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SPIRITUALISM;

OR THE

MAGNETIC TEACHING,

ITS METHOD AND ITS OBJECTS;



THREE LECTURES

DELIVERED IN DUNEDIN, APRIL 28, MAY 5, AND MAY 12, 1872,

BY

JAMES SMITH, ESQ.

DUNEDIN:

PRINTED AT THE "DAILY TIMES" STEAM PRINTING OFFICE, PRINCES STREET.

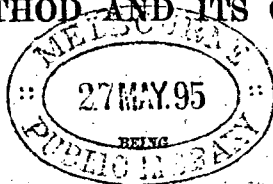
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PREFACE.

I HAVE been asked by many persons to explain how these three Lectures have been given to me, and I will do so as briefly as possible. They are communicated by a spirit taking possession of a human medium. The face of that human being is transfigured for the time being, and the magnetic light plays about her head. Not a word is spoken by the spirit during the time I am writing. The ideas are communicated magnetically, by the laying of the spirit's hand upon my own head; my own brain and hand being passive instruments as it were. When I commence a lecture I do not know what the subject will be, and when I have finished one sentence, I am ignorant as to the nature and construction of the next; but all is consecutive and coherent, without a correction or erasure. Sometimes I stop short in the middle of a sentence, and then I look for a few seconds at the eyes of the spirit; when the current of ideas and words immediately resumes its spontaneous flow. I have laid my watch upon the table and timed myself, and have found that I write in about one-third of the time which I should occupy in composing a lecture of my own. These phenomena have occurred in the presence of a dozen people, each of whom writes also under the spiritual influence. After I have finished, the spirit enters into conversation with me upon the topics arising out of the lecture; explaining that the magnetic fire communicated through him is identical in its nature and influence with the tongues of fire seen by the Apostles on the Day of Pentecost, and that the work of the spirits on earth—acting through human agencies—is to bring mankind back to a knowledge of the One True God; to rescue them from the thralldom of theological superstition and debasing priestcraft; and to prepare for the ingathering of our own branch of the human race—which they describe as the Fourth of the Seven Churches.

NEW YORK: 1852.

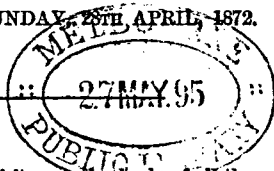
Published by J. H. R. & Co. No. 10, N. Y. No. 10, N. Y.

LECTURE

UPON

SPIRITUAL COMMUNICATION, INSPIRATION, OR IMPRESSION,

DELIVERED BY JAMES SMITH, Esq., OF MELBOURNE, IN THE MASONIC HALL,
DUNEDIN, ON SUNDAY, 25TH APRIL, 1872.



THE craving for communion with the spirit-world, while it is a testimony to the immortality of the soul, since mere matter cannot be attracted towards or by what is immaterial, is also one of the deepest and strongest instincts and desires of our nature. It is an evidence of the emancipation—to some extent—of what is spiritual within us, from the trammels of animalism. But we must be extremely careful how we endeavour to justify this craving. Indulged in, according to some methods, it merely gratifies an idle curiosity, it brings about us undeveloped spirits, with sentiments and sympathies which are still directed to the earth they have quitted and about whose precincts they are still hovering, and it subjects us to be misled, deceived, and in some instances mentally destroyed.

Spiritual communion is governed by immutable law, like all the processes of nature, and obedience to that law is essential for the safe and salutary enjoyment of that intercourse for which so many human beings instinctively yearn. There is no such thing as a supernatural phenomenon in the universe. Whatever we call by this name is a natural circumstance uncomprehended by us. Supernaturalism is a phrase which ought therefore to be discarded from our dictionaries. Spiritual communion is one of the natural facts of the world. It has existed from the beginning of time upon this our earth, and it will continue to exist until our globe has fulfilled its appointed work. Sacred and profane literature is full of testimonies to the truth and actuality of this communion; and all the religions of civilised mankind repose upon a spiritual basis. Take away this and they crumble to pieces; as everything that is human and material will necessarily do, in virtue of the law of its being. But the records and the pre-

ceptions of all these religions being largely adulterated and contaminated by human error, and what is historical in them having reference merely to but a small fragment of our race, and to a limited period in its annals, mankind has gone astray with respect to its apprehension of spiritual truths.

We must go to the very foundation of things in order to get at the truth of spiritual intercourse, and to explain the beautiful and wonderful gradations of intelligence and rule by which our world is governed. We must understand that the human race made its appearance upon the earth tens of thousands of years before the date assigned to the creation of the world in the Mosaic Cosmogony. We may be said, indeed, to belong to the middle ages of the history of mankind. There have been three great ingatherings of the human race—spoken of in the vision of John as churches—at intervals of many thousand years; and some idea may be formed of the incorrectness of our systems of chronology from the fact that the ingathering of the Third Church occurred at a period considerably anterior to the bondage of the children of Israel in Egypt. The time has arrived at which the work of gathering in the Fourth Church has been commenced, and although a thousand years may probably elapse before the work is perfected, it is steadily proceeding, and will eventuate in the establishment of such a spiritual civilization of the globe—and of such a confraternity of the spiritually minded in all countries, as has not been witnessed since the consummation and fulfilment of the last Church.

Outside of this earth are a number of spheres, constituting with our own—which is the birth sphere—seven. Ours is the first; in the second abide all those spirits who have quitted the earth

during the last six thousand years. In the sphere above these dwell the advanced spirits who belonged to the Third Church; and in the highest sphere of all, abide the still more glorified spirits, who ascend thither by due gradation from the Second Church. It is their office and privilege to instruct the angels of the Third Church; while they in like manner are the teachers of the undeveloped and progressive spirits in the second sphere, as well as of ourselves under certain conditions. All knowledge that contains within itself an element of value and durability, all inspired literature, all great inventions, all original thoughts, and all pure and noble aspirations come to mankind through these channels from the Most High. What we call genius is His holy gift, and the human being is almost as incapable of originating anything as the lower animals. Man—although unconsciously so to himself—is linked by this chain of intelligences with the Author of all being, and with the Source of all knowledge. From the moment of his birth, guardian angels are assigned to him, and if in infancy he receives a natural training, and if his after life be pure and natural likewise, those angels can continue to act upon him impressively, and promote his temporal happiness here and his spiritual progression hereafter.

Man being thus related to the angels, their watchfulness over him is incessant, and their influence upon him for good would be great, and no less unceasing, were it not, as I have said, that he alienates them from his side, and violates by disobedience the law of his being. This law is harmony and happiness, and its first transgression, in the case of most of us, springs from our getting outside of our individual spheres. Every person in the world has his appointed place in it, determined by the nature of his faculties and by the specific bent of his genius. Occupying these, the whole family of man would be as one brotherhood. Each unit of us belongs as much to a fixed order of things as the infinite varieties of animal and vegetable life below us fit into their proper places, and act and move to one consentaneous purpose. Between each human being and every other human being there are the same differences as between the quadruped and the bird, and the bird and the fish. Not only so, but as there are innumerable species of the bird tribes, so there are equally innumerable varieties of the man tribe; and it is just as erroneous, just as much an infringement of the law, and just as much a source of pain and perplexity for one human being to step out of his sphere, as it would be for a wolf to adopt the plumage of the peacock, or for an eagle to clothe himself in the skin of the tiger. Most of the crime and confusion which prevail in the world, and no small part of its vice and disease, are attributable to this very aberration of human beings from their respective spheres. It pervades all grades of society, and is productive of endless discord and incalculable suffering. There are many kings who should be tending swine, or following the vocation of hunters, or cooks, or dancing masters; and in like manner

there are many mute inglorious Miltons, possible Hampdens, and probable Cromwells, who are leading lives of obscurity and arduous toil. Not only is the work of the world done badly in consequence, but mankind is deprived of innumerable inventions of which it might reap the advantage if those who are capable of communicating them were not repressed by unspiritual circumstances.

But, it will be asked, how is each man or woman to discover his or her proper sphere, and to occupy the same? God has defined it for each of us. There is not a child who would not clearly indicate it if carefully studied. It betrays itself in very early life, and it is the duty of every parent to provide for its fulfilment. But convention steps in and says, No! If the son of a professional man, or of a person in opulent circumstances, evinces a marked inclination for mechanical pursuits, it is discouraged and repressed. He is otherwise trained. He is subjected to a learned education. His mind is crammed with dead languages, and with equally lifeless facts, and he is put to some employment which he follows from habit or necessity, but which—if it brings him success—never brings him happiness. There is an unsatisfied craving which he can neither account for nor allay. He endeavours to minister to it by pleasure, by excitement, by the accumulation of wealth, or by its expenditure upon objects which he no sooner possesses than they become indifferent to him. This happiness eludes his grasp. He has got outside his individual sphere; the evolution of his spiritual nature—if it evolves at all—is at variance with the evolution of his physical nature, and the result is enduring discord. Do you not suppose that Louis XVI. would have been a happy man if it had been consistent with the practice of kings to have placed him apprentice with a locksmith, and to have permitted him to pass his life in the peaceful pursuit of the mechanical employment to which he was so much attached? Do you not suppose, also, that if, instead of ascending a throne, Marie Antoinette could have followed the healthy calling of a rosy dairymaid, she would have been one of the happiest women in Europe? Who have been the world's chief benefactors? Have they not been the men and women who, knowing their own spheres, resolutely kept within them, developing their own natures on all sides, and growing up into the glorious stature of noble and natural human beings—unspoiled by erroneous systems of education, untrammelled by circumstance, and unwarping by any of the distorting influences of an improper and uncongenial training.

Such persons being natural, and having undergone no mental distortion, are necessarily more amenable to spiritual impressions; and to these, as I have said, humanity is indebted for everything precious that it possesses. If mankind have gone astray, if the world is a scene of turbulence and bloodshed, of wrong and rapine, if it presents to us the spectacle of enormous wealth, immense luxury and shameful self-indulgence, side by side with squalid poverty, with abject want and absolute starvation, who is to

blame? Ourselves. Does not every believer in a God and in a hereafter, acknowledge that there is a superintending Providence, and at the same time feel it hard to reconcile the existence of the "evils" which he sees and feels, with the operation and omnipotence of that Providence. It is not at fault, however. Its decrees are beneficence itself, its purposes are infinitely wise and infinitely loving. There is not a planet in this vast universe that is not under the direction of gradations of angels, subordinate to the highest hierarchies, these being in their turn subject to our Heavenly Father, whose service is delight, and whose commands are love. And so it is with respect to our own small globe; but we, humans, in the pride and vanity of our pigmy intellects, and in the exercise of that freedom which has been graciously vouchsafed to us by the Supreme Ruler of all things, apply ourselves to the task of thwarting the benevolent designs, and traversing his sublime decrees. We deliberately ignore the spiritual nature which is within us, and live only for the animal; setting the perishable above the imperishable, and acting as if in the great chain of being there were no intermediate links between ourselves and God, no open communication between the seen and unseen no angels to instruct and guide us, no spiritual forefathers watching over us, and striving to impress us for good. It seems to be an article of popular faith that when we die, owing to some mystical trust in the merits of somebody else, we shall leap at once into the presence of our Maker, and that the murderer who yesterday expiated his crime upon the scaffold and died penitently, will be at once ushered into the abode of God himself, of that inconceivably august and glorious Being whom it is the privilege alone of the highest archangel to look upon.

The great difference between the spiritual intercourse which is ordinarily enjoyed upon the earth, and that which has been permitted to mankind through the agency of the magnetic teaching, is this—that whereas the former brings us into contact with spirits only one remove from humanity—spirits in many instances not yet enfranchised from the errors of belief, and the intellectual trammels which impeded their mental progress and spiritual growth on earth—spirits who are being cured and instructed—spirits, in a word, occupying the second sphere—the magnetic teaching is bestowed upon us by those advanced intelligences which occupy the higher spheres of this our globe, and are the appointed channels through which the Most High conveys his love and light to his creatures upon earth, and to the undeveloped and progressive spirits in the second sphere. In that sphere reside all the spirits which have taken their departure hence, ever since the present branch of the human family—or in other words the members of the Fourth Church—appeared upon the earth. In the infinite wisdom of our Almighty Father he has prescribed that there shall be seven great ingatherings of the human race. Three of these, as has been said, have already taken place. The first was gathered in some

21,000 years ago, when our globe was much smaller than it is at present. The members of this Church, at their ascension, became the spiritual guides, teachers, and counsellors of the human race next dwelling on the earth. At the completion of each Church the earth underwent a great convulsion. Its physical aspect was changed, and its bulk expanded. When, in the fulness of time, and at the expiration of seven thousand years, the Second Church was gathered in, the first ascended to a higher sphere, and became the guide and teacher of the Second, which remained in the second sphere. And so in like manner with the Third. When that arose, the First passed into the Sun, and its members were invested with a lustre corresponding with the glorious radiance of the centre of our planetary system. Our teachers and instructors, as I have said, are members of the Third Church, and they flourished on the earth shortly before the epoch at which Biblical chronologists have fixed the creation of the world. When the ingathering was completed, our globe underwent yet another change and expansion of its bulk. Up to that time there was but one continent and one sea. The four continents which now exist were riven asunder, and the islands we inhabit began to emerge from the ocean. We foolishly imagine that the discovery of America was first accomplished a few centuries back. Nothing can be more erroneous than the supposition. That land was perfectly well known to the members of the third church; it was the seat of a pure and spiritual civilization, and the dwelling place of a noble and natural race of beings.

When our own Church is gathered in, all the spirits of the human race translated to the second sphere since what we are pleased to call the creation of the world—that is, since the date of the last great cataclysm—will ascend, and will take the place now occupied by the Third Church, and this last will take the position of the Second Church, which will pass into the sun, and there join its glorified predecessor. After us will come three other Churches, and when these have reached their completion, our earth—which has been described to me as one thought of the Most High, and as enclosing within itself when it first emanated from the Supreme Mind the germ of every being which ever has lived or ever will live upon its surface—will have fulfilled its work, and will pass away perhaps, or be prepared for the residence of a more exalted race of beings than ourselves.

