

HEROES & MARTYRS  
OF  
FREETHOUGHT.

BY  
G. W. FOOTE & CHARLES WATTS.

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Have we not men with us royal,  
Men the masters of things?  
In the days when our life is made new,  
All souls perfect and true  
Shall adore whom their forefathers slew ;  
And these indeed shall be loyal.  
And those indeed shall be kings.  
—*A. C. Swinburne.*

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## PREFACE.

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THE need of a Freethinker's Plutarch has long been seriously felt. Too often the lives of Freethought worthies have been left to the manipulation of lying partisans of an opposite faith, who have seen in them only so many opportunities of confounding the Infidel, or of perpetrating pious frauds which shall redound to the glory of God and the Church. Thus the world is grossly deluded from the truth, and the sacred dead are defrauded of their just meed of admiration and gratitude. It seems, therefore, desirable—nay, necessary—that some account, however brief, of the lives and teachings, the doings and sayings, of great historic Freethinkers, should be given in a spirit of charity and appreciation. Accordingly, we have decided to issue, in fortnightly parts, a work entitled "Heroes and Martyrs of Freethought," the words being used in their generic sense, so as to include both men and women. This work, of which the present is the first number, will comprise biographies of all the chief luminaries of past ages, who have toiled or suffered in the cause of human progress and freedom of thought, together with as full an account as its limits will permit of their writings and teachings.

Amongst Christians no literature is more eagerly and attentively read than the lives of saints and martyrs, chiefly because of the keen and intense interest which the perusal of such works excites, the barriers of time being always broken down when human heart throbs to human heart, and hopes and fears shoot forth to meet with fellowship. The present work will constitute a trustworthy register of the great uncanonised saints whom all the Churches omit from their calendars; an authentic record of the noble army who, in the face of obloquy, adversity, persecution, and even death itself, have bravely striven to redeem mankind from the thralldom of ignorance and error.

G. W. FOOTE.

CHARLES WATTS.

# HEROES AND MARTYRS

OF

## FREETHOUGHT.

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### 1.—VOLTAIRE.

**T**HE eighteenth century was the battle-ground where progress and retrogression engaged in a final struggle for the possession of the human mind. It opened with a religious persecution, and closed with an invocation to the God of peace and tolerance; it commenced by enthroning Catholicism as the dominant power, and ended by declaring the perfect equality of all religions. The history of the eighteenth century is an epitomised history of civilisation itself. The road was long from the starting point to the goal; it was sown with blood and tears, like all the ways which lead to human enfranchisement; and sometimes the sublime adventurers who gave us a new world halted and hesitated, oppressed with an agony of doubt. But their falterings were but seldom and temporary; justice was on their side, and the sacred standard of progress rendered them invincible. What a battle were they engaged in! It was the Thermopylæ of civilisation. On the one side was ranged everything powerful and respected; the Monarchy with its parliaments, its nobility, its laws, and its prisons; the Church with its clergy, innumerable and disciplined, its monks, its missionaries, its authority, and its wealth. On the other, a handful of feeble men, poor, isolated, proscribed, exiled, imprisoned. Between these hostile camps, unequal and desperate battles were waged; the victors enfeebled by every triumph, the vanquished strengthened by every defeat. At last the seemingly insignificant army of heroes were victorious. The tyranny of the altar and the throne was prostrated in the dust, and humanity was free to march into the promised land of aspiration and hope. Was there ever before such a magnificent triumph of ideas over force? All the organised forces of society, religious, political, and social, yielded to the persistent pressure of the little band of warriors, as the morning mist melts away before the re-arisen sun.

This portentous struggle centred itself in France. The French Church was *the* Church, the French throne Monarchy

itself. Feudalism and Catholicism received their death-blow at the Revolution, and, although the loathsome bodies writhe threateningly before yielding up the ghost, their present energy is but the desperate convulsion preceding death. When the sense of historical proportion is fitly developed, this contest in France, and through France in Europe, will rank with the other great decisive movements of progress, with the Revival of Learning and the Reformation. Nay, it will take precedence above all others, for it was the final war-embrace between old and new, which, culminating in the Revolution, decided the fate of Europe.

By the general consent of either side, Voltaire has been acclaimed as the representative of eighteenth-century Freethought, as the leader of the resolute phalanx of reformers who assailed Christianity and Ecclesiasticism in the name of freedom and humanity. During his lifetime the assailants of superstition and persecution instinctively ranged themselves under his banner, and since his death their successors have equally acknowledged his supremacy. The Freethought of last century was essentially militant and destructive, because it had to win mental breathing-room from those who claimed to intercept the light and air of heaven. Voltaire was, above all other men, qualified to head the revolt, by reason of his indomitable courage, unconquerable pertinacity, and invincible love of aggression. Eighteenth-century Freethought was essentially derisive, because of the preposterous claims, incredible absurdities, and debasing superstitions of its enemy; and Voltaire was Irony incarnated for the salvation of mankind.

François Marie Arouet, generally known as Voltaire, was born at Chatenay, on the 20th of February, 1694, and was baptised at Paris, in the Church of St. André-des-Arcs, on the 22nd of November in the same year. Excessive weakness was the cause of this delay. Indeed throughout his whole life, long as it was, this vivacious heretic suffered from a weakly constitution, which had to be carefully nursed. The elder Arouet exercised the office of Treasurer to the Chamber of Accounts, and enjoyed besides a lucrative practice as a notary. These advantages of fortune enabled him to provide his son with a good education. At the age of twelve the young Arouet was sent to the Jesuit College, Louis-le-Grand, where his hardihood of temper and his sceptical intellect soon manifested themselves. His instructors quickly perceived in him the elements of greatness, and one of them, Father Jay, took an early opportunity of pointing him out as the future Coryphæus of Deism in France; a prophecy which was verified by time. Though but a lad, his poetical and satirical proclivities were thoroughly marked. He recited the *Moïside* of Rousseau, in which so important a hero as Moses figured as an impostor, and launched infidel epigrams at "his Jansenist of a brother."

At an early age Voltaire (as we shall henceforth call him) was

introduced into Parisian society by his godfather, the Abbé de Châteauneuf. Here he speedily became a general favourite on account of his natural vivacity and wit, and his facility in turning verses. His circle of acquaintance included princes, nobles, literary celebrities, and women of fashion. The good, respectable notary, his father, grew anxious and alarmed on hearing of his son's brilliant career at Paris; he wished to make the boy a lawyer, and found him writing tragedies. A quarrel ensued, which ended in sending the young Voltaire away to the Marquis de Châteauneuf, the French Ambassador in Holland. His exile was not, however, of long duration. As is the wont of young gentlemen of his age, he became desperately enamoured of a Mademoiselle du Noyer; but the maternal severity and caution of Madame du Noyer frowned unpropitiously on the lovers, and Voltaire returned to Paris, where he soon forgot his amorous flame. By this time his father had become peremptory; he had determined that his son should give up poetry and living at large, and bind himself to an attorney. Fortunately for mankind, the Bohemian tendencies and literary aspirations of Voltaire proved too strong to yield to the worldly prudence and respectability of the old notary. What a loss to the world it would have been if the bold, vivacious, imaginative iconoclast had settled down in a distant province as a plodding notary, whose wildest dreams of ambition could never soar above the attainment of material competence.

In the autumn of 1715, Louis XIV. died, and the profligate Regent, D'Orleans, reigned in his stead. The death of the "great monarch" was signalled by the publication of a poem, the pungent lines of which recounted a number of the horrors that resulted from the united tyranny of kings and priests; prisons crowded with brave citizens, and every one harassed with burdensome taxes and unrighteous edicts. The anonymous writer declared himself in one of his lines to be under twenty years of age: Voltaire was upwards of three and twenty; yet it suited the authorities to suspect him, and he was accordingly cast into prison. In the Bastille he sketched his poem of the "League," and corrected his tragedy of "Œdipus," which had been begun long before. However, his incarceration was brief; for the Regent discovered his innocence, and restored him to freedom. "I thank your royal highness," said Voltaire, "for having provided me with food; but I hope you will not hereafter trouble yourself concerning my lodging."

The next six years were employed in the assiduous composition of new plays, and the completion of the "Henriade." His fibre was strengthened by study and reflection; and the recklessness of youth which the gay society of Paris had stimulated, subsided into the courage of manhood. Voltaire got to hate the frivolous pleasures of fashionable society, and to love a country life. "I was born," he says, "to be a fawn or creature of the woods; I am not made to live in a town;" "I fancy

myself in hell when I am in the accursed city of Paris." The light of a new life was dawning on his mind, the consciousness of a great future work was becoming more and more intense. At last he had to excuse himself even from the country seats of noblemen, with their exacting throng of company, preferring the quiet and delightfulness of solitude. "If I went to Fontainebleau, or Villars, or Sully," he wrote, "I should do no work, I should over-eat, and I should lose in pleasures and complaisance to others an amount of precious time that I ought to be using for a necessary and creditable task." Noble words for a frivolous, pleasure-loving age! Here is struck the keynote of the great life which Voltaire subsequently led.

Industrious as he was, he loved social intercourse, and often was to be found relaxing himself at the gay supper-table of his wealthy friends. One night, supping with the Duke of Sully, Voltaire was enlivening and delighting the company with his sprightly sallies of wit, when a fatuous young aristocrat, the Duke of Rohan, piqued at the poet's manifest superiority of intellect, cried out, "Who is the young man who talks so loud?" "My lord," replied Voltaire, with characteristic readiness, "he is one who does not carry about a great name, but wins respect for the name he has." This brilliant answering of an aristocratic fool according to his folly resulted, however, in painful consequences to the plebeian. A few days afterwards the high-spirited duke commanded his lackeys to cane the obnoxious wit in the public streets. Smarting under the insult, Voltaire sent a challenge to the duke, who was too pusillanimous to accept it. The only reply vouchsafed was imprisonment for six months in the Bastille, and an order to quit Paris on being released. What tyranny the French people then suffered under! It was the custom for the King to issue *lettres de cachet*, which, on presentation to the Governor of the Bastille, commanded him to seize and incarcerate the persons therein designated. Often these orders were signed by the King, and sold for money or for female favours, with a blank left, which the possessor might fill up with whatsoever name he pleased. That great, gloomy, frowning Bastille stood there in Paris for centuries as the symbol of national degradation and oppression. Within its chill, reeking dungeons had languished at one time or another nearly every great man esteemed by his fellows for splendid natural gifts, intrepid honesty, or literary excellence. Was it any wonder that, when the people of Paris rose in tumultuous insurrection in 1789, they tore down stone by stone that black, sullen fortress, which was to them the tangible type of their servitude and dishonour?

Forbidden Paris, and fearful of renewed indignities, Voltaire sought refuge in England. Here he found himself amidst influences altogether foreign to his experience. Owing to the feudal system having been engrafted in England, and not an indigenous growth, there were always three estates in the con-

stitution, virtually as well as nominally. From every dispute or struggle between the monarch and the aristocracy there accrued to the people a larger measure of liberty ; and as such altercations and contests were frequent, the English nation secured for itself, very early in its history, an unparalleled freedom. In the seventeenth century the third estate had become powerful enough to overthrow both the Monarchy and the Aristocracy ; and, although the Commonwealth was but short-lived, and was succeeded by a restoration of kingship and nobility under the reign of that divine gentleman, Charles II., there has never since the execution of Charles I. been any doubt as to which element of the constitution is virtually predominant. Political liberty and religious liberty necessarily go together, for both are expressions of one and the same spirit ; the people which bows to the spiritual authority of priests will also submit to the tyranny of secular rulers ; and, on the other hand, the nation which repels the oppression of political powers will go on to claim equal freedom in theological matters. And such was the result in England. While Swift, Addison, Bolingbroke, and Steele, and a host of lesser lights, were vigorously, and often ferociously, attacking the government or its enemies, as the case might happen, the Deistical controversy was with equal freedom carried on by Woolston, Toland, Collins, Chubb, and Morgan. The atmosphere of the literary world was free also from the crawling, fulsome sycophancy which had previously disgraced English authorship, and which even the manly strength of sturdy John Dryden was unable successfully to resist. Men of letters were more honoured in the Augustan age of English literature, and held in higher repute, than the most powerful and distinguished statesmen. The sovereignty was passing away from politicians, and gravitating towards the thinkers and writers who shape opinions, and mould with their subtle, persistent influence the outward forms of society.

Voltaire, always quick and apprehensive, speedily mastered the English language ; indeed, so rapid was his progress that, after twelve months' study, he was able to translate into French verse so esoteric and difficult a work as Butler's *Hudibras*. He read Shakspeare, Milton, Dryden, Addison, Rochester, Waller, Pope, Prior, Wycherly, Vanbrugh, Congreve, and Swift. In philosophy and religion he studied the writings of Lord Herbert, Hobbes, Cudworth, Berkeley, and, above all, John Locke, whose splendid annihilation of the doctrine of innate ideas powerfully impressed his mind, and persuaded him once for all of the truth of the experiential philosophy. He also mastered Newton's *Principia*, and subsequently popularised its principles for his own countrymen in France.

On returning to his native land, Voltaire's first task of importance was to give his countrymen some account of the politics, religion, philosophy, and science of their English neighbours. This he performed in his *Letters on the English*, which was the

first serious introduction of British thought into France. Those letters wrought a revolution in French thought, which had hitherto been vain and exclusive. Indeed, Buckle deems the junction of the French and English intellects which ensued, by far the most important fact in the history of the eighteenth century. During the two generations which elapsed between the publication of Voltaire's letters and the outbreak of the Revolution there was hardly a Frenchman of eminence who did not either visit England or learn English. Amongst the remarkable persons who flocked to London were Buffon, Brissot, Lafayette, Rousseau, Montesquieu, Mirabeau, Roland, and his noble wife, and Helvetius. In fact, it may be said, without exaggeration, that Voltaire played the part of an intellectual Columbus, discovering to his countrymen scientific, poetical, and philosophic England. Voltaire left France a poet; he returned to it a sage.

The Letters on the English proved, however, too outspoken for the clergy of France. Voltaire had learnt in England to place Newton high above Cæsar, Alexander, Tamerlane, or Cromwell. "True greatness," he wrote, "consists in having received from heaven a powerful understanding, and in using it to enlighten oneself and all others. It is to him who masters our minds by the force of truth, not to those who enslave men by violence; it is to him who understands the universe, not to those who disfigure it, that we owe our reverence." "The example of England," says Condorcet, "showed him that truth is not made to remain a secret in the hands of a few philosophers, and a limited number of men of the world. From the moment of his return, Voltaire felt himself called to destroy the prejudices of every kind, of which his country was the slave." He had commented, he a mere layman, on the "Thoughts of Pascal," a pillar of the Church; and had also dared to assail the doctrine of innate ideas which the Church took under its protection. The clergy demanded that the Letters on the English should be suppressed; and they were so, by an *arrêt* of council, the book being publicly burnt, as was the fashion then in dealing with heretic productions. Voltaire himself had to flee, in order that the delicate attentions bestowed on his book might not be extended to himself also. Fortunately he knew where to find refuge. He was astute and adroit enough always to elude the search of his foes, and used often to say that a philosopher, like a hunted fox, should have plenty of holes to retreat to when the priests were on his track.

Wearied by so much persecution, Voltaire for awhile turned his attention to purely literary projects, and to the acquirement of wealth. He speculated in the public funds and other enterprises with success, and derived also much profit from the sale of his numerous and popular writings. Prudent, nay, close, in all business affairs, he was nevertheless ever ready to extend charity and assistance to the suffering and needy. Much of his acquired wealth was expended in aiding poor men of

letters, and in encouraging such young men as he thought discovered the seeds of genius. Hearing that a niece of the celebrated poet Corneille was suffering the privations of poverty, he gave her a home and provided for her education, remarking proudly (and yet how tenderly, so as to conceal or disguise the kindness) that the dependents of an old general ought not to be neglected by his officers. The silly, contemptible spend-thrifts and envious scribes, who declaim against intellectual greatness for prudence in pecuniary transactions, may taunt Voltaire with avarice, but the contemporary writers whom he generously assisted would have treated such a trumpety and baseless accusation with disdain. Envy itself might be prevailed on to pardon the acquirement of riches by a man who employed them with such munificent liberality.

Having formed an ardent attachment to the Marchioness de Châtelet, Voltaire retired with her to Cirey, on the borders of Champagne and Lorraine, where they led a life of study and retirement, interrupted and varied by an occasional quarrel. The Marchioness was not one of the gay, frivolous coquettes of the day; she was a woman of powerful understanding and great strength of character; was passionately enamoured of philosophy, and successfully cultivated the arts. Voltaire's relations with Madame de Châtelet have made him the object of unmeasured censure and most virulent abuse by persons who unconsciously or conveniently forget that the customs of France last century differed widely from those of England today. Pious and excessively *nice* people lift their eyes in horror at mention of La Pucelle, or of Voltaire's relations with women, and yet regard with a sweet contemplative gaze the odious vices of the tyrants who oppressed France; the manifold adulteries of Louis le Grand, who frequently went straight from confession or prayer to the embraces of a mistress; the unmentionable depravities of his successor, for whose disgusting gratification the Parc aux Cerfs was reserved; and the dissolute gallantries, amounting almost to promiscuous intercourse, of the entire body of the nobility. A man ought not to be severely censured for trifling delinquencies who dwells in the midst of Sodom and Gomorrah.

On the decease of Mde. de Châtelet, Voltaire accepted a diplomatic mission to the Court of Frederick the Great, at Berlin, where he was ostentatiously received by the king, who loved to patronise men of letters. Frederick was undoubtedly a sagacious monarch, but his literary tastes were superlatively barbarous; yet he always hankered after literary fame, and even aspired to become a poet. As might be expected, the diplomatic mission came to grief. "The great poet," says Macaulay, "would talk of nothing but treaties and guarantees, and the great king of nothing but metaphors and rhymes." They secretly laughed at each other, and Frederick subsequently declared the mission a mere farce. However, the poet remained at Berlin,

where he was hospitably treated, until at length he discovered that the king desired to employ him as a kind of literary hack to polish and embellish his own wretched productions in prose and verse. One day Frederick sent a large quantity of verses to Voltaire, requesting that they might be returned with marks and corrections. "See," exclaimed Voltaire, "what a quantity of his dirty linen the king has sent me to wash." Smaller minds might sell their independence for a bit of bread, but Voltaire was infinitely above that; he was willing to be the friend but not the servant of a king; he with his marvellous capacities and facile pen had a European kingdom greater than any king's. A quarrel soon ensued between the singular pair; and when Frederick demanded from Voltaire an abject apology for an excruciatingly satirical diatribe against Maupertuis, who had been selected by the king to fill the chair of his Academy, the witty heretic refused to comply, and sent back to the Prussian monarch his cross, his key, and the patent of his pension. The king and the poet parted with hearts big with resentment, although they had gone through the forms of cold civility. The king, however, meanly vented his spite on his old guest, and had Voltaire arrested at Frankfort, on his way back to France, with every mark of indignity; the pretence being that he had purloined a volume of poems written by the great king himself. A shallow pretence indeed! There was no fear that Voltaire would ever need to plagiarise from "*l'œuvre de poésie de roi mon maître*," which was demanded in most barbarous French by the King's messenger, Freytag. The poet had his revenge, however, for he afterwards published the "Memories," in which he wrote the bitterest lampoon on his maltreater that ever proceeded from the pen of man.

