

room and come and go as if they had been ordinary visitors. Being a man of a scientific turn of mind he never supposed that these were really ghosts, but reasoned on them and recorded his experiences. Instead of sending for a priest and resorting to exorcisms, he called in a physician and took a course of medicine, with the result that after a considerable time the ghostly visitors gradually became dim and finally disappeared.

Numerous other cases are recorded in which there is no doubt that visions have been seen, especially under the influence of religious excitement, and a large number of so-called miraculous appearances and ghost stories are probably owing to this cause rather than to conscious imposture.

When we consider the enormous number of dreams, and probably considerable number of visions, which occur, instead of being surprised at occasional coincidences, the wonder rather is that they are not more frequent. If only one per cent. of the 30,000,000 inhabitants of the British Isles dream every night, that would give 109,500,000 dreams per annum, a large proportion of which are made up of vivid impressions of actual persons and events. It is impossible that some of the combinations of these impressions should not form pictures which are subsequently realised, and we may be sure that the successes only will be noted, and the failures forgotten. It is strange, therefore, that the researches of the *Psychical Society* should not have brought to light more instances of death-warnings and other remarkable coincidences. To take the vulgar instance of horse-racing. A number of minds are greatly exercised over the problem of picking out winners, and doubtless a vast number of dreams show colours flashing past winning-posts, and numbers hoisted on the telegraph board. And yet I remember only two tolerably well-authenticated instances in the last half-century, in which any one is said to have backed a winner on the faith of a dream. The only positive result of dreams and visions is that they frequently occur under circumstances where they are almost certain to be mistaken, by unscientific persons in unscientific ages, for actual supernatural appearances.

Another field of inquiry is opened out

by the effects which are undoubtedly produced under certain abnormal conditions of the brain and nervous system, as in epilepsy, somnambulism, and mesmerism.

In the simplest case, that of epilepsy, the effect is mainly shown by a more intense action of nerve-currents, causing convulsive motions and an unnatural increase of muscular strength and rigidity, so that two strong men may be scarcely able to hold one weak woman. In somnambulism, the effects are more complex. The reception of outward impressions seems to be limited, so that the whole consciousness and vital energy are concentrated on particular actions, which are thus performed safely, while in the ordinary waking state they would be impossible. Thus a somnambulist walks securely along a plank spanning an abyss, because the impressions of surrounding space do not reach the brain and confuse it with a sense of danger. In this state also past impressions photographed on the brain, which in the ordinary waking state are obscured by other impressions, seem to come out occasionally as in dreams, enabling the somnambulist to do and remember things which would otherwise be beyond his faculties.

Mesmerism is closely akin to somnambulism. Apart from delusion and charlatanism the fact seems to be established that it is possible, by artificial means, to induce a state resembling somnambulism in persons of a peculiar nervous temperament. As regards the means, the essential point seems to be to throw the brain into this abnormal state partly by keeping an unnatural strain on the attention, and partly by acting on it through the imagination. The experiments of Dr. Braid showed that the mesmeric sleep could be induced just as well by keeping the eye strained on a black wafer stuck on a white wall, as by the manipulations of an operator. This experiment disposes of a great deal of mysterious nonsense about magnetic fluids, overpowering wills, and other supposed attributes of professional mesmerisers, and reduces the question to the plain matter-of-fact level of the relations between the brain, will, imagination, and nervous system, which exist in natural and in artificial somnambulism. These are undoubtedly very curious, and open up a wide field for physiological and mental research. As

far as I have seen or read, they seem to turn mainly on the reflex effects of an excited imagination on other organs and faculties. I do not believe that any one could be mesmerised who was absolutely ignorant of the subject and unconscious that any one was operating. On the other hand, any one who had frequently been mesmerised would fall into the sleep if led to believe that an operator was at work when there was really not one. And the peculiar effects shown in the mesmeric state are attributable mainly, if not entirely, to the imagination acting with morbid activity on the slightest hint or suggestion of what is expected. Thus the will disappears in the more powerful suggestion of the imagination that the patient has to obey the will of the operator, or do certain things which are in the programme. I can readily believe also that in this state the imagination can perform feats which would be impossible to it in a natural state when it is kept in check by other faculties, and that a good deal of what is called clairvoyance may be explained by the way in which the slightest hint from expression, involuntary muscular motion, or otherwise, is taken advantage of as a substitute for the ordinary modes of communication. Such a faculty may also doubtless be cultivated by practice, and thus explain many of the phenomena of what are called spiritual communications and thought-reading. But that impressions can be made on the brain, or that one mind can communicate with another, without some physical medium between object and subject, is unproved and remains incredible.

CHAPTER VIII

MIRACLES

Origin of Belief in the Supernatural—Thunder—Belief in Miracles formerly Universal—St. Paul's Testimony—Now Incredible—Christian Miracles—Apparent Miracles—Real Miracles—Absurd Miracles—Worthy Miracles—The Resurrection and Ascension—Nature of Evidence required—Inspiration—Prophecy—Direct Evidence—St. Paul—The Gospels—What is Known of Them—The Synoptic Gospels—Resemblances and Differences—Their Origin—Papias—Gospel

of St. John—Evidence rests on Matthew, Mark, and Luke—What each states—Compared with one another and with St. John—Hopelessly Contradictory—Miracle of the Ascension—Silence of Mark—Probable Early Date of Gospels—But not in their Present Form.

WHEN men began to reason on the phenomena of the world around them, it was inevitable that they should begin by referring all striking occurrences to supernatural causes. Just as they measured space by feet and inches, and time by days and years, they referred unusual events to personal agencies. They knew by experience that certain effects were produced by their own wills, muscular energies, and passions; and when they saw effects which seemed to be of a like nature, they inferred that they must have been produced by like causes.

To take the familiar instance of thunder. The first savage who thought about it must have said: "The sound is very like the roar with which I spring on a wild beast or an enemy; the flash of lightning is very like the flash of the arrow or javelin with which I strike him; the effect is often the same, that he is killed. Surely there must be some one in the clouds, very strong, very angry, very able to do me harm, unless I can propitiate him by prayers or offerings." But after long centuries, science steps in. An elderly gentleman at Philadelphia, Benjamin Franklin by name, sends up a silk kite during a thunder-storm, and behold! the lightning is drawn down from the skies, tamed, and made to emit harmless sparks, or to follow the course of a conducting wire, at our will and pleasure. There is no more room left for the supernatural in the fiercest tropical thunder-storm than there is in turning the handle of an electrical machine, or sending-in a tender to light the streets of London by electricity. And the result is absolutely certain. In the contest between the natural and the supernatural, the latter has not only been repulsed but annihilated. The most orthodox believer in miracles, if his faith were brought to the practical test of backing his opinions by his money, would rather insure a gin-palace or gambling saloon protected by a lightning-conductor than a chapel protected by the prayers of a pious preacher.

This instance of thunder is a type of the revolution of thought which has been brought about by modern science in the whole manner of viewing the phenomena of the surrounding universe. Former ages saw miracles everywhere, the age in which we live sees them nowhere, except possibly in the single instance of the miracles recorded in the Bible. In the annals of grave Roman historians,

In every page *locutus bos*.

Not a Cæsar or a Consul died, without an ox speaking, or a flaming sword in the skies predicting portents. If the moon happened to pass between the sun and the earth the dim eclipse

With fear of change perplexes monarchs.

If the winds blow it is because Æolus releases them from the cave; if the rains fall it is because Jupiter opens the windows of heaven, or Indra causes the cloud-cows to drop their milk on the parched earth. Perhaps no better proof can be afforded of the universal belief that miracles were considered matters of every-day occurrence than is given by the passage in St. Paul's Epistle to the Corinthians, in which he enumerates the principal Christian gifts, and assigns, as it were, their comparative order and the number of marks that should be given to each in a competitive examination.

The power of "working miracles" comes low in the list. "First apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues." And he goes on to say, in words that come home to every heart in all centuries, that all those things are worthless as compared with that true Christian charity which "suffereth long, and is kind; envieth not; vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things."

This is in the true spirit of modern thought, which, when the externals of religion fail, strives to look below them at its essence, and to retain what is eternally true and beautiful as the ideal of a spiritual and the guide of a practical life, while rejecting all the outward apparatus of metaphysical creeds and

incredible miracles, which had only a temporary value, and can no longer be believed without shutting one's eyes to facts and becoming guilty of conscious or unconscious insincerity.

But to return to miracles. Almost the entire world of the supernatural fades away of itself with an extension of our knowledge of the laws of Nature, as surely as the mists melt from the valley before the rays of the morning sun. We have seen how, throughout the wide domains of space, time, and matter, law, uniform, universal, and inexorable, reigns supreme; and there is absolutely no room for the interference of any outside personal agency to suspend its operations. The last remnant of supernaturalism, therefore, apart from the Christian miracles which we shall presently consider, has shrunk into that doubtful and shady border-land of ghosts, spiritualism and mesmerism, where vision and fact, and partly real, partly imaginary, effects of abnormal nervous conditions, are mixed up in a nebulous haze with a large dose of imposture and credulity.

Even this region is being contracted every day by every fresh revelation in a police-court; in every fresh discovery of the laws which regulate the transmission of nervous energy to and from the brain; and in the abnormal state which constitutes epilepsy and somnambulism, and which enables an excited imagination to produce physical effects, such as those of drastic drugs on a patient who has actually taken nothing but pills of harmless paste.

The question of Christian miracles, however, rests on a different and more serious ground. They have been accepted for ages as the foundation and proof of a religion which has been for nineteen centuries that of the highest civilisation and purest morality, and for this reason alone they deserve the most reverent treatment and the most careful consideration.

Of a large class of these miracles it may be said that there is no reason to doubt them, but none to consider them as violations of law, or anything but the expression, in the language of the time, of natural effects and natural causes. When a large class of maladies were universally attributed to the agency of evil spirits which had taken possession of the patient's body, it was inevitable that

many cures would be effected, and that these cures would be set down as the casting-out of devils. In many cases also a strong impulse communicated to the brain may send a current along a nerve which may temporarily, or even permanently, restore motion to a paralysed limb, or give fresh vitality to a paralysed nerve. Thus, the lame may walk, the dumb speak, and the blind see, with no more occasion to invoke supernatural agency than if the same effects had been produced by a current of electricity from a voltaic battery. There is no reason to doubt that miracles of this sort have been frequently wrought by saints and relics, and that even at the present day they may possibly be wrought at Lourdes and other shrines of Catholic faith. Only at the present day we scrutinise the evidence and count the failures, and admit nothing to be supernatural which can be explained as within a fair average result of exceptional cases under the operation of natural laws. In like manner we set down all visions or apparitions as having no objective reality if they can be explained by the known laws of dreams or other vivid revivals of impressions, on the brain of the person who perceives them.

There remains the class of really supernatural miracles, or miracles which could by no possibility have occurred as they are described, unless some outward agency had suspended or reversed the laws of Nature. As regards such miracles, a knowledge of these laws enormously increases the difficulty in believing in them as actual facts. Take for instance the conversion of water into wine. When nothing was known of the constitution of water or of wine, except that they were both fluids, it was comparatively easy to accept the statement that such a conversion really took place. But now we know that water consists of oxygen and hydrogen combined in a certain simple proportion, and of these and nothing else; while wine contains in addition nitrogen, carbon, and other elements combined in very complicated proportions. If the water was not really changed into wine, but only seemed to be so, it was a mere juggling trick, such as the Wizard of the North can show us any day for a shilling. But if it was really changed, something must have been created out of nothing to supply the elements which were not in the

original water and were not put into it from without.

Again, those who have followed the question of spontaneous generation, and witnessed the failure of the ablest chemists to produce the lowest forms of protoplasmic life from inorganic elements, will hardly believe that such a highly organised form of life as a serpent could have been really produced from a wooden rod. And this, be it observed, not only by Moses the prophet of God, but by the jugglers who amused the court of Pharaoh by their conjuring tricks; and for an object of no greater moment than to persuade a king to allow some of his subjects to emigrate, which object, moreover, notwithstanding the miracle, entirely failed, as the king simply "hardened his heart" and persisted in his refusal.

But passing from this class of grotesque and incredible miracles, let us examine those which may be called worthy miracles; that is, miracles disfigured by no absurd details, and wrought for objects of sufficient importance to justify supernatural interference, if ever such interference were to take place. At the head of such miracles must undoubtedly be placed those of the Resurrection of Jesus. The appearances to the Apostles, and above all the bodily Ascension to heaven in the presence of more than 500 witnesses, were a fitting termination to the drama of his life and sufferings, and afforded a conclusive test of the fact which was the foundation-stone of the new religion.

"If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain," says St. Paul; and he proceeds to argue that the whole question of the reality of a future life hinges on the fact that Christ really rose from the dead. His theory is that death came into the world by the sin of the first man, Adam, and has been destroyed and swallowed up in immortality by the victory of the second man, Christ. This theory has, from that day to this, been the key-stone of Christian theology.

There can be no doubt, therefore, that if any miracle is true this must be the one, and, on the other hand, if this miracle cannot be established by sufficient proof, it is idle to discuss the evidence for other miracles. In order to go to the root of the matter therefore, it is necessary to consider, in a calm and

judicial spirit, the evidence upon which this miracle of the Resurrection really rests.