And it is because the time has arrived for the commencement of the ingathering of the Fourth Church, that this spiritual awakening is taking place all over the globe. In every part of it, the loving and wise ministers and messengers of God are acting impressively upon the minds of such persons as are susceptible to their impressions. Men of science and theologians are finding themselves brought face to face with doubts and difficulties which they are unable to solve. The old superstitions are crumbling to ruin, scepticism is invading the sanctuaries of orthodoxy; the belief in a physical death and a physical hell

is being discarded by all but an unenlightened few; the theory of the plenary inspiration of the Bible is rejected by many of those who were formerly its staunchest advocates and defenders, and mankind are beginning to extricate themselves from the meshes of a pernicious theology and to seek communion with God through the instrumentality of his holy angels. All these things are but the faint foreshadowing of more momentous changes which await us, even before the expiration of the present century; and if I were to repeat the assurances and distinct predictions which I have received—and not I alone, but many others—on this head, I might be suspected of being a visionary and a dreamer; possibly the victim of some extraordinary hallucination. Enough to say, however, that the effects of the magnetic teaching—teaching which is purely inspirational—teaching which is conveyed to men, women, and children by the magnetic fire and light, by that which—I speak it with the most unfeigned reverence, and merely utter what it has been given me to utter—by that which is of the very nature of God—have been seen by scores of persons, and will be visible to hundreds and thousands. There is much in it which transcends the human mind to explain. God's ways are not our ways; and it is only becoming on our part to receive with humility and gratitude the blessed light which descends upon us in vivifying and exhilarating power from above, and to acknowledge with heartfelt thankfulness, the happiness which we enjoy in living at a period of the history of our branch of the human race, in which this glorious gift was revealed to, and bestowed upon us.

The magnetic teaching, as now vouchsafed to mankind in its more direct and obvious form, is another variety of that inspiration which has been bestowed upon a favoured few in all ages of the world's history, which is to be found in all the so-called religions which have taken rise in the East—which has created and vitalised whatever is durable in art, literature, and science, and which would become the common property of all mankind, if mankind lived in obedience to the laws of God, and listened to and acted upon those impressions which our good angels are ever waiting and watching for an opportunity of imparting to us. For, as each living being, from the lowest organism to the highest, does actually ensphere an archangel, so in every member of the human family lie all the potentialities of genius. This, though rare among us, is not a privilege, is not an exclusive gift, is not a special favour. God, our infinite Father, does not deal in this wise with his children. They are equally dear in his eyes—equally precious to his all-comprehending love. What he gives to one, he bestows on all, and that with a lavish hand—with the free bounty of a Being whose goodness is inexhaustible, whose love knows no limit, whose active beneficence is incapable of rest, whose superintending Providence embraces the whole universe within its stupendous grasp.

The day will come when men, brought back to a sense of His presence in the world, weaned

from the pernicious errors, the degrading superstitions, and the amazing absurdities of human theologies, and studying Him in his glorious works, will participate as freely in the attributes of genius as they now share in the blessed sunshine, in the free air of heaven, and in the enlightened enjoyment of the spectacle daily presented to us by this beautiful earth. In every human brain lie the germs of genius—that is to say, of creative power. All they require is to be quickened by the magnetic light and fire which God's holy angels and our ministering spirits are commissioned to confer upon us if we only prepare the soul, and keep it free from the weeds of human doctrine and human error. Our part in the work is very simple, and our duty very easy. It is not even a labour. God, in his wonderful goodness, has made it absolutely delightful. Consider for a moment all that is required of us. (Obedience! nothing more! We have but to do as the lower animals and the vegetable world do—obey impressions. These come to us from above—from the ministering angels just spoken of. If we followed them, every human being would occupy precisely that sphere which he is peculiarly and pre-eminently qualified to fill. In it he would enjoy health and happiness. Out of it he would never wish to depart. He would resemble one wheel out of millions in a wisely conceived, exquisitely constructed, and harmoniously-working piece of machinery. He would fit in with every other part of that complicated mechanism, and would contribute his quota to the results produced.

Mankind have not yet come to recognise their inter-dependence and inter-relationship—have not yet felt that each unit of the mass is just as closely related to every other human being on the globe, as the nerves behind my eye are to those which are ramified through my hands or feet. Not only so, but we are akin, on the one side, to the dust beneath our feet; upon the other, to those celestial beings whose privilege it is to be admitted to the councils of the Almighty. "The chain of being" is something more than a figure of speech: it is an eternal fact. And this is a truth which is in process of revelation by the magnetic teaching, and will become before long so patent to the understandings of all men who have eyes to see and ears to hear, that they will wonder that they could have lived so many years upon the earth in utter blindness of verities which are being proclaimed every hour of every day by the million voices of animated Nature, speaking to us from every animal, from every bird, from every insect, from every tree and flower, and from every—so-called—inanimate object, that looks up in wonder and gratitude—in love and adoration—to the great Creator and Father of us all. But upon this subject of inspiration or impression it is necessary I should speak in greater detail. The question is one about which civilized mankind have agreed to differ, and chiefly because we have been accustomed to consider the gift as something partial and exclusive; as limited, indeed, to one set of books, produced by one family of people, arrogantly assuming to

be the chosen of the Almighty. But when we come to recognise the fact proclaimed by all the million voices of nature, and testified to by our own reason, that God is the Father and Creator of all things, loving all equally, and regarding all with an eye of uniform benevolence, then it is that we begin to apprehend the erroneousness of the popular superstition that the Old and New Testaments have exclusive claims to be considered as inspired; then it is that we arrive at the legitimate and rational conclusion that the sacred books, and even the profane literature of all nations, put forth similar claims to inspiration, and that those claims must be allowed. And while on the one hand mankind—or rather Christendom—has abandoned, by almost universal consent, the doctrine of the plenary inspiration of the Bible and the New Testament, and has agreed that both what is historical and what is preceptive in those books must be subjected to the test of criticism, and must be accepted or rejected, according as it stands or resists this test, so, in like manner, we are called upon to subject the sacred books of the Hindoos, the Chinese, and the Mahomedans, the philosophical essays of the Greeks and Romans, and the “profane” literature of all countries and of all ages to the same test, carefully discriminating between what is inspired—what is spiritual, that is to say—and what is merely human. Nor, for the application of this test, is there any necessity for learning. We can arrive at our object intuitively, that is to say, by impression. For impression and inspiration are synonymous terms. What is inspired comes to us from without—is communicated to us by the higher intelligences; and from the same source we derive the capacity of discriminating between inspired and uninspired literature. All genius, no matter what may be its particular manifestation, is the gift of the Most High, transmitted to men through his messengers and ministers. And there are many men of genius besides those whom the world recognizes and honours as such; men, indeed, of whom the world never hears, but to whom it is indebted for numerous inventions, for proverbs, and even for homely weather maxims, and the like; these being founded upon a careful observation of nature, and upon a cheerful and humble obedience to her laws, combined with a susceptibility to angelic impression.

Let us illustrate the difference between what is inspired and what is uninspired, by a reference to two familiar passages of the Old Testament. In the one we find the following commandment:—“I am the Lord thy God; thou shalt have none other Gods but me.” Of the inspiration of this no reasonable being can entertain a doubt. Not that it is to be supposed that the Creator of this stupendous universe ever stood face to face with Moses upon the mountain and delivered the first commandment to the great lawgiver who goes by that name, by word of mouth. For this, if not an impossibility—as we believe it to be, since no merely human being could look upon God and live—is obviously a gross improbability. But, examined by the light of reason, that is to say by the illuminating power of the Divine

principle within us, how do the commandments present themselves? As having been framed by some sagacious and enlightened ruler, who asked for assistance from on high in the preparation of a code of laws for the government of an idolatrous, covetous, cruel, and generally inferior race of people, and who received the assistance—the impression or inspirational help he asked for. But knowing the abject superstition, and at the same time the overweening pride, of the unruly tribe of fugitives he had to deal with, he felt that, in order to make these just and wise and salutary laws binding and authoritative upon the minds of the people, he must profess to have received them, not indirectly, but directly, from the Most High. Hence he goes up into a high mountain, of which the summit is habitually veiled in clouds, and as he is versed in all the meteorological lore of the Egyptians, he selects for the period of his visit, the time at which a tempest is impending. In all probability—if we assume that the historical narrative is correct in the man—he takes with him—unknown to the people generally—two tablets of stone, and a priestly artificer. He is absent from the camp for a long time, and in the interval a terrific storm breaks over the mountain. Thick darkness envelopes the summit, the thunder rolls, the lightnings flash, and the wondering spectators at the foot of the mountain, ignorant and credulous, and believing all such phenomena to be special and irregular manifestations of Divine power, are prepared to receive with undoubting minds the assurance which Moses gives them on his return, that he has conversed with God; and that the ten commandments he brings with him were traced upon the two tablets of stone by the finger of the Almighty himself.

The second narrative to which I would refer is this of the alleged standing still of the sun and moon, or more correctly speaking, of the globe we inhabit—in order to enable a sanguinary engagement to be completed during daylight, between the Israelites and their enemies. Now, here we have a narrative which is not only full of improbabilities, but also of impossibilities. It is unnecessary to discuss the question whether such a battle was ever fought. We may conclude that it was, and that it was recorded by an Israelitish scribe; but when we examine the record by the light of our reason, what do we discover in it? A total absence of inspiration. All inspiration comes to us, as has been said, from the Most High. Therefore it is absolutely true, because He himself is absolute Truth. But in this case we find the narrative contaminated by human error. In the first place, in order to justify what was probably an act of wanton aggression and cruel ferocity, the historian professed to assert that God had authorised the battle, and approved of the wholesale destruction. That nothing happens save by His permission we must all reverently admit; but to make a God of love the *particeps criminis* in sanguinary outrages is obviously little short of blasphemy. In the next place we have the utter impossibility of the sus-

pension for a single instant of the rotatory motion of the globe we inhabit. God cannot transcend His own laws; because He and they are one, and because they are absolutely perfect. Their imperfection would be implied by the fact that some circumstances might arise, rendering it necessary for Him to suspend their operations, or to go outside of them. This also would detract from His infinite prescience. For He foreknew all things when He framed those laws; therefore He foreknew that an occasion would arise in which a semi-barbarous horde would want an hour or two's additional daylight to finish a battle in; and if He considered the conclusion of that engagement within the limit of a single day essential to His divine purposes, we may be perfectly certain that He would have provided for the contingency by a natural law.

But what are—according to a rational hypothesis—the facts which probably underlie this partly fictitious narrative. May we not easily imagine the Captain of the Israelites, when exhorting on the events of the day, in the midst of his companions in arms around the camp fires at night, exclaiming, "In that momentous crisis of the battle, when victory was in suspense, and for a moment the issue of the conflict was doubtful, so much incident and excitement, and such a throng of hopes and fears come crowded into a few minutes, that it appeared to me as if the very setting sun lingered over the mountains of the west, as loth to look his last upon the scene, and that as the moon rose out of the east, she was awed by the spectacle presented to her pure gaze, and shrank for awhile from rising in the heavens?" Now, it requires very little intelligence on our part to know that language of this kind, reported from mouth to mouth, traditionally preserved, and committed to writing years after the event, perhaps, would undergo an inevitable transmutation. A chronicler as zealous for the honour and glory of his race, as Clarendon was for the Royalists, or as Carlyle is for the Roundheads, would drop the word "seems" out of his narrative, and would tell a proud, vainglorious, and superstitious people that the sun and moon actually did stand still in order to enable this battle to be brought to a close, and that this prodigy was of course the act of that Deity whom, in the narrowness of their belief and the egregious vanity of their minds, they declare to be the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, and of them and their descendants only; leaving all the other and the far more numerous children of the human family, outside of the sphere of the Divine Providence, and of his all-comprehending love.

Thus, then, you will perceive how necessary it is to discriminate between what is inspirational in the Scriptures and what is merely human; and if you study them by the light of reason—asking for, awaiting, receiving, and acting upon those impressions which are given to us as freely as the blessed sunshine, all difficulties will disappear, all doubts will be cleared up, and you will be able to sift the truth from the error, and to discern, amidst the illusions and extravagances

of both the Hebrew and the Christian writers, the image of the true God shining out upon us through the clouds of human darkness and the mists of human misconception.

All these errors, and all this darkness and misconception, are the result of disobedience to impression. There is and can be no mystery in religion—no mystery in the relationship to Almighty God. It is a purely filial one: full of infinite love on His part, and demanding nothing on our own but childlike obedience. An earthly father does not convey his injunctions and wishes to his little ones in parables and allegories. He adapts them precisely to the growth and character of their minds. He makes them simple, lucid, perspicuous, and intelligible. If he did otherwise, could he wonder at their disobeying what they failed to comprehend? And if this be so with human parents, frail, feeble, and fallible as we are, how much more so must it be with our Heavenly Father, who is perfection itself, omniscient, and infinite in goodness and in power? There is and can be no mystery in His commandments. Wherever you find anything that is mysterious and provocative of controversy in what is called Sacred Literature, you may be perfectly sure that it is of human origin—that it is the product of the human intellect, professing to know so much better than God himself, and substituting its own ignorant dogmas for his simple truths.

God speaks—through his angelic ministers and messengers—to every one of us, every day, every hour, and every minute of our lives, if we will only listen to Him. And not alone to us, but to every object in animated nature; and there is no such thing as an inanimate object, organic or inorganic, in nature. Every mineral, every vegetable, insect, reptile, fish, bird, and animal has its own magnetic atmosphere—its individual atmosphere, upon which plays that magnetic fire which has been described to me as the very nature and spirit of God. There is not one of these things, from the pebble beneath our foot to the stately elephant in the forests of Ceylon, that is not necessarily acted upon by this magnetic force—that is not obedient to the impressions thus received, and that is not perfectly happy in consequence. They obey natural laws, and that obedience is an act of worship—is the only worship that is acceptable to Almighty God.

Man is the only animal on the face of this beautiful globe that is disobedient to impressions, and he is accordingly the only animal that is unhappy, the only animal that is subject to vice, disease, and misery; excepting only in so far as the lower animals are liable to these things when brought out of their sphere, and vitiated and injured by contact with him, and by what we call domestication, which usually means debasement and degradation.

Man did not fall away from God—did not become an exile from a figurative Paradise by eating of the fruit of a forbidden tree. In all these poetical allegories and Oriental fables there lurks a germ of truth: Man suffered from disobedience

to impression, still suffers from it, and always will continue to suffer, so long as he refuses to listen to that impression, which is identical with what theologians and mental philosophers call conscience. "Paradise Lost" is capable of becoming "Paradise Regained" for each of us. Eden lies within our reach. We can still walk and talk with angels—still see the heavens bending down upon us, morning and evening in holy love—still breathe the fragrance of the new earth and taste the freshness of the primal dawn. For our globe is as beautiful as ever it was. It was not cursed with sterility then or now. All that is necessary for the perception, comprehension, and enjoyment of its inexhaustible beauty, is that we should be in harmony with it and with its Almighty Creator. And this can be accomplished by a simple act of obedience. Upon no other condition. Obedience to impression. In all the concerns of life—in the greatest as in the least—our angelic guides, counsellors, teachers, and loving friends, are waiting to impress us, waiting to feed us with the magnetic fire—with the love of God! It is ready to be given to us without reservation and without stint. We have only to obey—to receive and to be thankful—in order to be happy. Heaven lies about us, even here. It is not a place, but a condition; not a remote country, but an ever-present reality to all who seek it in obedience. The earth is not a vale of tears—that is an invention of the theologians. It is a possible Paradise, and it will actually become so before our own branch of the human race finally disappears from its surface in their physical bodies.