In 1758 Voltaire retired to Ferney, where he spent the last twenty years of his life. He rebuilt the house on the estate he had purchased there, laid out the gardens, kept a good table, and received a crowd of visitors from all parts of Europe. He was, besides, an indefatigable correspondent, and even amidst the turmoil of a still active life maintained an epistolary intercourse with distant friends in every surrounding country. Here he might have led a serene, peaceful life had he been made of mere common stuff, or had the beagles of persecution relented. But the fates had ordained otherwise. The old patriarch was destined to die as he had lived, waging incessant war with the enemies of mankind.

At Ferney, until the new outbreak of persecution in 1762, Voltaire occupied himself with literary composition as well as the amenities of social intercourse. Amongst other ventures, he published a translation of "Ecclesiastes," and the "Song of Solomon," in the latter of which he had somewhat pruned the voluptuous, nay, often licentious, imagery of the original. These translations were *burnt as immoral and indecent*. What a sight! The Christians burning their own books as obscene. The old

heretic avenged himself by a satirical, humorous letter, in which he mocked at the general hypocrisy of morals in Europe, which had destroyed the energy of character for which the ancients were distinguished.

The great Encyclopedia, designed by Diderot and D'Alembert to convey to the public scientific and historical knowledge calculated to weaken superstition and eradicate prejudice, was now in course of publication. The work soon raised up bitter enemies amongst those who prefer ignorance to knowledge, and especially amongst the clergy and the most devout Churchmen. Voltaire, however, speedily came to the assistance of the Encyclopedists, and personally contributed several articles. From Ferney the old patriarch bade defiance to all the hireling priests of Europe. He flooded the reading world with innumerable satirical pamphlets, sending his keen arrows into the breasts of those who strove to darken the intellectual sky, and to increase, instead of lighten, the burdens of mankind. Whenever an act of theological persecution or secular tyranny startled the lovers of freedom in Europe, all eyes were instinctively turned towards Ferney, where dwelt the philosopher who wielded a pen mightier than the sceptres of kings. Bigots and tyrants, who had never been moved by the wailing and cursing of millions, turned pale at the sound of his name.

In 1762 a fresh outbreak of persecution occurred; the Catholic Church—Jesuits and Jansenists alike—seemed united in a desperate attempt to crush out every spark of intellectual freedom. In the south of France the son of a respectable man, named Calas, was found dead. Every fact seemed to indicate that he had committed suicide; he was admittedly of a melancholy temperament, and the kind of reading he had indulged in was calculated to induce suicidal thoughts. However, it suited the priesthood to pretend that Calas, an infirm old man, had murdered his son, who was young and vigorous, to prevent him joining the Catholic Church. A more ridiculous accusation it would be impossible to conceive. Not only was the elder Calas infirm and stricken in years, and thus physically incapable of perpetrating the crime laid to his charge, but there was also a thorough refutation of the motive which, it was alleged, led to its commission: for another son of Calas, already converted to the Catholic faith, enjoyed a pension from the bounty of this father, who was far from possessing affluence. Nevertheless, the Catholic population speedily became inflamed with religious zeal. The young man was declared a martyr, and the fraternity of penitents at Thoulouse performed a solemn mass for him. Preposterous rumours were circulated that the Protestant religion commanded fathers to assassinate their children when they desired to abjure it. The unfortunate Calas was tried and condemned to be tortured and broken on the wheel. The infamously atrocious sentence was executed, and even the wife and younger children were put to the torture to make them con-

less the father's guilt. Calas died protesting his innocence, and no implicating words could be wrung from the lips of his tortured family. The wife and children fled to Geneva, where Voltaire saw them, and learnt the horrible details of their story. All Europe was startled, and yet none dared to raise a voice against the seemingly omnipotent clergy. But there was one old heretic, seventy years of age, whose heart still burned with the fire of its old loving-kindness; not one of those who prated about mercy, and protested generosity; rather one who was often cynical and sceptical of human nature; yet one who, when the occasion required, would march right up to the front of arbitrary power, and demand the victim it desired to immolate to its wrath or caprice. The compassion and indignation of Voltaire were aroused, and he at once set himself to obtain a reversal of the sentence passed on Calas. His fiery zeal animated the advocates who pleaded the cause of justice, his eloquence gave point and force to their vindication. He interested every powerful friend on his side, and animated by his untiring courage the hopes of all lovers of equity. At length he succeeded in obtaining a reversal of the sentence, and a compensation to the injured family of the murdered father. This occupied the brave old man during more than three years. "In all that time," said he, "a smile never escaped me for which I did not reproach myself as for a crime." When Voltaire went to Paris in 1778, for the last time, the public thronged to pay him homage; nobles disguised themselves as waiters to be in his company; and all Paris, high and low, rich and poor, united to do him honour. Yet of all the congratulations and marks of esteem bestowed on him there, none touched him so deeply as the remark of a poor woman on the Pont Royal, who, on being asked who the hero of the hour was, replied: "*Know you not that he is the Saviour of Calas?*"

Not long afterwards the daughter of a man named Sirven, who had been taken from her parents and shut up in a convent, was found drowned in a well. She had without doubt committed suicide to escape the ill-treatment to which she was subjected. Fanaticism again fastened on the innocent: Sirven and his family were accused; but fortunately they had time to flee. Sirven found shelter with the protector of Calas, but his poor wife died on the road thither, from cold and exhaustion. Again Voltaire interested himself on behalf of the helpless victims of persecution. He influenced judges, counsel, and all who could render any assistance; so that when Sirven appeared for trial he was acquitted, and the friends of truth were triumphant.

In the year 1776 another outburst of fanaticism astonished Europe. A crucifix of wood, fixed on a bridge at Abbeville, was thrown down in the night; and a young officer, the Chevalier de la Barre, and d'Ellatonde, his friend, were, for committing such sacrilege, sentenced to be beheaded, after having had their tongues cut out and having undergone the torture. There was

no proof whatever that the young de la Barre was guilty ; but the fanaticism of the mob was artfully raised by the priests, and the innocent young man, only seventeen years old, was cruelly put to death for this trifling offence, in a Christian country, his murder being accompanied with barbarous atrocities which might make even a savage shudder. D'Alembert wrote to Voltaire, giving an account of this new *auto-da-fé*, and ended his description with a mocking laugh—a laugh easily enough intelligible, and merely hiding the pain within, like the jest of a man under the surgeon's knife. The old patriarch, his soul all aflame with righteous indignation, replied to D'Alembert with noble impetuosity : “ This is no longer a time for jesting ; witty things do not go well with massacres. What ! these Busirises in wigs destroy in the midst of horrible tortures children of sixteen !.....Here Calas broken on the wheel, there Sirven condemned to be hung, a fortnight after that five youths condemned to the flames. Is this the country of philosophy and pleasure ?.....What, you would be content to laugh ? No, once more, I cannot bear that you should finish your letter by saying, I mean to laugh. Ah ! my friend, is it a time for laughing ? Did men laugh when they saw Phalaris's bull being made red hot ?” Noble words these ! How imagination pictures the old man ; his eyes suffused with tears, yet shooting forth flashes of indignation ; his slight, fragile frame quivering with the emotion which can only find vent in broken utterances. Contemplate Voltaire thus, think of his noble daring, of his pertinacious efforts to rescue the oppressed from the clutches of the oppressor, and then fling dirt at his reputation if you can ! And O ye sweet-souled angels of light, ye delicate Pharisees of orthodoxy, of what worth is all your maundering praise of virtue, when weighed against the greatness of this humane heretic, whose scepticisms and transgressions so offend your dainty susceptibilities ? Carp no more at his faults and failings ; generously admire his native worth of heart and head ; reflect on his magnanimous endeavours to shelter the oppressed and comfort the afflicted, and go ye and do likewise.

The accession of Turgot to power stirred Voltaire's sympathies, and gave him new hopes for his country. In his poetical letter to the great minister he uses the expression, “ *qui ne chercha le vrai que pour faire le bien,*” which has lately been rendered into English by Professor Huxley as ; “ Learn what is true in order to do what is right,” and declared by him to be the sum of the whole duty of man. Turgot, great as he was, was too impotent to resist the combination of all the Conservative interests of France ; his schemes were frustrated, and he had to retire. The Revolution, as Carlyle says, was necessary to destroy in a general conflagration the pestilent mass of sinister interests and iniquities. Voltaire sank into a despair from which he never arose. “ My eyes see only death in front

of me now M. Turgot is gone," he wrote. "It has fallen like a thunderbolt on my heart and brain alike. The rest of my days can never be other than pure bitterness."

In 1778 the old man visited Paris, and was greeted with the acclamations of the people. He was publicly crowned with flowers at the theatre, and thousands followed him to his home. Voltaire and Franklin met on this occasion for the first and last time. The two veterans embraced, and the American philosopher presented his grandson to Voltaire, requesting that he would give him his benediction. "God and liberty!" said Voltaire; "it is the only benediction which can be given to the grandson of Franklin." Three months after, on the 30th May, 1778, the patriarch breathed his last; the greatest man in Europe was dead.

Charitable Christians have gloated over a suppositious recantation, and parsons have often been known to edify their hearers with lugubrious exhortations to avoid the horrors of an Infidel death-bed. Fortunately, the grave of Voltaire is high and sacred enough above the abomination of their approach. We will present to our readers the truth, as we can ascertain it, respecting Voltaire's end.

The Abbé Gautier confessed Voltaire, and declared that he had made a full confession of faith. Were this true, it would be worth nothing. Voltaire was eighty-four years of age, and had been for days lying in bed in such a weak condition as to be almost incapable of understanding the words addressed to him; in fact, it was utterly impossible that he could sustain a conversation with his confessor. He could, therefore, merely have replied to questions, yes or no. After all, we have merely the Abbé's authority for the alleged confession, and subsequent events destroy all belief in its virtue. The curate of St. Sulpice, feeling that the Abbé Gautier had forestalled him, professed to be sceptical about the recantation. They therefore paid another visit to the dying Infidel, and the interview is thus described by Wagnière, Voltaire's Secretary.

"M. l'Abbé Mignot, his nephew, went to seek the curate of St. Sulpice, and the Abbé Gautier, and brought them into his uncle's sick-room, who, on being informed that the Abbé Gautier was there, 'Ah, well,' said he, 'give him my compliments and my thanks.' The Abbé spoke some words to him, exhorting him to patience. The curé of St. Sulpice then came forward, having announced himself, and asked of M. de Voltaire, elevating his voice, if he acknowledged the divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ? The sick man pushed one of his hands against the curé's *calotte* (coif), shoving him back, and cried, turning abruptly to the other side, 'Let me die in peace!' (*Laissez-moi mourir en paix.*) The curé seemingly considered his person soiled, and his coif dishonoured by the touch of a philosopher. He made the sick-nurse give him a little brushing, and then went out with the Abbé Gautier."

So much for the charge of recantation, the invention of malice and hypocrisy. Surely Christians might be a little more charitable than to concoct these idle tales of dying horrors, remorse, and the like, or to draw aside the veil that should hide from curious eyes the dying agonies of a fellow man. As to those who believe in the value of death-bed recantations we reply in the words of Carlyle : " He who, after the imperturbable exit of so many Cartouches and Thurtells, in every age of the world, can continue to regard the manner of a man's death as a test of his religious orthodoxy, may boast himself impregnable to merely terrestrial logic."

Voltaire was not, as ignorant or lying parsons aver, an Atheist, but a Deist, although his Deism was not very clearly defined. He seems to have held a moderately strong belief in the existence of a supernatural power ; yet he was far too wise a man to dogmatise on so abstruse and perplexed a subject. His intellectual vision was also too keen to allow him to be deluded by the flimsy pretences put forward on behalf of the infinite benevolence of God. When the great earthquake at Lisbon occurred, he composed a philosophical poem, in which he finely dilated on the unjust disparities of fortune, and called upon the theologians to reconcile such catastrophes with their dogmas if they could. And in a letter to D'Alembert he wisely reprobates all dogmatism from either side, Theistic or Atheistic, and asks : " After all, what do we know about it ?" Voltaire's Deism was in reality more a kind of imaginative hope than an earnest, reasoned conviction. His intellect was more quick and penetrating than profound and subtle, and was far better adapted to deal with the contradictions and absurdities of Christianity than with more recondite questions in metaphysics. His assault on Christianity as a revealed religion was the principal work of his life, and his effective onslaught on its most cherished beliefs constitutes his chief glory. He detested and despised orthodox Christianity as a pestilent system of error and a most damnable superstition. He believed—and rightly—that in the name of Jesus of Nazareth more blood had been shed than in the name of any other man or religion which the world has ever produced. He was convinced that persecution and priestly thralldom must last while superstition compels men to prostrate their intelligence in the dust, and to eat of the bitter fruit of error. There was, he thought, no possible redemption for mankind save through the eradication of the banyan tree of superstition, under which mankind crouched in darkness and misery. He therefore set himself to destroy the Christianity which afflicted Europe in his day ; and never for a moment did he waver in the prosecution of his purpose. Every weapon that could be selected from the armoury of satire, humour, wit, poetry, history, philosophy, and science, he scrupled not to employ ; and the thoroughness of his assault may be inferred from the fact that to the mental vision of Catholics and Pro-

testants alike he presents an object more hateful than even the Devil himself. Men like Mr. Carlyle accuse him of being a mere sceptic and doubter, devoid of all faculty of reverence; but the reputation of Voltaire can easily clear itself from such a baseless charge. He was capable of admiration and reverence for admirable and reverend objects. The enthusiasm of humanity filled his heart as much perhaps as it did that of Jesus, only it was controlled and regulated by reason. There are some persons who cannot believe in conviction or enthusiasm unless a man possessed of them make a fool of himself, and a spectacle to gods and men. These persons admire fanaticism instead of reasonable earnestness, and therefore prefer Jesus to Voltaire. They are free to take their choice. As to Voltaire's scepticism, it was indeed his greatest virtue, instead of a defect. The monstrous absurdities of Christianity—its very Godhead forming an arithmetical puzzle, and its whole history replete with lying wonders and pretended miracles—awoke the burning scorn of his ardent nature. It seemed to him, as it must to all reflective minds, that error is the more dangerous in proportion as it concerns the holiest depths of man's nature. He did right in assailing superstition with every available weapon. In the heart of that horrid incubus he planted the iron which will vex it to utter death. And when we observe how Reason more powerfully asserts her sway now than of yore; how men are more disinclined to prostrate their intelligence before dogmatic absurdities; how Freethought is spreading day by day; we should reflect on our manifold obligations to the arch heretic, Voltaire, and bless his memory for his noble labours in the cause of Truth.

Our readers who care to pursue the subject further may consult the following works:—

Carlyle's *Essay on Voltaire*—*Miscellanies*, vol. ii.

” *Frederick the Great.*

*Memoires sur Voltaire et sur ses Ouvrages*, par Longchamp et Wagnière, ses Seciétaires. 2 tomes. Paris, 1826.

Condorcet's *Vie de Voltaire.*

Voltaire's *Philosophical Dictionary.* 2 vols. Truelove, London.

*Ceuvres de Voltaire.* Bondonin, Paris. 75 tomes.

Morley, John, *Essay on Voltaire.* 1 vol.

Macaulay, *Essay on Frederick the Great*—*Miscellanies*, vol. ii.

Lanfrey, *l'Eglise et les Philosophes au Dix-Huitième Siècle.*

Buckle's *History of Civilisation*, vol. i.; *Chapters on French Intellect, the Protective Spirit in France, and the Proximate Causes of the French Revolution.*

P.S.—Various conjectures have been hazarded as to the origin of the pseudonyme Voltaire. The most plausible and favoured derives it from *Le Jeune Arouet*; the capitals *L* and *J* being united to the letters of the surname; and the *J* and *U* transformed into *I* and *V*, as was not unusual then.

# HEROES AND MARTYRS

OF

## FREETHOUGHT.

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### 2.—GIORDANO BRUNO.

**N**O other century of modern history was marked by such stir and impulse, as that which immediately followed the invention of printing. As early as 1440 the typographic art was in use, but it was not until the end of the fifteenth century that the printers of Europe had succeeded in widely circulating their literature, despite the active opposition of the Church. Not only was that century marked by the invention of printing, it was distinguished also by the most important maritime discovery ever made. In 1492 Columbus sailed to America, and opened up to the ardent spirits of Europe a new field of enterprise. His example was rapidly followed by other daring adventurers, who displayed in their undertakings an almost superhuman resolution and power of endurance. In 1497 Vasco de Gama set sail with three ships and one hundred and sixty men, and after a voyage of nearly twelve months, succeeded in reaching India. On August 10, 1519, Magellan set sail from Seville. Striking away to the south-west he reached Patagonia, threaded the straits which still bear his name, and sailed out into the seemingly infinite Pacific Ocean. These great maritime discoveries laid the basis of modern commerce, deprived the Mediterranean States of their naval supremacy, and altered the balance of European power. Nay more; they inevitably suggested the rotundity of the earth, and prepared men's minds for the acceptance of the Copernican astronomy. For centuries the geocentric theory, which made the earth the centre of the universe, had been supported by the dogmatic authority of the Church; and so grossly ignorant were the people, learned and illiterate alike, of astronomical laws, that when Halley's comet appeared in 1456, it was fulminated against by the Pope, and all the bells in Europe were set ringing to scare it away. Copernicus, however, shattered the geocentric theory and supported the heliocentric, which makes the sun, instead of the earth, the centre of our system; attributing to the earth a

double motion, a daily rotation on her axis, and an annual motion round the sun. But besides this fatal blow at the theological astronomy of the Church, another destructive movement was also going on. The Latin tongue had been used by the Church as a sacred language, and had enabled her to maintain a general international relation; a far greater source of power than her asserted celestial authority. But the great Italian poets, with Dante at their head, began a new intellectual movement by employing the vulgar dialect in the composition of their poems, a movement which rapidly extended itself over Europe, and ended in consolidating the modern languages and making the sacred Latin a dead tongue. This movement was aided by the revival of learning, consequent on the seizure of Constantinople by the Turks, which elevated Greek into the prominence formerly enjoyed by Latin. Greek manuscripts were scattered over Europe, and the printing press soon gave the treasures of ancient philosophy and poetry to all who could afford to purchase books. The revival of learning had its counterpart in the *renaissance* of art. Instead of the "dead limbs of gibbeted gods and ghastly glories of saints," which previously constituted the entire scope of Christian art, the treasures of Grecian statuary furnished the models of a new school, which resolutely turned away from the asceticism of Christianity, and dwelt with delight on the marvellous designs, skilful manipulation, and supreme beauty of the great masterpieces of antiquity. Philosophy was attracted also by the same wondrous influence; Platonism was usurping the place of the Aristotelian philosophy; the dogmatic reverence for the Stagirite was giving way to the adoration of the philosopher-poet of Athens. When the sixteenth century had fairly begun, Europe was prepared for two great movements—the one the Reformation which challenged the theological infallibility of the Church, and asserted by implication the right of private judgment; the other the astronomical crusade carried on by the ardent spirits who accepted the Copernican theory, which challenged the claims of the Church in the name of science and human reason. That scientific movement was, after all, the more powerful. Copernicus, Kepler, and Galileo, were its mathematicians; Giordano Bruno was its prophet, poet, and martyr.