In the first place we must consider what sort of evidence is required to prove a miracle. Clearly it must be evidence of the most cogent and unimpeachable character, far more conclusive than would be sufficient to establish an ordinary occurrence. The discoveries of modern science have shown beyond the possibility of doubt that the miracles which former ages fancied they saw around them every day had no real existence, and that, except possibly in the solitary instance of the Christian miracles, there has been no supernatural interference with the laws of Nature throughout the enormous ranges of space, time, and matter. It may be going too far to say with Hume that no amount of evidence can prove a miracle, since it must always remain more probable that human testimony should be false than that the laws of Nature should have been violated. But it is not going too far to say that the evidence to establish such a violation must be altogether overwhelming and open to no other possible construction.

Consider, now, the significance of the statement that a dead man rose in the body from the grave, ate, drank, and held intercourse with living persons. There are some 1,500 millions of human beings living in the world, and somewhat more than three generations in each century, that is, there are some 3,600 millions of deaths per century, and this has been going on for some forty or fifty centuries, or longer. It is certain, therefore, that at least 150,000 millions of deaths must have taken place, and a large proportion of these under circumstances involving the most heart-rending separations, and the most intense longing on the part of the dying to give, and of the living to receive, some token of affection from beyond the grave. And yet no such token has ever been given, and the veil which separates the dead from the living has never been lifted, except possibly in one case out of this 150,000,000,000. Surely it must require very different evidence to establish the reality of such an exception, from that which would be sufficient to prove the signature to a will or the date of a battle.

But just when the new views opened

up by modern science made it more difficult to believe in miracles, and more exacting in the demand for stronger evidence to support them, the old evidence became greatly weakened. The main evidence which satisfied our forefathers was that the Bible was inspired, and that it asserted the reality of the miracles. This, when critically examined, was really no evidence at all, for how did we know that the Bible was inspired? Because it was proved to be so by miracles. The argument was therefore in a circle, and resembled that of the Hindoo mythology, which rested the earth on an elephant and the elephant on a tortoise. But what did the tortoise rest on?

To examine the matter more closely, what is the meaning of inspiration? It means that a certain book was not written, as all other books in the world have been written, by writers who were fallible, and whose statements and opinions, however admirable in the main and made in perfect good faith, inevitably reflected the views of the age in which they lived and contained matters which subsequent ages found to be obsolete or erroneous, but that this particular book was miraculously dictated by an infallible God, and therefore absolutely and for all time true. But, as a chain cannot be stronger than its weakest link, if any one of these statements was proved not to be true, the theory of inspiration failed, and human reason was called on to decide by the ordinary methods, whether any, and if any, what parts of the volume were inspired and what uninspired.

Now it is absolutely certain that portions of the Bible, and those important portions relating to the creation of the world and of man, are not true, and therefore not inspired. It is certain that the sun, moon, stars, and earth, were not created as the author of Genesis supposed them to have been created, and that the first man, whose Palæolithic implements are found in caves and river gravels of immense antiquity, was a very different being from the Adam who was created in God's likeness and placed in the Garden of Eden. It is certain that no universal deluge ever took place since man existed, and that the animal life existing in the world, and shown by fossil remains to have existed for untold ages, could by no possibility have originated from pairs of

animals living together for forty days in the ark.

Another test of inspiration is afforded by the presence of contradictions. If one writer says that certain events occurred in Galilee, while another says that they took place at Jerusalem, they cannot both be inspired. They may be both reminiscences of real events, but they are obviously imperfect and not inspired reminiscences, and require to be tested by the same process of reasoning as we should apply in endeavouring to unravel the truth from the confused and contradictory evidence of conflicting historians.

Inspiration is clearly as much a miracle as any of the miracles which it relates, and there is only one way conceivable by which it could be proved, so as to afford a solid basis for faith and give additional evidence in support of the supernatural occurrences said to have taken place; that would be if it carried with it internal evidence of its truth. Such evidence might be afforded in one way, and in one only—by prophecy. If any volume written many centuries ago contained a clear, definite, and distinct prophecy of future events, which the writer could by no possibility have known or conjectured, such a prophecy must have been dictated by some agency different from anything known in the ordinary course of nature; and future ages, seeing the fulfilment of the prophecy, could scarcely doubt that the volume which contained it was inspired. But such a prophecy must be quite definite, so that there could be no doubt as to whether it had been fulfilled or not, and must not consist of vague and mystic utterances, in which future believers might find meanings, probably never thought of by the prophets themselves, confirming the faith which, from other considerations, they thought it a sin to disbelieve. Nor must it consist of passionate aspirations for deliverance, and predictions of the downfall of cruel conquerors, wrung from the hearts of an oppressed people in times of imminent danger and crushing despair; because such predictions have been partly verified and partly transformed in future ages, so as to receive a new and spiritual significance.

There is one prophecy which affords a test by which to judge of the value of all

others as a proof of inspiration, for it is perfectly distinct and definite, and comes from the highest authority—that of the approaching end of the world contained in the New Testament.

St. Matthew reports Jesus to have said:

“For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works.

“Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom.”

It is certain that all standing there did taste death without seeing the Son of Man coming with his angels. The conclusion is irresistible, that either Jesus was mistaken in speaking these words, or else Matthew was mistaken in supposing that he spoke them.

St. Paul predicts the same event in still more definite terms. He says:

“For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.

“For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

“Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air.”

Here is the most distinct prediction possible, both of the event which was to happen, and of the limit of time within which it was to take place; and, to give it additional force, it is specially declared to be an inspired prophecy uttered as “the word of God.”

The time is distinctly stated to be in the lifetime of some of the existing generation, including Paul himself, who is to be one of the “we which are alive,” who are not to “prevent,” or gain any precedence over, those who have “fallen asleep,” or died, in the interval before Christ’s coming. By no possibility can this be construed to mean a coming at some indefinite future time, long after all those had died who were to remain and be caught up alive into the clouds. St. Paul doubtless meant what he said, and firmly believed that he was uttering an inspired prophecy which would certainly

be fulfilled. But it is certain that it was not fulfilled. Paul and all Paul's contemporaries have been dead for 1,800 years, and the shout, the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God, have never been heard. What is this but an absolutely irresistible demonstration that prophecy not only fails to prove inspiration, but, on the contrary, by its failure disproves it, and shows that St. Matthew and St. Paul were as liable to make mistakes as any of the hundreds of religious writers who, in later times, have prophesied the approaching end of the world or advent of the millennium.

Turning to the evidence for miracles, this must be taken on its own merits, without aid from any preconceived theory that it is sinful to scrutinise it because the books in which it is contained are inspired. Applying to it impartially the ordinary rules of evidence, let us see what it amounts to for that which is really the test case of all other miracles, that of the Resurrection.

The witnesses are St. Paul and the authors of the four Gospels according to St. Matthew, St. Mark, St. Luke, and St. John. Of these, St. Paul is in some respects the best. When a witness is called into court to give evidence, the first question asked is, "Who are you? Give your name and description." St. Paul alone gives a clear answer to this question. There is no doubt that he was an historical personage, who lived at the time and in the manner described in the Acts of the Apostles, and that the Epistle to the Corinthians is a genuine letter written by him. In this Epistle he says :

"For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures ;

"And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures :

"And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve :

"After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once ; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep.

"After that, he was seen of James ; then of all the apostles.

"And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time."

This is undoubtedly very distinct

evidence that the appearances described by St. Paul were currently believed in the circle of early Christians at Jerusalem within twenty years of their alleged occurrence.

This is strong testimony, but it is weakened by several considerations. In the first place, we know that Paul's frame of mind in regard to miracles was such as to make it certain that he would take them for granted, and not attempt to examine critically the evidence on which they were founded, and this was doubtless the frame of mind of those from whom he received the accounts. Again, he places all the appearances on the same footing as that to himself, which was clearly of the nature of a vision, or strong internal impression, rather than of an objective reality. Upon this vital point, whether the appearances which led to the belief in Christ's resurrection were subjective or objective—that is, were visions or physical realities—Paul's testimony therefore favours the former view, which is quite consistent with the laws of Nature and with experience in other cases.

And finally, St. Paul's account of the appearances is altogether different from those of the other witnesses, viz., the four Evangelists.

When we come to consider the testimony of the four Gospels we are confronted by a first difficulty : Who and what are the witnesses ? What is really known of them is this : Until the middle of the second century they are never quoted, and were apparently unknown. Somewhere about 150 A.D., for the exact date is hotly disputed, we find the first quotations from them, and from that time forwards the quotations become more frequent and their authority increases, until finally they superseded all the other narratives current in the early Church, such as the "Gospel of the Hebrews," and the "Pastor" of Hermas, and are embodied in the New Testament canon. From the earliest time where there is any distinct recognition of them, they appear to have been attributed to the Evangelists whose names they bear, viz., Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

When we look to internal evidence to give us some further clue as to their authorship and date, we at once meet with a great difficulty. The three Gospels of SS. Matthew, Mark, and Luke, are called

"Synoptic," because they give what is substantially the same narrative of the same facts arranged in the same order, and the same sayings and parables giving the same view of the character and teaching of Jesus. In whole passages this resemblance is not merely substantial but literal, so that we cannot suppose it to arise merely from following the same oral tradition, and cannot doubt that the authors must have copied verbatim either from one another or from some common manuscript. But then comes in this perplexing circumstance. After passages of almost literal identity we have statements which are inconsistent with those of the other Gospels, and narratives of important events which are either altogether wanting or quite differently described in them.

Thus, in the vital matter of the Resurrection, Matthew says that the disciples were especially commanded to "go into Galilee; there shall you see him," and that they did go accordingly, and there saw Jesus on a mountain where he had appointed them to meet him; while Luke distinctly says that "he commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem," and describes them as remaining there and witnessing a number of appearances, including the crowning miracle of the Ascension (the same, doubtless, as that which St. Paul describes as having taken place in the presence of more than 500 witnesses), of which Matthew, Mark, and John apparently know nothing. And yet the final injunction of Jesus to preach the gospel in his name to all nations is given in almost the same words in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, showing that they must have had before them some common tradition describing the course of events after the Crucifixion.

So in minor matters, Mark mentions the cure of one blind man, Bartimæus, who sat by the roadside begging; in Matthew there are two blind men, and yet the dialogue that passed—"What will ye that I shall do unto you?" "Lord, that our eyes may be opened"—is almost word for word the same. It would seem that if they did copy from an original manuscript, they felt themselves free to take any liberties with it they liked, in the way of omission and alteration.

The only light thrown on this perplexing question of the origin of the Gospels is that afforded by the celebrated

passage from Papias quoted by Eusebius. Papias was Bishop of Hieropolis, in Asia Minor, and suffered martyrdom, when an aged man, about the year 164. He was therefore brought-up in personal contact, not with the Apostles themselves, but with those who, like Polycarp and others, had been their immediate disciples, and had known and conversed with them. In the passage quoted he states his preference for oral tradition over written documents, and his reasons for it. He says: "If I found some one who had followed the first presbyters, I asked him what he had heard from them; what said Andrew or Peter, or Philip, Thomas, James, John, or Matthew; and what said Andrew and John the Presbyter, who were also disciples of the Lord; for I thought I could not derive as much advantage from books as from the living and abiding oral tradition." And he goes on to give his reasons for not attaching more weight to the two written sources of information which were evidently best known and looked upon as of most authority in his time, viz., the Gospels according to St. Matthew and St. Mark. He says that Matthew wrote down in Hebrew the Logia, or principal sayings and discourses of the Lord, "which every one translated as he best could," evidently implying that these numerous translations were, in his opinion, loose, inaccurate, and unreliable. As regards Mark, he says that "Mark, who had not known the Lord personally, and had never heard Him, followed Peter later as his interpreter; and when Peter, in the course of his teaching, mentioned any of the doings or sayings of Christ, took care to note them down exactly, but without any order, and without making a continuous narrative of the discourses of the Lord, which did not enter into the intention of the Apostle. Thus Mark let nothing pass, jotting down a certain number of facts as Peter mentioned them, but having no other care than to omit nothing of what he heard, and to change nothing in it."

This testimony of Papias is very valuable and very instructive. In the first place, it seems conclusive that the Gospel of St. John was not known to him, and not received in the early Christian Churches of Asia Minor as a work of authority. Had it been so received, Papias must have known of it, brought

up as he was at the feet of men who had been John's disciples, and bishop of a Church closely connected with those of which, if there is any faith in tradition, John had been the patriarch and principal founder. And if he had known of such a written Gospel as that of St. John, and believed it to have been really written by the "beloved disciple;" the Apostle second only, if second, to St. Peter; it is inconceivable that he should have expressed such an unqualified preference for oral tradition, and made such an almost contemptuous reference to written documents. He must have said: "For, with the exception of the Gospel of the blessed John, I found that little was to be got from books."

It seems clear, therefore, that although the Gospel of St. John may contain genuine reminiscences of an early date, and possibly some which really came from the Apostle himself, the work in its present form could not have been written by him, and must have been compiled at such a late date as to have been unknown in the Christian Churches of the East in the time of Papias.

The same remark applies to the Gospel of St. Luke, of which Papias has equally no knowledge, and which, from internal evidence, appears to be a later edition of the two earlier Gospels, or of the original manuscripts from which they were taken, altered in places to meet objections of a later date, as where the injunction to "go into Galilee; there shall ye see him," is changed into "as he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee," obviously to reconcile the statement with the subsequent belief that the Ascension took place at Jerusalem.

