly, but with great effect, illustrated in the Cowper Street controversy. Every argument urged, whether by Christian or Secularist, was confirmatory of the opinion, enforced in my 'Impossibility of Atheism Demonstrated' and *other* Fourpenny Wilderness, that *they who pretend to teach religion show themselves ignorant of its source and essence.*

There is one matter with respect to which both disputants agreed, and with respect to which I am with both disputants at issue. This single point of contact—this sole ground of a com-

mon conclusion, as between our controversialists, being vastly important, and involving inconsistency on the part of Mr. Holyoake, may as well be disposed of before I pass to a consideration of arguments mainly relied upon by Grant in the advocacy of his supernatural system.

Both talked much concerning 'virtue,' though in what virtue consists, or in what particular sense (if any) they used the term, was not quite clear. Possibly the virtuous man of Mr. Grant might be a quite different sort of animal to the virtuous man of Mr. Holyoake. Voltaire, in his critique or prophecy of *La Nouvelle Heloise*, quizzes the author of that marvellous work for making St. Preux and his mistress talk so much of philosophy and virtue, that 'nobody shall know what philosophy and virtue are.' I design not to quiz the Cowper Street 'gladiators,' but certainly their contest, though prolific of fine phrases concerning virtue, left us to determine for ourselves in what virtue consists, and left *me* under the disagreeable impression that a good time is fast coming when 'nobody shall know what virtue is.' However, let us be thankful to Messrs. Grant and Holyoake for distinctly proving 'there is nothing so virtuous as virtue,' though we be left in the dark in respect to the *meaning* of 'virtuous' and 'virtue.'

But in whatever sense our disputants used the word virtue, they agreed in considering a virtuous course in this life ought favourably to influence our destiny in another. Grant contends for faith as well as works. Holyoake that good works without faith will surely be sufficient. The Secularist leader despises a theory which condemns a man to eternal torments on account of his misbelief, while tacitly accepting a theory which implies the punishment of man in eternity for his misconduct in time. Strange that any one should be a necessitarian, and fail to perceive that conduct is as much necessitated as belief! Strange that a reasoner who tells us 'sinfulness is inherited or acquired,' that 'if inherited, it is our misfortune and not our fault,' should also tell us his 'serious objection' to the Christian plan of salvation is that 'it made salvation' to depend on a 'special faith and not on works!' Strange that he should declare 'faith is not in itself a

virtue,' and immediately after say 'therefore it would be much more useful to have made salvation depend on works which are more or less at the command of all men!'

The doctrine of necessity is no less incompatible with the notion of eternal salvation through works than eternal salvation through faith. A consistent necessitarian necessarily concludes that an Omnipotent, Prescient, Wise, and Perfectly Just God, who created ALL, could not, without the grossest absurdity as well as most monstrous violation of justice, punish ANY. Amongst men the distinction between faith and works—between error in thought and error in action—is admissible. We are obliged sometimes to reward—sometimes to punish. Even praise is a sort of reward, just as blame is (with exceptions doubtless) a real, often a severe, punishment. Reward and punishment are useful circumstances. I see not how, without them, society would be possible. Crimes *against* society must be avenged *by* society although legislators may believe, with Lady Morgan, that crimes are committed in pre-assignable proportions, and that it is possible to predict the next year's crop of criminals with a closer approximation to absolute accuracy than the next year's crop of oats. When Mr. Holyoake says, 'If works do not save us, they ought,' he forgets that a man can no more help working than he can help thinking, and therefore 'God' might as justly praise us on account of opinions as on account of actions. To deny our responsibility for belief, while admitting our responsibility for conduct, is illogical and absurd. Neither by action nor opinion can we disturb Almighty wisdom. Mr. Holyoake lost sight of that important truth when he talked of the virtuous having 'nothing to fear from God.' Mr. Grant, who does not appear ever to have had a glimpse of it, so far confounded the relations of man to man with his relations to a supposed Creator as to institute a comparison between Jehovah and Lord Campbell, justifying our condemnation in the Court of Heaven by reference to the condemnation of culprits in the Court of Queen's Bench. '*Lord Campbell had recently passed a sentence because it was his painful duty to pass it; not, however, out of any feeling of revenge to the criminal, but for the good of society.*' It did not occur to Mr. Grant that an earthly judge has

no hand in creating the culprit he condemns. Did Lord Campbell pass sentence on criminals of his own making—criminals his own legislation rendered criminals—the cases of human and divine justice would be parallel. God, we are told, created the sinners whom it becomes his 'painful duty' to eternally punish. And surely there is something rather absurd in the supposition that any duty can be 'painful' to a passionless God. If the duty *were* painful would God perform it? Allowing that Lord Campbell sits in judgment upon criminals 'for the good of society,' it followeth not that society can in any way be benefited by the eternal punishment of sinners. What his lordship will think of being compared to Almighty God I presume not to say. A comet appearing just as Cardinal Mazarine was about to die, some of his flatterers assured him that the comet appeared in pure respect for so extraordinary a personage. '*Gentlemen*,' said Mazarine, '*the comet does me too much honor*.' Probably Lord Campbell may be of opinion that our 'rising young minister' does him *too much honor* in reducing Almighty God to the dimensions of a Chief Justice even though said Chief Justice presides in the Court of Queen's Bench.

Mr. Holyoake, who can say, after Cicero, '*Postpono famæ pecuniam*' (I postpone money to fame), might have been expected publicly and at once to have strangled this most flagrant of all the sophisms hazarded by his wily and unwise opponent. But although noticed, comparatively little good use was made of it. The Secularist leader having committed himself (so far as words went) to the fallacious hypothesis that for our actions though not for our opinions we can justly be amenable to 'Divine judgment,' had no firm place on which to plant his foot, and under blows rained upon him by a fast hitting antagonist, rolled to and fro, as we are told the earth *will* do 'when the frame of things disjoints.'

I have said Grant is a brave disputant, and unquestionably he merits praise to that extent; for after likening the Creator of Heaven and Earth to a Chief Justice of the Court of Queen's Bench—after elaborately *proving* that Lord Campbell is as well able to prevent the commission of crime as Almighty God—that justice in Heaven will be administered by the Lord Chief Justice

there with the same painful feelings, but same sense of necessity that our Queen's Bench Lord Chief Justice administers it *here* — our 'rising young minister' illustrated his notion of Biblical History by comparing much of said history to 'Police Reports in the *Times* newspaper.' Yes, according to Mr. Grant, 'God's oracles' are made up in part of 'God's Police Reports!'

Holyoake having referred to passages in the Old Testament as 'unfit for reading upon certain occasions,' Grant said there appeared in the *Times* 'Police Reports which would not do for common reading, but which nevertheless could not be charged upon the editor as the principles of the leading articles. Now God has his police reports in the Scripture—reports of evil actions that are condemned.' Obviously then Jehovah is not only a supernatural Lord Chief Justice but also a Director General of Police who does for the Universe what M. de Maupas does for France. In addition to functions performed by earthly functionaries so important, God did edit the Bible just as Stirling or Barnes edited the *Times* newspaper, and like them he will only be held responsible for 'principles laid down in the leading articles,' the rest not being editorial but merely 'a parcel of police reports,' which being part of Holy Writ are certainly divine but 'would not do for common reading!!!'