Giordano Bruno, whose baptismal name was Filippo, was born at Nola, near Naples, in 1548; just ten years after the death of Copernicus, and ten years before the birth of Bacon. Nola had been extremely prolific in great men: Tansillo, the poet, Ambrogio Leone the friend of Erasmus, Albertino Gentile, and Pomponio Algeri, who suffered martyrdom just a few years before Bruno, were all Nolans. The soft climate of Nola, the beauty of its position, and luxuriant fertility of its soil, were always affectionately remembered by Bruno in his wanderings. His nature seemed to partake of the characteristics of his native

soil, being luxuriant in beauty, yet withal volcanic; and his Greek brilliance and acuteness of intellect seemed to point back to the time when Nola was one of the old cities of Magna Græcia. Bruno was educated partly at Nola, and partly at Naples. He attended the public classes of the college and the private lectures of the professors till the age of fifteen, when he became a novice in the monastery of San Domenico Maggiore, in Naples. He changed his baptismal name of Filippo for that of Giordano, and, after his year's noviciate had expired, took the monastic vows.

In the convent of San Domenico Maggiore, the great St. Thomas Aquinas had lectured and conceived his subtle system of religious philosophy; but the young novice differed widely from the angelic doctor. Despising gauds and badges, he mused deeply on the great problems of theology, and with such unpleasant results that the authorities, dreading his heretical tendencies, drew up an act of accusation against him, which, however, on account of his youth (he was only sixteen), was set aside. Eight years afterwards, four years after he had taken priest's orders, another trial for heresy was projected, but again set aside. The Dominicans were partial to intellectual greatness, and doubtless suspended proceedings against the heretical young priest, in the hope that, when the mental ebullience and sceptical daring of youth had subsided, his brilliant talents would minister to the grandeur and success of their order. His scepticisms, however, became too flagrant to be pardoned. Doubts filled his mind as to the truth of many doctrines taught by the Church, such as the Trinity, the Incarnation, and the Atonement. Above all, he discarded the Aristotelian theory as to the motion of the earth, and embraced the Copernican astronomy, believing in the plurality of worlds, and rejecting the received Scripture notions as to the origin of mankind. A third time the chiefs of his order commenced an investigation into his creed, and Bruno, fearing that this time no mercy would be shown, resolved on flight. In his twenty-eighth year he began his Odyssey, which ended only when the bloodthirsty Inquisition had him within its savage clutch.

At Rome, in a convent of his own order, our hero sought refuge; but hearing that his prosecutors were forwarding the act of accusation to Rome after him, he escaped from the Holy City after a sojourn of but a few days. He paused at Genoa for a while, and then pursued his flight to Noli, where he stayed five months, earning his living as a schoolmaster, teaching grammar to children and youths, and expounding learned works to the gentlemen. Finding this sphere too limited for him, he left Noli for Venice, passing through Turin on his way thither. Venice was just then overshadowed with gloom; a recent plague had decimated the population; fear, squalor, and wretchedness were depicted on every countenance. The city offered but few attractions to the ardent Neapolitan, and Bruno went to Padua,

in the university of which he taught both publicly and privately. Here he allowed himself to be persuaded into resuming the monkish garb which he had discarded on leaving Rome. Probably his imagination was still enchained by the traditional glory of the great Dominican order, notwithstanding that his intellect and heart alike disowned the religion which his robe symbolised. How long Bruno remained at Padua is uncertain; we know that on leaving the city he went to Milan, where he first made acquaintance with the chivalrous Sir Philip Sidney. It speaks highly for the wandering Italian that, when he came to England a little subsequently, the intimacy was renewed and strengthened between himself and Sidney—that Sidney for ever memorable as the consummate flower of noble chivalry; warrior, poet, and wit. It must have been no common qualities that recommended Bruno to the author of the “*Arcadia*,” the chivalrous soldier of Zutphen, who sums up in himself the gallantry of the great Elizabethan age, just as Beau Brummel typified that of the tinsel generation which adored George IV.

From Milan, Bruno went to Chambéry; but the ignorance and bigotry of the Savoyard monks proved too much for his patience, and he soon left Chambéry for Geneva, where he arrived in 1576. He was welcomed by an Italian refugee, also an outcast from his native land for conscience sake, who advised him earnestly to discard his monastic dress before publicly appearing. A difficulty, vast and apparently insuperable, arose; Bruno had no money wherewith to purchase a new dress. However, he contrived to make a pair of breeches out of his gown, and his countrymen presented him with a hat and cloak and other necessary equipments of a citizen. What a touching picture of the *Odyssey* of a scholar! Despised and rejected of the world, the brave man bent not his proud spirit to the yoke of authority or custom. He sought Truth, diligently searching if haply he might find her; compared with which pursuit all the petty ambitions and mean delights of life were but as dust in the balance.

Calvin had died about twelve years before Bruno's arrival; but his fierce, relentless spirit still remained. A catechism had been drawn up, which all were required to sign under penalty of persecution to the death. Servetus perished at the stake, recalcitrant and obstinate; slowly roasting for two hours, calling vainly on his callous tormentors to despatch him out of his pain. Ocheno took refuge in Poland; some went to Tübingen; some even to Turkey, right away from the intolerance of Christians to the more tender mercies of Infidel dogs. Valentino Gentile, after having been compelled to do penance in Geneva, was beheaded in Berne. Bruno soon found Geneva no safe abiding place. Beza, Calvin's faithful disciple and ally, detested the opinions of the daring, irreverent Italian; and Bruno discovered that flight alone could preserve him from the fate of Servetus.

From Geneva, Bruno proceeded to Lyons, where he remained but a short time, and then went on to Toulouse, which he reached about the middle of the year 1577. The fair city of the South, then in the zenith of prosperity, afforded an ample field for his labours. Its University numbered ten thousand scholars, mostly young and ardent, and desirous of learning more about the soul, its immortality, and the strange new astronomy of which rumour spoke. Bruno was elected to fill the office of Public Lecturer to the University, which office he filled for nearly two years with great success, lecturing on the soul and also on the Aristotelian philosophy; insinuating, we may be sure, grave doubts in the minds of his hearers as to the truth of many received doctrines. He held also public disputations at Toulouse, and composed there several of his works. Probably his success emboldened him to try a wider sphere, for we find him at Paris in the year 1579.

The streets of Paris were hardly yet cleared of the blood-stains of the Bartholomew massacres, and the cry had scarcely subsided, *La Messe ou la Mort* (the Mass or Death). Yet Bruno refused a professorship at the Sorbonne, accompanied by the condition of attending mass. Henry III., however, for some reason, bestowed on him the office of Lecturer Extraordinary to the University. Either the King wished to profit by Bruno's method of artificial memory, founded on the Lullian art, or he was intelligent enough, notwithstanding his voluptuous effeminacy, to appreciate Bruno's profound erudition and daring intellect. Our philosopher's first lectures were on the "Attributes of God;" and from the notes prepared for the delivery of these discourses he composed a work called *Dei Predicamenti di Dio*; but this being still in MS. at the time of his arrest at Venice, was forwarded to Rome with his other papers, and has never yet seen the light. This was, perhaps, the most active part of Bruno's career. He taught privately, as well as delivered his public lectures, and composed several works on Pantheism, and on the Lullian art of memory; also a play, "Il Candelaiio," abounding in wit and buffoonery, from which Molière himself is said to have borrowed. His public lectures were numerous attended by the professors as well as the students of Paris; never since the days of Abelard had any other philosopher gathered around him such an enthusiastic following. He adopted every style of eloquence, grave, impassioned, controversial, fanciful, and humorous; startling all by his daring theories and wild speculations. His known contempt for the Aristotelian philosophy and belief in the Copernican astronomy, together with his flagrant heresies as to many cardinal doctrines of the Church, at last roused considerable opposition amongst the priestly professors of the Sorbonne; and although countenanced by the King, and admired by hundreds of students for his intellectual and rhetorical power, he found Paris becoming an unsafe residence. At the end of 1582, or early in 1583, he

came to England, bringing with him letters of introduction from Henry III. to the French Ambassador in London, Michel Castlenau de Mauvissière.

With the Mauvissières Bruno resided during his stay in England, enjoying comparative repose, and freed from the constant harassments of a struggle for bread. Mauvissière was a fine, noble character, gifted and cultured; his wife was a charming and accomplished woman; and their youngest child, a god-daughter of Mary Stuart, was as fascinating and as attractive as her namesake. She was Bruno's darling, and with her he used to play whenever he was at leisure; being, like all men of his bright temperament, extremely fond of children. His evenings were mostly spent with Sir Philip Sidney, Fulke Greville, Dyer, and Hervey, at his host's, discoursing with them on subjects dear to them all. This was the one bright oasis in the desert of his life, where he paused to drink of the pure waters of domestic felicity; the one peaceful resting-place in a journey otherwise full of arduous, unremitting toil.

So great was Bruno's fame that he was invited to read in the University of Oxford, then as now far behind the best thought of the age. He lectured on the indestructibility of matter, the nature of God, the plurality of worlds; and quite startled the big-wigged professors by his eloquent advocacy of such monstrous heresies as those involved in his theory about inhabitants in distant worlds. Bruno wittily called Oxford the *widow* of sound learning. Prince Albert Alasco of Poland visited Elizabeth in 1583, and instead of bull-fights or tournaments he was entertained with a wit-combat at the University, which Bruno ridiculed. The professors were admonished to furbish up their intellectual weapons, which, Mr. Lewes wittily says, meant to shake the dust off their volumes of Aristotle, and defend Ptolemy's system of astronomy against the new-fangled theory of Copernicus. It is really amusing to observe the deference paid to the Stagirite, whose philosophy had been fostered by the Church because it lent support to the Biblical astronomy. An anecdote recorded by Mr. Lewes forcibly exemplifies this submissive homage. A certain young student, having detected spots in the sun, communicated his discovery to a worthy priest, who replied: "My son, I have read Aristotle many times, and I assure you there is nothing of the kind mentioned by him. Go, rest in peace, and be certain that the spots which you have seen are in your eyes, and not in the sun." In 1624—a quarter of a century after Bruno's martyrdom—the Parliament of Paris issued a decree banishing all who publicly maintained theses against Aristotle; and in 1629, at the urgent remonstrance of the Sorbonne, decreed that to contradict the principles of Aristotle was to contradict the Church! At Oxford the statutes declared that the Bachelors and Masters of Arts who did not faithfully follow Aristotle were liable to a fine of five shillings for every point of divergence. Their very existence seemed to

depend on the invulnerability of Aristotle, and great must have been their dismay on hearing that the brilliant, aggressive Italian heretic was to step into the lists, and do battle against the Goliath of the Church. The details of the combat are unknown to us ; but, according to Bruno, quite a sensation was created by his startling novelties. The professors, he declares, when silenced in argument, replied with abuse. Bruno calls them a "constellation of pedants, whose ignorance, presumption, and rustic rudeness would have exhausted the patience of Job."

Towards the end of 1584 Bruno left London for Paris, with the Mauvissières. Soon after his arrival there, burning with all the zeal natural to the prophet of a new faith, he challenged the Sorbonne to refute in discussion 120 propositions selected by himself from his works published in London against the Aristotelian doctrines. Singularly, the challenge was accepted ; but private enmities, excited by these disputes, and public agitation, obliged Bruno once more to quit Paris.

We next find him at Marburg, where he was not allowed to lecture. From Marburg he went *via* Mayence to Wittenburg, where his simple declaration that he was a lover of wisdom was a sufficient introduction. He was instantly permitted to matriculate at the University, and enrolled among the academicians. The freedom of opinion allowed by the Lutherans excited his admiration, and evoked from him a splendid panegyric on Luther, "who had slain a monster more mighty and dangerous than all those conquered by Hercules, the vicar of the tyrant of hell, at once fox and lion, armed with the keys and the sword, with cunning and force, with subtleties and violence, with hypocrisy and ferocity, who had infected the earth with a faith superstitious and more than brutally ignorant, concealed under the title of divine wisdom, of simplicity dear to God." As for himself, he boldly declared that he was partisan neither of Wittenburg nor of Rome ; he hoped for the day when the father should be adored neither on this mountain nor at Jerusalem ; he revered in Luther the liberator of the human spirit, the moral renovator. At Wittenburg he taught nearly two years "with noisy popularity," says Mr. Lewes. "Your justice," he writes to the Senate, "has refused to listen to the insinuations circulated against my character and my opinions. You have, with admirable impartiality, permitted me to attack with vehemence that philosophy of Aristotle which you prize so highly." Here he might have remained probably for many years had not the death of the Elector Augustus caused a revolution in the religious world of Wittenburg ; Casimir, the uncle of the weak and incapable Christian, being a stern and rigid Calvinist. Bruno had gained experience of Calvinism at Geneva ; he knew that he should be silenced, probably persecuted. Therefore he left Wittenburg for Prague ; from the centre of Protestantism right to the heart of Catholicism—a dangerous transition, yet highly characteristic of his superb audacity.

In Prague he was introduced to the Emperor Rudolph II., by the Spanish Ambassador, Mendoza, with whom Bruno had become acquainted in London. The Emperor was a lover of the black art, hoping for most marvellous results from magic and occult science, and naturally attached himself to the Italian philosopher, who was reputed to be so skilful in many things, and might be proficient in forbidden arts also. Bruno, however, scarcely reciprocated Rudolph's regard; there was no attraction for him at Prague, books being scarce, and the opportunities few for lecturing or teaching. He was too proud, and too deeply impressed with a sense of the greatness of his mission, to attach himself as a kind of necromantic charlatan to the court of an Emperor. Prague was soon left for Helenstadt, Bruno carrying with him letters of recommendation from Rudolph to the Duke of Brunswick. At Helenstadt he remained six or seven months, and published a Pantheistic work *De Monade*, which he dedicated to his protector. He also engaged in a deadly feud with the Protestants, Boëtius, as the pastor of the Evangelical Church, excommunicating him as the readiest way of settling the dispute. The trial for which he appealed was denied him, and so he had to depart to Frankfort. The stay at Frankfort was in many ways a bright spot in his life. First he was able to fulminate safely against the Brunswick theologians; secondly, he found congenial society among the scholars who flocked thither; and thirdly, he was in the midst of booksellers and printers ready to publish and circulate his writings. The typographical establishments of Frankfort, Basle, Venice, Lyons, Rome, and Florence were famous, and attracted the learned of all countries, who resorted to these literary centres at the time of their annual fairs, in order to collect books and exchange thought. At these fairs "philosophers, mathematicians, historians, met and argued and philosophised, surrounded by a crowd of listeners, as Socrates and Plato might have done in the groves and porticoes of Athens." Wechel, a Frankfort bookseller, with honourable liberality, maintained Bruno while he was preparing the works afterwards printed there; all of them written in Latin, and setting aside the Lullian theories for a greater concentration on metaphysical and scientific truths.

While at Frankfort he had made the acquaintance of Ciotti, a Venetian bookseller, who, on a visit to the annual fair, had lodged at the monastery where Bruno himself resided. On returning to Venice, Ciotti spread the fame of the wandering Italian philosopher amongst the young patricians who frequented his shop in ostentatious patronage of literature, as was then the fashion. Mocenigo, a Venetian nobleman, became so interested in Bruno from Ciotti's report that he wrote to him at Frankfort most urgent letters, inviting him to Venice, and entreating him to become his guide, philosopher, and friend. In ill hour Bruno listened favourably to these entreaties and accepted

the invitation. Probably his pilgrimage through alien lands in search of mental freedom, denied to him at home, had become unbearably wearisome ; it may be that his heart was filled with an irresistible longing to gaze once more on the resplendent azure of his native sky, to touch, Antæus-like, his mother earth, and renew his strength, to drink again of the matchless beauty of his own Italy, the mother of nations. Or if we believed in portents we might conclude that his approaching fate loomed ominously before him, and that, like the wounded eagle struggling back to its native eyrie, he returned at last to the home of his youth, to resign the burden of life there, where he had first taken it up. Besides, Venice had many claims on his interest. Italy was the intellectual centre of Europe, and in Venice alone more books were published than in all the countries of Europe outside Italy. The masterpieces of Greek and Roman literature, the earliest translations of the Bible into modern languages, were all first printed there ; and the famous University of Padua, where Galileo afterwards taught, was supported by it. All these attractions combined proved irresistible, and Bruno came to Venice ; alas, right into the jaws of death. A sadness seemed to weigh heavily on his spirit, as if the impending tragedy were harbingered by premonitions. Yet he wrote undauntedly as ever : " Despite the injustices of fate, which have pursued me ever since infancy, I aspire unchanged, unwearied, to the goal of my career ; I feel my sufferings, but I despise them ; I shrink not from death, and my heart will never submit to mortal."

Mocenigo had invited Bruno for many reasons, all of which spoke a weak, mean, contemptible character. Wishing to be fashionable, he was of course desirous of becoming the patron of a man of genius ; hankering after the wealth and marvels of alchemical pursuit, he was of course anxious to secure the services of a mind stored with knowledge. Never were two dispositions more dissimilar brought together. Instead of flattering the vanity of his patron by deferring to his desires and opinions, Bruno provoked his jealousy by showing a decided preference for other society. Instead of passing his time with Mocenigo, he attended the literary and scientific receptions which were held in the evening in many of the Venetian palaces, where he was always a welcome visitor. The Venetian nobleman actually believed the philosopher to be possessed ; his shallow, deceitful, superstitious nature being readily alarmed by Bruno's passionate impetuosity, which often expressed itself in what seemed to Mocenigo heretical assertions and blasphemous jests. It is evident that Bruno loathed him. " I soon found," he says, " that misfortunes were gathering thickly around me, and that I had committed myself to a perilous destiny, having built up for myself the walls of my own prison, and delivered myself up to my own ruin."

Mocenigo conveyed to his confessor every witty sarcasm and

daring sally of his guest, all of which were naturally distorted by passing through such a medium. The confessor wrote to Rome. The answer soon came, identifying Bruno as the renegade Dominican monk against whom an act of accusation had been drawn up sixteen years before. Becoming suspicious of foul play, Bruno announced his intention to return to Frankfort. Every preparation was made for his departure ; but Mocenigo, resolved not to let the hated philosopher slip through his fingers, decided to play the gaoler himself, in default of an order of detention from Rome. On the eve of Bruno's contemplated departure, he perpetrated a dastardly violation of every law of hospitality ; committed in fact a deed which will secure for him an eternal, indelible infamy. At midnight he tapped at Bruno's door, which was unsuspectingly opened. The nobleman entered, accompanied by five gondoliers, his servant, and another man. Bruno vehemently protested against the intrusion, but on the pretext of explaining it, Mocenigo led him away to another room, at the door of which he hastily drew aside to let Bruno pass, and then without having crossed the threshold himself, turned round, closed the door, and locked it outside. Returning to the philosopher's room, he took possession of all his effects, books, and papers, and instantly sent them to the Inquisition. The next night at the same hour Bruno himself was transferred to the dungeons of the Inquisition.