There remain the two original Gospels according to St. Matthew and St. Mark. Volumes of erudition have been written to try and reconcile them with one another, and with the other two Gospels, and to explain the extraordinary resemblances and no less extraordinary differences. Translations have been heaped on translations, and successive editions and revisions piled on one another until the edifice toppled over by its own weight, but after all, we have nothing better to rely on than the statement of Papias, which there is no reason to mistrust. The basis of the three Synoptic Gospels was probably a collection of facts and anecdotes written down in Greek by Mark, and of discourses

written in Hebrew by Matthew. These have been worked up subsequently, at unknown dates, and by unknown authors, aided possibly by oral traditions, into connected narratives or biographies of the life and teachings of the Founder of the religion.

Possibly, though by no means certainly, we have in the present Gospel according to St. Matthew the nearest approach to the original Logia or doctrinal discourses, and in the present Mark the nearest approach to the original notes recorded by Mark from the dictation of St. Peter.

As regards the Gospel according to St. John, it appears perfectly clear, both from the silence of Papias, the absence of any reference to it by other early Christian Fathers until the end of the second century, and still more from internal evidence, that it could not possibly have been written by the Apostle whose name it bears. John, as we know from St. Paul's Epistles, was one of the pillars of the Christian Church of Jerusalem, whose doctrine was in all respects Hebraic, and who opposed the larger idea that a man could be a Christian without first becoming a Jew.

The writer of the Gospel is not only ignorant of matters which must have been well known to every Jew, but he is positively prejudiced against Judaism, and represents it in an unfavourable light. His narrative of the events of the life of Jesus, including the miracles, is totally different from that of the Synoptics, and his view of his character and report of his speeches wide as the poles asunder. To the Synoptics Jesus is the man-Messiah foretold by the prophets; to the author of John he is the "Logos," the incarnation of a metaphysical attribute of the Deity.

The terse and simple clearness of his sayings recorded by the first, is exchanged in the latter for an involved and cumbrous phraseology reminding one of a Papal Encyclical. The amiability and "sweet reasonableness" of the Jesus of the Synoptics, have become acrimonious unreasonableness and egotistical self-glorification in many of the long harangues which are introduced on the most unlikely occasions in the fourth Gospel.

It is evident, therefore, that this Gospel can afford no aid towards a critical examination of contemporary evidence, and that for this we must look

almost entirely to such remains of early records as are preserved in the Gospels of St. Matthew, St. Mark, and St. Luke. With these data, how does the evidence stand as regards the miracle of the Resurrection which is the test case of all alleged miracles?

It is important to observe that the oldest manuscripts of the Gospel of St. Mark stop at the 8th verse of the last chapter, and that the subsequent verses, 9—20, have every appearance of being a later addition made to reconcile this Gospel better with the prevailing belief and with the other Gospels. Commentators discover a difference in the style and language, and the appearances of Jesus after his resurrection are described in vague and general language, very different from the distinct details given of them in the other Gospels, and inconsistent with the formal statement twice repeated in the genuine Mark that they were to take place in Galilee. Moreover, if these verses were really in the original Gospel, it is inconceivable how they should have dropped-out in the oldest manuscripts, while it is perfectly conceivable how they should have been added at a later period, when the Fathers of the Church began to occupy themselves with the task of harmonising the different Gospels.

But if the genuine Mark really terminated with the 8th verse, not only is there no confirmation of the four miraculous appearances, including the Ascension, recorded by St. Paul as being currently believed by the early Christians within twenty years of their occurrence, but there is positively no mention of any appearance at all. A young man, clothed in white, tells three women who went to the tomb that Jesus is risen, and that they were to tell his disciples and Peter that they would see him in Galilee; an injunction which was not carried out, for the women "were afraid, neither said they anything to any man."

In St. Matthew the young man has become an angel, and as the women return from the tomb Jesus met them and said, "All hail," repeating the injunction to tell the disciples to go into Galilee, where the eleven accordingly went into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them, and "when they saw him they worshipped him: but some doubted." This is the whole of Matthew's testimony.

St. Luke, again, in his Gospel and Acts, amplifies the miraculous appearances almost up to the extent described by St. Paul, though with considerable differences both of addition and omission. The three women become a number of women; the one angel or young man in shining clothes, two; the appearance to the women disappears; Peter is mentioned as running to the sepulchre but departing without seeing anything special except that the body had been removed; the first appearance recorded is that to the two disciples walking from Emmaus, who knew him not until their eyes were opened by the breaking of bread, when he vanished; the next appearance is to the eleven sitting at meat with closed doors; and finally there is the crowning miracle of the Ascension, stated somewhat vaguely in the Gospel, but with more detail in the Acts, describing how he was taken up to heaven and received in a cloud, in the sight of numerous witnesses. This is probably the same miracle as that mentioned by St. Paul as having occurred in the presence of "more than five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain alive unto this present;" though he mentions two subsequent appearances—one to James and a second to all the Apostles—of which no trace is found in any other canonical narrative. It is to be noted that all St. Luke's miracles are expressly stated to have occurred at Jerusalem, where Jesus had commanded his disciples to remain, and are, therefore, in direct contradiction with the statements of Matthew and Mark, that whatever occurred was in Galilee, where the disciples were expressly enjoined to go.

When we come to St. John, we find the first part of the narrative of the other Gospels repeated with several variations and a great many additional details. Mary Magdalene is alone, and finds the stone removed from the sepulchre. She tells Peter and John, who run together to the tomb; John outruns Peter, but Peter first enters and sees the napkin and linen grave-clothes, but nothing miraculous, and they return to their homes. Mary remains weeping and sees, first two angels, and then Jesus himself, whom she at first does not recognise, and mistakes for the gardener. The walk to Emmaus is not mentioned, and the

next appearance is to the disciples sitting with closed doors. Another takes place after eight days, for the purpose of convincing Thomas of the reality of the resurrection in the actual body, and here apparently the narrative closes with the appropriate ending, "That these things are written that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name." But a supplementary chapter is added, describing a miraculous draught of fishes and appearance to Peter, John, and five other disciples at the Sea of Tiberias in Galilee, in which the command is given to Peter to "Feed my sheep," and an explanation is introduced of what was doubtless a sore perplexity to the early Christian world, the death of St. John before the coming of the Messiah.

These are the depositions of the five witnesses, Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, and Paul, in which the verdict "proven" or "not proven" must rest in regard to the issue "miracle" or "no miracle."

The mere statement of them is enough to show how insufficient they are to establish any ordinary fact, to say nothing of a fact so entirely opposed to all experience as the return to life of one who had really died. Suppose it were a question of proving the signature of a will, what chance would a plaintiff have of obtaining a verdict who produced five witnesses, four of whom could give no certain account of themselves, while the fifth spoke only from hearsay, and the details to which they deposed were hopelessly inconsistent with one another as regards time, place, and other particulars? The account of the Ascension brings this contradiction into the most glaring light. According to St. Luke and St. Paul this miracle took place at Jerusalem, in the presence of a large number, St. Paul says over 500 persons, before whose eyes Jesus was lifted-up in the body into the clouds, and more than half, or over 250 of these witnesses, remained alive for at least twenty years afterwards to testify to the fact. Consider what this implies. Such an event occurring publicly in the presence of 500 witnesses is not like an appearance to a few chosen disciples in a room with closed doors: it must have been the talk of all Jerusalem.

The prophet who had shortly before

entered the city in triumphal procession amidst the acclamations of the multitude, and who, a few days afterwards, by some sudden revolution of popular feeling, had become the object of mob-hatred; who had been solemnly tried, condemned, and executed; that this prophet had been restored to life and visibly translated in the body to heaven in the presence of more than 500 witnesses, must inevitably have caused an immense sensation. However prone the age might be to believe in miracles, such a miracle as this must have startled every one. The most incredulous must have been converted; the High Priest and Pharisees must, in self-defence, have instituted a rigid inquiry; the Proconsul must have reported to Rome; Josephus, who, not many years afterwards, wrote the annals of the Jews during this period with considerable detail, must have known of the occurrence and mentioned it.

And above all, Matthew, Mark, and John must have been aware of the occurrence; and in all probability, Matthew, John, and Peter, from whom Mark derived his information, must have been among the 500 eye-witnesses. How then is it possible that, if the event really occurred, they not only should not have mentioned it, but partly by their silence, and partly by their statement that they went into Galilee, have virtually contradicted it. The Ascension, if true, was a capital fact, not only crowning and completing the drama of Christ's life which they were narrating with its most triumphant and appropriate ending, but confirming, in the strongest possible manner, the doctrine for which they were contending, that he was not an ordinary man or ordinary prophet, but the Messiah, the Son of God, who had redeemed the world from its original curse and conquered sin and death. One might as well suppose that any one writing the life of Wellington would omit the Battle of Waterloo as that any one writing the life of Christ would knowingly and wilfully omit all mention of the Ascension. It must be evident that whoever wrote the original manuscripts from which the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and John were compiled, must either never have heard of the Ascension, or having heard of it did not believe it to be true. This must also

apply to the other miraculous appearances said to have occurred at Jerusalem. How was it possible for writers who knew of them to make no mention of them, and virtually contradict them by asserting that they did not remain at Jerusalem, but went to Galilee in obedience to a command to that effect, and that the final parting of Jesus from his disciples took place there?

The most unaccountable fact is the total silence of Mark, who was nearest the fountain-head if he derived his information from St. Peter, as to these miraculous appearances. If his Gospel ended with verse 8 of chapter xvi., as the oldest manuscripts and the internal evidence of the postscripts afterwards added appear to prove, there is absolutely no statement of any such appearance at all. Nothing is said but that three women found the tomb empty and saw a young man clothed in white, who told them that Jesus had risen and gone into Galilee. Now, if there is one fact more certain than another about miraculous legends, it is that as long as they have any vitality at all, they increase and multiply and do not dwindle and diminish. We have an excellent example of this in the way in which a whole cycle of miracles grew up in a short time about the central fact of the martyrdom of St. Thomas à Becket.

If, therefore, Matthew and Mark knew nothing of the series of miracles, which from St. Paul's statement we must assume to have been currently believed by the early Christians twenty years after the death of Christ, the only possible explanation is that their Gospels were compiled from narratives which had been written at a still earlier date, before these miracles had been heard of.

We must suppose that Mark really wrote down what he heard from Peter, and that Peter, being a truthful man, though he probably had a sincere general belief that Christ had risen, declined to state facts which he knew had never occurred. This is in entire accordance with what we find in the whole history of ecclesiastical miracles, from those recorded in Scripture down to those of St. Francis of Assisi in the thirteenth century, and of St. Francis Xavier in the sixteenth. Innumerable as are the accounts of miracles said to have been wrought by relics or by other holy per-

sons, there is no instance of any statement by any credible person that he had himself worked a real miracle. St. Augustine describes in detail many wonderful miracles, including resurrections from the dead, which he said had been wrought to his own knowledge, within his own diocese of Hippo, by the relics of the martyr Stephen. In fact, he says that the number of miracles thus wrought within the last two years since these relics had been at Hippo, was at least seventy. This testimony is far more precise than any for the Gospel miracles, for it comes from a well-known man of high character, who was on the spot at the time, and speaks of these and many other miracles having occurred to his own knowledge. But he never asserts that he himself had ever wrought a miracle.

In like manner Paulinus relates many miracles of his master, St. Ambrose, including one of raising the dead; but Ambrose himself never asserts that he performed a miracle. Neither does St. Francis of Assisi, or any of the 25,000 saints of the Roman calendar to whom miracles are attributed.

Even Jesus himself seems, on several occasions, to have disclaimed the power of working miracles, as when he refused to comply with the perfectly reasonable request of the Jews to attest his Messiahship by a sign, if he wished them to believe in it.

There is every reason, therefore, to believe that when we find narratives making no mention of important miracles which were afterwards commonly received, they must be taken from records of an earlier date, and proceeding directly from those who, if the miracles were true, would have been the principal eye-witnesses to vouch for them. But, if this be so, how near to the fountain-head do these narratives carry us? We lose the miracles, but in compensation we get what may be considered fresh and lively narratives of the life and conversation of Jesus, and confirmation both of his being an historical personage, and of the many anecdotes and sayings which depict his character, and bring him before us as he really lived. The mythical theory cannot stand which found in every saying and action an *ex post facto* attempt to show that he fulfilled prophecies and realised Messianic expectations. We can see him walking through the fields on a

Sabbath afternoon with his disciples, plucking ears of corn, and rebuking the Pharisees for their puritanical adherence to the letter of the observance of that day; we can see him taking little children in his arms, and talking familiarly at the well with the woman of Samaria; we can hear him preaching the Sermon on the Mount, and dropping parables from his mouth, like precious pearls of instruction in love, charity, and all Christian virtues. We can sympathise with the agony in the garden as with a real scene, and hear the despairing cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

It seems to me that faith in the reality of scenes like these is worth a good deal of faith in the metaphysical conundrums of the Athanasian Creed, or in the actual occurrence of incredible miracles.

Another argument in favour of the early date and genuine character of the primitive records which have been worked up in the Synoptic Gospels, is afforded by the sayings attributed to Jesus. It is impossible to imagine that these could be the invention of a later age, when theological questions of faith and doctrine had absorbed almost the entire attention of the Christian world. We have already seen how wide is the difference, both as regards style and phase of thought, between the discourses reported in the fourth Gospel and those of the Synoptics. No one writing in the second or towards the end of the first century, or even earlier in the religious atmosphere of St. Paul's Epistles, could have composed the Sermon on the Mount or the Lord's Prayer. The parables and maxims, instead of teaching nothing but a pure and sublime morality in simple language, must have contained references to the doctrine of the Logos, and the disputes between the Jewish and the Gentile Christians. Even if these discourses had passed long through the fluctuating medium of oral tradition, they must, when finally reduced to writing, have shown many traces of the theological questions which agitated the Christian world. The only explanation is that Apostles like St. Matthew, and St. Peter through Mark, really recorded these sayings in writing while they were fresh in memory, and that their authority secured them from adulteration.