The more the great truth of inspiration or impression is investigated, and the better it is understood, the more harmonious does it appear with God's beneficent purposes and with man's nature and necessities. According to the generally received belief, our Infinite Father is infinitely remote from us. In our prayers we acknowledge His nearness, but that nearness is not a living reality to us. If it were so, we should not live as we do. If the conviction that He is omnipresent and all-seeing had any firm hold upon our minds, could we, as rational beings, think, act, speak, and live as we do? The question has only to be stated in order to be answered with an emphatic No! Once a week we make a sort of compromise with our consciences. We enter what we call the House of God—as if the whole universe were not the abiding place, and each of us were not, or ought not to be, His living temple—and we declare ourselves to be miserable sinners. On that day, we abstain to a considerable extent from worldly occupations, and endeavour—sometimes with a reasonable degree of success—to appear as gloomy and morose as if we actually supposed that the Infinite Being, who is love itself, and who has willed that all men shall be happy, on the simple condition of obedience—could be pleased or propitiated by the spectacle of austere countenances and mortifying practices. But, on the morrow, we resume our buying and selling, our cheating and overreaching, our adulterations, and our sordid practices of all kinds, with a sort of tacit

understanding that we can live for ourselves during the rest of the week, and make our peace with God—by means of putting up certain prayers, singing certain hymns, and listening to certain edifying discourses on the Sunday following. And so we go on from year to year; balancing the worldliness of six days by the devotional exercises of the seventh, as we imagine, and keeping a kind of debtor and creditor account with the Almighty.

It is no part of my purpose to utter a tirade against Sabbatarianism. What I am anxious to declare to you is this—That every day in the week and in the year should be a Sabbath—should be consecrated by the love of God and by the love of our neighbours, by the abnegation of self, by a growth in knowledge, and by a steady advancement in happiness and spiritual light and life.

And thus it would be if we were only obedient to His holy will which His ministers and messengers are ever ready to impress upon us if we only listen to them. Surely no scheme of the moral government of the universe could possibly be so beautiful, so loving, so wise, or so perfect as this. For what does it reveal to us? Is it not the fulfilment and realisation of that dream of the patriarch in which he saw a ladder stretching from Heaven to earth, and angels ascending and descending by it, while he slept at the foot? And in this vision or allegory we discover a great truth, for, in all men, the receptiveness of or susceptibility to angelic impressions is most vivid during sleep. Our guides and counsellors can then reach us when our animal passions are laid to rest, when the sensorial avenues to the brain are all closed, and when the mind alone is active and open to impressions.

But at all times, and in all the circumstances of life, this impressionable guidance and instruction is equally open to us, provided we will listen to and obey it. It comes to us like the winds of Heaven, like the fragrance of the flowers that surround us, like the blessed light of day, or the tranquil shadows of the evening. There is nothing mystical or mysterious in its nature; nothing occult or incomprehensible in its operation. "My law is easy, and my commandments are light," was said of old, and every one who has once been accustomed to obey impression must acknowledge the truth of this—must perceive that obedience is happiness, and that to submit to the voice of what we call conscience will infallibly confer upon us the peace which passeth all understanding. Men ever substituting the complicated inversions of the human mind for the beautiful simplicity of God's most holy will, have devised innumerable forms of religion, innumerable rites and ceremonies, innumerable dogmas, doctrines, and professions of faith. They have imagined that by the adoption of these, they can either perform an acceptable service to our Infinite Father, or avert what they are pleased to call His wrath, or propitiate His favour. And multitudes of men, professing these forms of faith, and devoutly believing in these dogmas, have drawn nigh to Him; but

they have done so in spite of their creeds and their superstitious practices. Unconsciously, perhaps, to themselves, they have been obedient to impressions—have been, in short, much better than their creeds. And hence they have known and loved God, and have lived in conformity with His laws. Nor is it of the slightest moment to their eternal welfare that they have been disciples of Christ, or of Confucius, or Brahma, or Zoroaster, or Plato, or Mahomet. Truth is one immutable and eternal. It knows no variations of clime or country, of race or epoch. The love of God may be just as firm in the mind of the poor Indian who worships a stock or a stone as in that of an Oberlin or a Fenelon, according to their respective grades in the scale of being, and their respective lights. The savage acts from impression, so does the sage. In general, the "grey barbarian" is not "lower" but higher, "than the Christian child," simply because he is strictly natural—strictly obedient to the law of his being. Therefore he is happy, and therefore he is healthy; and it is the same, as I have said, with all the lower animals. It is the lord of creation alone who acts in disobedience to the loving admonitions of his Heavenly Father, and is miserable, diseased, and criminal in consequence.

Ah! men and brethren, if the human race could only be brought to feel its relationship with the invisible world, could only perceive that it is surrounded by angelic intelligences, could only know that we have perpetually by our side the ministers and messengers of the

Most High, filled with His love, affectionately submissive to His will, and overflowing with tenderness towards their human kindred, what a total transformation would be effected in the aspect of this fair and lovely world of ours! Vice and wrong-doing of all kinds would speedily disappear. We might pull down our lunatic asylums, dismantle our prisons, and abolish our hospitals. We could dispense with our armies, and navies, and fortresses, and relegate to productive labour the millions of men whom we now train and support in comparative idleness as the instruments and implements of homicide upon a scale of gigantic magnitude. But do you imagine that this transformation will not take place? Let any man who has lived for fifty years upon the earth look back to the state of society all over the civilised globe in 1820, and compare it with what it is now, and then let him attempt to dispute the imminency of the great change which is impending. It will be attended with great convulsions, doubtless; I believe, indeed, that the whole fabric of social life in Europe and America is threatened with subversion and ruin, because it is founded upon a rotten—because a godless—basis; upon the worship of wealth and the apotheosis of egotism; and that when the convulsion shall have been over past, the great body of the people—the poor and the ignorant, as we term them—more impressionable to angelic instruction and guidance than their "superiors," will proceed to reconstruct the edifice upon the enduring foundations of righteousness, truth, and love.

THE TWO GREAT COMMANDMENTS.

WE are frequently asked what are the doctrines taught, and the duties inculcated, by "higher intelligences" who communicate with us. The following lecture, emanating from THEM, supplies an answer:—

Upon a knowledge of God's commandments—which their Almighty Author has inscribed upon the book of nature and in our own consciences—depends man's happiness, both here and hereafter. For that knowledge precedes and presupposes obedience to them; inasmuch as, when it is perfectly understood how wise, how beautiful, how harmonious, and how beneficial they are, obedience will follow as a matter of course. Their harmony and adaptability to men's wants and to the circumstances of their daily lives, commend themselves to our finite minds with irresistible force. They are found to have been devised by infinite wisdom, guided by infinite love. They are the fruit of divine foresight operating in and for the benefit of mankind. To obey them is happiness; to disobey them is misery. Man, in his natural frame, is like an exquisitely constructed piece of machinery, and if this were superintended and controlled—as it was originally fashioned—by reason, it would go on working with the most efficacious results, until he attained the full term of four-score years. If, unhappily, it becomes deranged at a much earlier period, and falls to pieces far short of the natural span of human life, the creature is alone to blame. Sickness and vice are not inherent in our nature. They spring from ignorance and abuse. God has given to each of us a wonderfully compacted structure of blood, bone, flesh, muscle, and nerve. Properly handled, this admirable framework would become more and more enduring from generation to generation, because each would be an improvement upon its predecessor. Every one of us would enter on his new existence not merely with the mental attainments he brought with him from a former life, but also with a frame superior to that possessed by his predecessors. Thus, then, you will perceive that not merely does each one of us inflict a positive injury upon himself by his ignorance or his violation of natural laws, but that he transmits the consequences of his ignorance or of that violation to those who come after him.

Love of God begets knowledge. It is, we are told, "the beginning of wisdom;" and knowledge begets faith. Necessarily so, because it is impossible to know God's laws without at the same time reposing the most illimitable trust in His wisdom, justice, and goodness. Ordinarily speaking, you will observe, the process is reversed. Men are taught to believe, or to repeat, certain abstract propositions and mysterious formula—and this is expected to serve as the groundwork of knowledge. The foundations being laid in error, what can we expect from the superstructure? A faith in the Trinity, for example, conducts a man to certain impious conceptions of the Almighty Father. It induces him to derogate from the unique power of the great "I Am." The supreme authority is di-

vided between three mystical persons, each of whom is supposed to be co-equal with the other. By-and-bye this figment of the human brain is supplemented by the idea of a devil—a power antagonistic to, and in habitual rebellion against, the Most High, whose Omnipotence is thus actually impeached. For to imagine that any absolute monarch, even upon this earth, would tolerate the co-existence of an evil pretender to his throne, constantly engaged in seducing his subjects from their allegiance and in dragging them away to a loathsome dungeon—makes a greater demand upon human credulity than many of the most degraded superstitions of the most benighted savages. Then, again, a physical devil necessitates the imagination of a physical hell—a place of unspeakable torment, into which are supposed to descend the souls of all those who have been allured from their lawful allegiance to the rightful and only true Sovereign of the Universe; and who are kept there, bound in everlasting chains, with no hope of ultimate release. And all this goes on, we are told, in defiance of the authority, and in despite of the beneficence, of the great Being whom our intellectual instincts assure us to be as Infinite in love, as He is Supreme in power. Surely a belief of this kind is only paganism re-baptised.

But ignorance and superstition do not stop here. They do not scruple to defame the character and to defile the name of the Most High, by attributing to him the meanest passions of his meanest creatures. They make him jealous, revengeful, capricious, bloodthirsty, delighting in sacrifices, presiding over battles, authorizing lust and rapine, and sanctioning and encouraging the mutual slaughter of the beings whom he has created. Can you imagine anything more awful, anything more impious, anything more irreligious, anything more blasphemous than this ascription of the base passions and sanguinary deeds of human beings to Him who sitteth in the heavens; and before whose power, purity, wisdom, and Almighty Love, man must stand in reverential awe and silent adoration: wondering and grateful for, the divine gift of reason, whereby we have been enabled to apprehend and perceive, as through a glass darkly, these glorious attributes of our common Father.

Yes, Father! In that one word is summed up the beautiful relationship in which he stands to each of us. As a Father, he counsels, teaches, guides, and instructs us. As a Father, he conducts our steps through the infant stages of our multimorphic existence. As a Father, he feeds us with knowledge, imparting it in proportion to our growth and capacity, as well here, as heretofore, and hereafter. As a Father, he is with us always, and everywhere, tenderly considerate of our infirmities, long-suffering under circumstances of great provocation—as we should think them—and fulfilling towards us every duty that the most loving, the most benignant, and the most exemplary human parent could possibly discharge towards his offspring.

And does this imply no corresponding obligation, as of sonship, on our part? Setting aside the debt—the unspeakably heavy debt of gratitude we owe him “for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life,” is it not incumbent upon us to make ourselves acquainted with his laws, and, having ascertained them, to ensue them with all diligence and zeal? Even upon that odious principle of selfishness, which some philosophers have made the basis—the hideous basis of all human actions, should we not feel impelled to make His commandments our study, and obedience to them our delight? For in that knowledge and in that obedience lies the root of earthly happiness. And do not let us entertain the erroneous conviction that happiness is something alien to human life. Granted that it is continually eluding men’s grasp, what does that prove? That the mode of search—the method of the chase—is wholly erroneous. Doubtless humanity has its afflictions, but a knowledge of God’s laws turns all calamities to blessings. Our friends undergo the change called death; but we know that the separation is only temporary, and that we shall rejoin and recognise them elsewhere. Fortune deserts him, but the wise man who has learned to love, and therefore to know and trust his heavenly Father, accepts all such reverses with a serene mind and a tranquil countenance, because he sees the light behind the cloud.

By the laws of nature, men commonly understand the operations of some dumb, monstrous power, directed by a blind intelligence towards an inevitable end with irresistible force. They altogether omit to see that they are simply the laws of God, and, as such, are governed by the perfection of wisdom for the most beneficent of purposes. Obedience to them, I repeat, is perfect happiness; violation of them produces disorder and misery. Their authority ought to be supreme, and conformity to them by no means excludes the exercise of man’s free will. This is left intact. If its exercise coincides with the will of the Almighty, it is well for the creature. If it is repugnant to that will, it merely delays the fulfilment of the Divine purpose, but does not prevent its ultimate accomplishment. Thus, then, free will and necessity are not incompatible. It is only by taking a narrow and limited view of each, and by forming a confused notion of both, that men have entangled themselves in profitless discussions concerning the alleged conflict of freedom and predestination.

God’s purpose, we may be certain, is unchangeable; but it is necessary for the growth and development of man that he should be accorded a large amount of liberty. This might appear at first sight to clash with the higher law and with the Supreme Will; but in reality it does nothing of the sort, and people will understand this more clearly when they comprehend how small is the proportion which the period of time embraced in what we call human life, or in one human life, bears to the sum of each existence, and how every man has repeated opportunities of retrieving those errors, by the commission of which, he has been enabled to delay, but not, in the end, to counteract, the supremely beneficent objects of Almighty Wisdom.

To understand natural law—or, in the lan-

guage of Scripture, the commandments of God, there are three things which demand to be studied, and they are these:—to know what we are, where we are, and whether we are going.

As to the first: It is incumbent upon each of us to acquire an intimate acquaintance with our physical structure, with our mental organisation, and with our spiritual nature, so as to provide for the preservation and the healthy growth of all three. A knowledge of the laws of physiology would teach us how to preserve our bodies in such a condition as that they would be absolutely exempt from disease and suffering—both of which are unnatural and abnormal; and would also enable us to obtain the greatest amount of beneficial work out of our frames, and to keep them vigorous and active to the full term of human life, which even now falls far short of what it is capable of reaching under proper conditions of diet, clothing, exercise, and recreation. We should ascertain what food is suitable to us, in what quantities, and how it ought to be prepared. The avoidance of improper diet and drink would become intuitive, as it were, and we should religiously shun excesses of all kinds. The mere consciousness of existence, under such circumstances, would become at all times and in all conditions of life, an absolute blessing. We should find new and unnumbered sources of happiness and enjoyment opening to us; and the passions which now deprave and degrade humanity would die out for want of aliment. Our wearing apparel would be simple and suitable; not necessarily devoid of beauty and propriety, so as to deprive the eye of its legitimate gratification, but free from costliness and extravagance. Fashion would no longer be the grotesque and merciless tyrant it is, and so many thousands of lives which now perish by the needle just as effectually as if that household implement were a sharp sword or a poisoned arrow, would no longer be offered up on the altars of that hideous idol. Neither would some men pamper their appetites with all sorts of food, in all sorts of disguises, and with all sorts of stimulating and vitiating condiments, while so many of our fellow creatures perish of starvation, or slowly wither away, by reason of the insufficiency and the innutritious character of the food upon which they subsist. Most of the vices and crimes which now afflict society, and all insanity, would disappear; for to a perfectly healthy body, inhabited by a perfectly healthy mind, and animated by a progressive spirit, all these evils would be impossibilities.