The trial commenced. Bruno denied all the monstrous accusations of Mocenigo ; but he gave the judges a list of all his works, and calmly discussed with them heretical tenets laid to his charge, with the air rather of a professor than of a man on trial for his life. Yet some of his confessions were irretrievably damning. He admitted doubts as to the Incarnation, regarding the second and third persons of the Trinity rather in the light of attributes of the great final cause than as distinct, independent existences. He confessed to a sufficiently obvious species of Pantheism, defining the first cause as : "A God not outside creation, but the soul of souls, the monarch of monarchs, living, eternal, infinite, immanent. In the part, as in the whole, is God." The definite charges preferred against him by Thomas Morosini, who came from Rome, to demand him of the *Savi* of Venice, were : "He is not only a heretic, but a heresiarch. He has written works in which he highly lauds the Queen of England, and other heretical monarchs. He has written divers things touching religion, which are contrary to the faith." The Venetian Council finally decided to transfer him to Rome, but with a recommendation to mercy. Bruno now felt that all indeed was over. No more books, reading, and teaching ; no more sweet companionship with congenial minds ; no more grateful, though arduous, pursuit of Truth. The prison doors shut upon him, and excluded for evermore all human fellowship. For seven years he languished in the dungeons of the Inquisition, and was tortured (who knows how

often?) to make him confess to what could not be proved from his works. Wondrous mercy, forsooth! Far better the swiftest, most agonising death, than this perpetual exclusion from the light of heaven, from all that makes life worth having. But nothing could bend his haughty spirit; his obdurate pride exasperated his persecutors; and at length (welcome deliverance!) the dungeon was exchanged for the stake. No more clemency could be extended to the obstinate heretic who had dared to promulgate such unorthodox doctrines as the plurality of worlds, the rotundity and motion of the earth, with its relative astronomical insignificance, and other dangerous heresies directly in contradiction to the teachings of Mother Church, then, as now, blessed with the gift of infallibility. On the 10th of February, 1600, sentence of death was pronounced on him, in the Church of Sta. Maria Sopra Minerva, by one of the most imposing tribunals ever assembled to pass judgment on a heretic. Supreme members of the Holy Office, commissioners, assessors, council, doctors of law and of divinity, and secular magistrates, were met together in this year of the jubilee, attracted by many magnificent spectacles, of which not the least was the impending execution. Long confinement and suffering had wasted his frame; his face was pale and thoughtful; but the eyes were still full of their old ardour, mingled with melancholy; and unmarred were the noble, regular features, marked at once by Greek grace and Neapolitan fire. But once was the haughty calmness of his demeanour broken. The sentence of death was pronounced, and Bruno was handed over to the secular authorities (Holy Church hypocritically washing her hands clean of his blood) with a recommendation of a "punishment as merciful as possible, and without effusion of blood;"—the atrocious formula for burning alive. Turning from his judges, bold and prophetic, he haughtily raised his head, and gave utterance to these words, which even now echo proudly on the ear: "You are more afraid to pronounce my sentence, than I to receive it."

A week's grace for recantation was given, but without avail; and on the 17th of February, Bruno was led out into the most open space in Rome, the Field of Flowers, and there burnt to death under the very shadow of the walls of the Vatican. To the last he was brave and defiant, contemptuously setting aside the crucifix presented to him to kiss. Not a groan, not a plaint, escapes him; only the victim writhes, and presently all that remains of the once great heart and noble head is a few handfuls of dust, which the winds blow around the pendant globe as a testimony against that faith which has been pre-eminent in the shedding of blood. They killed Bruno's body, but they could not touch the immortal part of him; they could not exterminate his influence on the world in which he had toiled and suffered. For a brief hour's space the martyr's head is brought low; then, behold! it is crowned with imperishable lustre;

death has no more any part in him, enthroned on the everlasting sun-smitten mountains of memory.

Before attempting an account, necessarily brief, of Bruno's writings, it will be as well to give some description of his personal presence. Prefixed to the life by Bartholomèss is a portrait, of which we give the following description by B.V., of the *National Reformer*, because it excels any possible delineation of ours: "A simple frock or shirt, with its loose collar rolled down, leaves the throat and neck bare; the head rises lofty and majestic. The forehead is magnificent, and magnificently backed and surmounted; large strong eyes, under broad-curved, ample, but not heavy brows; firm jaw, chin round and full; the upper lip with its short moustache swelling full of fight, but exquisitely curved in its contour as the bow of Apollo. Passion and power are there in repose; the expression is somewhat melancholy, with a mingling of strange subtle humour. It is a head full of grandeur and distinction, one of the very few supreme types in which immense passion and power are moulded in perfect harmony."

Bruno was certainly not a Christian, although Janus-faced Brewin Grant audaciously claims him as such. In the *Spaccio de la Bestia Trionfante* (the Expulsion of the Triumphant Beast) he arraigns superstition before the bar of reason, and pronounces sentence on the asserted miracles of every faith alike. The pagan deities are mercilessly satirised, above all Orion, "who could walk on the waves without wetting his feet, and do many other pretty tricks." This passage, standing where it does, irresistibly suggests another than Orion, who is reputed to have performed the same wonderful feat on the Sea of Galilee. It is in the *Spaccio*, too, that he aims another blow at the most characteristic doctrine of Christianity. Bruno draws a pretty poetical picture of the expulsion of the beasts of ancient theology from the constellations, and of the substitution of the cardinal virtues; Truth being, with fine poetical insight, located in the polar star. These changes will, he declares, prove agreeable to all "save the dastardly sect of pedants, who say that not doing good is acceptable to God, but believing in the catechism." Surely this is a direct thrust at the mischievous doctrine of salvation by faith, which is, perhaps, the only one distinctively belonging to Christianity, and promulgated by Christ.

Bruno was in fact a Pantheist, although the designation itself was not then invented. He is, perhaps, best described as the "poet of the theory of which Spinoza is the geometer." The efficient universal cause he declared was the universal Intellect, which is the primary and principal faculty of the soul of the world, the soul being, on the other hand, the universal form of this intellect. The universal soul was "as the pilot in the ship; which pilot, in so far forth as he is moved together with the ship, is part thereof; considered as the director and mover of

it, he is not a part of it, but is a distinct efficient." Human and animal souls were manifestations of the universal soul, differing in degree only, not in kind. "Not only is life found in all things," he says in the treatise "*De la Causa, Principio, et Uno*" (On Cause, Beginning, Unity), "but the soul is that which is the substantial form of all things; it presides over the matter, it holds its lordship in those things that are compounded; it effectuates the composition and consistency of their parts..... Whatever changes, then, of place or shape anything may undergo, it cannot cease to be; the spiritual substance being not less present in it than the material. The exterior forms alone are altered and annulled, because they are not things, but only appertain to things—are not substances, but the accidents and circumstances of substances." Death and dissolution should be contemplated without terror, seeing that matter and form are constant principles; but Bruno has nothing definite to say concerning the continuance of personal identity, which is after all the immortality that superstitious men long for. Elsewhere he chaunts sublimely the Pantheism of which he felt himself the inspired teacher. To him the universe is infinite and changeless beneath all changes, as the sea, though fluctuant and billowy, is substantially stable; whatever causes difference or number is mere accident, mere figure, mere combination; all differences meet in one perfect unity, which is alone stable, and ever remaineth. This, if not sound philosophy, has at least the merit of being poetical; and, after all, great truths are conveyed in these rhapsodical utterances. Beneath the veil of appearance, which must for ever hide from us the inner causes, there is the noumenal matter, or force, or both, which undergoes no change, receives no addition, and suffers no detraction. Goethe embraced this Pantheism when he called the universe the garment of God; Browning is imbued with it when he asserts "The one face far from vanish rather grows;" and Shelley approximated to it when he said "The one remains, the many change and pass." But Pantheism, Theism, and Atheism are only different views by variously-constituted minds of the one great unfathomable mystery of being.

It will thus be seen that Bruno was the logical precursor of Spinoza, anticipating the latter's doctrine of immanence, and propounding, although rather poetically than with philosophical exactitude, that metaphysical theory which Spinoza afterwards elaborated and developed into a fortified system of thought. It is not clear that Spinoza ever read any of Bruno's works, and therefore the originality of the great Jewish metaphysician remains unquestioned; still the impartial historian of philosophy will always record the fact that the Italian philosopher legitimately demands chronological priority.

There is a conspicuous merit of Bruno which Mr. Lewes acknowledges, and which has more recently met with public recognition from one of the foremost modern teachers of science.

Occupied as the schoolmen of the middle ages were about entities and quiddities, they had missed the great truth that "man is the interpreter of nature." Bruno called them away from this vain pursuit, declared the impossibility of arriving at any knowledge by this absurd process of introspection and abstraction, and bade them come forth into the veritable light of day, and study *Nature* herself as the great storehouse of all facts. Matter to him was not the mere inert thing men had foolishly supposed, but the "universal mother who brings forth all things as the fruit of her own womb." To him matter was instinct with life co-eternal and co-equal with the universal soul itself, producing all phenomenal manifestations by the inexorable laws of its being. The earth itself was a huge animal, and so also were all the planets revolving in infinite space. Naturally, therefore, he embraced the Copernican astronomy, for was it not more consonant than the older theory with his exalted notions respecting the Universe and its informing Soul? Professor Tyndall, in his late Belfast address, paid a splendid tribute to the memory of Bruno, which it were an injustice to withhold. "The Italian philosopher Giordano Bruno was one of the earliest converts to the new astronomy. Taking Lucretius as his exemplar, he revived the notion of the infinity of worlds; and, combining with it the doctrine of Copernicus, reached the sublime generalisation that the fixed stars are suns, scattered numberless through space and accompanied by satellites, which bear the same relation to them that our earth does to our sun, or our moon to our earth. This was an expansion of transcendent import; but Bruno came closer than this to our present line of thought. Struck with the problem of the generation and maintenance of organisms, and duly pondering it, he came to the conclusion that Nature does not imitate the technic of man. The infinity of forms under which matter appears were not imposed upon it by an external artificer; by its own intrinsic force and virtue it brings these forms forth. Matter is not the mere naked empty *capacity* which philosophers have pictured her to be, but the universal mother who brings forth all things as the fruit of her own womb." Bruno was evidently one of those rare combinations of imagination and perspicacity, gifted with the supreme power of intuitively perceiving great principles long before the accumulated facts are sufficient for the purposes of scientific demonstration.

Bruno satirised mercilessly the vain ostentatious pedantry of his day. All the orthodox science of the time was mere erudition, and a dispute about a scientific theory meant a learned quarrel as to the legitimate derivation of the contested theory from Aristotle or some other recognised authority. This pedantry of a pedantic age was the frequent subject of Bruno's scorn. "If," says he, "the pedant laughs, he calls himself Democritus; if he weeps, it is with Heraclitus; when he argues,

he is Aristotle ; when he combines chimeras, he is Plato ; when he stutters, he is Demosthenes."

The philosophers he reproached with blind adherence to authority, and with slavish imitation of antiquity ; the clergy with ignorance, avarice, hypocrisy, and intolerant bigotry. For awhile the revival of Platonism, while it lessened the adoration for Aristotle, rather increased than diminished the respect for antiquity, and the Platonists were quite as pedantic and slavishly submissive as the Aristotelians, although they worshipped another idol. But Bruno was free from this intellectual prostration ; he did not so much decry Aristotle, as the worship of Aristotle, nor so much worship Plato as feel grateful for the truths enounced by him. "He studied the ancients," says Mr. Lewes, "to extract from them such eternal truths as were buried amidst a mass of error ; they, the pedants, only studied how to deck themselves in borrowed plumes." To the independent mind of Bruno the truth which Bacon subsequently apprehended revealed itself, that it is we, and not the ancients, who live in the antiquity of the world, and that to bow down to the mere authority of predecessors is to abnegate the very reason which led them to discover the truths they have transmitted to us. The whole life of the wandering Italian was a long protest against the claims of authority ; a protest which he ratified with his death. The living, bright-eyed Now was to him transcendently more interesting and important than the dead past, and Nature infinitely higher than human conceptions of her.

Very amusing is it to read Bruno's satire on the scholastics, with their abstractions spun out of their own internal consciousness, which they mistook for natural causes, thus making their conceptions the measure of Nature's operations, instead of shaping their own conceptions according to experience of her order. We laugh now at the suppositious meat-roasting powers of the meat-jack, dragged in as the necessary efficient cause to account for the roasting of the meat, but similar fallacies of abstraction then abounded, and while to-day any sane man can smile at such absurdities, it required then no common power and no common courage to expose and deride them. If, said Bruno, certain metaphysicians in cowls are asked, in what consists the essential being of Socrates ? they reply, in Socrateity ; when questioned about the substantial form of an inanimate thing, for instance wood, they can never get beyond "lignevity"; some logical intention being always put as the principle of natural things. Others since Bruno have hunted these metaphysical monstrosities to death, but none has more wittily and pithily exposed the weak points of scholasticism. "It was," says Maurice, "a succession of such blows as these that made the scholastics reel, and stagger, and fall."

But, after all, a man like Bruno is remarkable and memorable, not so much for his positive teachings—although they were

extremely valuable—as for the spirit which animated him ; he is more distinguished as a noble warrior than as a teacher, and more admirable in his life than in his utterance. Some men write poems and some live them ; Bruno did both, but the life poem was by far the grander, and commands imperiously our gratitude and reverence. The spirit which animated Bruno's teachings was the love of Truth, the goddess whom he exalted high over all other terrestrial or celestial things, the one object of a wise and noble man's reverence. The great aim of his heroic life was to diffuse this religion, to spread the worship of this goddess. In his endeavour he found himself confronted by the interested, the bigoted, the intolerant, who denied to him the right of intellectual freedom. Against them all, single-handed, he opposed himself, standing resolutely for the indefeasible right of a man to think for himself. Undaunted by adversity, undeterred by persecution, fearless of poverty, exile, or the certain miseries of a pariah's life, he persisted in the course which his conscience approved ; and at last, when life could not be preserved, save at the cost of rectitude, he sacrificed it unhesitatingly, bearing proudly and without murmur the utmost malice of his foes. He fell battling for freedom of thought, the most precious heritage of mankind, upon which every possibility of progress depends. History records the names of more towering giants of thought, of grander poets who have bequeathed a more precious legacy of song ; but nowhere shall we find a name with which nobler and more endearing qualities associate themselves. He stands unique, bold, intrepid, impassioned ; dowered with spotless fame, radiant with matchless glory ; his brows begirt with the ever-lustrous martyr's crown, richer than Royal or Imperial diadem.

Readers desirous of pursuing the subject further may consult the following works : —

Jordano Bruno, par M. Bartholmèss. 2 vols.

Tyndall, Professor, Belfast Address before the British Association, 1874.

Draper, J. W., History of the Intellectual Development of Europe. Chapters xix., xx., xxii.

Maurice, F. D., Modern Philosophy. Chapter v., sections 35 to 57 inclusive.

Lewes, G. H., Biographical History of Philosophy. Part ii., sections 4 and 5.

*Macmillan's Magazine*, February, 1871. Article on Giordano Bruno, by Andrew Lang.

*Fraser's Magazine*, March, 1871. Article on Giordano Bruno

# HEROES AND MARTYRS

OF

## FREETHOUGHT.

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### 3.—HYPATIA.

**S**TANDING on an eminence commanding a full view of Alexandria, the spectator, fourteen centuries and a half ago, would behold a marvellous and imposing scene. Below him lay extended the great emporium of the world, the intellectual and commercial centre of civilisation; full of bustle and animation, throbbing with the pulsation of a quick and eager life. Its two great streets crossed each other at right angles, the one three miles long and the other one; and through these, and other wide streets of less length, poured the multitudinous life of the city. Long trains of camels and innumerable boats brought in the abundant harvests of the Nile for the consumption of the many-mouthed multitude within its walls, numbering hundreds of thousands. On all sides rose lofty buildings, temple, palace, church, synagogue, theatre, gymnasium, or exchange, their gilded roofs glittering in the sun. Wealth and poverty existed side by side then, just as now, and while crouching beggars solicited alms from the passers-by, gorgeously or fantastically arrayed Christian ladies swept by, in chariot or on foot, with mincing gait and dainty air, their dresses embroidered with Scripture parables, the Gospels hanging from their necks by golden chains, themselves accompanied by troops of slaves with fans and parasols to mitigate the terrible sunshine heat. All nationalities met in this cosmopolitan city. The thrifty, thriving Jew trader, concocting loans or cheapening in the market with some scarcely less astute Greek merchant; the Oriental with the changeless flowing robe of immemorial date, his dark lustrous eyes deep with the brooding light of antique civilisation; the native Egyptian, lowest of all, the servile slave or servant of foreign power, yet conscious of a nationality whose prestige and antiquity dwarfed all others; the Roman governor or consul whose proud step and haughty demeanour bespoke the representative of the mistress of the world; the pensive, bowed philosopher in simple garb cogitating on the profoundest mysteries of mind; and last, though not least, the cowled and

shaven monk, to whom all this wealth, commerce, and learning were as nothing to the greatness of that Holy Church whose interests he had sworn to maintain, for whom the sweetest sound, far excelling the bell of the merchant's camel, or the profane music of the theatres, was the midnight prayer of the hermit, or the chaunting of holy strains to the God of his faith.

Alexandria had been founded seven centuries before by Alexander the Great of Macedon, who, with consummate sagacity, selected it as the centre of communication between east and west. On his decease his great empire fell into the hands of his captains who divided it between them; Egypt with Alexandria falling to the share of Ptolemy, the founder of that royal race of Ptolemies, the most illustrious in all history, and of the long glories of the great city with which their names will be for ever associated. Ptolemy's first act towards settling the problem of reconciling the discordant elements of his metropolis was to reinstitute the worship of the Pantheistic god Serapis, for whom a magnificent temple was built, and adorned with all that Grecian art could lavish upon it. The worship of the goddess Isis soon followed in deference to the perpetual hankering of mankind after female divinity. But the great Museum was the most splendid monument of royal munificence, and in time became the favoured seat of science and learning, to which flocked philosophers from all parts of the world. Not mere reading and rhetoric were the pursuits of these men, their minds turned to questions of science, and their researches subsequently resulted in marvellous inventions. Botanical gardens, zoological menageries, anatomical and astronomical schools, and chemical laboratories, furnished ample provision for scientific pursuit. In addition there were two splendid libraries containing 700,000 volumes, which were collected at immense labour and expense; and the university is said at one time to have contained fourteen thousand students.

With these fostering conditions science rapidly and vigorously flourished into stately strength. The Alexandrine school produced some of the most memorable and distinguished men in the history of science. Here Euclid taught and wrote the immortal work on Geometry which still bears his name, and which has extorted admiration from all posterity as the model of correct reasoning and perspicuous exposition. Here the great Archimedes discovered the principle of the lever, invented the method of determining specific gravity, the endless screw, the screw pump, and burning mirrors; his magnificent sense of mastery and of trust in the universality of natural law being conveyed in the saying, "Give me whereon to stand and I will move the world." Here Eratosthenes, who invented a number of astronomical instruments, was able to demonstrate the roundness of the earth by arguments which, after being submerged in the night of the Dark Ages, had to be painfully recovered by countless seekers after truth. Here Apollonius is said to have

invented the first clock, and Hero even the first steam engine ; and here also flourished the great Hippocrates, justly called the father of medicine. Yet all this brilliant outcome of essentially Greek genius was doomed to destruction, for two potent influences were at the work of annihilation ; one the political mastery of Rome, which ended in the total suppression of the Greek intellect, and the other the rising Christianity, which ended in the suppression of all intellect whatever.

Under the pressure of Roman power and fashion the Greek intellect abated its brilliant manifestations and became merely passive, rather dwelling on the interpretation of past teaching than endeavouring to discover new truths. There grew up a mystical school of theologians, which contrived to blend Oriental Pantheism with the old and almost universal triune divinities, and which may be said to have avenged the wrongs of Greece ; for the Alexandrine philosophy which they developed leavened Christianity more than any other influence, and so vindicated the irrepressible power of Grecian thought on the progress of mankind. Roman despotism had done its part ; it now remained for Christian intolerance to complete the work of destruction, and extinguish the last remaining spark of intellectual independence.