At the same time it must be borne in

mind that while portions of the original narrative appear to carry us back very near to the fountain-head, a large part of the Gospels in their present form is evidently of much later date and of uncertain origin. It is clear that Papias, writing about the year 150, knew nothing of the Gospels of Luke and John, and nothing of those of Matthew and Mark in their present form. The discourses of Matthew and the disconnected notes of Mark, to which he refers, were something very different from the complete histories of the life and teaching of Jesus contained in the present Gospels. It is equally clear that Justin Martyr and Hegesippus, who wrote about the middle of the second century, and made frequent quotations of the sayings and doings of the Lord, made them, not from the present canonical Gospels, but from other sources relating the same things in different order and different language. "A Gospel according to the Hebrews" and "Memoirs of the Apostles" seem to have been the principal sources from which they quoted.

It is evident however, that during the first two centuries there were a great number of so-called Gospels and Apostolic writings floating about in the Christian world along with oral traditions. The author of Luke tells us this expressly, and later writers refer to a number of works now unknown or classed as apocryphal, and complain of forged Gospels circulated by heretics. None of these writings, however, seem to have had any peculiar authority or been considered as inspired Scripture, which term is exclusively confined to the Old Testament, until the middle of the second century.

At length, by a sort of law of the survival of the fittest, the present Gospels acquired an increasing authority and superseded the other works which had competed with them; but the selection was determined to a great extent, not by those principles of criticism which would now be applied to historical records, but by doctrinal considerations of the support they gave to prevalent opinions. In other words, orthodoxy and not authenticity was the test applied, and it is probable that no Christian Father of the second or third century would have hesitated to reject an early manuscript traceable very clearly to an Apostle, in favour

of a later compilation of doubtful origin, if the former contained passages which seemed to favour heretical views, while the latter omitted those passages, or altered them in a sense favourable to orthodoxy.

To sum up the matter, it appears that apart from the fact that the antecedent improbability of miracles has been enormously increased by the constant and concurrent proofs of the permanence of the laws of Nature, the evidence for those recorded in the New Testament, with which alone we are concerned, is rendered null and void by the discordant reports of hearsay witnesses.

CHAPTER IX

CHRISTIANITY WITHOUT MIRACLES

Practical and Theoretical Christianity—Example and Teaching of Christ—Christian Dogma—Moral Objections—Inconsistent with Facts—Must be accepted as Parables—Fall and Redemption—Old Creeds must be Transformed or Die—Mahometanism—Decay of Faith—Balance of Advantages—Religious Wars and Persecutions—Intolerance—Sacrifice—Prayer—Absence of Theology in Synoptic Gospels—Opposite Pole to Christianity—Courage and Self-reliance—Belief in God and a Future Life—Based mainly on Christianity—Science gives no Answer—Nor Metaphysics—So-called Intuitions—Development of Idea of God—Best Proof afforded by Christianity—Evolution is Transforming it—Reconciliation of Religion and Science.

CAN Christianity continue to exist without miracles?

To answer this question we must distinguish between practical and theoretical Christianity. The essence of practical Christianity consists in such a genuine acceptance of its moral teaching, and love and reverence for the life and character of its Founder, as may influence conduct, and be a guide and support in life. Theoretical Christianity is that which professes to teach a complete theory of the creation of the world and man, of the relations between man and his Creator, and of his position and destiny in a future state of existence.

The former needs no miracles. The Sermon on the Mount, and St. Paul's description of Christian charity, carry

their own proof with them, and such parables as that of the Good Samaritan require no support, either from historical evidence or from supernatural signs, to come home to every heart whether in the first or in the nineteenth century. The fact that the son of a Jewish mechanic, born in a small town of an obscure province, without any special aid from position, education, or other outward circumstance, succeeded, by the sheer force of the purity and loveliness of his life and teaching, in captivating all hearts and founding a religion which for nineteen centuries has been the main civilising influence of the world and the faith of its noblest men and noblest races; this fact, I say, is of itself so admirable and wonderful as not to require the aid of vulgar miracles and metaphysical puzzles in order to be recognised as worthy of the highest reverence. And when such a life was crowned by a death which remains the highest type of what is noblest in man, self-sacrifice in the cause of truth and for the good of others, we may well call it divine, and not quarrel with any language or any forms of worship which tend to keep it in view and hold it up to the world as an inducement to a higher life.

Miracles are not only unnecessary for a faith of this description, but are a positive hindrance to it. To put it at the lowest, miracles, in an age which has learned the laws of Nature, must always be open to grave doubts, and thus throw doubt on the reliability of the narratives which are supposed to depend on them. Moreover, the touching beauty and force of example of the life of Jesus are almost lost if he is evaporated into a sort of supernatural being, totally unlike any conceivable member of the human family. We may strive to model our conduct at a humble distance on that of the man Jesus, the carpenter's son, whose father and mother, brothers and sisters, were familiar figures in the streets of Nazareth, but hardly on that of a "Logos," the incarnation of a metaphysical conception of an attribute of the Deity, who existed before all worlds and by whom all things were made.

But, on the other hand, miracles are indispensable for the dogma, or theoretical side of Christian theology. Let us consider frankly what this dogma is, and how far it is *true*—that is, consistent or

inconsistent with known and indisputable facts.

The Christian dogma cannot be better stated than in the words of St. Paul, who was its first inventor, or, at any rate, the first by whom it was elaborated into a complete theory.

"For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive."

This may be expanded into the following propositions:

1. That the Old Testament is miraculously inspired, and contains a literally true account of the creation of the world and of man.

2. That, in accordance with this account, the material universe, earth, sun, moon, and stars, and all living things on the earth and in the seas, were created in six days, after which God rested on the seventh day.

3. That the first man, Adam, was created in the image of God and after His own likeness, and placed, with the first woman, Eve, in the Garden of Eden, where they lived for a time in a state of innocence, and holding familiar converse with God.

4. That by an act of disobedience they fell from this high state, were banished from the Garden, and sin and death were inflicted as a penalty on them and their descendants.

5. That after long ages, during which mankind remained under this curse, God sent His Son, who assumed human form, and by His sacrifice on the cross appeased God's anger, removed the curse, and destroyed the last enemy, death, giving a glorious resurrection and immortal life to those who believed on Him.

This theory is a complete one, which hangs together in all its parts, and of which no link can be displaced without affecting the others. It is the theory which has been accepted by the Christian world since its first promulgation; and, although expounded with metaphysical refinements in the Athanasian Creed, and set forth with all the gorgeous surroundings of poetical imagination in Milton's "Paradise Lost," it remains in substance St. Paul's theory, that "as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive."

It is obvious that this theory is open to grave objections on moral grounds. It is more in the character of a jealous Oriental despot than of a loving and

merciful Father, to inflict such a punishment on hundreds of millions of unoffending creatures for an act of disobedience on the part of a remote ancestor. And it is still more inconsistent with our modern ideas of justice and humanity to require the vicarious sacrifice of an only Son as the condition of forgiving the offence and removing the curse.

Nevertheless it must be admitted that, notwithstanding these objections, and harsh as the theory is, it has had a wonderful attraction for many of the highest intellects and noblest nations.

It was the creed of Luther, Cromwell, and Milton, and the inspiring spirit of Scotch Presbyterianism and English Puritanism. It has inspired great men and great deeds, and although responsible for a good deal of persecution and fanaticism, it must always be spoken of with respect, as a creed which has had a powerful effect in raising men's minds from lower to higher things, and has on the whole done good work in its time.

But the question of its continuance as a creed which it is possible for sincere men to believe, as literally and historically true, depends not on wishes and feelings, nor on reverence for the past, but on hard facts. Is it or is it not consistent with what are now known to be the real truths respecting the constitution of the universe and the origin of life and of man?

To state this question is to answer it. There is hardly one of the facts shown in the preceding chapters to be the undoubted results of modern science which does not shatter to pieces the whole fabric. It is as certain as that two and two make four that the world was not created in the manner described in Genesis; that the sun, moon, and stars are not lights placed in the firmament or solid crystal vault of heaven to give light upon the earth; that animals were not all created in one or two days, and spread over the earth from a common centre in Armenia, after having been shut up in pairs for forty days in an ark, during a universal deluge. And finally, that man is not descended from an Adam created quite recently in God's image, and who fell from a high state by an act of disobedience, but from a long series of Palæolithic ancestors, extending back certainly into the Glacial and probably

into the Tertiary period, who have not fallen but progressed, and by a slow and painful process of evolution have gradually developed intelligence, language, arts, and civilisation, from the very rudest and most animal-like beginnings.

Belief in inspiration, the very keystone of the system, becomes impossible when it is shown that the accounts given of such important matters in the writings professing to be inspired are manifestly untrue; and when the ordinary rules of criticism are brought to bear upon these writings it is at once seen that they are compilations of different ages from various and uncertain sources.

The improbability of miracles is enormously increased by the proof of the uniform operation of natural law throughout the vast domains of space, time, matter, and life; and where the supernatural was formerly considered to be a matter of every-day occurrence, it has vanished step by step, until only the last vestige of it is left in a possible belief in some of the more important and impressive miracles of the Christian dispensation. Even this faint belief is manifestly founded more on reverence for tradition, and love of the religion which the miracles are supposed to support, than on any dispassionate view of the evidence on which they rest. Tried by the ordinary rules of evidence, it is apparent that it is contradictory and uncertain, and not such as would be sufficient to establish in a court of law any ordinary fact, such as the execution of a deed. It is apparent also that the evidence for the most crucial and important of all miracles, that of the Ascension, is not nearly so precise and cogent as that for a number of early Christian and mediæval miracles which we reject without hesitation.

What follows? Must we reject these venerable traditions as old wives' fables? I answer, No; but we can accept them as parables.

A great deal of the best teaching of the New Testament is conveyed in the form of parables. Take for instance that of Lazarus and Dives. No one supposes that this is an historical narrative; that this particular Jew, out of the millions of poor and good Jews who have lived and died, was actually taken up into Abraham's bosom; and that the remarkable dialogue across the gulf is a literal

transcript of an actual conversation. But the moral is taught for all time, that it is bad for the rich to indulge in selfish luxury and take no thought of the mass of poverty and misery weltering around them; and that the condition of the poorest of the poor, borne with piety and resignation, may really be better and higher than that of the selfish rich. Apply the same principle to the dogma of the fall and redemption, and we may see in it a parable of the highest meaning. Every one of us must be conscious of having fallen by yielding to temptation and giving way to animal passions. We may have fallen so low that without some redemption, or friendly influence from without, we cannot raise ourselves from the lower level and regain our lost place. We can see that there are thousands round us, who, from poverty or other adverse circumstances, have got immersed in evil conditions from which it is hopeless to extricate themselves without friendly aid. We can see also that there is nothing more noble and divine than to make sacrifices in order to be the redeemer who saves as many souls as possible from this entanglement of evil, and gives them a chance of rising into a happier and better life. We may feel this, and use as an incentive to attempt some humble imitation of it, the parable which presents it to us in its highest aspect, and has been the efficient means of stimulating so many good men to do good works. This is surely better than paltering with the truth, and enervating our conscience and intelligence by professing to believe in the literal historical accuracy of things which

NOTE.—Since writing this chapter, I have seen with much pleasure an article entitled "Christmas," by Matthew Arnold, in a recent number of the *Contemporary Review*, which takes exactly the same view of the allegorical or parabolic sense of miraculous narratives. He takes the instance of the Immaculate Conception and Birth of Jesus, and shows that it was a myth which grew up, almost inevitably, from the strong impression made on the minds of early Christians by the idea of purity set forth by the life and teaching of Jesus, which stood in such striking contrast with the corruption of the heathen world. The same idea led to a similar myth in the case of Gautama, the pure and self-sacrificing founder of the Buddhist religion, and it teaches an eternal truth to all who can look below the letter to the spirit of the parable.

have become incredible to all thinking and educated minds. Of course, I do not mean that these dogmas and miraculous narratives were intended by the original writers to be parables, but only that they have become so to us ; and the alternative lies between rejecting them altogether or accepting them as having an allegorical meaning or latent truth, or, it may be added, as recording the state of intelligence and knowledge of the age which produced the stories.

At any rate, whether we like it or not, this is what we shall have to do, for the conclusions of science are irresistible, and old forms of faith, however venerable and however endeared by a thousand associations, have no more chance in a collision with science than George Stephenson's cow had if it stood on the rails and tried to stop the progress of a locomotive. It is not enough to say that a thing is lovely and amiable, and that its loss will leave a blank, to ensure its continuance. The law of Nature is progress and not happiness. Stars, suns, planets, human individuals, and human races have their periods of youth, maturity, and decay, and are continually being transformed into new phases.

The old order changes, giving place to new,
And God fulfils Himself in many ways.

Childhood, with its innocence and engaging ways, passes into the sterner and more prosaic attributes of the grown-up man ; fancy decays as reason ripens ; simple faith is replaced by larger knowledge ; and the smooth brow of infancy becomes often marred by wrinkles of strife and suffering, impressed during the more or less successful struggle in the battle of life ; and yet we could not if we would, and would not if we could, arrest the progress of Nature, and say that the child shall never grow into a man.