Then, again, the understanding of what we are, would also involve the study of the human mind, and the comprehension of its laws, processes, and capabilities. Men would neither permit its powers to lie latent and undeveloped, on the one hand; nor would they overtask them, on the other. There would be fewer prodigies of learning, no doubt, because scholars and students would be less disposed to bury themselves amidst the dust, the mould and mildew of the past. They would discover that to each generation is given its appropriate teachers, and that nine-tenths of the literature that is now extant, howsoever valuable at the time it was written, and howsoever useful to the people for whom it was written, possesses very little, if

any, value or utility for us or for our times. Although there is a limited number of works—monumental structures—beacon lights along the shores of time—which enjoy an undying freshness, and a perpetual power of chaining and instructing mankind. But, with these exceptions, much of the literature of past ages is rather an injury than a benefit to our own. It is so because scholars and students, instead of giving us original thought, chew the ideas of dead men, and present them to us in a sort of innutritious and amorphous paste.

In nature, you will observe, there is nothing retrospective or retrogressive. Everything aspires; everything advances. Progress and ascension are the universal law. The locust, when he casts his shell, does not sit poring over the case in which his limbs were previously enveloped; nor does the butterfly apply itself to a laborious investigation of its former stages of being. When these are done with, both these insects direct all their efforts to the new life upon which they have entered, to the utter neglect and oblivion of the past. And should not this be the case with us? Each of us—as Paul says—“dies daily,”—physically and mentally. The atoms of our body perish—or rather they enter into new forms of matter and new combinations with other substances external to ourselves. This frame of mine is not the frame I wore last year, or last month, or last week. And so with the mind. It is daily and hourly secreting new ideas—daily and hourly excreting such as, in its growth and experience, it has found reason to reject. Therefore, we should study to direct our thoughts to that which lies before us and beyond us—speaking, for the present, of this world only—and “let the dead past bury its dead.” That has gone, and those who were responsible for what it was, and for what they made of it, have gone also.

If life were long enough, and if men had sufficient leisure to make themselves masters of the immense amount of so-called book-lore which exists in the world, its study might be tolerated perhaps; but have we not abundant employment for the most active and laborious minds in the study of natural science, in the investigation of the laws of health—of our own intellects, and of the questions which concern us in connexion with the other world, towards which we are all moving?

2. Where we are? With the external beauty of the earth, we are all more or less acquainted; but of its internal structure and utility how little do we know! And yet this knowledge is all-important to us. Without it, we are but as strangers and aliens on the globe we inhabit, for the time we are on it. Its framework should be as familiar to us as the framework of our own bodies. We should then understand that everything which we call a phenomenon is, in reality, the product of a law; and that, by knowing these laws, we should not only be enabled to derive the greatest amount of material good from the earth, but should escape the consequences of those calamities and disasters which take the form of shipwrecks, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, typhoons, avalanches, hurricanes, and so forth. These are not lawless explosions of what we call the forces of nature, but the inevitable results of the operation of certain laws, our ignorance of which exposes us to

sufferings and misfortunes. The earth is a great laboratory, created and superintended by Infinite Wisdom, and in proportion as His creatures exercise the Divine gift of reason, which our beneficent Father has bestowed upon each of us, to cultivate and develop,—shall we understand the processes, objects, and results, of the work which is going on in that laboratory. For, although we are told that, on the Seventh Day, God rested from his labours, we may be perfectly certain that this was only spoken figuratively. The work of creation—or of evolution—is never suspended—never has been suspended; and, we may assume, with great humility—never will be suspended.

The activity of Almighty Power is incessant and inexhaustible—all-penetrating and all-pervading. It is manifest in the greatest as in the smallest things—in the upheaving of a continent, and in the construction of the minutest insect inhabiting a tiny drop of stagnant water.

In the study of nature, we should all find not only profit but delight. It would yield us the fruits of the earth necessary to our sustenance in greater abundance and variety than we now receive them, and with far less toil. But its chiefest service to us would be that it would elevate our minds ever nearer and nearer to the Great Architect of this amazing universe. We should comprehend, though with such limitations as are necessarily imposed by our finite intelligences, the wonderful love, the illimitable forethought, the magnificent design, the exquisite adaptation of means to ends, and the sublime goodness of our Almighty Father. We should perceive, moreover, that this globe is but the analogue of millions of other globes, many of them superior to our own, and peopled by a superior race of beings, and we should be qualified to understand that great principle of infinite variety of form in unity of type which seems to run through all Creation.

3. And this naturally conducts me to the third part of my subject—Whether we are going. Every man is conscious by the revelation within him—apart from other revelations of varying authority and authenticity, that he enfolded an immortal principle—a “Me,” perfectly independent of, distinct from, and superior to, the physical structure he inhabits. But, practically, this consciousness is belied and suppressed by his material longings, feelings, and desires. He knows that he is immortal by an intellectual instinct—by a spiritual intuition. To deny it is almost to forego his title to be considered a rational being. An atheist is something abnormal in the human family—a *lusus naturæ*, an object of wonder and commiseration, but not of condemnation, any more than we should condemn a two-headed calf. Our immortality rests on grounds more impregnable and indestructible than even the truths of science. It is testified to by an inner voice, speaking in accents no louder than a whisper, but with a power exceeding that of the deep-voiced thunder.

But if we ask what influence this conviction of our immortality exercises upon the daily lives of each of us, the answer is a painful and humiliating one. And why? Because intellectual assent does not ripen into living conduct.

“The world is too much with us, late and soon, Getting and spending, we lay waste our power.”

Its realities—if, indeed, they are realities—are so much more vivid to us than the realities of the world to come. We occupy ourselves with the little ant-hill which is the present scene of our labours, our ambitions, and our enjoyments, precisely the same as if there were nothing beyond that ant-hill—no succession of endless ages awaiting us in the inevitable future, no ascending grades of existence, compared with the lowest of which, the highest objects of human aspiration are worthless and contemptible. And then—when the hour arrives that comes to all—when the monarch has to lie down with the beggar, and the philosopher with the ploughboy—when this body has to be resolved into its constituent elements, and the spirit is about to set forth on its journey to that land which is commonly supposed to be the unknowable, and the light of another world begins to gleam through the chinks and crevices of the decaying structure we have clung to with such a foolish fondness, God gives us a glimpse of what might have been possible here—if we had only chosen to listen to the voice within us—and we either undergo re-incarnation, or we expiate, in a temporary place of probation, punishment and discipline hereafter, our incredible blindness and perversity in not having studied His laws on earth, and in having refused to acknowledge that—in the language of the Book of Ecclesiastes—this is “the conclusion of the whole matter:—Love God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.”

All natural laws, then, are ordained by our Almighty Father for the preservation and progression of the creatures. We are called upon to investigate and learn them because the process is beneficial to us. He does not ask us for a blind obedience to them, but for one founded upon a rational apprehension of their beauty and utility. He does not say to us, “Do this, because it is my Supreme Will,” but “Do this, after having first ascertained, on your part, that the doing of it is essential to your health and happiness—to your welfare here, and to your eternal progress hereafter. My service should be one of love, enlightened by reason. Obedience is happiness, because My laws have all been framed in wisdom, working for wise and beneficent ends.” And the more closely these laws are investigated, and the more completely they are understood, the greater is our admiration, and the profounder our adoration of their Creator. We are drawn towards the fountain and source of Infinite Love by love itself. We perceive that the whole created universe is pervaded, penetrated, sustained, and bound together by this great principle. Science reveals, and experience confirms, it. We look up to Him through His works and we exclaim—as He is represented to have declared of old—“Behold they are very good.” We discover the omnipresence and incessant activity of law—law in the construction of a solar system—law in the population of a drop of water with its myriads of animated beings. Nothing is too great for His Supreme Power to undertake and construct—nothing too minute for His paternal Providence to oversee, protect, and preserve.

We look within ourselves and we learn that we are fearfully and wonderfully made. We

read in the brain of the infant, and in its successive stages of development, the early history of our race. We watch the changes which its skull undergoes, and we discover in them the cranial growth of the human head, ethnologically considered. The more closely we study the anatomy of our own bodies the more forcibly are we struck by the evidences they present of wonderful design, of an exquisite adaptation of means to ends, of amazing foresight and infinite knowledge. They inform us from what and whence we came, just as our minds—even more wonderful in their construction and operation—premonish us whither we are going. And in harmony with the complicated simplicity of our bodies—all referable to a few archetypes, and all agreeing in regard to general structure, functions, and purpose, is the complicated simplicity of life imposed upon us in order to keep both mind and body in perfect health and rational activity. By complicated simplicity must be understood that variety in unity which runs through all the works of nature. For example, our diet should be simple as well as sufficient; but this does not preclude the wise and temperate use of the infinite number of fruits and other natural products which have been furnished for our aliment and enjoyment by a bounteous Providence. So, too, with respect to the mind—while its operations should be conducted in obedience to one uniform law, and therefore governed by simplicity and regularity, and coherency of procedure, the field of its activity is, humanly speaking, unlimited.

And so, also, in the multifarious relations of man, living in society with his fellow men, the rule of conduct and the bond of union are both simple in the extreme. They are summed up in one golden sentence, “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” And in the fulfilment of this precept, we experience the beneficent working of a principle of enlightened selfishness. This will not be the motive, but it is nevertheless the result. What we do, we do for the benefit of our fellow creatures, but it is reflected upon ourselves. Every good deed is retroactive in its operation. Like mercy, it is twice blessed. It blesteth him who gives and him who receives. To make others happy, is to take the most effectual means of securing our own happiness; just as to promote or restore the healthful condition of any one member of our body, is to contribute to the healthful condition of the whole frame. For humanity, however, we may regard it, is not many, but one. Its principle is unity, its manifestation is variety. We each belong to it, and are each just as inseparably united with it, as is the hand with the arm, or the foot with the leg. By labouring for it, we labour for ourselves. We cannot advance its growth, promote its welfare, or strive for its elevation, without indirectly advancing our own. As is its condition in the bulk, such is it in the individual sample. It is not something which lies outside ourselves, which is foreign to our interests, sentiments, and feeling, but something with which we are absolutely incorporated. This is the truth, probably, which was discerned by the French philosopher who proposed to establish what he called a “religion of humanity.” There is a religion of humanity, in the sense of a bind-

ing up and of a binding together of the whole human race. Whatever may be the diversities of language and aspect, exhibited by the various members of the great family of mankind, there is this principle of unity running through the whole of them,—that they are all the children of one Father, all immortal, all tending towards the same goal, and all capable of the same progression, both here and hereafter. Hence, the higher the level of average humanity, the higher that of the individual constituent of the mass. The more we can do to lift our fellow creatures out of the mire of ignorance and animalism, the more serviceable we shall be in urging forward the whole human race along that path of progression which it has occupied centuries upon centuries in toilsomely struggling along, but which will seem much shorter and much less arduous, in proportion as we are the better equipped for the journey by knowledge and foresight—knowledge of the road and foresight of the goal.

Thus, then, we arrive at this great principle, that all mankind are interdependent, and that no one can live by or for himself. He must rely on others for the satisfaction of most of his wants, and those others must in like manner be dependent upon him for services which they are incapable of rendering to themselves. Ignorance of, or indifference to this fact is the cause of so many errors in public policy and private conduct,—of so many of the wars which desolate the world, and of so much of the misery and suffering which those wars entail. Once let us feel the solidarity of the human family, and that family will live as one household. We recognise the principle, you know, in the foundation and establishment of communities. The tribe is but an extension of the family, and the nation is but an expansion of the tribe. Why should not humanity, in like manner, become an extension of the fundamental principle of the household? What is more beautiful than domestic life when the members of a family are knit together by the ties of affection and esteem? What mutual respect and fondness are displayed, what delicate consideration, what a spirit of cheerful self-denial, what an anxiety to please, what a prompt putting forth of strength to succour weakness, and of compassion to alleviate suffering, and what a spirit of kindness and conciliation are manifested in the daily life and in the hourly relations of such a family! How strong it becomes in its union, how exemplary in its influence, how happy in its homely history! Do you suppose that what is practicable—what, indeed, is so often visible—in the family circle, is incapable of being realised in the nation, and among the whole human race,—which is but a bundle of nations? What is to prevent it? What does actually prevent it? An absence of the principle of love to our neighbour, and the want of that knowledge of ourselves and of God's laws, which would spring from the development of that principle in each of us.

Take any one of the causes which separate nation from nation, whether fiscal policy or political ambition, the thirst for martial glory or the greed of territorial aggrandisement. Analyse it, and trace its operations. Does it not take its rise in ignorance or animalism? And is it ever productive of real happiness, or of lasting advan-

tage to the nation itself, or to the master minds by whom that nation is conducted into war or desolation. Need I point out to you the history of France from the rise of the first Napoleon to his death at St. Helena? What did France gain by that series of wonderful achievements on the field of battle from Austerlitz to Jena? Did she retain the territory she had conquered, or could she recover the blood and treasure which she had squandered in so many sanguinary engagements?

Compare the map of France in 1872 with that of the same nation in 1789. Compare her indebtedness then, with what it is now. Follow her great military commander into exile, and ask him if he was happy. Here was a soldier of fortune who had set his foot upon the neck of subject-kings, who had made crowns and sceptres his playthings, who had given away thrones, as other potentates distribute orders and ribbons, and who had become the wonder and terror of the civilised world. And yet look at him on his lonely rock in the ocean—an eagle with bedraggled plumes and broken claws—morose, petulant, peevish, and petty, quarrelling with his gaoler about points of punctilio, and sullenly surveying, from his place of exile, the complete overthrow of the Imperial fabric he had built up, the dissipation of all his dreams of founding an imperishable dynasty, and the compulsory restitution to the smallest of the States he had conquered and pillaged, of the very booty he had carried away from them, in order to enrich the sumptuous capital of France, with the fruits of rapine and the trophies of victory.

Here was a magnificent animal!—but an animal only: a man who deliberately ignored God's presence in the world, who rebelled against his natural laws, and who shattered himself and his ambition to pieces, in the mad endeavour to resist or to set them aside. Contrast the life of this gigantic homicide with that of Oberlin, the simple-minded, truth-seeking and God-loving Swiss pastor, and tell me which you would rather have been—Napoleon the Great, or Oberlin the obscure?