In the beginning of the fifth century Christianity had fully entered upon its career of temporal conquest and persecution, inaugurating, as it were, a fit prelude to the Dark Ages which soon after followed. The simple Christianity of primitive times was completely lost in the swelling glories of a Church, universal in aim and pretension ; the Bishop of Rome had become more powerful than even the Emperor himself, and the prelate of Alexandria was scarcely reckoned much inferior to his metropolitan brother. The Church was now virtually the predominant force—social and political, as well as religious, controlling the Imperial power by artful threats or well-timed service, or by means of the females and eunuchs of the palace. All the splendour of outworn Paganism seemed to be attaching itself to the triumphant new faith, and Christian bishops and priests were beginning to vie with the antique religion in magnificence of ceremony and dress. To further the power of the Church was the engrossing object of priestly ambition, and to this end, every contemptible prostitute device was resorted to. The rites of Paganism were imported wholesale into the practise of Christian worship ; the adoration of saints and relics took the place of the old worship of a multiplicity of gods ; priestly vestments were conformed as strictly as might be to the habiliments of Pagan ceremonial ; incense was burnt in the churches ; prayers were offered to an innumerable horde of newly-discovered or invented saints ; pilgrimages became again fashionable ; and lying wonders and pretended miracles abounded to meet the craving demand of the all-credulous multitude. The discovery of long buried saints and martyrs would alone form a subject

of infinite amusement, and the dissemination of precious relics kept pace with it. Amongst other relics the very crosses on which Christ and the two thieves were crucified were discovered under a temple of Venus, formerly erected on the site of the Holy Sepulchre, and upon the centre of these still remained the inscription written by Pilate. Singular to relate the Saviour's cross displayed a marvellous power of growth or reproduction, for within a few years there were enough specimens of it scattered over Europe to have constructed many hundred crosses. After this we need be surprised at nothing, however absurd. Christianity had become a mere pandering to popular superstition for the securing of power, and already had entered upon that evil and infamous career which stands as one of the foulest blots on the page of history.

Intolerance was the natural accompaniment of ignorance, superstition, and bigotry. To answer the philosophers by argument was tedious and difficult; to silence them by rigorous suppression was pleasant and easy. Ancient learning was therefore decried as magic, evidently proceeding from the Devil, and philosophy was denounced as a vain pursuit which aimed at making men wiser than the God of revelation had intended. In the Holy Scriptures was to be found all knowledge necessary to man's guidance, and all besides was to be stigmatised, and, if possible, extirpated as profitless and unholy. Paganism itself was not at first directly persecuted, but indirectly it certainly was the object of attack, for the persecution of philosophers strengthened the hands of the Church and rendered quite easy the task of dealing with the deluded masses. As an instance of the mode in which philosophy was trampled down, the case of Sopater, a philosopher and friend of Constantine, may be cited. He was accused of binding the winds in an adverse quarter by the influence of magic, so that the corn-ships could not reach Constantinople. In obedience to popular and ecclesiastical clamour, the Emperor was obliged to give orders for his decapitation, to appease the general fury. The works of philosophers who wrote against Christianity, such as Porphyry and Celsus, were refuted by the quick and effective agency of fire. Under Theodosius sacrifices, and even the entering of Pagan temples, were prohibited, the ancient rite of inspecting the sacrificial entrails was made a capital offence, the revenues of many temples were alienated, and some were entirely demolished. All this was the work of the gentle and amiable Christian clergy, who had been enjoined by their great master to unite the harmlessness of the dove with the wisdom of the serpent. The Early Fathers expressed their utter contempt for the philosophy which they could not refute. Eusebius called it a vain and useless labour, diverting the soul from the exercise of better things. Lactantius deemed it "empty and vain," and derided the heretical notion of the globular form of the earth on the ground of the absurdity of trees on the other

side of the world hanging with their tops downwards; and St. Augustine asserted the impossibility of inhabitants on the opposite side of the earth, since no such race was recorded by Scripture as the descendants of Adam. Thus the Bible was erected into the position legitimately belonging to reason; it was made the sovereign arbiter of all disputes; and was declared to contain the beginning and the end of sound science and sound philosophy.

The Archbishopric of Alexandria was held by one, Theophilus, a bold, unscrupulous man, formerly a monk of Nitria. About the year 390, the great Trinitarian conflict was composed, the Unitarian party having been worsted; and the quarrel within the Church being settled there was ample time to deal with the common Pagan enemy; as for opportunities, they were to be created as occasion required. Against the Temple of Serapis the popular fury was directed, the temple being hateful to Theophilus and his monks for two reasons: first, because of the Pantheism which its worship shadowed forth, and secondly, because dealings with the Devil had been going on for ages within its walls. The Serapion comprised a magnificent library containing 400,000 volumes, and there also were treasured the astronomical and geometrical instruments which had once been assiduously employed by Euclid, Eratosthenes, and others, but which were now regarded by Christian ignorance and bigotry as devices of magic and fortune-telling. It happened that in digging the foundation for a new church to be built upon the site of an ancient temple of Osiris, obscene symbols of Phallic worship were discovered. These being exhibited for the derision of the rabble in the market-place, a riot ensued, the Pagans making the Serapion their head-quarters. The rescript from the Emperor Theodosius enjoined that the building should forthwith be destroyed, the task being entrusted to the ready and willing hands of Theophilus. First the library was pillaged, its treasures were dispersed or destroyed, and then the image of Serapis himself was shivered to fragments by the blow of a battle-axe; the whole structure being afterwards razed to the ground, and a church built in its precincts. Other Egyptian temples speedily shared the same fate; the cowed monk tyrannised over the philosophy and piety of the old faith, and substituted the worship of his own precious relics for that of Pagan folly. Archbishop Theophilus went to his account, and was succeeded by his nephew St. Cyril, who had been expressly prepared to fill the holy office, and who was in all respects a fit successor of so worthy a man as the departed prelate. Soon after his accession to office, a conflict arose between the Christians and the Jews, the latter for awhile getting the upper hand, but only for awhile. The Christians soon aroused themselves under the inspiration of Cyril, and proceeded to sack the synagogues and pillage the houses of the Jews. The Roman Prefect endeavoured to suppress the riot,

but in vain. Five hundred monks swarmed in from the desert to assist in the labours of Christian love. The Prefect was himself wounded in the head by a stone thrown by the monk Ammonius, and affairs were assuming an ugly aspect, when the respectable inhabitants interfered and suppressed the disturbance. The monk Ammonius was seized and put to death. Cyril, however, had him buried with unusual honours, and directed that he should be canonised as Saint Thaumastus ! This introduction to the imminent approaching tragedy will prepare our readers' minds for it, and obviate the probability of surprise at any barbarities, however atrocious.

Cyril was a fashionable preacher, above all desirous of popularity, and it grieved him sorely that a celebrated Pagan of Alexandria should be able to attract audiences far larger than his own. Amongst the surviving cultivators of philosophy there was one, Hypatia, the daughter of Theon, the mathematician, a young and beautiful woman, in the full flush of ardent life, and, if report speak true, as lovely as a poet's dream. She gently refused all her lovers, preferring to cultivate philosophy untrammelled by domestic ties, and devoted her time and ability to lecturing publicly on various philosophical and geometrical problems. Her lecture-room was crowded daily by audiences more numerous and fashionable than those of Cyril. The Archbishop had not philosophy, but he had power, and he was determined to stop the enchantments of this sorceress, who deluded men from the truth of God as expounded by his faithful servant, St. Cyril.

Thus in the year 414, Greek philosophy and ecclesiastical ambition stand face to face ; the former in the person of Hypatia, like a finely-tempered steel sword of reason, the latter in the person of Cyril, like the iron mace of despotic power, ready to shiver the bright steel to pieces by one tremendous swift blow. One day, as Hypatia comes forth to her Academy, she is assaulted by a mob of Cyril's monks, bare-legged, black-cowled fiends, from whom every spark of humanity has been driven by the cursed training of the Church. She is dragged from her chariot, and stripped naked in the public streets ; then hauled into an adjacent church, and killed by a blow from the club of Peter the Reader, her cries ringing through the sacred edifice, scream on scream, the cries of helpless innocence in the hands of savage power. But death alone is not sufficient to glut the vengeance of these fiends. They dismember the naked corpse, and finish their infernal crime by scraping the flesh from the bones with oyster-shells, and casting the remnants into the fire. So perished this young and beautiful woman, a victim to the intolerance and bigotry of Christian monks ; seeming to typify in her own sweet person the witchery and magic of Greece, her art, her poetry, her philosophy. With Hypatia philosophy itself expired in the intellectual metropolis of the world. No abiding place henceforth was to be found for

the lovers of wisdom ; all lay prostrate at the feet of the Church ; and the Dark Ages, swiftly approaching, buried almost every memory of what was once so noble and lovely in the antiquity of thought. Not till the Saracen broke the power of the Church, and wrested from oblivion some remnants of ancient science and philosophy, was there any hope of redemption. The redemption happily was destined to come, and Grecian intellect destined to avenge its wrongs on the Christianity which had trodden it under foot. The *renaissance* of art and the revival of learning were like the first joyful exercises of almost forgotten strength after a long night of sleep. One can, in presence of this dark history of crime, feel the full force of Mr. Swinburne's magnificent Hymn to Proserpine, depicting a young Pagan—calm, proud, and prophetic—foreseeing the same fate for the new gods as that which has overtaken the old :—

Thou hast conquered, O pale Galilean ; the world has grown  
grey at thy breath ;  
We have drunken of things Lethean, and fed on the fulness of  
death.  
O lips that the live blood faints in, the leavings of racks and  
rods !  
O ghastly glories of saints, dead limbs of gibbeted gods !  
Though all men abase them before you in spirit, and all knees  
bend,  
I kneel not, neither adore you ; but, standing, look to the end.  
Though the feet of thine high priests tread where thy lords and  
our forefathers trod ;  
Though these that were gods are dead, and thou, being dead,  
art a god ;  
Though before thee the throned Cytherean be fallen, and hidden  
her head,  
Yet thy kingdom shall pass, Galilean, thy dead shall go down  
to the dead.

Of Hypatia's life little is known ; only the tragic story of her death has been preserved. Yet, as her murder marks an epoch in the history of the struggle between Freethought and Intolerance, we have deemed it expedient to present our readers with a picture of the times at Alexandria, and an account of the general causes which led up to the crowning catastrophe of the foregoing sketch.

The reader may consult :—

Draper's History of the Intellectual Development of Europe,  
vol. i., chapters vi. and x.  
Gibbon's Decline and Fall, chapter xlvii.

**BERNARDINO TELESIO.**

**A**MONG the great Italian heretics who in the 16th century represented the growing revolt against the infallibility of Aristotle, probably none exercised a wider or deeper influence than Bernardino Telesio, born at Cosenza, in Calabria, South Italy, in the year 1509. This distinguished man received his first education under his uncle at Milan, where he acquired great proficiency in the Greek and Latin languages. He was present at the Sack of Rome in 1527, and was for some reason imprisoned for two months, besides losing all he possessed. After his liberation he went to Padua, where he assiduously studied mathematics and philosophy, having refused, it is said, the office of tutor to the Infante Philip of Spain, and also the offer of an archbishopric made to him by Pius IV. In 1535 he was received as Doctor of Philosophy in Rome, where he passed some years in the society of the learned, and where he published his two chief works on "Nature," which met with unexpected applause. Induced by the importunity of his numerous friends and admirers, he opened a school of philosophy in Naples, which soon became famous, both for the number of its pupils and for a bold, uncompromising hostility to Plato and to Aristotle as authorities on scientific questions. Telesio and his assistant professors were highly esteemed by those who were desirous of studying nature rather than dialectics, and he was patronised by several great men, particularly by Ferdinand, Duke of Nucerì. But his popularity brought upon him the envy of the "long-necked geese of the world, who are ever hissing dispraise, because their natures are little;" and his pronounced independence of mind provoked violent opposition from the orthodox teachers, especially from the monks, who loaded him and his school with calumny. His latter days were much embittered by the rancorous malignity of his opponents, and in 1588 he expired from a bilious disorder, the severity of which was increased by great domestic affliction, the old man having lost his wife and two children, one of whom was stabbed. After his death, in 1596, his works were placed on the *Index Expurgatorius* by Pope Clement VIII., notwithstanding the friendship of his predecessor for the departed philosopher.

Telesio, in language almost as clear and emphatic as Lord Bacon's, reprobated as chimerical the old method of studying nature; and he is singularly enough honourably mentioned by our great English philosopher, who exempts him from the sweeping condemnation passed on previous students of nature. In his work on the "Nature of Things," published in Latin in the year 1565, he asserts "that the construction of the world,

and the magnitude and nature of the bodies contained in it, is not to be sought after by *reasoning*, as men in former times have done, but to be perceived by *sense*, and to be ascertained from the *things themselves*." He then passes a swift condemnation on those who have presumed, by mere ratiocination, to divine the principles and causes of the universe, and affirms that a slower wit and less vigorous spirit characterise the *true* lovers of wisdom, who prefer ascertained demonstrable truth to the vain and unfounded imaginings of their own minds. The right method of studying nature is, he declares, inductive, proceeding upon a basis of ascertained facts, whence we ascend to the principles of things; and this method may be pursued fearlessly by all alike, by the slow as well as by the quick-witted, for "if there should turn out to be nothing divine or admirable, or very acute in our studies, yet these will at all events never contradict the things or themselves, seeing that we only use our *sense* to follow Nature, which is *ever at harmony with herself, and is ever the same in her acts and operations*." Surely it is quite startling to find an old Italian philosopher preaching in such unmistakeable language the value, nay, indispensableness, of experiment at a time when our own Bacon had but just emerged from long clothes.

It cannot be said that Telesio's physical system, which he endeavoured to substitute for that of Aristotle, was worthy to supplant it, for it was extremely fanciful; he, like many another philosopher, having swerved from the faithful observance of the logical rules which his sober judgment approved. Probably the paucity of accumulated facts rendering scientific demonstration impossible, the rapid, eager mind of the Italian was forced to formulate some theory of things as a mental resting-place, however inadequately supported. But, amidst all his speculative vagaries, Telesio constantly remembers one great truth which forms, as it were, the base of his system, namely, that *matter* is indestructible and ever the same in quantity, incapable alike of increase or diminution. Matter he conceives to be inert and to be acted upon by the two contrary principles of heat and cold, from the perpetual operation of which incorporeal agents arise all the several forms in nature. Even here there is an element of truth, for certainly heat does play an important part in the theories of modern physics, and is recognised as an all-pervasive influence. Although Telesio's fanciful speculations are of little positive value, yet his persistent attack on dogmatic authority as represented by Aristotle, and his lucid exposition of the inductive method of physical research, entitle him to our gratitude and admiration. A bold thinker, an intrepid advocate of freedom of thought, and a staunch friend of science, he rightfully claims a place in our muster-roll of heroes.

The reader may consult:—

Maurice's *Modern Philosophy*, chap. v., sect. 34.

Enfield's *History of Philosophy*, book viii., chap. iii., sect. 4.

**TOMMASO CAMPANELLA.**

**C**AMPANELLA was a countryman of Telesio, being born at Stilo, in Calabria, in the year 1568. Like Bruno, he displayed a wonderful precocity of genius. At thirteen he was able to write verses with great facility, and at fourteen he took the Dominican habit, thus enrolling himself a member of that great ecclesiastical organisation to which Bruno also belonged. He assiduously studied theological subjects, his first ambition being to rival the fame of Albert and the great Thomas Aquinas. In the convent of San Giorgio his youthful mind was deeply exercised upon the great themes of theology and philosophy, until at length he discovered the sterility of the ancient method of philosophising. The fame of Telesio was then noised abroad, and Campanella, being attracted thereby, obtained and read the old philosopher's treatise, "On the Nature of Things," already described in our preceding biography. He was captivated by the bold spirit which animated the teachings of Telesio, and was induced thereby to leave the barren tracks of baseless speculation for the plainer but more fruitful paths of inductive research. With all a proselyte's ardour, he engaged in a defence of Telesio against the attempted refutation by Antoninus Marta.

In the life of Bruno the reader will find depicted the grovelling submission of the human mind to the authority of Aristotle, a subserviency partly due to the ancient prestige of the Stagirite, and partly to his having been for centuries backed by the almost omnipotent power of the Church. It was natural in such circumstances that Campanella's uncompromising hostility to Aristotle should raise a violent ferment, and bring upon him censure and persecution. His monastic brethren were least of all inclined to tolerance, and their hatred was still further increased by his decisive contradiction of many long cherished beliefs. Supported, however, by wealthy patrons, he continued, in face of all opposition, to persevere in his attempt to reform philosophy; but at length neither the power of his own genius nor the patronage of friends could further protect him from insult and persecution, and he was obliged to flee. For about ten years he wandered through Italy, visiting Rome, Florence, Venice, Padua, and Bologna. At Venice he saw Sarpi, and at Florence the great Galileo. At last he settled in his native country, where, probably to protect himself, he wrote a defence of the See of Rome; but in 159 he was arrested and thrown into prison, as the leader of an alleged conspiracy against the King of Spain and the Neapolitan Government. The wildest charges were preferred against him, as that he was about

to announce himself as the Messiah, and to get himself crowned King of Calabria, and he was accused of the authorship of books he had never written. Notwithstanding the intercession of the Pope, Paul IV., and of his nuncio, Campanella was kept in prison twenty-seven years, during the greater part of which time he was denied the privilege of reading and writing. Seven times he was put to the torture, but his indomitable spirit would not bend, and no incriminatory words could be wrung from his lips. As soon as the indulgence of books and writing materials was granted he composed a work on the "Spanish Monarchy," and another on "Real Philosophy," both of which were sent into Germany to be published. In 1626 he was liberated in consequence of the express command of Pope Urban VIII. to Philip IV. of Spain. His flagrant heresies, however, made his residence in Italy unsafe. At Rome his preaching of the new philosophy caused intense excitement; his adversaries stirred up the mob against him, and he was obliged to escape in disguise to France, being assisted in his flight by the French Ambassador, the Count de Noailles.

At Paris he was favourably received by Cardinal Richelieu, the founder of the French Academy, a discriminating and powerful genius, whom his enemies openly accused of Atheism. The Cardinal procured from Louis XIII. a pension for the exiled philosopher, which enabled him to live comfortably at the Dominican Monastery, in the Rue St. Honoré, Paris, until his death in 1639. His last years were spent in the midst of learned society, and before he expired he paid a brief visit to Holland, where he met the celebrated Descartes.

Most of Campanella's works were written in prison, and it was while suffering incarceration that he bravely dared to champion the cause of Galileo, who was persecuted by the savage Inquisition, and compelled to recant his daring heresies about the position and movement of the earth. Numerous works proceeded from his fertile pen, amongst which the following, all written in Latin, may be cited: "A Precursor to the Restoration of Philosophy," "On the Rejection of Paganism," "On Astrology," "Rational Philosophy," "The City of the Sun," "Universal Philosophy," "On the Right Method of Studying," and "Atheism Subdued." The "City of the Sun" is a social romance, after the style of Plato's "Republic," Bacon's "New Atalantis," and More's "Utopia," in which community of women figures among other crudities. The "Atheism Subdued" ought, says a judicious critic, to have been entitled "Atheism Triumphant," as the author puts far stronger arguments into the mouth of the Atheist than into that of the Theist. Heretical opinions were in that persecuting age often thus concealed under an orthodox mask; while professing to be faithful Christians, philosophers would often adduce, and ineffectively answer, powerful arguments against the faith. When we come to the life of Vanini we shall find a conspicuous example of this. However much

we may deplore such weakness, we have no right to censure it, unless we are perfectly confident that we ourselves could have braved the anger and malice of the whole world.