Such also is the fate of creeds. They must be transformed or die ; and the best test of the vitality and intrinsic truth of a religion is just that capacity for transformation against which theologians exclaim as sacrilege. In this respect Christianity has a great advantage over other religions. The pious souls who are shocked at any denial of the inspiration of Scripture may console themselves by considering what has been the fate of other religions which have been

imprisoned too closely within the limits of a sacred book. Mahometanism, the religion of one God and a succession of prophets or great men who have taught his doctrines, is not in theory inconsistent with progress and civilisation. But Mahomet unfortunately wrote a book, the Koran, which, while it contained much that to the Arab mind was sublime and beautiful, was of necessity impregnated with the ideas of the age in which he lived ; an age of much ignorance and superstition, of imperfect social arrangements, and of barbarous and ferocious manners. This book came to be accepted as the inspired word of Allah, which it was impious to question, to which nothing could be added, and from which nothing could be taken away. Hence Mahometanism has become what we see it—a narrow and fanatical creed, incompatible with progress and free thought, and stereotyping institutions, such as polygamy and slavery, which are fatal to any advance towards a higher civilisation. From this fate Christianity has been saved by the fortunate circumstance that its sacred books are collections of a variety of writings of different authors and different ages, reflecting such various and often conflicting phases of thought and belief that of necessity their interpretation was very elastic, and lent itself readily to the changes required by the spirit of successive periods and of different nationalities. Wherever for a time a system of infallibility was enforced, as in Spain by the Inquisition, Christianity became cruel, barbarous, unprogressive, and really very little better than the religion of Islam, to which it closely approximated. Decay of faith, therefore, in dogmatic Christianity is, like other great revolutions of thought, a question, not of absolute gain nor absolute loss, but of a balance between conflicting advantages and disadvantages.

The loss is evident enough, and is set forth with much eloquence and force by the few remaining champions of orthodoxy. The simple, undoubting faith, which has been for ages the support and consolation of a large portion of mankind, especially of the weak, the humble, and the unlearned, who form an immense majority, cannot disappear without a painful wrench, and leaving, for a time, a great blank behind. But, on the other

hand, there are a great many real and important advantages which have to be set on the credit side of the account.

Intolerance is the shadow which dogs the footsteps of faith, and in many cases more than obscures its benefits. When we consider the mass of human misery which has been occasioned by religious wars and persecutions; as in the ruthless extirpation of the Albigenses; the slaughter of the saints

whose bones
Lie scattered on the Alpine mountains cold;

the Thirty Years' War, which desolated Germany and threw civilisation back for a century; the civil wars of France; the Spanish Inquisition; and a thousand other instances of the baleful effects of religious hatreds, we can almost sympathise with those who pronounce religion an invention of priests for the promotion of evil, and exclaim with the Roman poet:

Religio tantum potuit suadere malorum.

To this must be added the misery caused by the belief in demonology and witchcraft, and the tortures inflicted on innumerable innocent victims by prejudices inspired by a literal construction of passages of the Old Testament. Nor is it a small matter to have escaped from the nightmare dreams which must have oppressed so many minds, especially of the young and imaginative, in an age when such a book as Dante's "Inferno" could be written, and accepted as a gleam of prophetic insight into the horrors of the invisible world.

Even in more recent and humane times, intolerance remained as a general mode of thought, inspiring hatred of those whose form of belief differed from that which was generally adopted. It is only within the present generation that true tolerance has come to be established as the law of modern thought, and that men have learned to live together and love one another, without reference to intellectual differences of creed and doctrine. Surely this is a great advantage, and we are nearer to the true spirit of Christianity than in the days when a Birmingham mob sacked Priestley's house because he professed his belief in the saying of Jesus, that "my Father is greater than I." We may read the

Athanasian Creed less, but we practise Christian charity more, in the present than in any former age.

Another great advantage is that as freer thought has been brought to bear on the mysteries of religion, we have purged off the grosser ideas, and arrived at much more enlarged and spiritual conceptions. Take, for instance, prayer and sacrifice. In its crude form, sacrifice was a sort of bargain struck with an unseen Power, by which we hoped to obtain some favour which we greatly desired, in exchange for giving up something which we greatly valued. This is the form in which sacrifice appears in the Old Testament, in Abraham's offer to kill his son Isaac, and in the record of the Moabitish stone, how the king, when besieged in his capital, sacrificed his son, and by so doing obtained the favour of his God and defeated his enemies. In another form, sacrifice was considered as a propitiation to appease the anger of an offended Deity, pictured as a sort of Oriental despot, who must have some one for a victim, and was not particular who it might be; and even in the Christian dogma the merit of the sacrifice is very closely analogous to that of the Mayor of Calais who went out to King Edward with a halter round his neck, ready to be hanged, so that he might save the lives of his fellow-citizens.

Nowadays, no one thinks of sacrifice as anything but the sacrifice of lower instincts and passing temptations to a higher ideal, and the voluntary renunciation of selfish ease and pleasure for the good of others.

In like manner, the original idea of prayer was that of obtaining a request by flattery or importunity, just as a courtier might do at the court of some earthly king of kings or sultan. It is now spiritualised into the conception that its effect is entirely subjective; that it never really obtains any reversal of the laws of Nature, but that it often exalts the mind to a frame in which things otherwise impossible become possible. A German regiment marches to battle singing Luther's grand old hymn—

Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott.

Half the regiment may be freethinkers, but it is nevertheless true that they are more likely to stand firm and win the

victory if they chant the hymn, than if they march in silence.

Taking all these things into account, there is no reason to despair because the irresistible progress of science has made us

Falter where we firmly trod,

and changed a great deal of what was once fixed and certain faith into vague aspirations and less definite, though larger and more spiritual, conceptions.

There is next to no theology in the Christianity of the Synoptic Gospels, which give us by far the nearest and most authentic record of what its Founder actually taught; and it may be that in sloughing-off the mythical legends and metaphysical dogmas which have grown up around it, we shall be, in reality, not banishing the Christian religion from the world, but making it revert to its more simple and spiritual ancestral type, in which form all that is really valuable in its pure and elevated morality may be incorporated more readily with practical life, and assimilated without difficulty with the progressive evolution of modern thought and science.

At the same time we must bear in mind that even Christianity in its purest form does not escape from the universal law of polarity, and presents, not the whole truth, but only one very important side of truth. It is the religion of love, purity, gentleness, and charity; important virtues, but not all that constitute the perfection of men or nations. In fact, if carried to the "falsehood of extremes," its very virtues become vices. It would not work in practice, if smitten on one cheek to turn the other; and any one who attempted to follow literally the precept of "taking no thought for the morrow," and trusting to be fed like the sparrows, would, in modern society, come dangerously near being what we call in Scotland a "ne'er-do-weel," that is to say, a soft, molluscous sort of creature, who is a burden on his friends, and ends his days as a pensioner on charity or a writer of begging letters. The foremost men and foremost races of modern society are precisely those who act on the opposite principle, and do look ahead and steer wisely and boldly amidst dangers and difficulties for distant and definite ends.

In one of the old Norse sagas there is a

saying which has always impressed me greatly. An aged warrior, when asked what he thought of the new religion, replied: "I have heard a great deal of talk of the old Odin and of the new Christ, but whenever things have come to a real pinch, I have always found that my surest trust was in my own right arm and good sword."

This strong self-reliance and hardy courage to do or to endure is, beyond all doubt, the solid rock foundation upon which the manly character of individuals and of nations must be built up. The softer virtues and graces which are to refine and adorn, and convert the man into the *gentle* man, or one of Nature's true gentlemen, come afterwards. But without the harder gifts of courage and self-help, a man is not a man, and the raw material is not there out of which to fashion a Gordon or Christian hero.

This may be called the Norse pole as contrasted with the pole of Christianity, and the perfect man is he who can stand firmly between the two opposites, controlling both while controlled by neither.

While I have thought it right, however, to call attention to this counter-pole to Christianity, I should add that with the strong, practical Teutonic races there is not much danger of erring on the side of too much weakness, humility, or asceticism, and therefore the influence of the Christian religion makes mainly for good. Modern civilisation has been formed, to a great extent, by grafting the gentler virtues of the Gospel on the robust primitive stock of the barbarians who overthrew Rome. It is the example and teaching of Jesus, the son of the carpenter of Nazareth, which have been mainly instrumental in diffusing ideas of divine love, charity, and purity throughout the world, and humanising the iron-clad and iron-souled warriors, whose trust was in their stout hearts and strong right arms, and who knew no law but

The simple plan,
That he should take who has the power,
And he should keep who can.

In another respect it is most important that the world should, as far and as long as possible, hold on to Christianity and struggle to save its essential spirit from the shipwreck of its theology, and from

the sheer impossibility of believing in the literal and historical truth of many of its dogmas.

The highest and most consoling beliefs of the human mind are to a great extent bound up with the Christian religion. If we ask ourselves frankly how much, apart from this religion, would remain of faith in a God and in a future state of existence, the answer must be, very little. Science traces everything back to primeval atoms and germs, and there it leaves us. How came these atoms and energies there, from which this wonderful universe of worlds has been evolved by inevitable laws? What are they in their essence, and what do they mean? The only answer is, it is unknowable. It is "behind the veil," and may be anything. Spirit may be matter, matter may be spirit. We have no faculties by which we can even form a conception, from any discoveries of the telescope or microscope, from any experiments in the laboratory, or from any facts susceptible of real human knowledge, of what may be the first cause underlying all these phenomena.

In like manner we can already to a great extent, and probably in a short time shall be able to the fullest extent, to trace the whole development of life from the lowest to the highest; from protoplasm, through monera, infusoria, mollusca, fish, reptile, and mammal, up to man—and the individual man from the microscopic egg, through the various stages of its evolution up to birth, childhood, maturity, decline, and death. We can trace also the development of the human race through enormous periods of time, from the rudest beginnings up to its present level of civilisation, and show how arts, languages, morals, and religions have been evolved gradually by natural laws from primitive elements, many of which are common in their ultimate form to man and the animal creation.

But here also science stops. Science can give no account of how these germs and nucleated cells, endowed with these marvellous capacities for evolution, came into existence or got their intrinsic powers. Nor can science enable us to form the remotest conception of what will become of life, consciousness, and conscience, when the material conditions with which they are always associated while within human experience, have

been dissolved by death and no longer exist. We know as little in the way of accurate and demonstrable knowledge of our condition after death as we do of our existence—if we had an existence—before birth.

If we turn for an answer to these questions from science to metaphysics, we find ourselves in cloud-land. Mists of fine phrases and plausible conjectures condense into philosophies, and dissolve away again without leaving a vestige of positive knowledge. Take Descartes' famous fundamental axiom, "Cogito, ergo sum,"—I think, therefore I am. Is it really an axiom? Does it take us any nearer to what thought really is, and what is the true meaning of existence? If the fact that I am conscious of thinking proves the fact that I exist, is the converse true, that whatever does not think does not exist? Am I existent or non-existent during the seven or eight hours of dreamless sleep out of every twenty-four, when to a certainty I am not thinking? Does a child only begin to exist when it begins to think? If "Cogito, ergo sum," is an intuition to which we can trust, why is not "Non cogito, ergo non sum," an equally good foundation on which to build a system of philosophy, and spin out of the brain an ideal system of God, man, and the universe?

The so-called intuitions of metaphysics seem really to amount to little more than translations into philosophical language of our own earnest wishes and aspirations. We shudder at the notion of annihilation; we revolt at the idea that all the high faculties of the mature and cultivated mind are to be extinguished by death; we long for a future life, in which we may again see beloved faces, and, pondering on these things, we have a strong impression that it must not and cannot be, which presently takes the form, in some minds of a philosophical turn, of what is called an intuition, on which they proceed to build up a demonstration of God and immortality.

But, again, what do they really know more than science has already told us? The essence of all spiritual existence, as far as we know anything of it, is personal consciousness. This clearly depends on, or is indissolubly associated with, a certain condition of a material organ—the brain. With a less active condition

of this organ, as in sleep, personal consciousness is suspended. In the case of a man recovered from drowning by artificial means, it is gone, and the man is to all intents and purposes dead for perhaps a quarter of an hour, and would remain dead if warm blankets and artificial respiration did not recall him to life. Where and what was he during this interval? and, if his personal identity and conscious existence were gone for that quarter of an hour, why and when did they return? and, if the Humane Society's men had been less prompt, would they ever have returned?

These are questions to which no metaphysical system that I have ever seen can return the semblance of an answer.

Again, how is it possible for philosophy to lay down as an axiom that man has an intuitive perception of a Deity, in the face of the fact that whole races of savage men have no such perception, and have not got beyond rude fetichism and a vague superstitious fear of ghosts and evil spirits, while others, further advanced, have made their own anthropomorphic gods, obviously from reflections of their own faculties and passions on the distant mists of the unknown, like the spectres of the Brocken? We can trace the idea of Deity, step by step, from early attempts to explain phenomena of nature, astronomical, legendary, and linguistic myths, and reverence for departed ancestors and heroes, up to the philosophical conceptions of a Plato or a Marcus Aurelius. In the same way we can trace, step by step, the transformation of the tribal God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, into the national God of Israel, who was at first only better and stronger than the gods of the surrounding nations, but finally became the sole God of the universe, degrading the other gods to the category of dumb idols. So, also, we can see the first crude anthropomorphic conceptions of this Deity gradually giving way to purer and nobler ideas. The God who required rest on the seventh day becomes the Almighty one at whose word all things were created. The jealous and cruel God who withdrew His favour from the chivalrous Saul, because he would not hew his captives in pieces before the Lord, is transformed into the God who "loves mercy and not sacrifice." The God who found after His own heart the man whose depraved mind could con-

ceive such an act of foul villainy as David practised towards Uriah, and who not only condoned the crime, but rewarded it by giving the succession to the son of the adulterous intercourse with Bathsheba, has become the God of holy love and purity of the New Testament. At which of these stages entered that philosophical intuition of God which is said to be an innate faculty of the human mind, and the surest base of all our knowledge of the universe? Where is the inevitable intuitive perception of a personal Deity in the minds of some of the deepest thinkers and purest livers of the present day, who, like Herbert Spencer, can discern nothing behind the veil but a great unspeakable and unknowable?