Let us remember this, that whenever we seek to obtain happiness—or what we imagine to be such—at the expense of our fellow creatures, it not only eludes our grasp, but it proves to be a source of pain, dissatisfaction, discontent, and disappointment to us. But when we endeavour to arrive at the same end by doing good to others, we invariably find what we seek; and the greater the amount of good we do, the more abundant is the happiness reflected on ourselves. I suppose it has happened to most of us in the course of our lives, to have been moved by an impulse of benevolent enthusiasm, or touched by a pathetic tale of sorrow, and to have measured the relief we afforded rather by our estimate of the sufferer's great need than of our own capacity to alleviate it; so that the act of kindness has necessitated some exercise of self-denial known only to ourselves. Let me ask the most worldly-minded, if he ever experienced any sense of pleasure so exquisite as that which glowed within him when he reflected on what he had done, and when he recalled to mind the eyes of the afflicted glistening with tears of gratitude,

his heart melting with emotion, and his voice tremulously essaying to utter the thanks he might feel but could not adequately express. Was not this a real glimpse of heaven? Did it not reveal to the donor himself possibilities of good within his own nature, of which he scarcely suspected the existence, and sources of happiness which were absolutely without alloy?

Now, imagine the feeling which promoted the benevolent action to be constantly influencing us in our daily lives, and what would be the result? An enormous and immediate diminution of the vast amount of suffering around us, and an equally immediate and enormous augmentation of the sum of human happiness. For this fulfilment of our duty to our religion would have the natural effect of awakening in him a sense of his duty towards us. Animated and fortified by our example, and moved by our unselfishness, the spendthrift, the drunkard, and the thief would begin to feel that they had no right by their intemperance, their improvidence, and their spoliation, to wrong their fellow men. The improvident would exclaim, "How can I consent to place myself in the shameful position of leaving my children dependent on the bounty of others, when those others are so active and so disinterested in the discharge of every one of their obligations towards me, and so eager and liberal to alleviate any case of genuine misfortune?"

And thus with all forms of vice, ignorance, and crime, those who now give way to them would, if mankind acted up to the principles of human brotherhood, be driven, in very shame, to relinquish habits and practices which would then appear so hideous and degrading, by comparison with the pure, healthy, and beneficent lives of their fellow men. Nor would the depredations or deprivations of what we call the dangerous classes derive that indirect sanction which they now obtain from the malpractices of the classes above them. We all know that, besides that form of intemperance, which finds its punishment at the police court, there are many varieties of it—far grosser in character, and far more pernicious in their consequences which meet with no punishment whatever; but which are actually—to some extent at least—honoured, imitated, and rewarded. Need I enumerate avarice, gluttony, the greed of personal, social, literary, or political distinction, the thirst of applause, the love of dress, and the cravings of sensuality. These are in full force around us, and those who practice the more vulgar vices, or the more vulgar forms of vice, feeling within them a rough instinct of justice, exclaim:—"Why should I be punished for getting intoxicated, or for picking a man's pocket, when the filthy sensualist, the fraudulent trader, and the man who robs hundreds of his fellow creatures by concocting a bubble company, and disseminating falsehoods, is not only not punished, but is honoured, and rewarded; perhaps, even, is selected to assist in making the very laws by which I am adjudged to be fined or imprisoned for the comparatively trivial offence I have committed?"

The principle of love to our neighbour, however, cannot receive its perfect development, until we fully comprehend the unity of the whole human race, and understand that the

"family of mankind" is something more than a conventional expression; that it implies the closest relationship as well as that identity of interest which is felt among the members of the same household. Selfishness, in truth, is a huge mistake; and for this obvious reason, that it misses the very object at which it aims. No selfish man is, or ever was, or ever will be happy. You have only to look at his face to be assured of the fact. And yet, what is the aim of all selfishness? Is it not to promote the happiness of the individual, no matter at what sacrifice to the happiness of those who surround him. Show me a man who is supremely selfish and supremely happy, and I will undertake to show you, in return, the philosopher's stone, or to present you with the elixir of life.

It is wisely ordained by our Almighty Father, that no one human being shall arrive at that which is the aim of all humanity, save by the simple, natural, unique, and eternal way of conferring happiness upon others. In proportion as this is done, in proportion as a man thinks, acts, and labours for his fellow creatures, will he secure that indestructible enjoyment and imperishable delight which are the secure possession and the appropriate reward of the truly benevolent. Nor does this, by any means, imply or necessitate the neglect of those efforts which are conducive to the well-being of his family and himself. This were to inculcate a wholly erroneous system of ethics. It is one of the conditions of humanity—its curse, according to Theologians, its blessing, according to ourselves—that a man should labour with his hands or with his head, for his own subsistence, and for that of those who are dependent upon him. But each of us can, and does, produce more than is necessary for this purpose, and it is this very surplus that should be devoted to the support of the incapable, and the relief of the afflicted. And, instead of hoarding up wealth with a view to exempt our children from the wholesome obligation and admirable discipline of labour, it would be far better for them, and far better for ourselves, if we were to dedicate these savings to ameliorate and equalize the lot of those around us. By doing so, we should very soon discover that instead of competitors and rivals, we should be surrounded with coadjutors and helpers—with eager assistants and spontaneous friends.

Instead of the spectacle which society presents at this moment—that of a herd of ravenous beasts, each striving to monopolise as large a portion as possible of the common pasturage, each ready to fly at the other's throat the moment that pasturage is encroached upon, and each rejoicing when the weaker combatants are worsted in the conflict, and are compelled to slink away, wounded and disabled, into the jungle of wretchedness and misery—we should witness a spirit of genuine brotherhood arise. Men would be mutually helpful, mutually eager to help, mutually rejoicing in each other's welfare, and mutually participating in the prosperity of all. Egotism would be merged in a far nobler sentiment, and the State, instead of being the personification of that odious principle, would become what it ought to become—a Commonwealth, towards which form of government and constitution of society so many vague aspira-

tions are now tending, and so many thoughtful men are anxiously directing the noble enthusiasm of their minds, and the most generous impulses of their hearts.

I think it must be sorrowfully admitted that the neighbourhood of man to man implies a relationship which is almost lost of sight in modern society, owing to the isolation in which each of us lives, and the strange seclusion in which we—the most gregarious of animals—voluntarily immure ourselves, each like a wild beast in his lair. In fact, the very precautions we take to secure that segregation, and to confirm what we believe to be our safety, are—when regarded from a philosophical point of view—ridiculous in the extreme. Look at our iron railings, our high walls, our doors and shutters, our safety locks, our bolts and bars, and all the ingenious arrangements by which we either sequester ourselves from, or guard ourselves against, the incursions of our fellow men. Do you find anything like it in nature except among the weakest and most defenceless of insects—as, for example, the trap-door spiders of South Australia? What a satire is it upon man—the lord of the creation—man gifted with mental power so much in excess of that of the lower animals—man capable of framing and obeying laws for his self-government in society, that he should be driven to have recourse to these devices in order that he may the more effectually sever himself from his fellow creatures, and protect from depredation the fruits of his industry, or—as not unfrequently happens—the proceeds of his wrong-doing! Is this the outcome of so many centuries of civilisation? Is this the proud achievement of humanity after occupying the earth for ages upon ages? Have we not yet reached such a social condition as that we can afford to dispense with precautions which are manifestly based upon the assumption that every other man is an intruder or a marauder? Don't you think that barbarism—as we contemptuously term it—has the advantage of us in this respect? Must there not be something terribly unnatural and even rotten, in our so-called civilization, when so much of the structure of our daily life is based upon the supposition that the human family—or our own branch of it—is not a brotherhood, but an aggregation of thieves and suspicious persons; and that the secure enjoyment of life demands individual isolation, and compels a mutual denial of the principle that God made all mankind of one flesh? Custom, however, has so brazened our minds, and clouded our faculties that we fail to discern the shocking inconsistencies which present themselves between our principles and our practice. And yet there must be moments in the life of each of us, when the still small voice within admonishes us of the irrationality and of the unnaturalness of our social life; and when we feel perforce that if the question were addressed to us—"Who is thy neighbour?" we should be dumbfounded by the startling interrogation, and humiliated by our inability to reply to it with satisfaction to our own consciences.

As God has loved us—we are told—so should we love one another. This is, of course, but a figurative expression; for His love to us is infinite and inexhaustible, whereas ours towards our fellow men is, of necessity, finite and

limited. But the very knowledge of the immensity of the Divine Love to man—whereof the proofs lie all around us, in the whole scheme of creation and progression—ought to inspire us with the deepest and truest affection for our fellow creatures, made like ourselves in His spiritual image, destined to immortality, and capable of being advanced in their upward path, by the manifestation towards them of the love of their neighbours. For, in this principle of love lies the true germ of progress. Quicken it in the minds of those in whom it is dormant, and you become their benefactor. They instinctively turn towards the Father of Love, as the plant turns towards the light—as the infant bends its eyes in trust and tenderness upon its mother's face. From the love of God, once established as a vital and growing principle within us, springs the desire to know Him as reflected and revealed in His works objectively, and in ourselves subjectively. And the more intimately we become acquainted with both, the more patiently and profoundly we study the Almighty Mind in the infinitely great and in the infinitely little—in the life which swarms in a drop of water, and in the myriads of solar systems which are distributed through space—the nearer shall we be drawn towards Him, the more fervid will become our adoration, and the more immutable our faith in His supreme power, and in His unspeakable love. For, as I took occasion to remark previously, knowledge brings faith. To love God is to know Him, and to know Him is to repose unshaken and immovable trust in His benignant Providence, His unceasing care, His immeasurable kindness, His unbounded affection.

Knowing, therefore, what is His love to us—can we impose any limits upon our love to our fellow men? If we would endeavour to repay—for the endeavour is all that is possible to us—His love to man, in what way can we do so more effectually than by loving our neighbour even as He has loved us?

Reflect for a moment what a "Paradise Regained" this earth would become if we could eradicate from our nature the principle of selfishness which now reigns so universally. All injustice would cease as a matter of necessity. No man would inflict upon another the wrong which he would be unwilling that another should inflict upon himself. No man would be intemperate, violent, or slothful, because he would feel that the consequences of his misconduct would be partially visited upon others. No man gifted with a superabundance of mental power, or of material wealth, would withhold any portion of it from those who are "in need, sickness, or any other adversity;" and the number of the latter would be materially diminished, because each person would feel that the fulfilment of his duty to his neighbour involved the exercise of diligence and forethought, temperance and prudence, on his part: so that, while the principle of benevolence would sustain an immense expansion on the one hand, there would be a commensurate contraction of the sphere of its efforts on the other.

And are we to be told that such a state of society as is herein shadowed is visionary and Utopian? The men who reason thus virtually deny the divine element in the ethical teachings

of the New Testament. They declare, in effect, that the highest teachings of inspired men in all ages have no validity or value—are illusory and deceptive. God forbid that such a conclusion should ever be entertained by the family of man; for it would strike at the root of all progress, and would be in direct contradiction to the voice which speaks within us—to the intellectual instincts which assures us that, even upon the earth, man is capable of drawing nearer the angels in sentiment and action; and that the day will come when the animal within us will be subjugated and destroyed, and when we shall stand nearer to our Almighty Father in virtue of our closer approach to the angelic natures above and around us.

All the day-dreams of the past—all the visions of man's perfectibility—dim suggestions as these were of higher possibilities within him—will be realised and fulfilled when the true principles of human brotherhood begin to be recognised and acted upon. Instead of being, as it is, a menagerie of wild beasts, in which we see the worst passions of our animal nature displaying themselves in greed, cunning, and ferocity, we shall witness a genuine sentiment of benevolence and philanthropy, taking possession of men's minds. It will spread outwards from those of a few to those of the multitude. For among the most ignorant and the most unimpressible there is to be found a latent sense of goodness and justice, and a capacity for appreciating nobility and unselfishness of conduct. Show a disinterested action to the most selfish man, and convince him that it is without base alloy, and he will admire it in spite of himself. Multiply disinterestedness upon the earth, exhibit the spectacle of only a hundred men living disinterested lives and labouring for others, and, believe me, you will find thousands following their example. For there is this paradoxical characteristic about unselfishness that it is the most selfish proceeding of which a man is capable. To put the paradox in other words, the greater the amount of happiness a man diffuses around him, the greater the store of happiness he garners up for himself both here and hereafter. And happiness is, avowedly, our "being's end and aim." We are always striving after and struggling towards it. The avaricious man, the sensualist, the student, the statesman, the merchant, the speculator, and the explorer—each is labouring for the acquisition of certain means, or of a certain position or reputation which he regards as indispensable to the attainment of a given end—that end being happiness. Let me ask you how many of these are successful in the achievement? They acquire, perhaps, what they have been accustomed to consider as the means, but the end is as just as far from them at the close of their career as at its commencement.

"Ah!" said a poor friend of the late Baron Rothschild, as he entered his office in Paris, and found him surrounded by the documentary sym-

bols of wealth, "What a happy man you must be!" "Call me not happy," said the cynical Croesus, "until you see me throw all these bonds, debentures, scrip, and drafts into the river Seine."

"How I envy you!" said an American one day to the wealthiest man in New York. "Do you?" was the grim reply. "Would you undertake the management of my enormous and complicated business for no other remuneration than your food, clothing, lodging, and pocket-money?" "No." "That's all I derive from it," was the almost pathetic rejoinder of the opulent merchant.

All! But who can estimate what the losses—the mental and spiritual losses—of such men as Rothschild have been? And then imagine the eagerness and rapidity with which their heirs may have watched their failing health and calculated upon their approaching death. Do you suppose that the last hours of a man's life are likely to be soothed and consoled by the knowledge that the very people who are gathered round his bed—with white handkerchiefs in their hands and a decent show of grief upon their hypocritical countenances—are mentally speculating upon the probable distribution of the dying man's wealth? Do you imagine that he himself, with every sordid instinct of his nature sharpened by incessant exercise through life, and with that clearness and penetration of vision which people acquire just before physical dissolution, does not clearly discern the wolfish craving of their selfish natures glaring through their ravenous eyes. What a valediction to earth! What a foretaste of the remorse and anguish of mind which must precede the commencement of regeneration elsewhere—that is, supposing the immortal principle is not sent back to earth again to recommence another pilgrimage upon the globe!

Contrast the life and death of men who have lived for themselves with those of men who, feeling the brotherhood of humanity, and loving their fellow creatures because God first loved us, have devoted themselves to ameliorating the physical condition and elevating the mental character of their race. They may be poor, obscure, and insignificant. Their names may not be written on the scroll of secular fame. They may have been decried as fanatics or commiserated as madmen. They may have been familiar with sorrows like Christ, accustomed to hardships like Spinoza, and acquainted with persecution like Galileo; but we may be absolutely certain that, in life, they were accompanied by troops of angels; that they experienced the peace which passeth all understanding; and that when the change which we call death occurred, it was but an awakening into a state of existence such as human eyes have not seen, nor human ears heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, the glory, the wonder, the rapture, and the unending and infinite progression thereof.

ON ORIGINAL SIN, AND THE RESURRECTION POSSIBLE TO MAN IN THIS LIFE.