Like many other minds of the age, Campanella was a strange compound of sense and absurdity. In his astrological writings he confesses to a belief in the cure of disease by the words of an old woman, and he appears to have believed that, like Socrates, when any danger threatened, he was warned by a demon, between sleeping and waking. Yet in other respects he evinces great boldness and soberness of thought. Most of his philosophy was borrowed from his master, Telesio; he accepted the Telesian theory of matter, and of the perpetual action thereon of heat and cold, the two great active agents. Yet he was not a slavish follower of his master; on the contrary, he often controverted many of his notions. All animal operations are, he thought, produced by one universal spirit, which acts in all sensoriums. All things in nature have a passive sense of feeling, and withal a consciousness of impressions, and a perception of the objects by which they are produced. The universal soul thus pervades all nature, our earth, like the planets in Bruno's philosophy, being sentient. His psychological notions were more plausible. Sense, the foundation of all knowledge, is the only trustworthy guide in philosophy, and this faculty he divides into present perception, and inference from things perceived to things not perceived. A simple classification of mental powers, and highly scientific for the age in which it appeared. Campanella, like Bruno, Telesio, and Vanini, is chiefly remarkable on account of the spirit of his philosophy, rather than for its positive value. Like them, he stands forth conspicuously as a champion of the cause of mental freedom against dogmatic authority, and his memory should be honoured as that of one who dared and suffered much persecution for Truth's sake.

The reader may consult:—

Enfield's History of Philosophy, book x., chap. ii., section 4. Other information can be obtained only piecemeal from various sources.

**LUCILIO VANINI.**

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**L**UCILIO VANINI was born at Taurisano, near Naples in 1584 or 1585. His father was steward to the Duke of Taurisano, Viceroy of Naples, and according to the son's statements a man of elevated character. Besides his natural prenomens of Lucilio, Vanini during his lifetime assumed others, such as Julius Cæsar and Pompey. This affectation of celebrated names brought upon him an accusation of pride, but he defended himself on the ground that a miserable theologian of Rome unfortunately bore the same names as himself, and shared his renown without partaking in his labours. His father sent him to Rome where he studied theology and philosophy, his first master in theology being Barthelmi Argotti, whom he highly praises, calling him the phoenix of preachers: in philosophy he had for master Jean Bacon, whom he styles the Prince of Averroists, and from whom he learnt to swear by Averroes. His favourite authors were Pomponatius, Cardan, Averroes, and Aristotle, but to none of them did he pin his faith. Each of them is occasionally severely handled by Vanini in his works, although he accords to them all praise when seemingly due. Besides theology and philosophy, he studied physics, astronomy, medicine, and civil and ecclesiastical law. He afterwards at Padua made theology his special study, became a doctor of canon and civil law, and was ordained a priest.

Vanini's father although a worthy man was not well to do, and had left his son no fortune. The young doctor and priest was therefore poor, but he supported his poverty with honour and courage. "All is warm," he writes, "for those who love; have we not braved the most piercing colds of winter at Padua, with wretchedly insufficient raiment, animated solely by the desire to learn?" When he had completed his studies in this city he found himself prepared to travel through Europe, to visit the academies, and to assist at the conferences of the learned. According to his own writings he must have travelled over the greater part of Europe, visiting not only the whole of Italy, but also France, England, Holland, and Germany. Fathers Mersenne and Garasse, the two principal authorities for the facts of his life, inform us that before his execution at Toulouse he confessed before the Parliament there assembled, that at Naples, before starting on his tour, he and a dozen of his friends had formed the project of journeying over Europe to promulgate Atheism, and that France fell to his share. M. Rousselot, however, the editor of Vanini, stigmatises this as a libellous detraction from Vanini's character, and declares that he was

obliged to quit Italy, where his lectures recalled those of Pomponatius, and seek refuge in France, where he published his two principal works: the *Amphitheatrum Æternæ Providentiæ, &c.*, at Lyons in 1615, and the *De Admirandis Naturæ Regina, &c.*, in 1616. Everywhere he went he discussed and expounded, arousing the opposition of the bigoted, and extorting the admiration of the independent. From Lyons he was compelled to flee to London to avoid being burnt, and even at the latter place he was imprisoned for forty-nine days by the zealous religionists of our own metropolis. This happened in 1614, five years before his death. Father Mersenne alleges that about this time he entered a convent of Guienne, where he made fervid professions of faith, but whence he was expelled for depraved conduct; but, as M. Rousselot observes, this is an allegation advanced without proof. If the holy Father deemed it his duty to cite the fact, he ought also to have recognised an obligation no less great to prove it. At Paris Vanini had for host and protector the Marshal de Bassompierre, whose almoner he became, and to whom he dedicated his second great work. Here also he enjoyed the friendship of the Papal Nuncio, Roberto Ubaldini, Bishop of Politio, whose rich library afforded him invaluable opportunity for study. But his naturally uneasy and adventurous spirit impelled him to wander like a knight-errant of philosophy, and he quitted Paris for Toulouse. There happened, however, just then a circumstance which fully justified his departure. The two works above cited had been examined and sanctioned by the censors of the Sorbonne; but as the latter in particular made a great noise, the Sorbonne examined it afresh and condemned it to the flames. The author was accused of reproducing the ideas of a book called "The Three Impostors," nay, even of reprinting the work itself; but as a matter of fact, this work, although much talked of, has never been seen by any one and probably never had existence. This charge of plagiarism is on a par with the statement of Father Mersenne that Vanini's preaching and writing had perverted so many young men, doctors and poets, that he had 50,000 Atheistic followers at Paris!

At Toulouse Vanini found his life overshadowed by this sentence of the Sorbonne, and before long the fate of his work became his own also. He was accustomed to hold conferences with his friends on matters of philosophy; by one of these, a respectability named Francon, he was denounced as an impious heretic. The following are the words of Father Garasse, which may serve as a specimen of the style in which the enemies of Vanini speak of him: "Lucilio Vanini was a Neapolitan nobody, who had roamed over all Italy in search of fresh food, and over great part of France as a pedant. This wicked rascal, having arrived at Gascogne, in the year 1617, endeavoured to disseminate his own madness, and to make a rich harvest of impiety, thinking to have found spirits susceptible to

his teachings ; he insinuated himself with effrontery amongst the nobles and gentry, as frankly as if he had been a domestic, and acquainted with all the humours of the great ; but he met with spirits more strong and resolute in the defence of truth than he had imagined. The first who discovered his horrible impieties was a gentleman named Francon, possessed of sound sense. It happened that towards the end of 1618, Francon having gone to Toulouse, as he was esteemed a brave gentleman and an agreeable companion, soon saw himself visited by an Italian, reported to be an excellent philosopher, and one who propounded many novel and startling curiosities. This man spoke such fine things, such novel propositions, and such agreeable witticisms, that he easily attached himself to Francon, by a sympathy of the supple and serviceable disposition of his hypocritical nature. Having made an opening, he commenced to insert the wedge ; little by little he hazarded maxims ambiguous, and every way dangerous, until no longer able to contain the venom of his malice, he discovered himself entirely." The worthy Father says that Francon's first impulse was to poniard Vanini, but after reflection he preferred to denounce him ; it was thus that Vanini, who perhaps had fallen into a trap, was delivered into the hands of the law. The President Gramond, author of "The History of France under Louis XIII.," gives an account of the trial which ensued, and of the wretched arguments for the existence of God which Vanini adduced in answer to interrogations concerning his belief in Deity. One cannot read these last without suspecting that the arraigned culprit, with infinite contempt, was expending his masterly irony on the judges who were trying him. Gramond himself thinks that he reasoned so, not from conviction, but from vanity and fear. His judges apparently took the same charitable view of the case, for they condemned him to have his tongue cut out, and then to be burnt alive. During the trial his courage seemed to fail him ; men with the indomitable heroism of Bruno are not abundant, but rare as the fabled phoenix. He confessed, took the communion, and professed a readiness to subscribe to the tenets of the Church, which he certainly disbelieved and despised ; but when the sentence destroyed all hope, he flung away the Christian mask, and recovered his natural dignity. The fearful suspense was less bearable than the certainty of having to stand at the stake. Let us not hypocritically be harsh in our judgment on this man ; rather let us reprobate that bigotry and intolerance which could be the means of reducing a naturally proud spirit to such degradation.

Vanini was burnt at Toulouse, on the Place St. Etienne, February 19th, 1619. That he died bravely cannot be denied. *Le Mercure Français*, which cannot be suspected of any partiality towards him, reports "that he died with as much constancy, patience, and fortitude as any other man ever seen ; for

setting forth from the Conciergerie joyful and elate, he pronounced in Italian these words : ' Come, let us die cheerfully like a philosopher.' " There is a report that, on seeing the pile, he cried out, Ah, my God ! On which one said, You believe in God then ; and he retorted, No ; it's a fashion of speaking. Father Garasse says that he uttered many other notable blasphemies, refused to ask forgiveness of God, or of the king, and died furious and defiant. So obstinate indeed was he that pincers had to be employed to pluck out his tongue, in order duly to execute the sentence of the law. The President Gramond writes : " I saw him in the tumbril, as they led him to execution, mocking the Cordelier who had been sent to exhort him to repentance, and insulting our Saviour by these impious words : ' He sweated with fear and weakness, and I, I die undaunted.' " Thus perished Vanini, at the age of thirty-four, a victim to religious bigotry, to the last an obstinate heretic.

Vanini's Scepticism was of the most pronounced character, in fact, it is very doubtful whether he had any belief at all in the existence of God ; certainly he was declared an Atheist by his persecutors, and put to death as such. In the Amphitheatre he undertakes to defend Providence against the malicious attacks of precedent Atheists, such as Diagoras, Protagoras, and others. But his replies to their arguments are wretchedly weak, and he constantly falls back upon Holy Scripture as an all-sufficient answer to objectors, admitting, however, that the Atheists are still unconvinced, seeing that they regard the Bible as he does Æsop's Fables or the dreams of old women. In the Dialogues on Nature he passes in review all beliefs, discussing them with the utmost verve and audacity, and forgetting not the impostures of priests, whose institutions are to him but pious frauds. The mask worn in the Amphitheatre is here lifted enough to show the features concealed. No wonder it brought upon him the judgment of death.

Vanini was one of the most hardy and enlightened spirits of his century. Mixed with graver matter, there are in his writings a number of superstitions and examples of false science, such as are to be found in every author of the time ; but this in no way detracts from his great *ess*. He was one of the most sceptical in an age of intellectual revolt, a champion of reason against the power of authority. In the prime of his life he perished at the stake, bravely and defiantly, notwithstanding his previous moments of weakness. He, too, wears the crown of martyrdom, and is enrolled in the Freethought calendar of saints as a heroic warrior in the cause of human redemption.

The reader may consult :—

Rousselot, M. X., *Œuvres Philosophiques de Vanini ; avec une Notice sur sa Vie et ses Ouvrages.* Paris, 1842.

# HEROES AND MARTYRS

OF

## FREETHOUGHT.

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### 4.—BENEDICT SPINOZA.

**W**ONDERFUL is the fate of greatness. The men destined to exercise potent sway over their kind through successive ages are too often misunderstood and misappreciated by their own generation ; fortunate, indeed, if they have not to bear the weight of the world's malice besides. Such is necessarily the fortune of supreme genius ; being immeasurably ahead of all others, the master minds are doomed to comparative solitude. The feet of clay mix with the multitude, and are accurately enough discerned by them ; the lofty head is exalted into the clear sunlight, and the grovellers below cannot continuously gaze thereon because of the blinding glare which greatness alone can affront. But earth's generations increase in stature as the ages roll ; the sublime altitude of creative genius can be contemplated with faces less upturned ; and posterity at last, meting out tardy justice, reverses the verdict of its predecessors. Then indeed there sometimes supervenes an opposite excess. The despised and rejected of previous generations comes to be regarded as almost beyond criticism ; his merits are exaggerated, and his defects ingeniously glossed. Such revulsion, however, is natural and by no means deplorable. Time will right all. Rational criticism succeeding pardonable idolatry will gauge the dimensions of the imperial thinkers, and assign to each his place in the intellectual development of humanity.

With respect to the subject of this biography the temper of public opinion has undergone a remarkable change. For many generations after his death Spinoza was the object of almost universal execration ; Spinozism and Atheism were identical phrases ; to express any sympathy with the spirit or admiration for the intellect and life of the outcast philosopher, was to incur the certainty of being regarded as a wilful child of the devil. Now, however, the poor Amsterdam Jew is elevated to the metaphysical throne, and before him loyal subjects bow. "The Systematic Atheist" of Bayle is the "God-intoxicated

man" of Novalis ; since the time of Lessing and Mendelssohn he has profoundly influenced Germany's noblest minds, in particular that of her greatest poet, Goethe ; in France he has extorted the homage of the subtlest thinkers ; and even in England, averse from ontological speculation as our best intellect is, his rigorous logic and supreme mental grasp and spiritual insight have won high and intense admiration. The grand simplicity of his life, too, has been fully recognised, and no longer are senseless accusations hurled at his memory. Even the most determined opponents acknowledge that his character was free from all meanness, egotism, baseness, and chicane ; nay, they are compelled to admit his claim to rank among the few combinations of sublime genius and heroic fortitude of which the human race can boast. Every one, agreeing or disagreeing intellectually, must feel when perusing his works that they are in the clear air of a great man's presence.

The Jewish people, from whom Spinoza derived his origin, has a remarkable history ;—the semi-barbarous tribes of Palestine eventually decided the religion of the civilised world. From them sprang the literature which Christianity adopts as the veritable Word of God, and in their midst was born the Nazarene destined to wield the religious sceptre over subject nations. For such gifts some feel no inexpressible gratitude, and yet they also can loyally thank this strange people for other deeds. In the long night of the Dark Ages, when Christian bigotry ruthlessly trampled under-foot all humanising and progressive influences, the Jews held tenaciously the torch of Science. Arabian learning was first imported by the Jewish merchant ; and the people against whom scornful tongues were thrust, whose gaberdine was the badge of outlawry, upon whose face the meanest Christian beggar might contemptuously and impunibly spit, actually for ages supplied the whole of Europe and the East with physicians, and furnished every important educational institution with the most skilful and erudite teachers. It were impossible to exaggerate the value of such devotion to intellectual pursuits. Religious persecution, protracted through centuries, stereotyped the Jewish nation ; now it is fast merging into the populations around it ; but never will the faithful historian forget the immeasurable debt of gratitude due to the long-despised people of Israel.

In the Spanish peninsula the industrious and enterprising Jews dwelt for many generations side by side with the noble Moors, as in a new land of promise. In every great city they furnished a contingent of population. But under Ferdinand and Isabella, in whose persons the crowns of Aragon and Castile became united, the war of races, hitherto partial and intermittent, burst into utter vehemence. The Moors were finally expelled, those spared from slaughter having to seek a new home in other lands. The spirit of religious persecution next violently raged. The establishment of the Inquisition was fol-

lowed by a long night of ignorance and repression, during which Spain was systematically and industriously weeded of Freethinking minds. The turn of the Jews soon came. An edict went forth commanding that they should all be gathered into the true Catholic fold. Suasion was at first adopted as means of regeneration, but the terrors of persecution were the ultimate menace. How could the monotheistic Jew bend the knee to a ghastly, crucified man, crowned with thorns, and sanguine from many wounds? Or how bow before a tawdry female figure, blasphemously supposed to symbolise the mother of God? The thing was spiritually impossible. Yet many attempted, by lip-service and outward profession, to illude the lynx-eyed Inquisitioners. In vain, however; the rack and stake were brought into play, and the dungeons of the Inquisition yawned to receive the obstinate heretics. In the reign of Philip III. the Jews began to leave Spain in multitudes; some going to Italy, some to the East, but most to the Netherlands, where the revolt against Spanish authority was succeeded by Republican Government, and where legal toleration was extended to all sects and schisms. There the Jews were welcomed, and allowed to build and worship in their synagogues. Well did they repay such hospitality; they extended the trade of Holland beyond that of any other nation, and set the printing-press to work at the production of literature. But the fact most interesting to us is, that amongst the Jewish fugitives from Spain was the father of our Spinoza, who settled at Amsterdam, residing in a detached house on the Burgwal, near the old Portuguese Synagogue.

Baruch Despinosa, or, to use the Latin equivalent, Benedictus, was born at Amsterdam, on the 24th of November, 1632. He was the eldest of three children—himself, and two sisters, Miriam and Rebecca. His father, already mentioned, was in comfortable, if not affluent circumstances, and derived his income probably from trade. He is reputed to have been a man of excellent understanding, and of this he gave evidence in the care he took to secure to his son the best education the Jewish schools of Amsterdam afforded. The classical languages of Greece and Rome had no place in the curriculum of the Jewish seminaries, but evidently the study of Latin was not interdicted, as Greek was by the Christian hierarchy, for amongst the Jews physicians and naturalists abounded. Arithmetic was taught, but geometry and mathematics were generally neglected. Beyond the commonest rudiments, the instruction given appears to have been entirely religious. The Law and the Prophets were expounded by the rabbis, and diligently studied by the scholars, and the pupils who evinced extraordinary aptitude were selected for study in higher branches of education, with a view to becoming teachers themselves. Young Baruch, a remarkably quick and inquisitive boy, found means to supply himself with Latin, by aid of a German teacher, and afterwards with Greek. The boys on the upper form had the use of a well-furnished

library, in which, probably, Spinoza pastured ; at least, we know that at a very early age he became acquainted with the writings of Descartes.

In his fifteenth year, Baruch was already remarkable for Biblical and Talmudic lore. The Rabbi, Saul Levi Morteira, superintendent and occasional teacher of the upper division of the school, had noticed his great promise, and is said to have taken unusual interest in aiding and directing his studies, flattering himself, doubtless, with the hope that his young pupil would some day occupy a distinguished place among Jewish teachers. But, alas for his preceptors, the curious and eager mind of the boy shot ahead of their limits ; doubts, which if they entered his tutors' minds had entered only to be stifled, were to him the unsuspecting dawns of intellectual life. His questions perplexed and annoyed Morteira, who found here material that could not be fashioned into orthodox shape. For awhile, doubtless, no open profession of heresy was made, but the strife within him must have been intense and distressing. Painful it always must be to earnest minds to struggle between the pressure of conviction on the one side, and the dread of having to condemn the faith of forefathers on the other. At first he endeavoured to find some ground of reconciliation between Reason and Scripture, but in vain. "I aver," he says in the "Tractatus," "that though I long sought for something of the sort, I could never find it. And although nurtured in the current views of the sacred Scriptures, and my mind filled with their teachings, I was nevertheless compelled at length to break with my early beliefs."