After all, we must fall back on Christianity for any grounds upon which to trust, more or less faintly, in the "larger hope." The Christian religion, apart from any question of miracles, is an existing fact. It is a fact which for nineteen centuries has proved, on the whole, in accordance with other facts and with the deepest feelings and highest aspirations of the noblest men and women of the foremost races in the progressive march of civilisation. Why do we say that its moral teachings, such as we find in the Sermon on the Mount, and in St. Paul's definition of Christian charity, carry conviction with them and prove themselves? Because they accord with, and give the best expression to, feelings which, in the course of evolution of the human mind from barbarism to civilisation, have become instinctive. We may be able to trace their origin and development, we may be able to see that they are not primary instincts, implanted at birth, like those of the lower animals, but secondary instincts, formed by the action of a civilised environment on hereditary aptitudes. Still, there they are, and being what they are, and living in the age and society in which we actually live, they are inevitable and necessary instincts, and it requires no train of reasoning or laboured reflection to make us feel that "right is right," and that it is better for ourselves and others to act on such precepts as those of "loving our neighbours as ourselves," and "doing as we would be done by," rather than to reverse these rules and obey the selfish promptings of animal nature. Of the same order, though less clear and cogent, are the teachings of

the Gospel respecting God and immortality. They are less clear and less cogent, because the only evidence by which they could be demonstrated from without, that of miracles, has broken down and failed us; and because we cannot verify them experimentally by an appeal to facts, as we can in regard to the working of moral laws and precepts. But it still remains that they are ideas which have arisen inevitably in the course of the evolution of the human mind; and that they fit in with and satisfy, in a way which no other ideas can do, many of the best and deepest feelings which have equally been developed in that mind, in the course of its progressive ascent from lower to higher things. It remains also true that science, while it can add nothing to this proof, takes nothing from it, and that while it excludes miracles and supernatural interference after the order of the universe has been once established, it leads us back step by step to a great Unknown, in which, from the very fact that it is unknown, everything is possible.

Further than this it is not possible to carry the proof. If we are to believe at all in a God, we must be content to believe that He knows better than we do what is right and consistent with the conditions of our own existence and that of the universe; and that part of the scheme is that at a certain stage of the development of our race we should have to exchange the certainty of simple and limited faith for the fainter trust in a larger hope. We may, perhaps, dimly discern something analogous in the progress of each individual from childhood to manhood. He has to part with many a simple belief and unhesitating trust, and climb the hill of life staggering under many a burden of doubt and difficulty; and yet it is better for him to "set a stiff heart to a steep brae," and struggle upwards while life is in him rather than to remain an innocent child playing at its foot.

Anyhow, whether we like it or not, this is the fact we have to accept; but the hill is steep, the burden heavy, and we may well be grateful to anything which, however vaguely, helps and cheers us on the way. From this point of view, the ideas of God and of a future life taught by the Christian religion, accepted by so many good men, and hallowed by so many venerable traditions

and sacred associations, should be cherished, as far as it is possible to do so without shutting our eyes to facts and indulging in conscious insincerity.

For the same reason we shall do well to be tender with the forms and creeds of religion, even when they appear to be getting obsolete, and their strict and literal interpretation becomes no longer consistent with known truths. It is far better that the transformation requisite to bring them into accordance with the evolution of modern thought caused by the discoveries of science, should take place gradually and spontaneously from within, rather than forcibly and abruptly from without. Evolutionists specially ought to trust to the healing influences of time, and the inevitable though gradual survival of that which is most in harmony with its existing environment.

Already a great deal has been quietly done in this direction. Intolerance and fanaticism have almost disappeared from cultured minds. Even in the ranks of the clergy themselves, many, in all denominations, are devoting themselves more and more to good works, and less to theological disputes and sectarian wranglings.

The metaphysical side of Christian dogma is fast receding into the far distance. The Athanasian Creed, which once convulsed empires and occupied a foremost place in the thought of the age, has become a mere form, read once or twice a year by lukewarm preachers to indifferent or scandalised audiences, who would be only too glad to have a decent excuse for dropping it out of sight altogether. Let any sincere Christian put to himself candidly the question what part the "Holy Ghost," or the definition of the "Logos," really has in the living faith which guides his actions, and he will be astonished to find into what infinitesimal proportions these once vital dogmas have actually faded. It will be the same with all dogmas which, in their literal and historical interpretation, contradict established facts. They will be either forgotten, or, if they contain a kernel of spiritual meaning, will be transformed into truths taught by parables.

In the meantime, it behoves those who see more clearly than others the absolute certainty of the conclusions of science, and the inevitably fatal results to

religion of staking its existence on literal interpretations which have become flatly incredible, to do their best to assist the transformation of the old dogmatic theology into a new "Christianity without miracles," which shall retain the essential spirit, the pure morality, the consoling beliefs, and, as far as possible, the venerable forms and sacred associations of the old faith, while placing them in thorough accord with freedom of thought, and with the whole body of other truths, discovered and to be discovered, respecting the universe and man.

CHAPTER X

PRACTICAL LIFE

Conscience—Right is Right—Self-reverence—Courage—Respectability—Influence of Press—Respect for Women—Self-respect of Nations—Democracy and Imperialism—Self-knowledge—Conceit—Luck—Speculation—Money-making—Practical Aims of Life—Self-control—Conflict of Reason and Instinct—Temper—Manners—Good Habits in Youth—Success in Practical Life—Education—Stoicism—Conclusion.

Self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-control,
These three alone lead life to sovereign power.
Yet not for power ; that of itself
Would come uncalled for ; but to live by rule,
Acting the rule we live by without fear,
And because right is right to follow right,
Were wisdom in the scorn of consequence.

TENNYSON, *Ænone*.

IN these lines, which he puts into the mouth of the goddess of wisdom, Tennyson, the same poet who has already condensed the essence of modern thought in the lines already quoted from "In Memoriam," gives us what may be well called "the Gospel of practical life." It is clearly our highest wisdom to follow right, not from selfish calculation or hope of reward, but because "right is right"; in other words, because we have a standard within us which tells us, in an unmistakable voice, what to do and what to refrain from doing. For practical purposes, it is comparatively unimportant how this standard got there; whether, according to old creeds, by direct inspira-

tion or, as modern science tells us, by the slow evolution of primitive faculties, and the accumulation through countless generations of hereditary influences tending towards the survival of the fittest, both of individuals and of societies, in the struggle for life. In either case the standard is there, not as a vague and theoretical, but as an absolute and imperative, rule, and the difficulty is not to discern it, but to act up to it.

It may be that it is to a great extent the product of education, and depends on the environment in which we are brought up. It is pretty certain that if I had been kidnapped when a child by Comanche Indians, I should have grown up with a very different moral standard touching the taking of scalps and the practice of treacherous murder. But I have not been so kidnapped, and having been born and brought up in a civilised country of the nineteenth century, it is inevitable that outward influences combined with inward capacities should give me a conscience, which tells me in clear enough accents whether I am doing right or wrong. And it is equally certain that by acting in accordance with this conscience, I shall, on the whole, be doing better for myself and better for others than by disregarding it. It is none too easy to make our life even a tolerable approximation towards doing right for the sake of right, and it would be folly to allow any theoretical considerations as to the origin of the idea of right to be an excuse for relaxing any of the constant and strenuous effort which is requisite to keep our feet from straying from the straight path. It is much wiser to cast around us for influences and inducements to strengthen the inward law, and to endeavour by clear insight to bring reason to the aid of faith, and enable us to see intelligently the main causes both of our weakness and of our strength.

This is what the poet does for us in the lines above quoted. Rightly considered, "self-reverence, self-knowledge, and self-control" are the three pillars which support the edifice of a wise and well-ordered practical life.

Self-reverence, in its widest meaning, includes the faculty of forming some ideal standard superior to the lower nature of animal man, and recognising in ourselves some power of approximating to it. The higher the standard the

nobler will be the man who cherishes it and tries to attain to it, but it is by no means a rare gift confined to a few select natures. On the contrary, it is the commonest and most universal incentive to good conduct. Even in the rudest and simplest form of admiration for physical courage, it makes heroes of many a common soldier and sailor. If poor Tommy Atkins, fresh from the plough-tail, stands firm in the shattered squares of Waterloo, or on the bloody ridge of Inkermann, it is because he has been brought up in the fixed idea that a Briton must not run away from a Frenchman or a Russian.

In civil life the idea of respectability, though not a very elevated one and apt to degenerate into narrowness, and that which Carlyle and Arnold sneer at as "Gigmanity" and "Philistinism," is yet one of universal and, on the whole, beneficial influence. A large majority of the middle and upper working classes lead decorous lives very much because they feel it incumbent on them to be "respectable" in their own eyes and those of their neighbours. In the case of one half of the human race, the female half, the feeling of self-respect and the desire to be what is called respectable afford the strongest and most constantly present securities both for good morals and good manners. The immense majority of British women are modest maidens and faithful wives, not so much from any cold calculation of the balance of advantages, or from fear of consequences, as from an instinctive feeling that they cannot be otherwise without losing caste and forfeiting their own self-respect and that of their neighbours.

From these common and universal forms of "self-reverence" we rise, step by step, to the higher ideals, which, in every rank and every condition of life, give us among gifted natures what may be called the "salt of the earth," and the shining examples which guide the world to higher things—noble men and noble women. A Sidney, dying on the field of Zutphen, hands over the cup of water to a wounded soldier because his soul, nourished on noble thoughts, and his fancy, fed by the old ballads which, like that of "Chevy Chase," stirred him like a trumpet-blast, had led him to conceive an ideal of a perfect knight which would have been tarnished by any shade of a

selfish action. Gordon sacrifices his life at Khartoum, not only cheerfully but almost instinctively, because the suggestion that he might save himself by abandoning those who had trusted in him seems an absolute impossibility.

It is a great advantage of the present day that education and the press bring such instances of devoted heroism vividly before millions who would never otherwise have heard of them. The influence of the press, both in the way of books and newspapers, is happily in this country almost entirely one which makes for good. There is not a noble act done throughout the world, by high or low, by private or officer, by soldier or civilian, which is not held up for praise and admiration; while any signal instance of cowardice or selfishness is held up to contempt. Newspaper correspondence and leading articles have, to a great extent, superseded sermons, and do the practical moral work of the world in asserting the right and rebuking wickedness in high places. In like manner all the higher works of poetry, fiction, and biography have a good tendency, and are read by an ever-increasing number of readers. Enid and Elaine, Jeanie Deans, Laura Pendennis, Lucy Roberts, are the sort of models set before girls; while boys who have any heroic fibre in their nature are fed with such lives as those of Lawrence and Gordon. For all, but especially for the young, there is no help to self-improvement so great as to read good books in a generous spirit; and nothing which dwarfs the mind so much as to debauch it by frivolous reading, and by the moral dram-drinking of sensational rubbish, until it loses all natural and healthy appetite for the pure and elevated. An affectation of narrow knowledge is also a very fatal tendency in the youthful mind. A man from whose mouth such words as "rot" and "humbug" are constantly heard is, in nine cases out of ten, a very poor, rotten creature himself.

Among the many advantages of self-respect, not the least important is that it teaches respect for others. The petty jealousies and suspicions, the senseless quarrels, the slanderings and backbitings, which so often turn sour the wine of life, disappear of themselves when a proper standard of self-respect has been firmly established, and a high ideal of human

quite true.

life has become part of our nature. As Tennyson says :

Like simple noble natures credulous
Of what they wish for, good in friend or
foe ;

while on the other hand

The long-necked geese of the world
Are always hissing dispraise, because their
natures are little.

There are some who delight in running down everything and everybody, and whose appetite for scandal is so great that they are positively unable to refrain from believing and spreading an ill-natured tale, if it affects some eminent man, and still more if it affects a well-known woman. Such are assuredly not the sort of persons whom we should like to resemble ourselves, or to see our sons and daughters resemble. I have always found through life, a safe rule to go by was, if you hear an ill-natured story of a man, discount nine-tenths of it as a lie, and if of a woman, don't believe a word of it.

Perhaps the best test of the amount of real "self-reverence" in an individual or a nation, is to be found in the tone and manner in which women are treated. A low tone invariably bespeaks a low nature, and testifies to innate coarseness and snobbishness, however high may be the rank and polished the outward varnish of the person who indulges in it. On the other hand the roughest miner or backwoodsman is already more than half a gentleman, if his attitude towards women is one of chivalrous courtesy. Nothing looks more hopeful for the future of the human race than to see that the female half of it are constant gainers by the progress of freedom and education. It goes a long way to reconcile one to the dangers of democracy, to find that in the newest and most democratic countries of the world, such as the United States and British colonies, women can travel alone without fear of insult, and have far more innocent liberty and freedom of thought and action than they have in older societies. Whatever may be the case as regards men, for women there can be no doubt that there is a progressive scale upwards from East to West, from despotism to freedom, from Turkey to America.