THE resurrection of the Spirit from the grave of animalism, typified in the parable of Lazarus, contains one of those profound truths of which the uncorrupted portions of the Old and New Testament are full to overflowing. But men looking for signs, and wonders, and portents, and craving for miracles, as is natural to persons in a semi-savage condition, mistake the husk for the kernel, read parables as narratives of actual events, and thus lose themselves in a maze of doubt and mystery. Putting a natural interpretation on things figurative, they bring what they read, or what they imagine they read, into conflict with the laws of nature; and thus while, in one class of minds, a feeling of superstition is engendered, a sentiment of scepticism is begotten in another. For the so-called and self-entitled religious man makes it a merit to believe the improbable and the impossible credulity is the measure of his piety. With him, belief or faith is all in all; faith is something which never happened, and therefore never will, happen. And this revelation, misinterpreted and misunderstood, is brought into direct antagonism with reason and science. It is assumed that the operations of the unchangeable and unresisting laws of God have been suspended at some time, and that the earth has actually paused in its rapid revolution on its own axis, in order to enable the commander of a horde of barbarians to finish a sanguinary battle with the enemies of Israel. It is also assumed that the waters of the Red Sea suddenly divided for the purpose of enabling these same barbarians to escape from a land peopled by a superior race to which the fugitives had fulfilled the same functions as the coolies in India and elsewhere discharge towards their European employers.

What wonder, therefore, that devout minds studying our Heavenly Father in His works, and in the all-wise laws of which those works are but the expression and the instrument, recoil from a belief in these things, and from the doctrines which are based upon it? What wonder that weak, perverse, conceited, and unreverential minds are driven into blank unbelief, and to the utter negation of God in His glorious universe?

Before we condemn any such—and instead of condemning we should commiserate them—let us ask ourselves how far the so-called orthodox religionists are responsible for whatever atheism exists in professedly Christian communities.

Of the many doctrines which shock belief, and which have retarded or prevented man's resur-

rection on earth, that of original sin may be regarded as the most pernicious. Nakedly stated, it is this:—All mankind sprang—it is alleged—from one couple, originally inhabiting a beautiful garden. They were innocent, and they were simple. The freshness of the dewy morning was in their natures, as it was upon the face of Eden. There was only one restriction on their freedom. They must not eat of the fruit of a particular tree. As a matter of course, they surveyed this fruit with longing eyes. It was, to them what the secret chamber was to Bluebeard's wife and her sister in that other Eastern apologue. One day a sort of rival to their Creator, of whose previous existence these guileless babes had never heard, taking upon himself the form of a serpent, and employing all the beguiling eloquence of a damaged archangel, coaxed the woman into tasting the fruit. She found it very palatable, and persuaded her husband to eat it also. He did so, and then the Creator—a Being of Infinite Love, and Infinite Presence—who had foreknown through all eternity what Adam and Eve would do, turned them out of Paradise in just such a passion as a human being might experience with a servant who had disobeyed him just such a passion, indeed, as is commonly attributed to the gods of the heathen mythology. By this incident, we are told, sin and death made their entry in to the world, and every child that is born into it bears the taint of Eve's wickedness. I am credibly informed that there are many Christian sects which believe—or very recently believed—that every child, dying unbaptised, is forthwith translated to a physical hell, where it undergoes endless tortures, such as the imagination cannot picture, nor the tongue describe. And all because of that unfortunate apple! It is almost impossible to write, or to speak seriously on such a subject. A belief like this transports us to the very infancy of the human race, when all men were only one remove from the lower animals, and when—as soon as the imaginative faculty began to stir within them—they conceived the most preposterous notions of the Deity, and regarded him as a magnified reflection of themselves.

But this doctrine of original sin has survived the childhood of the human race. It is vital yet. It is believed in by millions of beings who call themselves civilized, and repute themselves Christians. They are evidently reluctant or incapable of relinquishing it. They cannot find any other explanation of the animalism of man's nature.

Their conception of the Almighty Ruler of the Universe—of the Infinite Mind, is as gross, degrading, and superstitious as anything you will meet with in the religious beliefs of the most ignorant tribes of savages, simply because that conception took its rise among a primitive people, and at a barbarous epoch.

The authors or compilers of the Mosaic books were probably ignorant that thousands of years before the age of the patriarchs, and even long before the time at which the wise Egyptians forced upon the servile Hebrews the sanitary laws embodied in the book of Deuteronomy, three great races of people had lived and flourished on the earth, had known, loved, and worshipped the one true God, and, having reached the highest stage of spiritual civilization, had passed away to continue their sage and beneficent existence elsewhere. The Jews knew nothing of the pure monotheism and exalted morality of the Ancients. In their pride and egotism they believed themselves to be the chosen people of God. They either knew not, or craftily suppressed the fact that there had been divinely given revelations in Asia and in Africa; and that, in the latter country more especially, long before the days of Moses, the purest morality was taught and practised. God was worshipped in simplicity and truth, a fatherly form of Government was established—the like of which has never been seen since—art flourished, and the sciences and inventions which we flatter ourselves as being the especial property of our own time were known to the whole population.

As the clouds of Man's ignorance are dissipated with respect to the origin and antiquity of the race to which he belongs, the doctrine of original sin is destined to be replaced by a juster perception of his being and his nature so that the will of our Heavenly Father may be fulfilled on earth as it is on high. For the same law—one and immutable—reigns there and here. It is universal. Man cannot vary it—cannot, with safety, rebel against it. If he does so, he suffers. There is nothing in the world of matter or of mind that is exempt from its operation; and when we have ascertained how it acts in the former, we learn how it influences and controls the latter. We discover, also, that there is nothing absolutely evil; and that what we designate as such is mere ignorance—is undeveloped nature—is good, in the process of being evolved. This enables us to explain all the moral problems which have been vexing mankind for ages. Men have been puzzled to understand why, in this beautiful world of ours, there should appear to be a power antagonistic to the love and goodness of the Most High, and—as it seemed to their unenlightened judgments—continually engaged in thwarting His most holy will, and in neutralising His benevolent designs. And thus it was, that the notion of a devil arose, and, in some form or other, entered into the religious systems of nearly every branch of the human family in its superstitious infancy. Thus it was that many of the grander phenomena of nature were supposed to be the work of malignant and supernatural beings—gnomes, giants, genii, and demons.

Ignorance and superstition naturally governed the minds of semi-savage races of men and women but one remove from the brute, and endowed not with reason, but with just a higher form of instinct. For reason is by no means the gift or essential property of all mankind. It is, in reality, the attribute of a very small number—of those only whose natures have been spiritually renewed. You may judge of the presence of reason in a human being by his language and actions. If these are guarded and governed by it, the presumption is that he is a rational animal. He leads a rational life. The world and the pleasures of sense are indifferent to him. He fulfils his duty to his family and to himself; but he regards the earth in no other light than as a place of temporary sojourn. He is conscious of the dual nature within him—the animal or bestial, and the spiritual. All his efforts are directed to slay and crucify the former; and to render himself more and more susceptible and receptive of the light and love which descend upon us from above. He is not necessarily an ascetic or a recluse. On the contrary, he practices self-denial without mortification or maceration. He does not sequester himself from his fellow men like the hermits and monks of old, because he knows that his place is among them. When he has provided for the satisfaction of his daily wants and for those of his family—these wants—reduced to their ultimate expression—being few and simple, he applies himself to the grateful task of assisting his fellow creatures. He feels his unity with them, and he recognises the obligation to work for them. And he does so, in a spirit of cheerfulness and with a loving zeal that add immensely to the value of the beneficent actions he performs. This, then, is the human animal upon whom has been bestowed the divine gift of reason.

No doubt, this doctrine of the comparative rarity of reason among ourselves—the higher animals—is calculated to shock and startle us. But have you ever investigated the springs of human conduct and asked yourselves—Was the motive power of this or that action instinct, or was it reason? If you will only do this, and do it without prepossession or prejudice, you will be amazed at the discovery of the enormous part which merely animal instinct plays in the affairs of human life. The fact is, we have been accustomed to accept, as an axiomatic truth, the mere presumption that a broad line of demarcation separates us from the lower animals. There is nothing of the sort. There are no abrupt transitions in nature. Every grade of being shades off into the next below it and the next above it, by imperceptible degrees. You cannot tell where the one ends or the other begins, any more than you can define where one line of the rainbow terminates and where another commences. Many of the so-called lower animals are mentally superior to many human beings. There are dogs, horses, and elephants gifted with instincts and even with moral qualities which place them far above some of their masters. The instincts of the former are greatly superior to those of the latter. Which do you suppose is

the higher in the scale of being—being, as distinguished from seeming—the essence as separable from the substance—a brutal, foul-mouthed and drunken wood carter—or the docile, patient, sober, reflective horse he drives, and to whose intelligence he is frequently indebted for the preservation of his own life on many a dark night when the patient and much-enduring quadruped pilots his master safely home during a drunken sleep?

Did you ever see a horse or a dog eat or drink to excess? Did you ever see any of the lower animals slaves to sensuality as so many thousands of human beings are? Can we call any man a rational creature who is the servant of vice, or any woman reasonable who is servile to fashion or folly? No. There is no denying the fact that reason is the gift of a comparatively small number of the human race. It is the precious possession of the spiritually minded. It is their passport to the higher life hereafter; because it is God's gift, and nothing can enter heaven but that which came from thence. To the animal, admission to the abodes of the blessed is absolutely interdicted, just as a fish is forbidden to live in our atmosphere, and just as it would be impossible for us, in our present forms, to breathe the rarer ether which surrounds our globe.

It is important to bear these distinctions in mind, between man as a creature of instinct and man as ennobled by reason, because they throw a flood of light upon the origin of our race; and when this has been clearly ascertained and firmly and finally established, the entire fabric of superstition—founded on the basis of the doctrine of original sin—will crumble into dust, in such complete ruin that no amount of theological ingenuity will ever be able to set it up again.

Man was formed of the dust of the earth, we are told in that venerable collection of documents, which contain so many grand and inspired truths, intermingled with so much human error and perversion, and with so many parables and legends, which biblioters have mistaken for the narratives of actual occurrences. Man undoubtedly was made of the dust of the earth. His vital principle commenced its earthly journey in the most rudimentary forms of organic life; and thence, ever advancing and ever expanding, it continued its career through the mineral, the vegetable, and the animal kingdom, until it is incarnated in the human form. And even here it is obedient to the same law of progression. It passes through the savage, the semi-savage, the semi-civilized and through many bodies, until it reaches such a stage of growth and development, that it becomes fitted to forsake an earthly tabernacle and to assume a spiritual form; and, in this glorified shape, is privileged to commence that progression through the realms above, which will be eternal in duration.

So man becomes a living soul:—Called out of the infinite past to put on an individual form, and to live thenceforward in the infinite future—a being recognisable by other beings—never, in all the changes of form, losing the unity and identity of essence—one in himself, and one

also with God, so soon as he has undergone that spiritual regeneration, upon which theologians have bestowed the epithet of being "born again." In such a genealogy, there is much to humble man's pride—to abase it, indeed, to the very dust from which he sprang; but with such a future there is everything that should ennoble his aims, purify his life, exalt his actions, and inspire his hopes. And consider, for a moment, what a magnificent conception it gives us of Almighty Power and of Almighty Love. Contrast this account of man's origin with the poetical allegory contained in the earlier chapters of Genesis, and you will at once perceive how consonant the former is with men's highest reason—with God's boundless beneficence and how the latter resembles a fairy tale invented to satisfy the inquiries and beguile the attention of the Hebrews in the infancy of their civilization.

On the one hand we have the story—evidently borrowed from the older literature of India—of one pair of human beings planted in a beautiful garden, by a deity who came down to recreate himself like an ordinary mortal in the shady groves of that garden in the cool of the evening. His power was so feeble and his foresight so weak that he could not exclude from thence a rival deity of greater intellect and capacity than himself. So the latter came, saw, and overcame the simple earth-man and his credulous wife; and because these two yielded to a temptation, which they were obviously unfitted to resist, they were driven out of Eden into the bleak and dreary wilderness, which was cursed with sterility on their account: and thus, as I have said, sin and death are traditionally reported to have made their appearance in the world. Reflect upon this parable or allegory for a moment—divest it of the superstitious veneration which has grown up around it, and how will it present itself to your minds? As the childish fancy of man in the very infancy of his intellect—man incapable of conceiving of a Supreme Being as anything better than an exaggerated and distorted reflection of himself—capricious, irritable, jealous, and vindictive.

Now, look at the other version of man's origin—that which represents him as susceptible of infinite progression—that which reveals him to us as an eternal principle, emanating from God in the first instance, undergoing infinite changes of form, and yet immutable in essence, each change being an improvement and an advance upon its predecessor, and each conducting him by slow and gradual stages to a higher life, endowed with larger powers and finer faculties, until—eventually divorced from matter and from all forms of planetary life—that immortal principle, clothed in a spiritual body, forsakes this "dim diurnal sphere," and commences its magnetic and ascending march through eternity, accompanied by those it has known and truly loved on earth.

In such a scheme of creation and evolution, there is no room for that monstrous invention of the theologians called "original sin." It could find no place in it. Would they blaspheme the Almighty by imputing to Him that He, the

Sinless, the All-wise, the All-good, the All-loving, is capable of creating sin? Have they ever thought of this? Have they ever perceived the absolute impossibility of the thing? There could be no original sin in this world of ours unless by the divine fiat and the divine permission. It would be irreconcilable with His attributes, inconsistent with His nature, incompatible with His purpose. What we mortals call "sin" is only another name for ignorance—ignorance of His laws; ignorance of His holy will. That ignorance has to be worked out of us; and as the scheme of creation and evolution necessitates, on the part of each of us, many reappearances on the earth, repeated opportunities are thus afforded to us of gradually divesting ourselves of the trammels of ignorance, gradually subjugating and slaying the beast within us, and of thus eventually ascending to a spiritual altitude, even on this globe, by the attainment of which we bring ourselves very near the angelic beings who await our advent in the life to come.

If mankind would only study the laws of their being; would only perceive how gracious our loving Maker is to each of us, how large is the liberty he accords us, how repeated the opportunities he affords us of "rising on the stepping-stones of our dead selves to higher things," it would completely change the whole tenor of human conduct—the whole course of human affairs. Consider how exquisite the tenderness displayed by our Infinite Father in drawing the veil of oblivion over the previous existences of each of us. Now and then we catch dim glimpses of them. We visit strange places which are curiously familiar to us; we hear voices and melodies in which there are tones that vibrate mysteriously in our memories; and we have a vague consciousness—and oftentimes a startling conviction—of repeating actions and words performed or spoken in some far off and incomprehensible epoch. But beyond this, all is cloud and thick darkness. And mercifully so. Otherwise, what remorse, what regrets, what repinings would overwhelm each of us! The mendicant who may have been a monarch in his former incarnation would experience a feeling of inconceivable wretchedness in contrasting his bygone state and splendour with his present abasement and misery. The poor household drudge who may have been, in her former state, a reigning beauty, the petted and pampered idol of a court or capitol, would be tempted to escape from her degradation by suicide, unknowing that her new life was necessary for her probation and spiritual advancement, and that, out of its trials and hardships would grow that humility and resignation, that sympathy for others and forgetfulness of herself, which may qualify her, when she has again undergone the change called death, to put on the garments of immortality in a world where sorrow and sighing shall pass away, and tears shall be wiped from all eyes.