Is it true that Scripture police reports are precisely what Mr. Grant describes them to be? I think not. I do not find that the evil actions reported in Scripture are *always* condemned by Scripture. Where is Lot condemned for incestuous intercourse with his own daughters? Where Noah for getting dead drunk, exposing most shamefully his person, and denouncing the curse of curses—the curse of bondage—upon Canaan? Where Jacob for defrauding Esau of his birthright? Where Judith for barbarously murdering Holofernes? Relying upon God's police reports I conclude that Jehovah had a particular affection for criminals inasmuch as with scarcely an exception his greatest favourites were the greatest scoundrels.

And will any one seriously affirm that *all* evil actions reported in Scripture are 'condemned by Scripture,' when even Sunday School teachers know that Scripture nowhere condemns the

Midianite massacre—a massacre of atrocity unparalled—a massacre involving atrocities so hideous that compared therewith the blood-chilling horrors of a Sicilian Vesper or a St. Bartholomew are pleasant to recall? Grant sadly damaged his cause by reducing the Christian God to a level with Lord Campbell, but still more serious was the damage he inflicted upon that cause by the shallow flippancy with which he likened a large portion of Bible history to 'police reports in the *Times* newspaper,' and disturbed the pious ignorance as well as faith of even Sunday School teachers by making it appear there are supernatural penny-a-liners of whose services God Almighty availeth himself for the purpose of reporting evil actions which in very many cases are not *condemned* but *applauded* in Scripture. Grant having thought proper to make God a minister of police and *redacteur en chef* of the Hebrew *Times* as well as Lord Chief Justice, it was expected that the Secularist leader would have laid bare the sophistry of an opponent who seemed to court exposure by going out of his way to talk nonsense. He did no such thing however, and Grant, who spares no one, was himself spared. Holyoake's theory of non-disparagement precludes all who hold it from giving opponents a sound drubbing, and without doubt Grant has abundant reason to rejoice at non-disparagement in his own case.

That theory was much talked of by both speakers. Mr. Holyoake *would* ventilate it. He wasted a vast deal of his time in denouncing denunciation. His notion seems to be, that though a spade may be called a spade, to call a scoundrel a scoundrel is forbidden by the law of politeness, and proves nothing but the dominance of shocking bad taste. No, the Secularist leader so much dislikes denunciation that he cannot but associate therewith pettiness of aim and vulgarity of thought. According to his theory men of genius are always polite. While discussing the character of Christ Mr. Holyoake took Christians roundly to task for supposing that because Jesus 'spoke out against those whom he considered hypocrites they might do the same.' Not at all moved by the fact made sufficiently prominent that he was himself in no way over scrupulous as to the epithets he fas-

tened on others our denouncer of denunciation stuck to his theory, of which he is as fond as a patentee of his everlastingly-expensive patent, or a doting father of his everlastingly-erring and scapegrace son.

A desire 'to dwell in decencies for ever' is an amiable weakness on the part of Holyoake which Grant cleverly turned to account. He saw his advantage, and made the most of it. While explaining the double nature of Christ Mr. Holyoake said many fine things, but he also said many foolish ones. His praise of Christ the gentle was admirable. But why should he dispraise Christ the severe? Severity to those whom gentleness will not profit is good. And Mr. Grant wanted to know why Christ should be blamed for calling certain people 'fools and hypocrites' if he really thought them so? No satisfactory answer was given to that question. What Mr. Holyoake affirmed concerning genius being incompatible with the spirit and practice of denunciation is disproved by all history. Was Demosthenes no genius? And did Cicero lack abilities of the highest order? That they protested against corruption and denounced the enemies of liberty in language highly 'offensive,' there can be no doubt. But because they denounced, as never men had denounced before, are they to be held wanting in genius, or deficient in any one element of the noblest intellectual power? Before Mr. Holyoake again stigmatises severity of language as peculiar to people of vulgar intellect he should revel in the dainties served up by Thomas Carlyle, that master of invective—at once the most epithetical and influential of living writers—and then run through the speeches of modern as well as ancient orators. Let him read with attention the speeches of Pym, Elliot, Russell, Sidney, Pulteney, Chatham, Burke, Sheridan, Fox, Curran, Grattan, Canning, Plunkett, and Brougham, before trusting himself again to the perilous work of denouncing denouncers as wanting in genius and vulgar in intellect.

It is remarkable that immediately after associating the outspokenness contended for by Grant with everything abominable Holyoake alluded to Paine (one of the most outspoken denouncers of modern times) as having done more to bring

about American independence by his *pen* than ever Washington had by his *sword*. The fact is this pet theory must be given up if Secularists mean mischief to Christianity or good to Secularism. Grant knew well what the theory of non-disparagement was worth and set it at defiance. I, for one, admire the denunciatory portion of *his* speeches. They were shrewd, clever, apt, and telling. I like a merciless opponent: one who will not spare and asks not to be spared. Such an opponent is Grant. He believes that they who profess to be sincere either in controverting opinions or exposing persons should pronounce 'liars and hypocrites' those who notoriously are both. It is true that the 'rising young minister' made a very free use of disagreeable epithets, but I see no objection to his using the liberty with which Christ hath made him free. He spoke of Holyoake as a rattle-snake who was none the less dangerous because he had laid aside his rattle and crept into the grass. Well, where's the harm of all that? If the Secularist leader is rattlesnakish without the rattle but quite as dangerous as if with it, why should Grant be denounced for saying so? Nothing more ridiculous than the complaints of those who combat the style and taste instead of the principles and arguments of antagonists. I concede at once that in private life outspokenness hath its inconveniences. If we would be at peace dissimulation is indispensable. I perfectly appreciate the saying—'*Qui nummos non gestat in bursa, mel saltem habeat in bucca* (He who has no money in his purse ought at least to have honey in his mouth.) But the leader of a party whose aim is the destruction of superstition, and the establishment on a basis purely secular of 'a scheme of society in which there shall be no vice,' must lay his account with giving offence to the many 'fools and hypocrites' whose folly or hypocrisy, or both, he will be forced to confront and expose. Objecting to Christianity because its reputed founder called 'fools and hypocrites' those who really were so is sorry work. I confess myself quite as much an admirer of the severe as the gentle Jesus, who did no wrong in exposing Pharisees, though perhaps open to the charge of physical force Chartism inas much as not content with hard words which proverbially break o bones, he took a whip of small cords and whipped out of the

Temple certain money-changers and people who 'sold doves.' It is because Christianity is superstition *not* because Christ denounced a pack of scoundrels that we have cause to complain, and Holyoake should rather have employed himself in exposing the hollowness of that scheme of supernaturalism with which Christ must ever be associated than in denouncing the denouncer of 'fools and hypocrites.'