What has been said of individuals is

even more true of nations. Self-respect is the very essence of national life. A great nation may suffer great disasters, and survive them, if the spirit of its people remains intact. England survived the war of American independence, and Prussia recovered from the defeat of Jena. But if a nation loses its vigour and self-respect, if it begins to groan under the burdens of extended empire, and to prefer comfort to honour, ignoble ease to noble effort, the hour of its decline has sounded. Imperial Rome did not long survive when she began to contract her frontiers and buy off barbarians. The most fatal thing any Government can do for a country is to destroy its sense of self-respect and teach it to acquiesce in what is felt to be dishonourable.

Looking forward to the future of the great British Empire, this is evidently a turning-point of its destinies. The triumph of democracy is an inevitable fact ; for knowledge is power, and whether for good or evil, the masses have either acquired, or are fast acquiring knowledge, and with equal political rights numbers will tell. How will this democracy of the future affect Imperial interests, and what will be its attitude in regard to foreign and colonial policy ?

On the one hand it may be hoped that by making our institutions more popular, and going down to the heart of the masses, our policy will acquire fresh energy and our public men fresh vigour. The working classes are very patriotic, and, on the whole, more open to the influence of generous ideas than the class immediately above them. In the recent instance of the great civil war in the United States, we have seen a democracy making greater sacrifices of men and money for the idea of maintaining national greatness, than was probably ever voluntarily made by any monarchical or aristocratic country. The Copper-heads, who preached peace where there was no peace, and advised letting the erring sisters go their way rather than spend lives and money in the attempt to coerce them, found no response from a nation who felt that the union was their union, and its greatness the separate personal possession of each individual citizen.

But, on the other hand, demagogues will never be wanting to flatter the people, and angle for power by appealing to their lower instincts and advo-

good.

cating measures of present ease and popularity. If a necessity arises for maintaining by the sword an empire which has been won by the sword, the army of parochial politicians who gauge everything by the standard of pounds, shillings, and pence, will be reinforced by the far more respectable body of sentimentalists and humanitarians, who shrink from the shedding of blood in wars the abstract justice of which is not absolutely demonstrated. A large number, perhaps a majority, of platform orators will therefore be found now, as it was in the days of Demosthenes, to denounce armaments, ridicule precautions, minimise responsibilities, and look upon India, the Colonies, and extended empire generally, as troublesome encumbrances rather than as glorious possessions. The two conflicting ideals constantly set before our future political rulers, the four millions whose votes decide the fate of policies and of ministries, will be, on the one hand, that our first duty is to hand down the British Empire to our sons no less great and glorious than we received it from our fathers; on the other, that it is better to stay at home, mind our own affairs, avoid entanglements, contract responsibilities, pass reform bills, and reduce taxes, trusting to the "silver streak" and the chapter of accidents to protect us from invasion. It is the old story of the fable of Hercules, which presents itself constantly to each individual and to every nation. Shall we follow the strait and narrow path which leads upwards, or the broad and easy one which leads, with a pleasant slope, to a lower level? Would it have been better for Paris to give the golden apple to Minerva, counselling "self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-control," or to Venus, promising pleasure?

SELF-KNOWLEDGE

Oh wad some Power the giftie gie us
To see oursels as ithers see us!

BURNS.

A gift which is unfortunately as rare as it is necessary. Without self-knowledge to see our faults how shall we correct them? How shall we become wise if insensible to our follies? How shall we achieve success if we learn no lessons from our failures? There are some men

so blinded by vanity that they go through life committing ungentlemanly actions while fancying themselves perfect gentlemen; who are convinced that all men admire them and all women are in love with them, while in reality every one sees through them and laughs at them. A thoroughly impervious vanity is like a waterproof, which throws off the wholesome rain on the outside, while on the inside it is soaked with unhealthy exhalations.

Fortunately this type of vanity is not a common one with our English race, who are too proud and self-reliant to feel the petty anxiety of the really vain man to be always shining in the eyes of others. With us it takes more the form of priding ourselves on artificial distinctions, and attaching an exaggerated importance to matters of trivial importance. Your commonplace English swell, for instance, is apt to class all mankind under two categories—those who associate with lords and wear clothes of a fashionable cut, and those who do not, and to set down all the former as the "right sort," and all the latter as "brutes."

It is a sign of narrowness to make a fetich of these or any other arbitrary distinctions between an upper ten and the rest of mankind, and self-knowledge is never more required than to show the hollowness of adventitious advantages which are not supported by intrinsic merit. A true gentleman feels

The rank is but the guinea stamp,
The man's the gowd for a' that,

and feeling this, he holds out the hand of hearty human sympathy to peasant as well as to peer. If born to rank and riches, self-knowledge tells him that he is simply placed on a pedestal, where, if he fails to act on the maxim that "noblesse oblige," the failure will be the more conspicuous. No man who really knows himself can ever be conceited, for he must be aware how far he has fallen short in practice of his own ideal standard, and how constantly "he has done things he ought not to have done, and left undone things he ought to have done."

On the other hand, there is an opposite extreme from which self-knowledge will save a man: that of undue despondency and want of proper confidence and self-reliance. There are men who fail in

everything they undertake because they have not the heart to undertake it resolutely, and who at last sink down into the hopeless condition of querulous mental invalids, who cherish their ailments rather than combat them, and are rather proud than otherwise to be considered as interesting victims of untoward circumstances.

For all the relations of practical life the one essential requisite of success is to see things as they really are, and not as we wish them to be; and for this purpose self-knowledge is the foundation of clear insight. If the focus of the glass is wrongly adjusted it will show only distorted images, but if a clear eye looks through a properly focussed glass, outward objects will be truly represented.

Perhaps the commonest of all delusions is that of being born under a lucky star. A man gambles, bets, or speculates because he thinks he is lucky and sure to win. Now, there is in reality no such thing as luck, it is all a question of averages. The only approach to what may be called luck is, that a fool will probably have more of it than a wise man, for as the fool foresees nothing, whenever fortune's die turns up in his favour he sets it down to luck, while the wise man, who has schemed and worked for the event, calls it foresight. But the actual average of events, which depend entirely on chance, will be the same.

If a man plays at *rouge et noir* with one chance in a hundred in favour of the bank, it is certain that if he plays often enough, he will lose his capital once at least for every hundred times he plays. Or, if he speculates on the Stock Exchange, the turn of the market and broker's commission will, in the long run, certainly swallow up his original capital. And yet men will gamble and speculate, because they cannot resist the pleasing illusion that they are lucky, and that it would be very nice to win a large stake without having had to work for it.

There is nothing for which self-knowledge is more indispensable in practical life than to enable a man to steer a straight course between opposite extremes, and to discern clearly the boundary line between right and wrong. The law of polarity, by which things good in themselves if pushed to extremes become bad, and every truth develops a corre-

sponding error, is of daily and universal application in practical affairs.

Take, for instance, the much-debated question of the pursuit of money. Poets and novelists are never tired of denouncing the "Auri sacra fames," and there is no doubt that, when carried to excess, it is the fertile source of crime; and even in a less degree, it leads to meanness and dishonesty, and has a degrading influence on the individual or the nation who give themselves up too exclusively to the worship of the "almighty dollar." But, on the other hand, the desire, or rather the necessity under the conditions of civilised society, of making money, is by far the most powerful and all-pervading influence of practical life. And, within due bounds and under proper conditions, it is a healthy and beneficial influence. At the lowest stage it obliges men to work instead of being idle, and this is an immense advantage both to the community and to the individual. An idle man, in every grade of society, is generally a worthless and often a bad man; while an honest working man, whether the work be of the head or hand, is far more likely to be happy and respectable.

Again, the necessity of earning money is a wonderful test of the real value of a man in the world's market. We should be all very apt to become pretentious wind-bags of conceit, if we were not brought to our senses by the wholesome *douche* of having to work for a livelihood. Many a man who fancies himself intended for a poet or politician, and some who by accident of birth or fortune are pitchforked into prominent positions, would find it difficult to point out any occupation in which they are honestly worth a couple of hundred a year.

Even in the higher departments of art and literature, it may be questioned whether the healthy, natural desire to turn an honest penny has not inspired greater works than a morbid appetite for fame. Shakespeare's ambition was to retire to his native town with a moderate competency; Walter Scott's to become a laird, with a family estate, in the border-land of the chief of his clan—"the bold Buccleuch." And, in the present day, literature is becoming more and more an honourable profession, which men take to, as they do to law

or medicine, as a means of earning a livelihood.

It must always be borne in mind that under the practical conditions of modern civilisation, money means not only the possibility of bare existence, but nearly all that makes existence tolerable—health, recreation, culture, and independence. The number and locality of the rooms a man lives in, the number of cubic feet and purity of the air he and his family breathe, are questions of rent; the food they eat, the clothes they wear, the books they read, the holidays they enjoy, are all questions of money. And above all, without money there is no independence. An absolutely penniless man has to fall back on crime or the workhouse; a poor man is at the mercy of a thousand accidents; sickness, fluctuations of trade, caprice of employers, pressure of creditors, may at any moment reduce him and those who depend on him to want. It admits of no question, that the first duty of every one is to endeavour to raise himself above this level of ignoble daily cares, and plant himself in a position where he can face the present and look forward to the future with tolerable equanimity. As we rise in the scale of society the problem becomes more difficult. Money-making is very apt to be pushed to excess and lead to gambling and dishonesty; while the worship of wealth, which is perhaps the besetting sin of the age, is distinctly the cause of much lax morality and snobbish vulgarity. But on the other hand, money is power, and a large fortune honestly acquired and well spent, gives its possessor unrivalled opportunities for doing good. He can assist charities, patronise art, and if gifted with force of character and fair abilities may become a legislator and statesman, and enrol his name in the annals of his country. It is hard to say that if a man has an opportunity of making a large fortune honestly, and feels that he has it in him to use it nobly, he should refrain from doing so because moralists cry "Sour grapes," and tell him that riches are deceitful.

But for nothing is "self-knowledge" more requisite than to enable a man to see clearly how high he can safely aim, and what sort of stake he can prudently play for. The immense majority of man-

kind have neither the opportunities nor the faculties for playing for very high stakes, and must be contented with the safe game for moderate and attainable ends. One such end is within the reach of almost every one:

To make a happy household clime
For weans and wife,
Is the true pathos and sublime
Of human life.

So says Burns, who has a rare faculty of hitting the right nail on the head; and the ideal he sets before us in these simple lines is at once the truest and the most universal. The man who fails in this is himself a failure; while the man who by his industry and energy supports a family in comfort and respectability according to their station, and who, at the same time, by control of temper, kindness, unselfishness, and sweet reasonableness makes his household a happy one, may feel, even though fortune may not have placed him in a position of higher responsibilities, that he has not lived in vain, that he has performed the first duties and tasted the truest pleasures of mortal existence, and that, whatever there may be behind the impenetrable veil, he can face it with head erect, as one of "Nature's gentlemen."

SELF-CONTROL

This is, after all, the vitally important element of a happy and successful life. The compass may point truly to the pole, the chart may show the right channel amidst shoals and rocks, but the ship will hardly arrive safely in port unless the helmsman stands at his post in all weathers, ready to meet any sheer of the bow by a timely turn to starboard or to port. So self-reverence and self-knowledge may point out ever so clearly the path of duty, unless self-control is constantly present we shall surely stray from it. At every moment of our lives natural instinct tells us to do one thing, while reason and conscience tell us to do another. It is by an effort that we get up in the morning and go about our daily work. It is by an effort that we refrain from indulgences and forego pleasures, control our passions, restrain our tempers. The uncultured man is

violent, selfish, childish ; it is only by the inherited or acquired practice of self-control that he is transformed into the civilised man—courteous, considerate, sensible, and reliable.

The necessity of self-control in all the more important relations of moral and practical life is so obvious that it would be only repeating commonplaces to enlarge on it. But there is often danger of its being overlooked in those minor morals of conduct which make up the greater part of life, and determine the happiness or misery of oneself and others.

For instance, control over the temper. A man never shows his cousinship to the ape so much as when he is in a passion. The manifestations are so exactly similar—irrational violence, nervous agitation, total loss of head, and abdication of all presence of mind and reasoning power. To see a grown-up man reduced to the level of a spoiled child, or of a monkey who has been disappointed of a nut, is a spectacle of which it is hard to say whether it is more ridiculous or painful. Even worse than occasional violence is the habitual ill-temper which makes life miserable to those who are obliged to put up with it. We call a man who strikes a woman or child with his fist a brute ; what is he if he strikes them daily and hourly, ten times more cruelly, with his tongue ? A ten times greater brute. And yet there are men, calling themselves gentlemen, who do this, either from sheer brutality of nature, or oftener from inconsiderateness, coarseness of fibre, and inability to exercise self-control in minor matters.

There is one very common mistake made, that of considering relationship an excuse for rudeness. The members of a family may relax something of the stiffness of company manners among themselves, but they should never forget that it is just as much ill-breeding to say a rude thing to a wife, a sister, or a brother, as it would be to say it to any other lady or gentleman. In fact, it is worse, for the other lady can treat you with contempt and keep out of your way, while the poor woman who is tied to you feels it keenly, and has no means of escape from it. Good manners are, in practical life, a great part of good morals ; and there is something to be

said for religions which, like the Chinese, lay down rules of politeness, and make salvation depend very much on the observance of rites and ceremonies intended to ensure courtesy and decorum in the intercourse of all classes of the community in daily life.