These doctrines are not new to mankind. They have been known to numbers in all ages. They have been familiar to three, at least, of the most advanced races that ever lived; and if you study the Old Testament by the light which

they will flash upon its pages, you will be amazed at the enigmas which will be solved, and at the mysteries which will be cleared up; for, as it is written in the Book of Ecclesiastes, "men and beasts have all one spirit; so that a man hath no pre-eminence above a beast," until the latter is crucified within him, and there has been a resurrection of the spirit out of the grave of animalism.

If you will investigate the majestic scheme of God's Providence with the aid of this simple and sufficient clue, you will discover in it a harmony, a grandeur, a beauty, an absolute justice and a faultless perfection, which have not otherwise manifested themselves so vividly and completely. But people shrink from whatsoever tends to undermine and destroy their venerable and dearly cherished superstitions. They refuse to put away childish things. They cling to the doctrine of Original Sin, as if it were something precious, something holy, something unspeakably comforting. You know that a great theologian has said that there are infants in hell a span long. These blameless little creatures owe their endless torments to original sin. They experience the fire which is never quenched, and the worm which never dieth, because a fabulous woman, in a fabulous garden, at the instigation of a fabulous serpent, ate a fabulous apple, tens of thousands of years subsequent to the appearance of humanity upon the earth.

And there are theologians in our own day—who let it be mentioned with sincere sorrow—who affect to fear the overthrow of Christianity if the doctrine of Original Sin be eliminated from the popular belief. As if anything in the world, or out of the world, were capable of overthrowing what is essential and vital in Christianity; as if the two great commandments—upon which hang all the law and prophets, were not indestructible, were not divinely inspired—were not known and practiced thousands of years before the Christian era, and will not be known and practiced by all the children of God upon this earth, so long as the world endures.

Ah! men and brethren, when we look around us and see what are the predominating superstitions and what is the prevailing darkness, it is almost enough to make us feel and believe, either that mankind is in its infancy still, or has passed into mental decrepitude and second childhood. If we would only turn from human theologies and priestly inventions, to the book of revelations ever open before us in the works of nature, and to that other book of revelation which the Almighty has bestowed upon us in our own minds, we should see how completely belied all theologies and invented dogmas are by God's works. We should read in the latter—stamped in broad, legible, and inefaceable characters—that he is a God of love; that there is no place for such a thing as original sin in the whole universe; that it is repugnant to His nature, and irreconcilable with His supreme wisdom and unerring justice; that it is an evil imagination of human ignorance, like a physical devil and a physical hell, and that the time will come

when men will wonder at and compassionate their forefathers for having clung, for so many centuries, to these miserable and debasing relics of paganism.

Out of darkness, however, cometh light. From the shadows of the past emerges the luminous star which will guide us through the future. We cast off what is old, and put on that which is new. Man, rising higher and higher in the scale of animated beings, even upon earth, as he will continue to do in the world to come, ascends above the mists and fogs of superstition in which he was enveloped while he was a dweller in the vallies; and—breathing the rarer and purer air of the mountain tops—his clearer vision qualifies him to perceive the darkness which he has left behind him, and to discern the brightness which lies before him. Although related to the worm, he feels that he is also kindred with the angels. Although, as a lower animal, his perceptions and conceptions may have been hitherto congenial with that condition, he relinquishes them as he advances. He comprehends God, by means of his expanding intelligence, and the greater the growth of that intelligence, the more exalted is the notion he forms of the attributes of the Infinite Mind. It must be so; because he draws nearer to the fountain of all intelligence—to the source of all knowledge—to the author of all wisdom, supreme, beneficent, and all-loving. And this nobler and truer apprehension of the nature of our Almighty Father entirely banishes the venerable and child-like superstitions that God has created sin or sinners, that he is capable of being propitiated by sacrifices or burnt-offerings, that he is liable to the infirmities of a human parent, and that He sanctioned and permitted the decent upon earth of an only Son—co-equal in all respects with himself, as the theologians say—but superior to the Father in affection and commiseration—to suffer an ignominious death upon the Cross as an atonement for the sins of an insignificant fragment of the human race: those sins deriving their origin, as has been said, from the simple fault of an unsuspicious woman tempted by one of the grandest of the arch-angels—that archangel having been expelled from Heaven, which is love itself—for rebellion against the Omnipotent.

Are not these inventions of men—men living in the dark ages—men seeing in the Supreme Being only a distorted and magnified reflection of their own feeble, variable, and ignorant natures—shocking and repulsive in the extreme? They will not abide the test of reason. We have only to reflect upon them to perceive how grossly they dishonour and defame the Most High. Mankind may well have gone astray under such delusive teaching as this. People might well take refuge in barren atheism as an escape from such a frightful creed as this. Christendom may well be divided into innumerable sects, each quarrelling with, hating, and persecuting the other, when such fictions are presented to it as truths. The human mind recoils appalled from the picture of the Almighty which has been portrayed for its admiration—

say, rather, for its terror, by theologians. He is not presented as a God of love—not even as an affectionate Father in the human sense of the term. No; he is shown to us as actually incapable of foresight, and restricted in power—full of childish caprice, rancorous vindictiveness, and cruel animosity towards the beings he has created. He is described as imposing conditions upon the first man and woman which experience demonstrated it was impossible to obey, and then—after the lapse of a few centuries—as having destroyed the whole of mankind—one family alone excepted, by an universal flood. Then, when that family had multiplied, and it had branched off into many nations, God is represented as sanctioning and directing exterminating wars between the descendants of Noah; and as petting and fostering one branch of the family, and dealing ruthlessly with the rest. Finally, we are told that He sent down His only Son to redeem these pampered Hebrews, by whom, however, that Son—in spite of his immortal and imperishable Godhead—is put to death like a common malefactor, and is rejected, scorned, despised, denied, and derided by the very people he came to save.

Think upon these things. Ponder well upon the merely human and thoroughly debasing image, in which they present the Supreme Ruler of the universe, and then tell me who are the sceptics and the infidels, those who assert that this monstrous conception of the human mind in its infancy and barbarism, is really and truly God, or those who, winnowing away the human error from the grains of divine truth and inspiration, which are to be found in the writings of the Old and New Testaments recognize, worship, love, and adore the one God—the Infinite Mind—a Being of boundless power, boundless wisdom, and boundless affection, whose all-seeing and all-embracing Providence includes everything, every atom of matter, every created being within its stupendous grasp, who was, and is, and is to be—who, from all Eternity, has been the same benignant, beneficent, and blessed God whom to know, though in ever so faint a degree, and with ever such finite limitations, is happiness—whose to love, is one of the laws of our nature—whom to approach, is the impulse and the motive power of all progression, and towards whom to aspire is our highest privilege, our noblest duty, our most exquisite delight, our endless employment, and our supreme reward.

I will now pass on to speak of that resurrection from the body which is possible to many of us, even while we continue to be dwellers on the earth. For the spark of divinity within us, the eternal principle which, in the hereafter, will become the Me to each living being, lies buried in the grave of animalism, and must ascend from thence before we ourselves can rise. "Flesh and blood," we are told, "cannot inherit the kingdom Heaven." The animal cannot enter there; and by the animal is meant not merely what is coarse and sensual, but what we often suppose to be pure and uncorruptible. The animal is a very Proteus in form. His varieties

are as great as those of the substances through which our immortal spirits have passed. He may be brutish and repulsive, but he may also possess the beauty of the tiger, the grace of the antelope, the craft of the fox, the subtlety of the serpent, or the sleekness of the dove. His disguises are infinite. He imposes on the very best of us. I may look down with culpable disdain upon the bestiality of the drunkard, the glutton, and the voluptuary, but am I altogether certain that I am not also under the dominion of the animal? To me, perhaps, he takes another shape, less coarse and more seductive. He impels me to surround myself with elegancies and luxuries; to find a selfish gratification in the exclusive possession of books and pictures, and statues, and to thrust far from me everything that could offend the eye or do violence to a cultivated taste, by its want of beauty, harmony, and propriety. But am I the less under the dominion of animalism? In no wise. It merely takes the form which is best adapted to captivate my senses, to ensnare my reason, and to render me less susceptible to spiritual impressions.

Or, perhaps, I am a just and upright man, rigorously correct in my daily conduct, and severe upon the moral aberrations, and the mental weaknesses of my fellow men. Unconsciously to myself, I am a vainglorious Pharisee. It is my pride and ambition to stand well in the estimation of the world, to be pointed at as a 'good citizen,' a model member of society, an exemplary man. Am I therefore exempt from the dominion of animalism? In no wise.

Or, perchance, I have the ambition to shine in the world of letters, to see my name on the title page of books, to hear it mentioned with approbation by readers and reviewers; and, dying so, to leave an enduring reputation behind me? Is not this also animalism? Undoubtedly. There is no limit to the variety of forms under which it presents itself, no possibility of determining under what aspect it may not beguile and betray us.

This is that "body of"—so-called—"sin," from which the apostle prayed to be delivered; and the resurrection from which ought to be the object of our earnest supplications, as well as of our incessant efforts. Nor let it be concluded that our advancing civilization—or that rotten thing which we ennoble by that name—is favourable to such a resurrection. On the contrary, it heaps up mounds—nay, mountains—over the grave in which the spiritual principle lies buried. None of the earlier civilizations—I refer to those which existed before our globe assumed its present aspect—were at all comparable with our modern civilization in its baseness, its dangers, and degradations. On the contrary, they were essentially spiritual civilizations, and the races which flourished under them were correspondingly superior to our own.

A spiritual civilization is something, indeed, almost inconceivable in these times when our mental perceptions and intellectual judgments have been clouded and perverted, warped and distorted, by centuries of error, ignorance, and materialism. We find it hard to imagine a state

of society in which the acquisition of wealth would have been regarded as an evil or as a proof of insanity—in which there were no class distinctions—in which the soil of the country was held in common—in which art was consecrated to the decoration of cities and the enjoyment of the whole people—in which men, after providing by moderate toil for the satisfaction of their daily wants, concentrated their energies upon the acquisition of a true knowledge—a knowledge of themselves and of God their Father, and upon the development of the spiritual element in their natures. We find it difficult to conceive of a whole nation living as one family, under the rule of an entirely fatherly governor or chief; and with no statute books, or judges, or juries, or lawyers, or policemen, but obedient only to the law of love. And yet thrice within the history of man—thrice during a period of 27 or 28,000 years—has this Utopia been realised. But among these peoples—before they were gathered in and taken from the earth—there had been a general resurrection of the spiritual man out of the animal man; and to this resurrection are we, in like manner, graciously united by our Heavenly Father.

Coming from the animal we bring with us, compacted in our earthly frame, the passions and desires of that animal. But the spark of divinity within us, implanted there at the very dawn of our existence, grows and expands, and must eventually burn and destroy all that is earthly—all that is bestial in our nature. Yet the conflict is a strenuous and protracted one between the two principles—the divine and the animal. That which is material, being also visible and tangible to us, is very precious in our eyes. That which is immaterial and immortal, being invisible, intangible, and imponderable, is in many instances almost, if not altogether, disbelieved in. We worship ourselves when we ought to worship the Creator and Father of us all. We seek our own honour and glory when we should seek to honour and glorify Him, by living in obedience to His holy laws, by aspiring towards His excellence, and by directing all our thoughts to the cultivation and development of the eternal principle within us.

Take the life of the very best of us, and analyse it by the light of divinely illuminated reason, and what is it? How is it spent? This stage in our existence—"this bank and shoal of time"—is a mere point—a scarcely perceptible and vanishing point in the endless record of our eternal duration; but how is it consumed? Study each man's employment of this brief parenthesis called Time, and can anything be more irrational—might we not venture to say insane—than his occupation of his waking hours? Do we not live as if we emerged from nothing when we entered upon life, and as if we should finally cease to be when our bodies go down into the dust? All our concern is to gather riches, or to acquire position, or to achieve renown, or to indulge and pamper our animal appetites. Everything is done for, by, and through the body, or the animalised brain. There is apparently no vital conviction of the higher nature within or of the higher life beyond us. Life is

devoted to the pursuit of the smallest object; and those who imagine that it is becoming to satisfy the requirements of conscience, and to defer so far to the popular beliefs as to acknowledge that there is a hereafter—suppose that it is capable of being purchased by setting apart a portion of one day in every seven to the repetition of certain words, and to listening to certain discourses—by not transgressing in any open or scandalous way the Ten Commandments in the ordinary affairs of life, and by doling out a few guineas to various institutions which undertake to perform a vicarious benevolence for their contributors.

Compare the commonly received ideal of human life with the higher ideal set before us by the inspired men of old, and observe how utterly dissimilar the two are. By the latter we find it declared that the body is a mere gross, bulky, encumbrance of the spirit, requiring nothing more at our hands than to be maintained in health by a pure and simple diet, by cleanliness, by sufficient and unpretending clothing, and by moderate exercise and necessary labour. We are assured that it is perishable, and we know that so long as we inhabit it our spiritual being cannot ascend to the abode for which it has, or ought to have been preparing itself on earth, and towards which its purest aspirations should be directed. We are admonished that a like perishableness is the attribute of everything we touch and taste, see and smell. Decay is written upon all around us. Change is the law of matter. All that men labour for—all that they wear out their strength in procuring—all that they rack their faculties and ruin their health of mind and body in accomplishing, perishes. Fame is evanescent. Power falls from the grasp of the mightiest; wealth disappears; social position is transitory. Spiritualised mind alone is immortal. Poets and philosophers, sages and statesmen have moralised for centuries on the instability of human grandeur, human opulence, and human reputation. The proofs of that instability meet us at every step—confront us every hour of our lives—startle us at every death or disaster that comes within the range of our personal experience. And thus the lessons of life serve to reinforce the maxims of wisdom. Observation confirms the theorems of philosophy. Therefore we are convinced, or ought to be so, that the higher, the spiritual ideal of human life is the only true one; but do we carry the conviction into operation? We have only to look around us, and to watch each man's conduct, not forgetting our own, in order to receive an emphatic assurance that the opposite—the animal—theory of existence is a degrading, a mistaken, and a disappointing one. Must we not pray, and ought we not to strive in the strength which will be given to us from above, if we only ask for it, for the resurrection of the spirit out of the grave of animalism?