His hesitating answers to delicate questions from those who sought him because of his scholarly reputation, soon made him an object of suspicion. He became cautious and reticent in his intercourse with the elders of the congregation ; he abandoned regular attendance at the Synagogue, and indeed gave good cause for being regarded as a very perverse youth. Whether propensely or from instigation, two young men of his own age, amongst others who sought his assistance in the tangled mazes of theology, pressed him on some of the most delicate topics of their faith. Unwilling to unbosom himself as yet, or perhaps feeling an instinctive repugnance for his interrogators, he referred them to Moses and the prophets. But they insisted. What did he think of the nature of God ? was God corporeal or incorporeal ? were there in truth any incorporeal existences ? were there such beings as angels ? was the soul of man really immortal ? and so on. Still he refused to confide in these would-be friends. His refusal and evident mistrust roused their anger, and induced in their minds a resolution to be revenged. At first they spread disadvantageous rumours against him, and then denounced him to the heads of the Jewish Synagogue as an apostate from the true faith. Cited before the elders, he indignantly denied having uttered some of the statements

imputed to him. He was reprimanded, and ordered to make instant submission and acknowledgment of wickedness. This he refused to do; such procedure was insufferable to his proud nature. Threat of excommunication was then declared, but without effect, and the contumacious youth retired from the presence of his judges. During the interval allowed for possible submission, we can imagine how his parents and sisters would sometimes in turns, and sometimes altogether, objurgate, expostulate, and beseech. Their amiable irrelevancies and distressed appeals must have been more trying, perhaps more exasperating, than even his ill-treatment by his judges. The deadliest enemies of an aspiring soul are often those of his own household. It was the old, old story repeated—

Ralph, thou hast done a fearful deed,  
In falling away from thy father's creed.

On July 6th, 1636, the Jewish Synagogue at Amsterdam was crowded with excited men of Israel, assembled there to witness the excommunication of the recusant Spinoza. Angry, frowning faces, and lurid dark eyes, told more eloquently than any words how enraged the faithful were, and how absorbed in the zeal of persecution. What mercy could be shown to a perverse youth who deliberately forsook the religion of his own people and forefathers, and opposed himself to the matchless wisdom of all their rabbis? While the anathema was being pronounced, the long, wailing note of a great horn occasionally sounded; the lights, seen brightly burning at the beginning of the ceremony, were extinguished one by one as it proceeded, till at the end the last went out, and the congregation was left in total darkness. And in the solemn, mysterious gloom, the faithful responded with fervid *Amens!*

There has been considerable doubt as to the exact nature of the curse pronounced. Mr. Lewes gives a fearfully-protracted curse, almost as wearisome to read as a sermon, copied from a little book entitled "An Account of the Life and Writings of Spinoza," published in London, 1720. According to Mr. Lewes, at the close of the anathema the candles were reversed in a vessel filled with blood. That form of excommunication, the Schammatha, did exist, but was pronounced only against blasphemers. The second form of excommunication, the Cherim, was the one used in Spinoza's case. Colerus has here misled all subsequent writers dependent on his authority. That worthy pastor searched diligently for a copy of the malediction, but unsuccessfully, as he himself confesses. Dr. Van Vloten, however, has fortunately obtained a copy from the present Secretary of the Portuguese Jewish Church at Amsterdam. It is in the Spanish language, and is thus rendered into English by Dr. Willis:—

"With the judgment of the angels, and the sentence of the saints, we anathematise, execrate, curse, and cast out Baruch de

Spinoza, the whole of the sacred community assenting, in presence of the sacred books with the six hundred and thirteen precepts written therein, pronouncing against him the anathema; wherewith Joshua anathematised Jericho, the malediction where with Elisha cursed the children, and all the maledictions written in the Book of the Law. Let him be accursed by day, and accursed by night; let him be accursed in his lying down, and accursed in his rising up, accursed in going out, and accursed in coming in. May the Lord never more pardon or acknowledge him; may the wrath and displeasure of the Lord burn henceforth against this man, load him with all the curses written in the Book of the Law, and raze out his name from under the sky; may the Lord sever him for evil from all the tribes of Israel, weight him with all the maledictions of the firmament contained in the Book of the Law, and may all ye who are obedient to the Lord your God be saved this day.

“Hereby, then, are all admonished, that none hold converse with him by word of mouth, none hold communication with him by writing; that no one do him any service, no one abide under the same roof with him, no one approach within four cubits length of him, and no one read any document dictated by him, or written by his hand.”

“With these amenities, the current compliments of theological parting,” says Matthew Arnold, with delicious humour, “the Jews of the Portuguese Synagogue at Amsterdam took, in 1656, their leave of their erring brother, Baruch or Benedict Spinoza. They remained children of Israel, and he became a child of modern Europe.”

Amsterdam, at least the Jewish part of it, was in an uproar; but the innocent cause of the commotion was, probably, not much disturbed. Excommunication from one church in the midst of many others was not fraught with such dreadful consequences as followed excommunication where but one church existed; there was a great world outside the Jewish fold affording ample space for movement. As for the lugubrious curses of the Synagogue, extinguishing of candles, horn blowing, and other accompaniments, earnest, independent Spinoza could afford to let them pass unheeded as the idle wind. He is said to have sent a reply in Spanish to the Anathema, but Van Vloten has in vain, though eagerly and industriously, searched for it. When informed of the excommunication, he is said to have replied: “Well and good; but this will force me to nothing I should not have been ready to do without it.” The greatest trial of all was yet to come. No orthodox Jew could shelter beneath his roof one under the ban of excommunication, even though his own son. Spinoza had, therefore, to quit his home, endeared to him by all the tender, gracious, memories of childhood; never more to feel a father’s benison impressed with loving hand upon his head; never more to know a mother’s sacred kiss; to be an outcast for ever from all he held dear; and

zealously avoided, even in the public streets, as a contaminated reprobate. His sensitive nature must have deeply suffered, but he was too proud to utter plaint; all his anguish was borne with noble fortitude and heroic placidity of demeanour.

Spinoza's classical acquirements stood him now in good stead. He at once found an engagement in the educational establishment of Dr. Francis Van den Ende, amongst whose pupils were the sons of some of the wealthiest and most distinguished citizens. Van den Ende was skilful, accomplished, and, in private, of irreproachable character, but was suspected of adding a grain of Atheism to every dose of Latin. He powerfully influenced Spinoza's mental development, and stimulated his natural hardihood of intellectual temper. At the doctor's school commenced also the one romance of the outcast's life. Van den Ende's daughter, a charming girl of twelve or thirteen, assisted in the tuition of the younger pupils; indeed it is said (and upon its possible truth Mr. Lewes draws a very pretty picture of dawning love) that she aided Spinoza in his Latin studies. This, however, is highly improbable. That he became deeply attached to her is, nevertheless, certain; and he seems to have cherished the hope of one day being able to make her his wife. He is reported to have said to one of his friends, that "he had made up his mind to ask Mdlle. Van den Ende in marriage, not carried away by her charms as one of the most beautiful or faultlessly formed of women, but admiring her, loving her, because she was rarely gifted with understanding, possessed of much good sense, and, moreover, of a pleasant and lively disposition." When the maiden grew to womanhood, years afterwards, poor Spinoza was not the only suitor; he had a rival in a certain Dietrich Kerkering, a much wealthier man than himself. The rival's attentions were backed with costly presents, and finally the fair one consented to become his wife; but before consenting she stipulated that her lover should renounce Protestantism for Popery, which she professed. That was a condition that Spinoza never could have assented to, so that even without any rival his chances of winning a bride were precarious enough. Poor Spinoza! hard indeed to him were the decrees of fate. No other attachment did he ever form; Philosophy thereafter was his sole mistress, whom surely he served with a devotion constant and sublime.

Spinoza never felt his vocation to be that of an instructor of youth, as indeed he subsequently confessed on being offered a Professorship in the University of Heidelberg, and the drudgery of an usher's place was extremely distasteful. He, therefore, remained but a brief period with Van den Ende. Fortunately, there were other means open of earning bread. It was the custom for the youths in Jewish schools to be prepared for professional life, or initiated into some handicraft, as well as instructed in book lore. Spinoza had acquired the art of grinding

and polishing lenses for optical purposes—spectacles, reading glasses, microscopes, and telescopes—and had attained to such proficiency in the business that his manufactures were readily disposed of, their sale producing sufficient to supply his modest wants. At this trade he laboured, and commenced, as he continued, to earn his bread by the sweat of his own brow.

Naturally, while he remained in Amsterdam, he had to brook the scowls of his former co-religionists, which perhaps he soon learned to bear with equanimity. Hard looks do not any more than hard words break bones. But he had yet to experience to what lengths fanaticism would go. A hot-blooded fanatic waylaid him one night, and attempted his assassination. Happily the intended victim perceived the gesture of the villain as he raised his arm to strike, and by a rapid movement prevented disaster. The dagger thrust was received through the coat collar, and Spinoza escaped with a slight wound on the neck. He long preserved the coat in illustration, not of his hair-breadth escape, which would have seemed to him petty, but of the terrible spirit of superstition and fanaticism.

The chiefs of the Synagogue, sensible of Spinoza's magnificent intellectual gifts, were still anxious to secure his service, notwithstanding the terrible excommunication they had themselves pronounced. Intimidation had signally failed to induce submission; might not some more successful method be adopted for the recovery of the precious lost sheep? Might not a pecuniary bribe effect what threats had failed to achieve? They offered to remove the ban of excommunication, and to guarantee to him for the rest of his life a pension of 1,000 florins per annum, if he only would acknowledge his error and submit to the mildest censures of the Church. They might as well have tried to stay the sun cross the courses of the stars, or put back the tides of the sea. Egregiously had they mistaken the character of the man. He had no error to acknowledge, and money was the last thing for which he cared.

Theological hate is never satisfied, except with the entire removal of its object. Censure, excommunication, attempted assassination, flattery, and bribes, all had failed to move the obstinate heretic; if not to be won he must somehow be removed. As a last resource they petitioned for his expulsion from the city. But there was no precedent for such banishment. Amsterdam was a free city, where all religious denominations were tolerated. Nevertheless the magistrates, unwilling to disoblige a powerful section of the community, referred the case to the Synod of the Reform Church, for their advice and opinion. With characteristic intolerance the Synod recommended a temporary banishment at least. Whether the authorities acted on this advice or not is unknown; but it is certain that for some reason Spinoza left Amsterdam towards the close of 1656. He was yet only twenty-four years old, and the events recorded since the excommunication had all occurred within the space of

a few months. He found shelter with a Christian friend, whose hospitality overleapt the narrow bounds of sectarian intolerance. The name of this good man is unrecorded, but his house still remains, and the lane in which it stands is still known under the name of Spinoza Lane. Dr. Willis states that the house is distinguished by a memorable verse of the poet Kamphaysen, cut in stone, let into the front or gable end; which verse he renders as follow :—

“ Were all men only good and wise,  
And willed but to do well,  
This earth were then a Paradise,  
As now 'tis most a hell.”

We lose sight of Spinoza for some years until 1660, when he was still residing at Rhynsburg; but in all probability a portion of the interval was spent at Amsterdam. He still practised his handicraft of glass-polishing, and earned an independent livelihood, asking gifts of no man. The implements of his work were few, and easily portable, so that they could always be readily brought into use. Those four years were as important as any of his life, for during that time there dawned on his mind those great principles which were to be indelibly stamped with his name. He had also formed many valuable friendships with Dr. Louis Meyer; Drs. Bresser and Shaller, physicians; Simon de Vries, a young gentleman of fortune, of whom we shall hereafter hear good account; and, above all, Henry Oldenburg, with whom throughout his lifetime he maintained correspondence. Oldenburg was the intimate friend of Robert Boyle, and helped in the foundation of the Royal Society of Great Britain; was in fact its first Secretary, performing the duties of his office with sedulous care; indeed, the very first paper published in the Transactions of that Society bears his signature. He was also the Hague Consul in London when Cromwell was Protector, and distinguished himself by highly commendable efforts to secure toleration for the Jews in England. One is glad to hear that Spinoza still kept alive his friendship for Van den Ende, notwithstanding his rejection by the fair daughter.

In 1663 Spinoza published his first work, “The Principles of Descartes Geometrically Demonstrated,” which was composed for the use of a young gentleman whom he had engaged to give lessons in philosophy, and to whom, as still youthful and of unstable character, he was indisposed to impart his own particular views. Descartes’ writings were then much in vogue, and even when a boy Spinoza had been struck with their subtlety of thought; in particular, he had treasured that rule so emphatically enunciated in them, and which Professor Huxley has lately characterised as the first consecration of Doubt, that “nothing is ever to be accepted as true that has not been proved to be so on good and sufficient grounds.”

Spinoza appears to have quitted Rhynsburg in 1664 for Voor-

burg, within about a league of the Hague. His exposition of the Cartesian philosophy had brought celebrity, and he found himself obliged to intermit his studies and meditations to receive friends, and sometimes curious strangers. About two years after his arrival at Voorburg he settled finally at the Hague, boarding at first with the widow Van Velden, in a house on the Veerkay, and occupying the rooms in which Dr. Colerus, his biographer, afterwards lodged ; but subsequently, finding the cost of living with Madam Van Velden too great for his means, removing to fresh quarters in the house of Henry Van den Spyck, a painter, which overlooked the Pavilion Canal ; and here it was that he passed the rest of his days. "It is perhaps even more than probable," says Dr. Willis, "that to the accident of Colerus's occupation of the very rooms in which Spinoza had lived, we owe all that we now possess that is most interesting and reliable in the biography of the philosopher." Colerus was a Lutheran pastor, whose curiosity was excited about the manner of Spinoza's life because of his redoubtable opposition to the accredited religious notions of the world. He set himself to gather all possible information about the departed philosopher, and published to the world the result of his inquiries. Mainly from this and the extant letters of Spinoza are the facts of his life at the Hague to be gathered.

Among Spinoza's warmest friends at the Hague, was the unfortunate Grand Pensioner, Jean De Witt, who was, in 1672, literally torn to pieces by an infuriated mob, who baselessly suspected him of complicity with the hated French, then harrying the Netherlands without apparent reason, save the love of slaughter and conquest. The philosopher himself, it may here be remarked, narrowly escaped the same fate a little later, and under the following circumstances. Lieutenant-Colonel Stoupe, commander of a Swiss regiment in the service of France, being a man of intellectual mark, and anxious to converse with Spinoza, induced the Prince de Condé, Generalissimo of the French army, to invite the renowned philosopher to their headquarters. The invitation was accepted, but Condé being suddenly summoned to Paris, his guest waited a week or ten days at Utrecht in hope of his speedy return, but as much delay occurred Spinoza took his way back to his home at the Hague. The populace, ignorant of literary or scientific curiosity, could only interpret the visit as treason to the State. They must have made some threatening demonstrations against the philosopher, for poor Van den Spyck became greatly alarmed, and besought his lodger to quit the house. Spinoza, disdainng flight, assured the timid man, and bade him fear nothing ; "for," said he, "I can easily clear myself of all suspicion of treason. There are persons enow at the Hague who know the motive of my journey, and who will right me with my townsmen. But be this as it may, should the people show the slightest disposition to molest you, should they even assemble and make a noise before your

house, I will go down to them, though it should be to meet the fate of the De Witts." Fortunately the popular fury subsided, and Spinoza and his host suffered no further molestation. This slight digression will be pardoned by our readers ; the incident is worth recording as illustrative of the heroic bearing of this great man.

Jean De Witt was leader of the Republican party, and it was by his strenuous opposition that the Prince of Orange failed in his purpose of having himself elected Stadt-holder for life. Spinoza was Republican on principle and from impulse, feeling the dignity of independence himself, and anxious also to secure it for his fellows. A brotherly affection sprang up between these men. "In all Holland," says Mr. Froude, "there were none like these two ; they had found each other now, and they loved each other as only good men love. From him Spinoza accepted a pension, not a very enormous one—some thirty-five pounds a year ; the only thing of the kind he ever did accept. Perhaps because De Witt was the only person he had met who exactly understood what it was, and weighed such favours at their exact worth, neither less nor more." This pension was not, however, the only thing of the kind Spinoza ever accepted. Simon de Vries, later in life, brought him a thousand florins as a gift, or rather as a meagre instalment of a heavy debt owing by the pupil to the teacher. Spinoza "laughingly assured him that he was in no need of money, and that such a sum would turn his head. Simon then made a will, bequeathing the whole of his property to Spinoza, who, on hearing of it, at once set off for Amsterdam to remonstrate against an act so unjust to Simon's brother. His arguments prevailed. The will was destroyed, and the brother finally inherited. Now came a struggle of generosity. The heir protested that he could not accept the property unless he were allowed to settle five hundred florins a year on the disinterested friend ; and, after some debate, Spinoza agreed to accept three hundred." Under such pressure what else could the philosopher do ? It would have been ungenerous indeed to have peremptorily refused the gift, and would have needlessly wounded the feelings of his insistent friends. These windfalls made no difference, however, in his mode of life ; he was as abstemious as ever, even to the verge of indiscretion. "It approaches the incredible," says Colerus, "with how little in the shape of meat and drink he appears to have been satisfied ; and it was from no necessity that he was constrained to live so poorly ; but he was by nature abstemious." His ordinary daily diet consisted of a basin of milk-porridge, with a little butter, costing about three-halfpence, and a draught of beer, costing an additional penny. Occasionally he indulged in wine, but his consumption of that luxury never exceeded two pints a month. Once a quarter he regularly settled his accounts, "to make both ends meet, like the snake that forms a circle with its tail in its mouth," as he playfully said. "Though

often invited to dinner," says pastor Colerus, "he preferred the scanty meal that he found at home to dining sumptuously at the expense of another." Yet against this man, for generations, vulgar pretenders to philosophy cast the epithets of "immoral," and "Epicurean." His Epicureanism stands confest to gods and men at the magnificent rate of twopence-halfpenny per day.

It must not be supposed that Spinoza was in any way parsimonious; utterly foreign to his nature was that odious vice. On the contrary, he was ever liberal to the full extent of his scanty means, affording willing aid to the suffering or needy. Once, at least, he shows himself in the prominent light of a lender; for one to whom he had lent two hundred florins, as we learn, became a bankrupt; whereupon the philosopher calmly remarked: "Well, I must economise, and so make up the loss; at this cost I preserve my equanimity." Yet with all this indifference to self, he was not the man to tamely submit to injustice or fraud. On the death of his father, his two sisters disputed his right to share in the succession, opining that the ban of excommunication had cut him off from all human rights. Their obstinate refusal to admit his claim obliged him to vindicate it by legal means. This done, he left them in quiet enjoyment of the whole property, entirely foregoing his share, selecting only a single article of household furniture—a bed with rich hangings.

Spinoza's fame continued to extend. His "Principles of the Cartesian Philosophy" was used as a text-book in the schools, and his "Tractatus Theologico-Politicus," although obnoxious to many on account of its heresies, was approved of and admired by some whose praise was worth having. Early in 1673 he received an invitation, through the learned Fabritius, from the Prince Palatine, Charles Louis, to fill the vacant Chair of Philosophy in the University of Heidelberg, a lucrative and honourable post. After some hesitation, probably to avoid hurting the susceptibilities of his friend, the philosopher declined the chair, "not knowing," as he says in his answer to Fabritius, "within what precise limits the liberty of philosophising would have to be restricted." Louis XIV. offered him a pension if he would dedicate his next work to him; this also he refused, "having no intention of dedicating anything to that monarch."