To point out the vulnerable parts of Christianity Mr. Holyoake was in the course of this controversy challenged more than once. The challenge passed unheeded by; and yet it might have been shown that Christianity is vulnerable in *fundamentals*—that the belief of which we hear so much, the 'central belief,' *is no belief at all.* The Secularist leader did not expend five sentences upon that all-important topic. Exploding what Christians allow to be the basis of their 'scheme' formed no part of his tactics. Matters were so managed that while Grant might deal with Secularism as he thought proper Holyoake was pledged not to shock the feelings of good Christian people by assaulting their impossible belief. Grant boasted at Walthamstow that he had 'handcuffed' his opponent, a boast perfectly well founded but the terms of which should have been different. Instead of saying he had put a *cuff* upon the *hand* of Mr. Holyoake he should have said 'I contrived to put a *padlock* on his *mouth*,' as the Secularist leader was called upon to furnish securities for good behaviour during the controversy before Grant and his friends would consent to its taking place. One condition insisted upon by these cunning people was that no attempt should be made to disturb the fiction fundamental and therefore essential to all the thousand and one schemes of positive nonsense called positive religion.

In my 'Second Fourpenny Wilderness' I have shown that belief cannot operate upon unintelligibility. Now, there is no one dogma of the Christian scheme which can be pronounced intelligible. Its fundamental, or, if Mr. Holyoake pleases, its 'central' dogma is absolutely meaningless. Dissenters laugh at that article of the Athanasian creed which informs us God the Father is incomprehensible, God the Son is incomprehensible, God the Holy Ghost is incomprehensible; and yet they are not three incompre-

hensibles, but one incomprehensible. I tell Dissenters that they no more believe in the God they say they believe in than Church of England priests believe in the Triune Incomprehensible of St. Athanasius. Had Holyoake thought it politic to take the line here indicated he might have utterly ruined the priest party, for their 'scheme' rests on the hypotheses that we do or may believe in unintelligible propositions. Probably Mr. Holyoake thought no good could come of agitating the God question. But whatever he thought concerning that question, every one present at the discussion knows little if anything was said respecting it. Mr. Holyoake objected to Christianity on many grounds, and so far as they went his arguments were for the most part effective. But the best of those arguments fell short of what the occasion required. They were put with immense ability but in no instance did an argument urged by the Secularist leader disturb popular belief in the possibility of believing in that of which we cannot have ideas. Exclusive attention to the affairs of this life was recommended by Mr. Holyoake as something eminently secularistic, but throughout the controversy he was silent as to the fundamental fallacy of the Christian scheme of salvation and said little concerning those rationalistic principles which fairly enunciated do fairly prove that the affairs of this life are the *only* affairs to which we *can* attend.

When Grant said a belief in the life to come 'led to no indifference to whatever in a proper sense belonged to the present life' he might most effectually have been met by a plump denial that any one really believed in 'the life to come,' understanding by the phrase 'life to come' a state of more than natural existence. When he said 'an earthly duty could not be named to the performance of which Christianity presented the slightest obstacle' his career of assertion might have been cut short by the 'offensive' but true statement that Christianity resting on unintelligibilities is itself meaningless, and being meaningless no one can tell *what* it means. When 'the rising young minister' had astonished his hearers and exhausted himself in attempts to exhibit the 'Secular Aspects of Christianity' he might in the politest imaginable manner have been brought to

book by insisting upon a distinction being drawn between the religion of Christianity and the secularism of science; for if the secularism of Christianity or any other scheme of religion is science, then to science it belongs. Religion can no more be secularized or exhibit 'secular aspects' than nothing can metamorphosize into something or exhibit the aspects of a goose or a butterfly. Secularism is science because it relates to the known. Christianity is mystery because it relates to the unknown. Secularism is superior to Christianity because knowledge is superior to ignorance. Grant argued that Christianity supplied motives to virtuous conduct over and above those supplied by Secularism. On that argument he laid great stress. He produced and more than once reproduced it during the debate. In reference thereto I say the assumption of a more than natural potency in what some call religion and others superstition to make men virtuous is not new. Even reputed 'infidels,' aye and 'infidels' of mark too, have subscribed to that article of every genuine superstitionists' faith. Rousseau declared *Morality could do nothing that religion could not do better, and religion does many things that morality cannot do at all.* Holyoake explained with much force and eloquence what he understood by the term Secularism but allowed Grant to escape the consequences sure to follow any attempt to explain Christianity. If Grant had been *worried* into an explanation of that religion or scheme of salvation whose wonder working and truly miraculous efficacy in 'taming the devil' within us he so much vaunted, it would at once have been seen that 'the rising young minister' having nothing but unintelligibilities to explain could explain nothing intelligibly, and that notwithstanding all his mother wit and native shrewdness he is after all nothing more than a disciple of the school described by a witty Frenchman as the school of clever persons who *deny what is and explain what is not.*

It will be time enough to consider the influence of 'belief in God on the character of man' and the influence of 'belief in the life to come' on our actions in the life present, when these or other so called supernatural beliefs are shown to be possible. I deny that man can think without ideas, and I deny that man has or

can have any relation *to* or derive any ideas *from* the supernatural. Our instincts, affections, and powers of thought (such as they are) transcend not nature however nobly they be developed. The hypothesis that there is something supernatural though dogmatically assumed never can lose its hypothetic character. 'There may be another and a better world,' observes the Christian when lashed into humility or driven into a corner. He is right too when thus undogmatic. But my good Christian logomachist although there may be another and a better world, on the contrary there may not. Possibly some who profess belief in the unintelligible may after taking their final adieu of this world—their fearfully imaginative 'leap in the dark'—find another and a *worse* world than the one we inhabit and with which they take so much pains to put us out of conceit. When positive religion takes refuge in *maybeism* how pitiable is the condition of its preachers. And yet knowledge of more than nature being unattainable by man, and priests being human (sometimes barely that) their language is either void of meaning or suggestive of ideas which contradicting destroy each other. Even the God whose will they profess infallibly to deliver through fallible lips; that God of whom with measureless effrontery they claim to be deemed the 'humble' vicegerents; that Immense Phantasm they with unfathomable hypocrisy profess to love; is according to their own account a Being with whom we have nothing in common—a Being unlike and distinct from all we know or can conceive—a Being who was before the Universe—a Being self-existent, alone, unapproachable, and eternal—a Being with whom all things are possible no one thing intelligible, higher than heaven which hath no top lower than hell which hath no bottom. Much sham belief in this Immense Phantasm we have, real belief *none*. And therefore I say Christianity is not a 'system' but a delusion. I say moreover that if there *is* a life to come we know nothing of it—if there *is* truth in Christianity the truth cannot be discovered by mortal eyes—if that 'pure religion' *hath* 'secular aspects' they belong to science with which religion has nothing to do—if the Immense Phantasm to whom or which Christians have given names many, opinions, passions, and even sex, though denying

his materiality, *did* create and *does* now rule the Universe, belief in Him must be belief without ideas, a kind of belief equal to no belief at all.