And of this animalism, as has been said, there are as many forms as there are varieties of animal life; and it is almost needful that we should be conversant with these, in order to comprehend and to be upon our guard against those; for, as the immortal principle within us has passed

through so many husks or shells of matter, ever enlarging, expanding, and growing more refined in its progress, and as the human frame is the final dwelling place of the soul or spirit upon earth, there reside within it passions and feelings derivative from inferior and precedent bodies, and powerful in proportion to the greater power and higher development of the human body. If you look around you, you will perceive, stamped upon the face of every human being, the visible signs and tokens of his animal ancestry. They are, of course, grosser, more obvious, and more legible, in proportion to the nearness of the human being to the bird, beast, or fish, through which his eternal principle has passed in its perpetual ascension. You meet with the lineaments, of the wolf, the cat, the dog, the tiger, the placid ox, the ponderous elephant, the soft-eyed deer, and the fascinating snake, in the countenances of the men and women you encounter in your daily intercourse with your fellow creatures. Even their figures and their gait betray their origin. There is a suppleness and vivacity in some, a slowness and heaviness in others—a nervous mobility here, and a disposition to inactivity and sloth there—which are distinctively indicative of origin. So, too, with the amazing varieties of walk, and the equally wonderful diversities of voice, among human beings. No two are alike, and each bears the indelible impress of its animal ancestry. As we get farther and farther, by successive incarnations, from our bestial forerunners, these characteristics are softened down. The animal becomes finer and finer; but we can never wholly obliterate the heraldry of our family.

I know not whether, in those barbaric devices of the old fighting times, when men crested their helmets with the carved head of some animal, there may not have been an instinctive recognition of the relationship between the head beneath and the head above the visor; but certain it is, that among the purely savage tribes in many parts of the earth, there prevails a worship of certain of the lower animals, founded upon an acknowledged sense of some mysterious kinship between the worshipping savage and the "totem" he adores.

And if each of us preserves ineffaceably in our material forms some of the physical characteristics of the animals through which we have ascended in the scale of creation, is it not reasonable to conclude—is it not a fact demonstrable by observation and experience—that we bring with us into the human life the instincts and propensities of our former states of existence? Study the character, and what is called the natural bias, of each individual, and if you possess sufficient powers of discernment and discrimination to determine the nature of the animal through which his spirit passed, immediately before he began—as a brutish earth-man—to climb the ladder of humanity, you will be startled by the correspondence which presents itself between his merely animal propensities and instincts, and those of his remote ancestor. These may be modified by civilization, but they are fundamentally identical. The ravenous ani-

mal will be ravenous still, no matter in what grade of life he may be placed. The creature which was his prey formerly will be so still. The spider may spin his web in the office of an usurious money lender, and the flies may be transformed into necessitous borrowers; but their mutual relationship remains unchanged. The bird of prey may build his nest in the gilded saloons of a gambling-house, and the pigeons, or chickens, or leverets, may now appear to us as simple-minded and featherless bipeds, fluttering around the roulette table; but the old predatory instinct is as strong as ever with the obscene vulture, swooping down upon his victims, with a hooked nose and glittering eyes, and long, claw-like fingers.

So, too, with many of the occupations of life—some of them so repulsive that we cannot imagine any persons deliberately adopting them? Are not these defined for them by antecedent habits and tendencies—the mole to the mine, and the sea-bird to the career of a sailor? May not the scavenger birds of eastern cities, after the vital principle which animated them has passed into a human frame, still fulfil the same useful purposes to mankind, in their more advanced stages of existence, which they discharged formerly? Are we not all familiar with jewelled peacocks exhibiting their iridescent necks to admiring or to envious beholders, on civic footpaths or in public gardens? Have we not seen self-adoring lyre birds, in ballrooms and elsewhere, dancing round in deep admiration of their voluminous tails or skirts? Are we not all acquainted with parrots and magpies, ever repeating the same commonplaces, the same unmeaning and lifeless formulæ in pulpits and on platforms? And are there not, on the other hand, admirable descendants—or to speak more correctly—ascendants from the patient sheep, the faithful dog, the docile and magnanimous elephant, and the noble and serviceable horse?

Read human nature by the light which is shed upon it from a knowledge of our origin, and you will find all mysteries made plain, all doubts and difficulties swept away, and all darkness dissipated. Nor is it necessary that we should be versed in the intricacies of science for this purpose. Upon the whole, it may be doubted whether literature and science, unless inspirationally given—as to the Newtons, the Keplers, the Bacons, and Shakespeares of mankind—have not been a greater restraint upon the real intellectual progress and spiritual advancement of the human race, than a help to it; for the simple reason that books prevent and repress original thought in each of us. God has bestowed upon every human being a mind capable of arriving at all earthly knowledge by its own independent processes, if the possessor will only ask for light from above to quicken and expand its latent capacities. Of course the quality of that mind will be largely affected by the progress which the individual has made in the scale of being; but the germs of intellectual development are to be found in every human brain; and it is a notable fact in the history of our race, that the greatest and most beneficent inventions in this—the

fourth of the seven epochs of humanity—have been communicated to us through men of a reflective turn of mind—men who thought their own thoughts, instead of copying or appropriating those of other people.

Common to all men as is the change called death, the resurrection in this life is unhappily restricted to a few, though possible to many. It ought to be one of the grandest objects of human aspiration, nevertheless it is one that is almost universally neglected. We live for the body—for the animal within us—and we suffer the eternal principle—the God-like emanation from above—the ever-living spirit—the light that should burn so brightly, that should be as a pillar of fire guiding us through the human wilderness, to flicker faintly and almost to die down in the pestilential atmosphere which gathers round it in our progress through the world. Here “we have no abiding place,” yet we think and speak and act as if this were indeed the tabernacle of our everlasting rest. What is perishable we cherish, adorn, and love. What is imperishable we starve, neglect, and endeavour to destroy. The animal is all in all. The spiritual is nothing in our estimation. The former undergoes a sort of earthly apotheosis; while the latter is deposed, despised, and misused. A man has only to retire within himself and reflect—has only to sequester himself for a few days from his fellow creatures, and live among God’s works in nature—has only to listen to their teachings, to study the wisdom, the harmony, and the beauty of the laws which govern their existence and development, in order to be conscious of the miserable mistake we all make in continuing to be in the grave of animalism; when we ought to pray to our Heavenly Father to instruct His holy angels to roll away the stone from the sepulchre, and thus permit the enfranchisement of our immortal spirit.

If the pampering of our animalism were conducive to our happiness in this life, there would be something intelligible in our servile devotion to all the lower instincts of our nature. But let any man who has been signally successful in the attainment of the objects upon which he has most set his heart—be they wealth, titular rank, social distinction, military, naval, literary, or scientific fame—the adulation of the classes beneath him or the envy of those around him—place himself in the confessional before God, and then answer truly to the question: Are you happy? And what would be his response? Can anyone walk through the streets of a populous city, like London or Paris, without being painfully struck by the care-worn, languid, haggard, and even animal expression of the countenances he meets with. Now and then he sees a bright and happy face—but it is that of a child or of a young girl; not yet subjected to the tyranny of fashion and convention. Otherwise all is dark, if not repulsive. Where is “the mind, the music breathing from the face?” Where the heavenly light that should play upon the human countenance divine? Nearly every face you see bears the impress of anxiety and care, passion or pain. Upon each is written a history—generally sad,

often tragical. Listen to the conversation in our streets and public places of resort, and what is the burden of it? Money, money, money.

Only imagine a herd of swine in some old English forest, confabulating in this way:—"I have accumulated," exclaims an astute boar, "a bushel of acorns, and I expect to monopolise ten bushels by the time my turn comes to be converted into brawn. These acorns I shall bequeath to my piglings, with strict injunctions to add to the store, so that I may found a distinguished family of hogs, and be pointed at, for many generations to come, as the rich pig progenitor of a long line of obese and affluent swine."

Very absurd, doubtless, but not a whit more so than the conduct of us human beings, who waste the best years of our life in the endeavour to accumulate what is our equivalent to acorns; and who appear to imagine that it is our duty to exempt our children from the wise and beautiful necessity of labouring for their own subsistence. The lower animals—as we superciliously call them—are wiser than we are. They have an instinctive trust in God's providence. As a general rule—with a few such well-known exceptions as the ant, the bee, and the squirrel—they take no heed of the morrow. They are simply submissive to natural laws, and are perfectly happy, in consequence. They know, by a species of intuition, that as the sun rose this morning and the green leaf and tender blade of grass continued their growth, and the dew fell, and the blessed sunshine descended upon them, and all the sweet and gracious influences of nature combined to make the earth fruitful and to replenish in the living hour whatsoever supplies of food were consumed on the previous day, so, on the morrow, the same all-seeing, all-providing, all-loving God and Father of us all, will care for their wants and for those of their young. Man is literally and absolutely the only animal on the face of this beautiful earth which practically denies and ignores the existence and activity of a paternal Providence. He acts as if there were no such thing in the world, and he obstinately refuses to be enlightened by experience. He is perpetually being admonished that this over-ruling Providence is all-powerful and all-pervading; he sees—daily and hourly—the dissipation of wealth hoarded up by men who fondly believed it would endure for ever—the passage into oblivion of names and reputations which, it was conjectured, would be immortal on the earth—and the futility and worthlessness of all kinds of human schemes of ambition and aggrandizement; nevertheless he blindly and foolishly perseveres in fighting against reason, against revelation, and against God; and, as a matter of course, he is ultimately worsted and destroyed in the insane and disastrous conflict.

There is a darkness greater than that which we associate with the change called death—a darkness enshrouding all our faculties in a thick pall—a darkness so deep and dense as to appear almost impenetrable. And as it is internally—as the spirit—the immortal principle—the emanation from the Infinite Mind—which is within

us, is enfolded by this thick gloom of selfishness and worldliness, so it is with our external aspects. Wherefore should there be such a difference between the divine expression which inspired painters, like Fra Angelico da Piesole, and Michael Angelo, and Raffaele have stamped upon the virgins, saints, and angels yet living upon and almost breathing from their canvasses, and the haggard, care-worn, dark and grovelling countenances which surround us in the world? Do you not suppose that to all of us—angels in embryo—beings linked with a chain of intelligences stretching up to God himself, would be vouchsafed some of the brightness of the other world, if we habitually set our faces towards it? The light which "was never yet on tree or flower"—would irradiate us—would shine upon us with a softened but growing lustre if, instead of bending our gaze so persistently downward upon the earth and its perishing things, we would lift it up to the source of all light, the fountain of all glory, the inexhaustible reservoir of all splendour. But, in order to do so, there must be a spiritual resurrection within us. We must come forth, like Lazarus, out of the grave of animalism, and leave behind us the cereclothes of natural interests and the decomposition which springs from our devotion to, and absorption by, what is of the earth earthy, transitory, and perishable.

That immortal principle, that spark of the divinity, I have spoken of, resembles the seed of a flower; and as is the husk of that seed—the rough envelope which encloses it—so are our bodily wants and animal passions. For a time they overlay and conceal the beautiful germ. For a time it is as if it were buried in the earth. But after a time, under the benignant influences of the sunshine and the dew, and in virtue of that wonderful power, (growth) and evolution which resides in it, the seed puts forth a tender shoot above the ground and sends down delicate little rootlets below it, and the shoot expands and aspires. It looks up in love and gratitude to the beneficent sun, welcomes the bland breezes and the soft showers of heaven, and so grows from day to day and from hour to hour—ever manifesting new beauties, ever enlarging in bulk, and ever exhibiting such a matchless perfection of form, and such an exquisite wisdom of purpose, that it is almost impossible to study it without exclaiming, Behold a miracle! And yet, as we know, it is no miracle. It is merely the product of an eternal and immutable law prescribed by Infinite Wisdom and Foresight.

And as is the tiny seed buried in the earth, such is the spirit within us. It is capable of receiving its resurrection here. It awaits its emancipation upon earth. It requires to be freed from the trammels of animal passion. The body is as necessary to it here, as the rootlets are necessary to the flower, but they should be kept in strict subordination to it. We should not reverse the beautiful processes of nature. We should not bestow all our attention on the roots and deliberately depress and destroy the beautiful blossom, the bright consummate flower. Yet this is precisely what we do. All

our care, all our forethought, and all our affection are lavished on this perishable vehicle and envelope of the soul—on this machinery of bone, flesh, blood, muscle, and tissue, which will eventually be the prey of the worm and the victim of corruption. We live for it, in it, by it, through it. We believe—or profess to believe—that that which we neglect and despise is immortal; but all our actions belie our belief. There is nothing so dear to us as the objects and pursuits of animalism, nothing so far from us as the vivifying conviction that the spirit within us is eternal—never had a beginning and never can have an ending. Were it not so, should we live as we do? Consider how few and easily-satisfied are our natural wants. Consider how—beyond their rational satisfaction—everything is productive of discontent, disappointment, and disease. Read the life or watch the existence of any one man who has lived for this world and for the body only, and upon whom fame and opulence have lavished all they could bestow, and tell me if he was happy. Many of us have probably—in the vicissitudes of our chequered lives—been familiar with comparative opulence and with comparative poverty, and, if so, must we not confess in our heart of hearts, that there were no enjoyments and that there has been no happiness, within the range of our personal experience comparable with those which lay within our reach when life was a hard struggle, and the holiday of to-day had to be purchased by the frugality, the forethought, and the self-denial of many yesterdays? Yes, believe it, there is no true happiness in this world but that which is wholly independent of the animal; and as it is absolutely certain that the happiness of the great

hereafter will be incapable of enjoyment except by those out of whose natures the animal has been expelled, before they quitted this life—will be accessible, indeed, to none others—should we not strive, by the help of God and his holy angels, who are ever ready—ever waiting and watching for the opportunity to assist us—to bring about the resurrection of the spirit from the grave of animalism, while we are inhabitants of the globe?

For, looking beyond it, what awaits us? Penetrating the thin veil which separates the spiritual from the material, what do we see with the purified vision of faith and love! An endless ascension from sphere to sphere—a perpetual growth in knowledge and affection—a constant acquisition of new faculties—a boundless expansion of the horizon of observation and perception—a glorious and inspiring intercourse with the prophets and seers, the sages and philosophers, the poets and artists of all antiquity—the power to survey the entire field of mundane history from the moment when God, by a divine afflatus, created this little globe of ours, until the hour at which we were permitted to take our departure from it. And through the ages yet to come—which will be to us like those which have rolled away—a perpetual NOW, we shall watch with the deepest interest and the tenderest solicitude, the progress of our race upon the earth. We shall be permitted, indeed, to instruct, to comfort, to counsel, and to guide them; and we shall be enabled to comprehend—though still in a finite degree—the eternal truth that God is love, and that as He is a Spirit, so he must be worshipped in spirit and in truth, world without end, AMEN.