Although not so bad as the indulgence of a violent or morose temper, a great deal of unhappiness is caused by a fussy and fidgety disposition, which makes mountains out of molehills, and keeps every one in hot water about trifles. This is one of the common faults of idleness, as genuine work both strengthens the fibre to resist and leaves no time to brood over petty troubles.

The excuse one commonly hears from those who give way to these petty infirmities is, "that they cannot help it, they are born with thin skins and excitable tempers." This is the excuse of sloth and weakness. If, as the poet says,

Man is man, and master of his fate,

what sort of an unmanly creature must he be who cannot master even the slightest impulse or resist the slightest temptation, and allows himself to be ruffled into a storm by every passing breath, like a shallow roadside puddle ? If he will not try he certainly will not learn ; but if he will honestly try to correct faults, he will find it easier every time, until the fancied impossibilities fade away and are forgotten. A man who is so much afraid of tumbling off that he will never mount a horse, may fancy that Nature has disqualified him for riding ; but for all that, nine men out of ten, if obliged to try—say as recruits in a cavalry regiment—though they may not all turn out accomplished horsemen, will all learn to ride well enough for practical purposes.

It is peculiarly important for the young to set resolutely about correcting bad habits and forming good ones, while the faculties are fresh and the brain supple ; for, in obedience to the law by which molecular motions travel by preference along beaten paths, every year cuts deeper the channels of thought and feeling, whether for good or evil. A brain trained to respond to calls of duty soon does so with ease and elasticity, just as

the muscles of the blacksmith's arm or of the ballet-dancer's leg acquire strength and vigour by exercise; while, on the other hand, motion is a pain and self-control an effort to the soft and flabby limb or brain which has been weakened by self-indulgence.

It is scarcely necessary to say that for success in practical life, self-control is the one thing most needful. To take the simplest case, that of a young working man beginning life with health, knowledge of a trade, or even without it with good thews and sinews, he is the most free and independent of mortals, on one condition—that he has saved £10. With this, he is a free agent in disposing of his labour, he can make his contract with an employer on equal terms, he can carry his goods to the best market, and is practically a citizen of the world, ready to start for San Francisco or Melbourne if he thinks he can better himself. Without it, he is a serf tied to the soil, he cannot move from place to place, he must take whatever wages are offered him or starve.

But how to save the £10? That is a question of daily and weekly recurrence; whether to spend an extra shilling in the pleasant way of going to a public-house and sitting with a pipe and a jug of ale by the fireside among jolly companions, or to forego the pleasure and save the shilling. A shilling a week saved will, in four years, give him the £10, and go a good way to establish habits which, if he is enterprising and goes to a colony, or is clever and has any luck at home, may readily make the ten a hundred, or even a thousand pounds. So in every class of life, the man who gets on is the man who has schooled himself never to ask whether a thing is pleasant, but whether it is right and reasonable; who always keeps a bright look-out ahead, and who does his best at the task, whatever it may be, that is set before him.

Education really resolves itself very much into teaching the young to acquire this indispensable faculty of self-control. The amount of positive knowledge, useful in after life, acquired at our English public schools, is really very little beyond the three R's. A boy who could teach himself French or German in five months spends five years over Latin and Greek, and in nine cases out of ten forgets them

as soon as he leaves school or college. Almost everything we know that is worth knowing we teach ourselves in after life. But the discipline of school is invaluable in teaching the lesson of self-control. Almost every hour of the day a boy at school has to do things that are disagreeable and abstain from doing things that nature prompts, under pain of getting a caning from the master or a thrashing from other boys. The memory also is exercised, and the faculty of fixing the mind on work is developed, by useless almost as well as by useful studies. In this point of view even that *ne plus ultra* of technical pedantry, the Latin grammar, with its "Propria quæ maribus" and "As in presenti," may have its use in teaching a boy that no matter how absurd or repulsive a task may be, he has got to tackle to it or worse will befall him.

But it is in a moral sense that the influence of a good school is most valuable. The average boy learns that he must not tell lies, he must not be a sneak or a coward, he must take punishment bravely, and conform to the schoolmaster's standard of discipline and the school-boy's standard of honour. In this way the first lesson of life, stoicism, becomes with most English lads a sort of instinct or second nature.

For stoicism, after all, is the foundation and primary element of all useful and honourable life. Whether as Carlyle's "Everlasting No," or as George Eliot's advice to take the pains and mishaps of life without resorting to moral opium, the conclusion of all the greatest minds is that a man must have something of the Red Indian in him and be able to suffer silently, and burn his own smoke, if he is to be worth anything. And still more a woman, who has to bear with and make the best of a thousand petty annoyances without complaint. Men can bear on great occasions, but in the innumerable petty trials of life women as a rule show more self-control and moral fortitude. What would the life of a woman be who could not stand being bored with a smiling face, put up with the worries of children and servants with cheerful fortitude, and turn away an angry word by a soft answer?

There is much more that might be said, but my object is not to preach or

moralise, but simply to record a few of the practical rules and reflections which have impressed themselves on me in the course of a long and busy life. I do so in the hope that perchance they may awaken useful thoughts in some, especially of the younger readers, who may happen to glance over these pages. This much I may say for them, I have tried them and found them work well. I have lived for more than the Scriptural span of threescore and ten years, a life of varied fortunes and many experiences. I may say, in the words which my favourite poet, Tennyson, puts into the mouth of Ulysses :

For ever roaming with a hungry heart,
Much have I seen and known, cities of men,
And councils, climates, governments.

And the conclusion I come to is, not that of the Preacher, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity," but rather that life, with all its drawbacks, is worth living ; and that to have been born in a civilised country in the nineteenth century is a boon for which a man can never be sufficiently thankful. Some may find it otherwise from no fault of their own ; more by their own fault ; but the majority of men and women may lead useful, honourable, and on the whole fairly happy lives, if they will act on the maxim which I have always endeavoured, however imperfectly, to follow—

FEAR NOTHING ; MAKE THE BEST OF
EVERYTHING.

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*A Brief Statement of the Objects and Methods of the
Association.*

The "Spirit of Rationalism."

THE prevalence of the "spirit of Rationalism," as Mr. Lecky has called it, is one of the chief features distinguishing modern from mediæval thought and life. This spirit has permeated all nations and all classes comprised in the world of Western civilisation. It is not any definite and reasoned doctrine, but simply a sceptical attitude towards magic and miracles, assumptions of occult power and insight on the part of men, and alleged divine interferences.

We believe that this spirit of Rationalism is closely connected with the progress of modern science and critical research. The "spirit" assumes unconsciously and as a general, practical rule that uniformity of nature which science and research repeatedly prove to exist in particular cases. In other words, it assumes that exceptional occurrences are due to unfamiliar combinations of familiar conditions, and do not require superhuman conscious agency to account for them. But the spirit of Rationalism is, after all, only a mental tendency. As such, it is liable to exist in the modern mind side by side with the supernaturalism of a pre-scientific age. It does so conspicuously under present-day Protestantism. Most Protestants are Rationalists in their attitude towards contemporary instances of alleged miracle and inspiration. They are Rationalists in their attitude towards the sacred literatures of Buddhists, Brahmans, Parsees, and Mohammedans, and towards the distinctive teachings of the Church of Rome. As regards the narrative and theology contained in the Bible, however, they are not Rationalists, but at best compromisers between traditional reverence and scientific inquiry. Thus, while the spirit of Rationalism is rife, the attempt to raise Rationalism into a consistent rule of the intellectual life is extremely unpopular, having to face both active opposition and widespread indifference. That, nevertheless, is the aim of the Rationalist Press Association, Limited.

Embodiment of the Rationalistic Spirit.

The physical sciences are, within their respective limits, the most consistent embodiments of the spirit of Rationalism. Astronomy, geology, and biology have successively broken away from Biblical tradition. They have become genuine sciences through an exercise of the freest and most serious inquiry, combined with the expectation of discovering natural uniformities where men formerly saw nothing but supernatural mysteries. But the special sciences belong primarily to specialists. What the average thinking man requires is a good synopsis of the object-matter and results of science, an insight into its nature and methods, and a habit of mind which will enable him to form sensible and serviceable judgments as to the many questions which cannot yet (and perhaps never can) be decided with scientific accuracy.

Thus the spirit of Rationalism has needed to embody itself, not only in science and exact research, but in certain types of human thought which form, as it were, the atmosphere of science. Among the more highly-cultivated intellects it has given rise to the various schools of modern philosophy. Among the people and certain of their democratic leaders it has given rise to the various parties of modern Freethought. Philosophy is, on the whole, somewhat conservative, although it is far more anxious to conserve the wide outlook of Plato and Aristotle than the theology of Paul and Augustine. The tendency of popular Freethought is more revolutionary and impatient for a new start in human ideas. With the spread of education and democracy, however, these two types of advanced thought must increasingly coalesce. In coalescing, Freethought should gain breadth of view and lose the "scoffing" habit which only hardens foes and alienates many who would otherwise be friends. Philosophy, on the other hand, should gain a certain downrightness and relation to practical life which it generally lacks, and at the same time learn to relinquish such speculations as are not even possessed of probability in the light of experience and science. To temper Freethought with philosophy, and to assist in freeing philosophy from all academic trammels and fanciful excrescences, are among the objects for which the R. P. A. has been formed.

The Limits of Compromise.

The semi-philosophic works which have acquired wide popularity in recent years are those which have set forth some new compromise (or what has really amounted to a compromise) between certain tenets of Christianity and certain views of modern science. We believe that this accommodating spirit, though a long way in advance of the spirit of sheer intolerance, lags equally far behind the philosophic spirit of truth seeking.

Compromise is inevitable, and, to a certain extent, salutary, in politics. This is because political measures have to be adjusted to the existing views of the most influential body of citizens, no matter whether those views be sound or the reverse. But the very fact which makes compromise legitimate in politics makes it illegitimate as regards religious and abstract social questions. Thus a consistent Rationalism is the direct antithesis, the uncompromising rejection, of that religious faith which deems it necessary to accept traditional and reputedly sacred opinions, without seriously inquiring into their evidential value. In saying this, we do not, of course, mean that all traditional religious opinions are necessarily to be rejected, nor do we pretend to be in a position to teach the whole philosophy of Rationalism. That is still in the making, and it is that which the R. P. A. must help, directly or indirectly, to make. Our contention is that the appeal to experience and reason must alone decide what elements of traditional Christianity are worthy to be retained, and that theological dogmas and scriptural prejudices must be

allowed no more influence over the philosophic thinker than has the legend of creation contained in the book of Genesis over the present-day astronomer or geologist.

After careful consideration, aided by the advice of several well-known thinkers, the following definition of Rationalism has been adopted and embodied in the Memorandum of Association:—

“Rationalism may be defined as the mental attitude which unreservedly accepts the supremacy of reason and aims at establishing a system of philosophy and ethics verifiable by experience and independent of all arbitrary assumptions or authority.”

In making direct mention of ethics we wish to accentuate the fact that the philosophy of Rationalism cannot fail to have important bearings on human conduct, which will, we believe, be far more beneficent in the long run than those of traditional theology.

The Need of Propaganda.

Although the spirit of Rationalism has permeated the Protestant clergy, conforming and non-conformist alike, and, in many cases, the preachers are more liberal-minded than their flocks, professional needs naturally make them, as a body, hostile to Rationalism in any consistent shape. They and their lay supporters spare neither pains nor money in promulgating views which, though differing widely according to the church or sect from which they proceed, agree in attributing unique authority and surpassing excellence to the Christian religion, and defending, rather than dispassionately inquiring into, its supposed essentials. Many powerful associations, among which the Religious Tract Society and the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge are perhaps the most widely known, are carried on largely with the object of vindicating Christian tradition against Rationalist criticism.

Philosophic Rationalists, on the other hand, have been disposed to trust to the progress of science and the ultimate triumph of truth, and have made comparatively little effort to propagate their opinions. It is believed that the R. P. A. will be a means of arousing and directing the energies of such torpid sympathisers. Concerted action among Rationalists was never more needed than now, in face of the present widespread reaction towards relatively irrational beliefs and practices. This reaction shows itself in the disposition to assert the sufficiency of instinct and sentiment, as well as to magnify the claims of custom, ritual, and authority, while making light of reason, evading the duty of critical inquiry, and ignoring the need of a broad human and scientific outlook, such as constructive philosophic thought alone can give.

The cause of Rationalism cannot be assisted more materially than by promoting the publication and distribution of works which the organised weight of religious prejudice, the stolid indifference of the general public to philosophic inquiry, and the consequent policy of the popular press and the booksellers, all tend to discourage, if not to taboo—provided, of course, that such works have intrinsic value.

Publications of the R. P. A., Ltd.

Works of a serious, and especially those of a seriously philosophic character, are heavily handicapped in the competition for popular favour. Still more is this the case when such works soberly advocate unpopular views. The notion that the most successful books are the best may be partially true as regards works of imagination. It is very far indeed from being true as regards works of research and reflection.

In these cases the author has usually to publish the book at his own expense, and, even should it acquire a steady sale, it is long before the outlay is recouped. If he cannot make the outlay, the probability is that his book, even though valuable in itself, will never see the light. Recognising these facts, the R. P. A. seeks to afford practical encouragement to authors, and especially young authors, who are capable of serious research or of hard thinking, and to be a means of bringing their writings into circulation.

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