Now, had Holyoake applied himself in earnest and perseveringly to the great work of showing that Christianity rests on belief in God and that belief in God is belief without ideas, I know he would have offended many, but I also know he would have pierced to the very marrow of his opponent's bones and sounded the death knell of that disgusting superstition whose loathsome 'aspects' are so studiously concealed.

Grant made an elaborate attempt to prove that barbarism prevailed over the whole earth before 'a voice went forth from the carpenter's shop;' that though religious Jews, artistic Greeks, and voluptuous Romans had clubbed their wits, civilization eventuated in little but corruption until Christian light dawned upon the world. To eke out his argument our 'rising young minister' laid Hume under contribution. He quoted the 'infidel' historian as excellent authority on this matter, and Hume had said that in the old Pagan times a man might be a murderer, an adulterer, a perjurer, any or all of these, and yet have statues erected to his memory. Be it so. I accept the fact but deny the Christian inference. It is at least probable that Romans and others did in some instances raise statues to the memory of many great scoundrels. But are we not open to the charge of doing the like? Have no statues been raised to murderers, and adulterers, and perjurers since 'a voice went forth from the carpenter's shop?' Ages hence when Macaulay's traveller from New Zealand shall stand upon the broken arch of London Bridge to sketch the ruins of St. Paul's, that traveller will find many an 'infidel' historian testifying to the fact that in Christian England and during the nineteenth century of the Christian era statues in honour of pre-eminently great scoundrels might be found. So little hath Christianity done towards really civilizing us that we still do reverence to successful workers of iniquity. Statues erected to the memory of scoundrels indeed! Why erecting statues to murderers, perjurers, and parricides is quite a 'feature' in the beautiful face of modern civilization. Where has Grant been

living? What books does he read? How contrives he to remain so marvellously ignorant? Has he never heard of Nicholas, Emperor of all the Russias? Of George IV., once the first *blackguard* in England? Of Napoleon I., or his hopeful nephew Napoleon III.? Is he unaware that statues have been raised in honor of these heroes, and by Christian hands too? Not a single country of modern Europe is unpolluted by statues of the murderer, the parricide, and the perjurer. Erecting statues in memory of such is therefore chargeable as well on Christianity as Paganism, and Grant's argument based upon the assumption that criminal folly of that kind was put an end to by 'a voice from the carpenter's shop' falls to the ground. Allowing that the nations have improved since a 'voice went forth from the carpenter's shop;' allowing that the masses of modern Europe are more civilized than the masses of ancient Rome; allowing that in Christian communities there have been rulers wiser than Trajan, orators greater than Cicero, patriots nobler than Cato; allowing (surely the allowance is large and liberal) that Christian priests are more self-denying or less hypocritical than they who ministered at Pagan altars, still we may be permitted to doubt that the superior civilization we boast is due to Christianity. Nothing more childish than ascribing to a superstition the civilization it was unable to prevent *except* the childishness which attempts to imagine a supernatural cause for results naturally brought about. In Christianity I see a 'scheme' admirably calculated to enable the crafty to alarm and give law to the credulous, a scheme hostile to all 'new developments' except they be such as are compatible with old fictions, a scheme so hideous that a history of *its* developments is little else than one long and gloomy detail of the worst crimes committed by the worst men who for more than thirteen centuries treated science as no Goth or Vandal ever did, made war quite Palafoxian upon its professors, brought into constant requisition racks, thumbscrews, and gibbets, treated themselves occasionally with an *auto da fe* (*act of faith*), which consisted in burning alive Jews or each other, made of Europe a human shamble, all the while professing to love science, to adore its teachers, to hate persecution, to loathe cruelty, and to seek

nothing but the glory of God and speedy establishment of his kingdom. Well might Holyoake say civilization did not advance in *consequence* but in *spite* of Christianity, for history, not as written by Hume the 'infidel' but Mosheim the 'Christian' historian, teems with evidence of the noteworthy fact that from first to last Christian schemers have hated science and persecuted unto death the noblest of its votaries.

Mr. Holyoake talked much, always with power and often only as a man of genius could talk, of *the Nature of Secularism—the General advantages of Secularism—the Death of Jesus Christ, its policy and its example—the Eclecticism of the Apostolical Writings*—and other subjects; but comparatively useless were his efforts. Much of what he uttered might as well have been unsaid. All that part of the debate which arose out of the pretty but obscure phrases '*spiritual dependence leads to material destruction*' was worse than useless. All that part of the debate which professedly explains the nature of Secularism might have been spared with advantage to Secularists. Nor was it wise to volunteer dissertations however beautiful upon *Science the Providence of man.* Holyoake, I again venture to say, should have *forced his opponent into a defensive position.* When the struggle was drawing to a close he said, 'Mr. Grant instead of defining and defending Christianity has betaken himself to fault-finding.' Good policy too, friend Holyoake. But it was not good policy to permit the adoption of such policy. Tact is talent. Grant is an excellent tactician. He had himself laid down the maxim that time should not be wasted in talk concerning things of which we have no idea, and was little disposed to define or defend a system whose 'central belief' and 'corner stone' is belief *without* ideas. He found it infinitely more convenient to *demand* explanations than to *give* them. Instead of pledging Secularists 'to preserve and augment whatever was good in Christianity,' Mr. Holyoake might have goaded or shamed his opponent into such a defining and defending of Christianity as would have put Christians to the blush for the impertinencies of a scheme which has no real hold either on judgment or affection. Instead of admitting that Christianity 'taught two sets of duties

—duties to God and to man,' Mr. Holyoake might have denied the fact, and instead of allowing Grant to ride off upon 'spiritual dependence' or some other convenient absurdity, have put and kept him to the work of proving that there *are* 'two sets of duties.' Here is a fact which implying the reality of Theism commits every Secularist to the difficulties and irrationalities of that impossible 'system.' But Theism is *not* real. Based on fiction it never can have more than fictional value. Avowedly supernatural it never can operate upon, or be operated upon by, merely natural intellect. The duties of man to man may be rendered clear and intelligible—not so unimaginable duties of man to more than man.

In no part of this memorable controversy did Grant appear to more advantage as a logomachist than where he turned to *long* account those pretty but obscure phrases concerning 'spiritual dependence' and 'material destruction' I have already alluded to and condemned as worse than useless. They *were* worse than useless to Secularists, but for purposes of mystification the 'rising young minister' found them excellent stock in trade. His attempt to annihilate material dependence by declaring that in dealing with material objects we have nothing to depend upon but what is spiritual, and to resolve 'matter itself' into a 'spiritual suggestion,' struck me as subtle, and clever, and learned, but rather dangerous to the system called Christian.

Mr. Holyoake had said '*spiritual dependence might lead to material destruction.*' What he meant by 'material destruction' everybody understood, but it may be doubted whether any person who sat out the six nights' controversy in Cowper Street knew exactly what he meant by 'spiritual dependence.' There really is no such thing. All dependence must be physical. A license of speech recognised by custom permits us to talk of moral, and mental, and other kinds of dependence, but the only real dependence is physical just as certainly as the only real existence is physical. Grant hazarded his bold sophism either in utter ignorance of what manner of creature man is, or in utter contempt of an audience whom he assumed to be completely imposed upon by the jargon of spiritualising priests whose 'spiritual manifesta-

tions' have been well defined as *wrappings for imposture*. Christians would do well to consider that any argument effectually disturbant of faith in the material universe must peril faith in an immaterial Creator; for if the reality of matter cannot be proved —if Grant or anybody else make out the transcendental proposition that matter itself is not a material thing but a 'spiritual suggestion'—matter never was created, and if never created could not have a Creator. They who deny the reality of matter do in effect deny the reality of Him who is said to have created it. Expelling matter out of nature may be 'a free and easy way of dealing with materialists,' but it is every whit as free and easy a way of dealing with immaterialists. Their 'central principle' vanishes—their 'corner stone' is knocked away the moment they by spiritualizing matter reduce it to a nonentity. Our 'rising young minister' outraged by dependence on material things, while with swallow unimpaired he greedily 'puts away' dependence on spiritual things, reminded me of the giant who after taking down his capacious throat and absolutely digesting huge windmills, iron gates, or the like, was choked in the attempt to swallow a pound of melted butter.

Existence is known by its attributes. Whatever exists hath attributes of which our organs of sense take cognizance. To strip existence (were the feat possible) of attributes would be to annihilate it. Take from a table, for example, length, breadth, form, color, and the table vanishes. Therein lies a difficulty for materialists. Their eternal matter amounts to no more than a given number of attributes, and attributes being unreal the thorough sceptic challenges them to prove the reality of eternal matter. He argues that as attributes are not things, and attributes so far as our senses are concerned make up all we know of matter, there is no such thing as matter. In bar of such an unsatisfactory conclusion the best we can do is to plead the constitution of man. Apart from such plea there is no help for Materialism. Apart from that plea there is no help for Immaterialism. The argument against material dependence may be turned against dependence of *any* kind. Let Christians beware lest their 'new light' prove a will o' the wisp, tempting poor souls

towards bogs, quagmires, and bottomless abysses. Believe me, Christian reader, this argument against dependence on material things leads direct—by the shortest possible cut—to thorough going out and out scepticism such as Phyrro taught. No logic, not even the logic of a very clever Christian, can answer that. In the battle of ontological speculation ultra scepticism must prevail, but, as remarked by Hume, although such scepticism admits of no answer *it produces no conviction.*

If Grant, and other preachers of a new crusade against 'infidels,' can make it out that 'no reliance should be placed upon material things,' they are cleverer people than I take them for. Were the age of miracles *not* passed, and they miracle workers, success might crown their efforts. But, as things stand, any attempt to destroy 'dependence on material things,' is big with the fate of Christianity, and may bring that divine system down about their ears; for man is so constituted that he must believe in, and depend upon, material things. If the new crusaders deny material things they will be expected to give some account of immaterial things. Now, to explain or account for a material thing is difficult—vastly more difficult than it at first sight appears. But who shall explain or account for an immaterial thing? Material things act upon our sensual organs so as to beget ideas yclept 'spiritual suggestions.' Immaterial things have no relation to, nothing in common with, organs of any kind, and therefore cannot beget ideas. Materialism is a word which at least means *something*, whereas immaterialism is a word denoting simply the *absence of signification.* They who profess immaterialism are dealers in 'words without knowledge,' whose speculations like themselves are unstable as water—shifty as wind. Their everlasting explanations of the immaterial need to be everlastingly explained because it *is not*, and what *is not* no words can render intelligible. A material man we so far comprehend as to have ideas of him. An immaterial man (if real) would be totally incomprehensible, inasmuch as immateriality implies absence of body, therefore absence of organs, therefore absence of everything. Rare old doctrine this doctrine of immateriality! Its preachers cannot tell what it means, and be thankful if they

condescend to say what it does not mean. Admirably qualified are these blind guides for the pious work of leading fools to that ditch in which they precipitate others but are wary of tumbling into themselves. Inspired by this motley host of dullards and cheats who explain the immaterial *which is not* and deny the material *which is*, poor weak 'souls' imagine that they really have 'souls.' Now, in one sense every living creature hath a 'soul,' and as the simplest possible exposition of the only sense in which any things or beings can have 'souls' may enlighten even Sunday School Teachers of the Unknown and certainly will form a complete answer to Grant's sophistry concerning the dangerousness of relying upon material things, I will attempt such exposition. The fact that Mr. Holyoake put in no protest against such part of the reasoning of his subtle opponent as reduced matter to a 'spiritual suggestion' and was meant to show 'dependence itself was a spiritual act,' but dismissed it contemptuously as 'the kind of opposition he saw no objection to,' is another of the many circumstances potent in moving me to an exposition which Grant and other crusaders with Three Years at disposal may show the folly or falsehood of if they can.

In a Portuguese manuscript many years ago translated and published by a friend of mine there is a long but remarkably pleasant account (fabulous to be sure, but none the worse for *that)* of certain bees amongst whom had contrived to live largely and luxuriously some cunning bees who doing little else than deny *what was* and explain *what was not* were called Learned Drones. These Learned Drones contrived to persuade the working bees that though the entire race of bees was doomed to die—'passing through nature to eternity'—in consequence of an offence given to the maker of all bees by the first bees that ever were made, still (thanks to Mediation and an Atonement made by the only begotten son of the Immense Creator of bees) every bee who died in the faith, that is who died believing or saying he believed whatever the Learned Drones told him to believe, would go to a Heaven expressly prepared for good bees, and from which bad or misbelieving bees would be for ever excluded, another place being provided for *them* where they suffer unheard of tor-

ments after the manner of bees. The Learned Drones taught that the only perishable part of the bee was his body, the 'soul' or *buzzing part* was to live for ever. Their theory distinguished between the Buzz of the bee and the bee himself. By learned dissertations (frequently repeated) on the immortality of the Buzz and perishability as well as utter worthlessness of the body of every bee, they contrived to make all save a few 'infidel' bees believe that the Buzz of a bee was an entity, something entirely distinct from the bee himself. Enlightened bees of the 'working class' saw through this scheme of salvation for bees, and protested against it as only bees could. But the Learned Drones persisted, and it is said do to this very hour persist, that their whole scheme is divine, and declare with more than former vehemency the fact that though every bee will die every bee's Buzz will live for ever.

Such in substance is the fable done into English and published for Christian edification by my facetious friend. This fable may help the reader to see 'soul' from the same point of view that I see. I consider that the Learned Drones who taught that the Buzz of a bee was something distinct from the bee were quite as wise and perhaps no less honest than our learned priests who teach that the soul of a man is something distinct from the body of a man. I suppose that as bees buzzed because they were so organised as to buzz in like manner men think because they are so organised as to think. A bee could not buzz without a body to buzz with, neither could a man think without a body to think with. I suppose it no less absurd to say a man can think without anything to think with than to declare as Learned Drones did that bees could buzz without anything to buzz with. The Buzz of a bee, is a 'spiritual manifestation' of that bee—the language embodied sensibility of a man is the 'spiritual manifestation' of that man. Buzzing is an action, so is thinking—even when not made manifest by audible sounds, and soul being nothing but the sum of all the sensibilities enjoyed or suffered by individuals organised to enjoy or suffer, the argument of Mr. Grant, which leads to 'dependence on spiritual things,' and ascribes to unknown spirit a reality denied to known body, is an argument which will not bear rough handling or at all likely to

survive the three years of controversy and preachment we are promised but are not likely to get.

The fallacy of hypotheses which confound attributes with existence, and sneakingly suggest rather than openly declare the non-existence of matter by reducing it to a 'spiritual suggestion,' deserves and would repay more than the cost of a public exposure. All that part of Mr. Grant's argument was put with considerable ability and much effect. His friends were delighted to find in their 'rising young minister' a man who could so cleverly attack materialists on their own ground. Nothing he did pleased them more, except perhaps his personal abuse of Mr. Holyoake.

In his eagerness to immaterialise matter by converting it into a 'spiritual suggestion,' Grant damaged himself by parading as true science what many schoolboys could tell him is scientific untruth. 'Astronomy,' said he, 'was not learned from the senses. We believe that the world goes round—not because the sun rises, but because we trust to the spiritual arguments of the philosophers whose reasoning contradicted our senses.' While our 'rising young minister' spoke thus scientifically untrue I felt almost reconciled to the opinion that a little knowledge is a dangerous thing. His spiritualising argument relies upon an exploded and double fallacy—the fallacy that without senses it is possible to learn astronomy or anything else, and that senses deceive us. Senses are sensibilities which imply material organs. All mental operations are sensual. Reasoning is as much a sensual operation as tasting or hearing. One might as wisely talk of spiritual puddings as spiritual arguments. What Grant *calls* spiritual arguments are but outward and visible signs of material processes. Nor do spiritual arguments, so-called, contradict the evidence of our senses though people with a little knowledge imagine so. Senses often seem to contradict senses but never really do so. We believe the world goes round because reflection upon the analogies of things hath led up to that grand truth. But what is reflection? A mental process, exclaims the half-informed Christian. Well, it *is* a mental process, and the senses are concerned in all mental processes. Apart from the

senses there can be no mental processes; and strange though the thing appear it is true that sense deceptions are self-deceptions; that reflection which enables us to correct what are ignorantly called errors of the senses is sensual *not* spiritual; that pure reasoning never can contradict the senses, for to say that pure reasoning contradicts the senses is equal to saying the senses contradict the senses, whereas we know the senses never contradict the senses though to the ill instructed they appear to do. A straight stick when thrust into the water appears crooked, and because it does the senses are said to deceive us. Not so, however. There is no deception no illusion in the case. The stick ought, under the circumstances, to appear crooked. Its crooked appearance *in* the water is as completely in harmony with general laws appertaining to light, water, &c.—laws familiar to every tolerably taught schoolboy—as its straight appearance *out* of the water is in harmony with said laws. Our belief that the world goes round, like every other belief, rests upon experience, and experience means simply the evidence of our senses. That evidence may appear contradictory, but, I repeat, never is so. An argument which implies senseless reasoning Grant is very welcome to. In sober earnestness I say no argument will enable him to make a spiritual suggestion of a material existence. His elaborate reasoning on that head was elaborate quackery. Holyoake, thinking so much of his opponent's reasoning unobjectionable, of course did not object to it.

The part of this controversy least instructive and most amusing, was the part intended by Grant to illustrate his notion of providence. He complained of 'the doctrine of providence which Mr. Holyoake had dressed up in harlequin fashion to divert the audience,' and said 'a proper view of providence would show how evils were turned to account.' Mr. Grant thinks that however individuals may suffer, all is for the best—if they did but know it. Disdaining the 'short-sighted and very special providence' of Mr. Holyoake, he finds good in the worst calamities, always, I suppose, excepting calamities which befal himself. His special-pleading for general providence smacked much of the ironical; and, in its way, equalled the cool sophistication of that preacher

who, having during a sermon declared that God had devised the best possible of schemes for the government of men, and made everything perfect after its kind, was asked by one of his hearers, who happened to be hunchbacked, whether *he* was perfect after his kind? With admirable coolness the holy man replied, '*Yes, a perfect hunchback to be sure.*' Grant's argument is, that God having set the Universe a going, it goes in the best possible manner; that all things are good after their kind—even calamities; that 'if God constantly interfered nothing would be certain,' and 'the regular miracle of nature would be confused by irregular miracles' performed by Mr. Holyoake's 'short-sighted and very special providence.' This sort of providential logic is contemptible, and will surely bring into contempt the cause it was intended to bolster up. It amounts to a plagiarism on the preacher who preached the perfection of hunchbackism, and leads me to suspect that Grant is the wiseacre who reporting for certain newspapers the death of a poor fellow tumbled by general providence from top to bottom of a house while looking eagerly at the funeral-procession of a certain Iron Duke said 'the poor man died a few minutes after his fall but *providentially* did not tumble upon and kill anybody else.'

Dependence on God or general providence Grant calls spiritual dependence. This kind of dependence he passionately recommended, and more than once defied Mr. Holyoake to adduce a single instance in which it led to material destruction. The instance demanded was not forthcoming, and yet history teems with instances of spiritual dependence leading by the shortest possible cut to material destruction. What became of five million or more Crusaders who maddened into spiritual dependence upon supernatural nonentities by Peter the Hermit sought by fire and sword to purge the Holy Land of infidels? The Amazon was referred to by both disputants. Grant said it was not spiritual dependence which led to the material destruction of that vessel. He may be right in so saying, and yet the argument which condemns spiritual dependence on prayer and providence instead of natural dependence on our own right arm is sound. Let Christians study the very ancient and wonderfully wise fable

concerning a certain waggoner who got his team into a hole. They will find the waggoner praying Hercules for help, but Hercules teaches him that the Gods help those who help themselves, and not by spiritual dependence on prayer and providence, but dependence on a right application of his material shoulder to the equally material wheel could he hope to lift it from the deep rut in which ignorantly spiritual dependence had stuck it fast. Of course Grant contends for enlightened spiritual dependence, but then what he calls enlightened spiritual dependence is dependence on *we know not what* which I call ignorant dependence. Did we depend more on science and less on supernaturalism there would be fewer shipwrecks, fewer disasters of every kind. Such accidents as the burning of the Amazon almost always result either from want of knowledge or want of caution. The spiritual dependence contended for by Grant is incompatible with that enlightened, far-seeing self-dependence contended for by Secularists. Every one remembers the loss of the Pegasus. Poor Elton was in her when she went down. Before she did so all on board went to prayers and supplicated providence—according to custom on such terrible occasions. The mate and two others while praying bethought them that work under the circumstances might be the best worship. Helping themselves they *were* helped by providence, for while all the rest perished they escaped a watery grave solely through 'spiritual dependence on material things.'

The general providence contended for by Grant is so very general as to exclude all special interposition by Deity in human or other affairs. He 'saw no necessity for replying to Mr. Holyoake's arguments about prayer and providence as they were manifest perversions.' How marvellously do doctors disagree! The Secularist leader contended that 'a special providence was the corner stone of Christianity,' and argued that 'to teach people to believe in a special providence interposing in all the minute as well as great affairs of life was to discourage human exertion.' His opponent scouts special providence, which according to him is not 'the corner stone of Christianity,' but an invention of anti-Christ, and therefore argument founded

thereon is 'manifest perversion.' I confess myself unable to discover what can be gained for Christianity by denying special providencedism. If the Universe was created and is governed by the Being who created it, of what consequence can it be so far as the truth or falsehood of Christianity is concerned whether He govern through an infinite number of special interpositions or through general laws. Grave disputes on such frivolities never can affect the essentials of any theological scheme, and are not a whit less absurd than monkish disputes as to the number of angels who can stand upon the point of a needle, or the disputes of certain rather uncertain Lilliputians as to the right end at which to break an egg. What we have to determine is the *reality* of a Great First Cause. It will be time enough to consider whether it acts by 'partial or by general laws' when a Great First Cause shall be proved more than the dream of a shadow. If there is an Eternal Providence I am bound to say that Christians are wretched apologists of his government. The Rev. Mr. Hinton, who sat in the umpire's chair during the controversy under consideration, hath just published a Lecture in which we are assured 'Man's doom to endless perdition (supposing it for the moment to be a fact) is not pronounced by Christianity but by the moral government of God.' Pleasant logic truly! If our doom be endless perdition we shall have the satisfaction of knowing that the doom is not pronounced by Christianity but the moral government of God. Grant made no attempt to prove the divine origin of Scripture although his umpire hath declared and truly, *the real question is the divine origin of the Bible.* Instead of settling Secularism and Secularists, converting the latter by platoons while giving to their scheme its logical quietus, he quoted many passages from the *Reasoner* with a view to convict Mr. Holyoake of inconsistency and self-contradiction. While thus employed he was cheered on by his friends who mightily enjoyed whatever they thought damaging to the character of Mr. Holyoake. But calmer people had a notion that Grant would have been better employed in answering his opponent's arguments than in villifying his character. Whether Mr. Holyoake is or is not 'consistent,' whether he has or not 'contradicted' himself in print

or on the platform, the audience assembled at Cowper Street (always excepting the *practically* Christian portion of them) care little to know. What they really needed was a sufficient reason for belief in the supernatural; together with a sufficient reason for belief in Christianity as that particular scheme of supernaturalism essential to morality here and to salvation hereafter. Picking out texts (often without explanatory contexts) from the *Reasoner* for no better purpose than to fling them in the face of Mr. Holyoake seemed to me a cunning but discreditable manœuvre. Grant quoting the *Reasoner* against Holyoake reminded me of Ferrand quoting Hansard against the late Sir Robert Peel. A cunning manœuvre it undoubtedly was for had not some three-fifths of the time been consumed in criminations or recriminations purely personal our 'rising young minister' might have exhausted the patience and provoked the contempt of his audience.

More than once Mr. Grant alluded to divisions in the Secularist camp. He said Secularists could not agree among themselves. The *tu quoque* argument is seldom to my taste, but I am tempted to ask Mr. Grant whether Christians agree among themselves? If they who are infallible interpreters of an infallible book; if they who have God on their side and all the angels—cannot agree, why are Secularists to be taunted for occasional disagreements amongst themselves? Besides, agreement in matters purely speculatives is by no means desirable. Wise men seek harmony in liberty not spiritual unity. If Secularists agree to differ on a considerable number of unessential topics so much the better for Secularism and so much the worse for Christianity. Poor is the scheme which reduces to one dead level every mind. Imbecile are the schemers who aim at nothing higher or nobler than a new development of old bigotry. Labouring to make all men think alike is as vain, foolish, and mischievous as would be one grand systematic effort to make men look, or walk, or talk alike. The Secularist who would render imperative upon Secularists uniformity of speculative opinion may fancy himself a philosopher but is really a bigotted sectarian. I do think, am happy to think, the wise people of this age are heartily sick of sectarianism,

and far from hankering after new sects would like to dispose *summarily* of some old ones.

No other argument or statement advanced by Mr. Grant calls for special notice. The arguments urged with most vehemency, and on which he laid most stress, I have brought under review. As to their value, let others now judge. I am unconscious of having misrepresented him in a single article; indeed, there can be no earthly reason to misrepresent an opponent who is quite a master in the art of self-stultification. I have ungrudgingly extolled his abilities, such as they are; but no ability, however great, will suffice for the defence of a scheme whose fundamental assumption takes for granted the possibility of an impossible belief. Though in mere wordmongery proficient, he failed to make out a case for supernaturalism. A sufficient reason for such failure is to be found in the circumstance that no such can be made out. Wit, eloquence, and learning, however much, avail nothing in the way of proving incomprehensible propositions. What supernaturalists need is a basis of belief. They seek, and will perhaps for ever seek it; but in vain. The 'Three Years Mission' with Grant for its 'terrible hero' cannot conquer a basis of belief in supernaturals. The fact that Miall, of nonconforming celebrity, thinks it necessary to publish a *Basis of Belief*, indicates an alarming ignorance as to what *is* a basis of belief. Surely *the* basis of belief ought long ago to have been settled—made plain as a pikestaff. But no; so dense is Christian ignorance with respect to the basis of belief that celebrity aforementioned shuts himself up heaven only knows how many months for the purpose of inditing a rational explanation of the basis of a supernatural belief. But—*there's nothing in it.* All explanations of that sort need another explanation, which, alas! no mere mortal can give. If Grant accept my challenge to a public controversy, and during that controversy produce an intelligible basis of belief I will thank him, and, if permitted, at once join the 'Three Years' Mission.' In the controversy at Cowper Street a basis of supernatural belief was not demanded, and certainly neither its positive nor its negative side 'turned up.' A Miall or a Grant might by any number of sermons in the chapel

of friend Ebenezer blow down the great wall of China, just as certain clever Israelites with the aid of rams' horns blew down the walls of Jericho, but neither Miall nor Grant, nor a preacher, if such can be found, ten thousand times more potent in speech than either of these can oblige us with an intelligible basis of supernatural belief. On this fundamental topic there is no difference of opinion between myself and Holyoake. We agree in repudiating supernaturalism. We differ as to the mode of dealing with it. The Christian scheme is no more acceptable to George Jacob Holyoake than to Charles Southwell. But he seems to recognise in that scheme some truth and some utility. He argued throughout as if prepared to accept Christianity in part—as if Christians could believe their own theory—as if supernaturalism might be something more than assent without ideas, and as if the scheme of his opponent might be overthrown without disturbing its fundamental assumptions. The Secularist leader cared little to attack, his object was rather to defend. An opportunity for assailing the superstructure and tearing up the very foundations of superstition, such as no other opponent of superstition ever had, was scarcely at all turned to account. Holyoake had taken a leaf from the book of his friend Owen, and throughout this controversy lectured rather than debated. He was evidently more intent upon explaining his own 'system' than demolishing the 'system' of his antagonist. Challenged to point out the vulnerable parts of Christianity he declined to waste breath on matters so 'impracticable,' and proceeded to discourse (with much eloquence I admit) on *the Nature of Secularism*, or *Science the Providence of Man*, or *the Secularism of the Apostolical*, or *the General Advantages of Secularism*, or some other subject equally general and equally *mal apropos*. His tactics denoted a foregone conclusion that to explain and defend Secularism not to expose and denounce Christianity was his proper business.

Spectators are said to see more than they who play the game. That saying hath risen almost to the dignity of a maxim, and a pleasant maxim it is so far as lookers on are concerned. But perhaps in many cases the looker on who fancies he sees a great

deal more really sees considerably less than the gamester whose play he condemns. I was a spectator at this clever game of disputation with which some fault has been found, but my mode of playing such a game might be by no means an improvement upon the mode pursued by Mr. Holyoake. This is not said in compliment to him but rather as a something due unto myself. I have publicly challenged Grant or any other accredited defender of Christianity to a discussion of that 'system,' not however in the hope of taking a line with which no one could fairly find fault. Should my challenge be accepted the sharp-eyed critic on the look out for flaws would perhaps find in me a debater able to furnish a vast supply. What then? Let the flaws be discovered and pointed out by whomsoever will take the trouble to do it. In matters of criticism I act towards others just as I would have others act towards me. Honest criticism is often false, but in these days of free discussion we much need honest criticism. Its general tendency is to improve intellect and through intellect 'make the earth wholesome.' I recognize truth in the words '*Qui s'excuse s'accuse*,' but that truth affects not me; for the sentiments just expressed are not penned as an excuse but simply to make apparent the feeling which animates me. I honor genius but spare no error. My antagonism to the 'supernatural' is *thorough*. In the fervid and fevered eloquence of the priest I see matter for compassion or contempt. A priest party, *as such*, I hold to be mere janizaries well drilled and appointed, whose sympathies, like the sympathies of hirelings all our world over, are with the despotism they are employed to defend, and from which they draw their life blood. In parliamentary or other churches supported by involuntary as well as voluntary contributions I see the machinery which enables an ecclesiastical 'swell mob' to rob the poor they affect to love, and with impunity violate that injunction which forbids theft. My bones will have returned to kindred dust ere the doctrine here laid down as fundamental to every pure thought concerning religion—that doctrine on which the Cowper Street controversy threw a flood of light—can become popular, or powerful in the work of pulling down superstitious strongholds. Woe to a doctrine which has nothing but truth to recommend it!

Extracts from No. 3 of a series of Tracts entitled

TEMPERANCE AGAINST TEETOTALISM,

By Charles Southwell, Moderation Man.

By reference to the *Lancet*, a publication which the medical profession generally recognise as their organ, it may be seen that in addition to Liebig and Culverwell already mentioned — the eminent persons whose names are subjoined rank among those who think *beneficial* the products of malt and hops and the constituents of pure spring water, even when such wholesome ingredients are 'spiced' with a moderate proportion of alcohol:—

Graham, Hofman, Musprat, Watson, Budd, Marshall Hall, Travers, Ferguson, Rowe, Vivian, Heygate, Leman, Arnold, Evans, Formby, Petrie, Macrorie, Vose, Tuffnel, Hunter, Davies, Jones, Senior, Maclaren, Macaulay, Gray, Teevan Hill, Hayward Harrison, Pepper, Inman, Sir Charles Clark.

The Beer brewed by the Metropolitan and Provincial Joint Stock Brewery Company* is pleasant, wholesome, and highly nutritious. All off-hand statements made by 'reclaimed' or other 'characters' at Teetotal meetings notwithstanding, I affirm that the Company whose Beer is now under consideration are incapable of lending themselves to downright fraud—much less to that system of wholesale poisoning charged upon brewers generally by 'ignorant enthusiasts.' Although the Metropolitan and Provincial Joint Stock Brewery Company commits the huge sin of furnishing her Majesty's lieges with Ale and Porter, it provides no employment to Brewers' Druggists or Brewers' Chemists—those terrible people about whom Teetotallers of the Dr. Lees school make such a fuss. That Company professes to supply *unadulterated* Ales, Porter, and Stout, and before Teetotallers deny the truth of such profession they would do well to inquire a little into the peculiar nature of the said Company—its *means*, *principles*, and above all the CHARACTER of its officials. A list of directors is before me, and in that list I find the name of

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* 13, Upper Wellington Street, Strand.

Edward Vansittart Neale, a man devoted to the cause of human improvement, more especially the improvement of that class known as the 'working class'—a man who has proved himself the fast friend of co-operation among the members of that class—and a man quite incapable of lending himself to any scheme, however profitable, which entailed ruin upon vast masses of his fellow-creatures. Associated with him (as directors of the Metropolitan and Provincial Joint Stock Brewery Company) I find Francis Bontems, Charles Henry Edmands, and other gentlemen of honorable as well as liberal tendencies. Now, these Directors have declared *in print* that their object is to establish breweries on a comprehensive plan for the purpose of supplying the public with UNADULTERATED Ale and Porter at prices below those at present charged by the trade for an indifferent and frequently a very deleterious article; and that the Metropolitan and Provincial Joint Stock Brewery Company pledge themselves to supply every description of Ale and Porter—*made from malt and hops only*.

Believing the statement of these gentlemen, I say—here, at all events, is a Company of 'poisoners' who will have nothing to do with Brewers' Druggists or Brewers' Chemists, and hope to realise a fair profit on the sale of strong drinks which shall *not* contain *Grains of Paradise, Coculus Indicus, Coriander Seeds, Logwood, Tobacco, Turmeric, Quassia, Capsicum, Copperas*, and the long list of other deleterious ingredients our *ignorantly enthusiastic* Teetotallers assure us enter largely into the composition of ALL *malt liquors*. Not only have we the testimony of Edward Vansittart Neale, and many gentlemen equally respectable with him associated, as to certain beers being *unadulterated*, but also, in addition to Liebig, Culverwell, and the other scientific authorities given in another part of this tract, the testimony of William Bastie, the Analytical Chemist, of Brook Street, Bond Street, who after examining the Ale and Stout brewed by the Metropolitan and Provincial Joint Stock Brewery Company, declared them to be *perfectly free from any deleterious ingredients, and to contain nothing but that which is derived from good malt and hops*.