With all his love of truth and hatred of error, Spinoza manifested no inclination to obtrude his views upon others. He was not infected with that chronic distemper of proselytising, which impels men to parade their own notions or dogmas on every available occasion, and blinds their eyes to all possibility of truth outside their own convictions. Nor did he trouble the minds of those unfitted to receive new doctrines. Madam Van den Spyck being one day much troubled as to the prospect of her soul, and as to her chance of salvation, inquired of her learned lodger whether he thought her form of religion sufficient

to secure eternal happiness? "Your religion," he made answer "is a good religion; you have no occasion to seek after another neither need you doubt of your eternal welfare so as, along with your pious observances, you continue to lead a life of peace in charity with all"—surely a most proper answer to a simple woman like her. The strong meat of philosophy must not be given to sucking babes; they are unable to digest and assimilate it. As Mr. Lewes justly and Beautifully observes, Spinoza "knew his hostess was not wise, but he saw that she was virtuous."

Spinoza's personal appearance is described by Colerus, in whose days there were many persons living at the Hague who had been well acquainted with the great man. He was of middling height, and slenderly built; with regular features, forehead broad and high, large eyes, dark and lustrous, full dark eyebrows, and hair of the same hue, long and curling. The prevailing expression of the face was that of thought overcast with melancholy. He was never seen either sorely depressed or greatly elated. His dress was that of a sober citizen, plain yet scrupulously neat, for he despised a disorderly and slovenly carriage as a sign either of affectation or of a mean spirit. He mostly spent his time in his own room, engaged in his handiwork (at which he continued to labour), in meditation or in writing. When wearied with these he would join Van den Spuyck and his family in the evening, smoke a pipe of tobacco, and take part in their ordinary chat. Amongst other likings he seems to have had a taste for drawing. In an album which he kept there figured the portraits of several of his friends, done by his own hand, and one of himself represented as Masaniello, the revolutionary Neapolitan fisherman, with the net over his shoulder. According to Colerus, he is said to have taken delight in watching the battles of spiders, which "afforded him so much entertainment that he would laugh heartily at the spectacle." Of this amusement, however, Dr. Willis gives a different interpretation. Spinoza watched not the *wars*, but the *loves*, of the spiders. The female spider is so captious and wayward, and withal so superlatively savage when provoked, that the male has to approach warily, like one bent on mischief. If his mistress happen not to be pliant, or if he linger an instant beyond her wishes, she remorselessly slaughters him as a punishment for his imprudence. The story of Spinoza throwing a fly into the spider's web has been unduly magnified in importance. It was, if the story be true, simply an experiment, far less cruel than vivisection, or the injection of drugs into the arteries of living creatures. As to delighting in the struggles of the fly to escape, the thing is simply impossible, for the fly hardly struggles at all. He is soon enmeshed and devoured. Stories of this kind are often embroidered as they get old, until at length a very simple incident becomes rich in gratuitous adornments.

Towards the end of his life Spinoza appears to have been affected with a chronic form of pulmonary consumption. He complains frequently to correspondents of not feeling well. With the coming in of 1677 he grew more seriously indisposed. On Saturday, the 20th of February, he wrote to his friend, Dr. Louis Meyer, requesting a visit, but was still able in the evening to join the family circle and enjoy his pipe. Early the next morning Dr. Meyer arrived, and found his patient worse than was imagined. The philosopher partook of a little chicken broth, and the worthy doctor remained in attendance with him. The painter and his family went to church, and never saw their friend in life again; he had been seized with a sudden difficulty in breathing, and passed peacefully away about three o'clock in the afternoon of Sunday, the 21st of February, 1677, aged forty-four years and three months. The funeral took place on the 25th, the remains of the philosopher being followed to the last resting-place by a numerous train of respectful inhabitants of the Hague.

Malevolent rumours were circulated as to the manner of Spinoza's death. It was reported by some that he had taken drugs and unconsciously slid into death; by others that he had been heard to exclaim: O God, have mercy on me, a miserable sinner! Colerus made inquiries concerning these rumours, which of course proved baseless. A sale of the philosopher's effects realised 400 florins, about £40. Rebecca Spinoza appeared on the scene, but swiftly retreated on finding no spoil. A desk, containing the immortal "Ethics" in MS., was forwarded by Van den Spyck to Jan Rienwertz, of Amsterdam, thus fortunately escaping the vulture clutches of Rebecca, who would assuredly have made swift dispatch of such a detestable production.

No adequate conception of Spinoza's philosophy can be given in the brief space here at disposal; nevertheless, a few indications may be ventured. Spinoza's two great works are the "Tractatus Theologico-Politicus," and the "Ethics," both written in Latin, but happily available to the unlearned student through effective translations into English. "The Principles of Descartes Demonstrated, with additional Metaphysical Reflections," will also repay the labour of study; and there is another remarkable fragment on "The Improvement of the Intellect," of which Mr. Lewes gives a partial but beautiful translation. In this last piece Spinoza sets forth the reasons which determined him to a life of study and reflection. Most men place their happiness in one or all of three things, *riches, honours, and pleasures of sense*; but he, for his part, while not despising the ordinary enjoyments of life, will resolve to forego them, lest they hinder his attainment of the *Supreme Good*, which consists in the pursuit of truth, in the endeavour to learn the true relationship between man and nature, and what are the inexorable laws of existence. From the course thus deliberately laid down the

writer never swerved ; if ever man obeyed his higher nature, surely he did.

The "Tractatus" treats of Prophecy, Inspiration, Miracles, the Canon of Scripture, Church and State, and other cognate topics. The prophets exercised a power, he thinks, no more divinely derived than any natural gift ; for does not all proceed from God ? The Mosaic Law was intended solely for the Hebrew people, the commandments had regard solely to the national preservation of the Jews, and were binding simply upon them. The possibility of miracles he emphatically denies ; those who recorded them either were deceived themselves or aimed at deceiving others. The multitude do not understand that the laws of nature, being the expressions of immutable divine will, are as constant as their source itself ; they respect only what astonishes, terrifies, or overwhelms ; whereas true knowledge clears our conceptions instead of baffling them. Spinoza's criticism of the Scripture canon goes to the root of the matter, and clearly shows that the canonical books are mere fragments of a vaster literature, selected by the Rabbins according to their tastes and doctrinal notions. Because of this achievement Strauss designates him the father of Biblical exegesis. Politically, Spinoza was a Democrat, believing the highest freedom to be self-government, and desiring the completest extension of Democratic institutions. In individual energy lay the germ of all worth. Government should interfere as little as possible, and never presume to patronise or to suppress opinions. "The unique method of making the arts and sciences flourish, is to allow every individual to teach what he thinks, at his own risk and peril."

The "Ethics" is a masterpiece of reasoning, and apparently without a flaw in the whole process. It will be observed, however, that those who reject the possibility of ontological knowledge are not caught in the geometrical vice. Spinoza reasons irresistibly from his premises ; but the premises are assumed, and may be repudiated by the pure phenomenalist who doubts the efficiency of all attempts to reach the nature of "things in themselves." But for others there is no escape. Admitting the premises, Spinoza's reasoning is impregnable ; once yielding, the student feels himself carried along by a force which cannot be withstood. Once for all, admitting the primary assumption of the school, Spinoza has demonstrated the actual existence of God, of the one substance beneath all appearances, the cause of all things, in which all effects are implied. Yet there is very little metaphysical difference between positive Atheism and Spinoza's Pantheism ; for does not the latter deny the applicability to the Infinite of the attributes of the Finite ? and is not an unknown God practically a No-God ? Nevertheless Spinoza is not legitimately chargeable with Atheism, for he had an intense conviction of the existence of Deity. Even Atheists, however, may be thankful for his superb and triumphant

demolition of Final Causes, which Bacon justly denominated barren virgins. Disasters are no signs of God's wrath, evil and good light indifferently upon the godly and ungodly; neither is all nature directed to the gratification of man's desires. It is the business of rational men to submit with equanimity to the immutable will of God, which we may learn from the universe around us. The design argument had thus no charm nor relevancy to the great mind of Spinoza. Freethinkers would do well to study the "Ethics" attentively; there is a mine of intellectual and moral wealth to be worked out by every comer.

When we contemplate the simple nobility of this man's life, his devotion to truth, his courage, his pertinacity, his disinterestedness, we cannot but love and revere him. His intellectual force was commensurate with his moral worth. A mystic yet sane, he pierced with grand power of vision the mists of ancient fallacies, and saw beneath the hideous placid form of ignorance; strong-souled, he cast off the burden of superstition, and winged his flight into the clear empyrean, kindling his eyes at the full mid-day beam of the sun of Truth. He stands alone, said Schliermacher, and unapproachable; the master in his art, but elevated above the profane world, without adherents, and without even citizenship.

The reader may consult;—

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# HEROES AND MARTYRS

OF

## FREETHOUGHT.

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### 5.—THOMAS PAINE.

**T**HOMAS PAINE is known to the political and religious orthodox generally from wretched caricatures in illustrated journals of a pious character, in which he is represented as a leering, hook-nosed, besotted, covetous old sinner, shrinking with manifest terror from the judgment that awaits him beyond the grave. What hundreds of death-bed stories and awakening sermons have been pointed by reference to his terrible end ! How often have ranting bigots narrated to credulous hearers the manner of his death as a warning to all curious minds against indulgence in inquisitiveness, or criticism on matters of faith ! Ignoramuses, without a tithe of his intellect or virtue, have sat in judgment on him, and pronounced condemnation, without probably having ever read a line of his writings. Shorn even of his full name, he is designated by such contemptible persons as "Tom," and not Thomas ; so that those who listen may easily conceive him to have been a low fellow, who frequented the company of associates wont to apply familiar designations indiscriminately to all their acquaintance. His name is a bye-word among respectable people, who regard him as only second in iniquity to the infamous arch-heretic, Voltaire. And even among professed Liberals in politics his heresy bars his way to fit recognition. As a Republican he might be tolerated, but as a blasphemer against the Christian faith his sedition assumes an intolerably offensive hue and flavour. Such, alas ! is the charity, and such the critical discernment, of men for whom the despised stay-maker's son laboured so arduously and achieved so much. Fortunately, there are others who esteem his disinterested service to mankind at a juster value. The number of such is happily augmenting, so that one may reasonably hope for an increased recognition and appreciation of the noble man who took part in two revolutions ; who more powerfully than any other promoted the cause of American independence ; who, as the delegate of a French constituency, conspicuously shone in that great Convention

which proclaimed the first French Republic; who ably defended, at the risk of his life, the principles of the revolution against the vindictive attack of the most powerful pen in England; and who finally, to complete his labours, struck at the very root of all tyranny, and vindicated the right of every man to criticise and condemn the preposterous superstitions which keep the masses in perpetual subjection to a designing priesthood.

Thomas Paine was born at Thetford, in the county of Norfolk, on the 29th of January, 1736. His father, Joseph Paine, was a stay-maker of that place, belonging to the Quaker profession, but disowned by them on account of his marrying out of the sect; his mother's maiden name was Frances Cocke, the daughter of an attorney at Thetford. He was never baptised, but owing to the orthodox care of an aunt, was confirmed in due course by the Bishop of Norwich. At an early age he seems to have evinced a talent for literary composition, and a taste for poetry, which was discountenanced by his parents. Some trifling verses have been preserved as his first poetical effusion, but they are not of a character to induce a desire for further specimens. His heretical opinions also date from a very early period, for he tells that at the age of eight he was shocked by a sermon on Redemption, which represented God as a passionate man who killed his own son when he could not revenge himself in any other way. His education was received at the Thetford Grammar School, under the Rev. William Knowles. His studies were directed merely to the useful branches of reading, writing, and arithmetic. Latin was objectionable to the Quakers, so Paine did not learn that language, but he managed to make himself acquainted with translations of the classics. At thirteen years of age he left school, and entered his father's business, which it seems he strongly detested. At the age of sixteen or twenty (it is uncertain which) being filled with false notions of heroism, and impelled by a naturally adventurous spirit, Paine entered on board the *Terrible* privateer, the commander of which bore the ominous name of Captain Death. But yielding to the dissuasion of his father and friends of the Quaker sect, he left her, only, however, to join another privateering craft soon after, commanded by Captain Mendez. In 1756, we find him in London, working at the shop of Mr. Morris, a stay-maker, in Hanover Street, Long Acre. From thence he removed in 1758 to Dover, where he worked at his trade for about twelve months. In April, 1759, he settled as a master stay-maker at Sandwich; and on the 27th of September following married Mary Lambert, the daughter of an exciseman of that place. In April, 1760, he removed with his wife to Margate, where she died shortly after. From this marriage no children resulted, nor indeed was Paine ever blessed with those arrows of fortune of which some quivers are so full.

Paine now resought London, but in the following year, being disgusted with the toil and little gain of his late occupation, he

determined to apply himself to the profession of an exciseman, which his wife's father followed. To qualify himself for the profession he retired for awhile to his father's house at Thetford. After fourteen months of study, he was established as a supernumerary in the excise, mainly through the influence of a kind friend, named Cocksedge, the Recorder of Thetford. From this post, after three years' occupancy, he was discharged for some purely *official* misdemeanour, in no way reflecting on his moral character. Malignant scribes have sought to make capital out of this trifling incident; but there is a triumphant refutation of their insinuated charges in the very language employed by Paine, when afterwards seeking to be reinstated in his office. In his petition to the Board of Excise, bearing date July 3rd, 1766, he emphatically says: "No complaint of the least dishonesty ever appeared against me;" and the petition is officially endorsed, "To be restored on a proper vacancy." Clearly the offence which occasioned his discharge was but a trifling inadvertency or breach of rules. He resumed his duties a short time after.

The interval of eleven months was spent in London, where he officiated as teacher at Noble's academy, in Leman Street, Goodman's Fields, at a salary of £25 a year, and also for a brief space at Kensington with a Mr. Gardner. In the intervals of leisure he attended the philosophical lectures of Martin and Ferguson, and Dr. Bevis, an astronomer of repute, and member of the Royal Society. He acquired great proficiency in mechanics, mathematics, and astronomy, from which studies splendid fruit accrued, as we shall hereafter learn. Little time was misspent, for Paine's temperament was sanguine and strenuous. "Indeed," says he, "I have seldom passed five minutes of my life, however circumstanced, in which I did not acquire some knowledge."

In 1758 Paine was settled as an exciseman at Lewes, in Sussex, where, on the 26th of March, 1771, he married Elizabeth Ollive, shortly after the death of her father, whose trade of a tobacconist and grocer he entered into and carried on. The marriage, however, proved an unhappy one. For some unknown reason, Paine never cohabited with his wife, although they lived under the same roof together. When pressed by Rickman to assign a motive for such strange conduct, he replied: "It is nobody's business but my own; I had cause for it, but I will name it to no one." In May, 1774, the ill-assorted couple separated by mutual arrangement; articles of which were finally settled on the 4th of June. Conjecture is free to expatiate on the possible causes of this disunion, but as no positive information is discoverable, all must refrain from light charges against either party. However the case stood, Paine always spoke tenderly and respectfully of his wife, and sent her several times pecuniary aid, without her knowing even whence it came.

At Lewes Paine was respected and admired by a wide circle of friends for his tenacity of opinion, perspicacity of thought, and brilliancy of wit ; indeed, Rickman has preserved some verse of the tap-room order, in which he is celebrated as "Immortal Paine" twice within the space of eight lines. A copy of Homer was presented to him as the most obstinate and logical of the arguers that assembled at the White Hart Club. His instincts were always opposed to tyranny, although he did not at that time deem politics aught but a species of "jockeyship." A Whig he called himself, probably because the Tories were in power. Literary composition occupied much of his time when freed from professional avocations, and several little pieces in verse produced by him at that period are still extant, which, however, hardly bear him out in the remark that he had a talent for poetry. In 1772 he wrote a pamphlet, "The Case of the Officers of Excise," of which four thousand copies were printed at Lewes. This protest on behalf of the ill-paid Excise officers throughout the country is a succinct and masterly account of their grievances, and of the evils resulting from their insufficient salaries. Apparently, no application to Parliament was made ; but the publication of the appeal procured for Paine an introduction to Oliver Goldsmith, with whom he continued on terms of intimacy during the remainder of his stay in England.

In April, 1774, Paine was again dismissed from the Excise, on the ground of his trading as a grocer in exciseable articles being incompatible with the faithful performance of his official duties ; but probably the outspoken little pamphlet had offended those in authority. There was adduced against him no positive charge, except that he connived at smuggling, which may or may not be true, but which was unsubstantiated by any evidence. As rebutting evidence, we have an account of various letters of approval from the principal clerk of the Excise Board in London, thanking Paine for his assiduity in his profession, and for his information and calculations forwarded to the office. Difficulties seem now to have overtaken him, for we find that the goods of his shop were seized to pay his debts. He removed to London, where he became acquainted with Dr. Franklin, then agent for the Massachusetts House of Representatives, who earnestly advised him to seek a field for his talents in the American colonies, where the serfdom and grovelling ignorance abounding in England were unknown. Acting on this advice, he set sail from his native land in the autumn of 1774, and reached America just in time to take a prominent part in that great movement which culminated in the establishment of the mighty Western Republic. Engaging himself with Mr. Aitkin, a bookseller, as editor of the *Pennsylvania Magazine*, he at once paved the way for his grand achievement of a few months later, when his words were to ring in the ears, and inspire the hearts of a whole people, and urge them to declare their inde-

pendence of a foreign power that aimed at trampling their dearest liberties in the dust.

The American Rebellion was caused by the wanton fatuity of the English Government. From the very beginning of the reign of George III., the policy of high-handed, officious interference with the concerns of the colonists, had been steadily pursued by the king and his advisers, who were almost as mad as he. In 1764, restrictive duties, amounting to a prohibition, were laid on the commerce between the British Colonists and the French and Spanish settlements, and all offenders against the act were to be tried at the Admiralty Court, and so deprived of trial by jury. It was then sought to make the American colonies a back kitchen, in which to perform the imperial dirty work. Taxes were somehow to be obtained, and if the English people themselves were unable to bear any additional burdens, the colonists should be taxed to make up the deficit of a profligate ministry. The famous Stamp Act was passed in the English House of Commons, notwithstanding the petitions of the colonists against it. Immediately resistance was organised. The State of Massachusetts invited the other colonial bodies to send representatives to a Congress to be held at New York. The representatives met, drew up a declaration of rights and petitions to the king and both Houses of Parliament. The Stamp Act was burnt, and the first day of its operation ushered in with the funereal tolling of bells. To render the Act null, the colonists agreed to dispense with all stamps, and regard documents as legal without them. Further, they pledged themselves not to import any articles of British manufacture till the repeal of the Act. This caused such a stoppage of trade, that the Government was compelled to repeal the Act in the commencement of 1766. But the Repeal Act was accompanied by the insolent declaration that "Parliament had, and of right ought to have, power to bind the colonies in all cases whatsoever." In the following year, the English Parliament attempted to levy taxes on a number of articles imported by the colonists; but as non-importation agreements were again entered into, the ministry were once more obliged to rescind all the obnoxious duties except that on tea. This reservation was extremely odious, and the colonists again determined to use no tea except smuggled, till the Act was repealed. Resolutions were passed throughout the States, declaring that whoever should abet the landing of taxed tea was to be deemed an enemy of his country; and the East India Company were desired to resign their agencies. This demand was complied with, except in the case of Massachusetts, where the agents, relying on a strong military force at Boston, had decided to land their cargoes; but in the night the leading patriots boarded the ships and emptied the tea chests into the water. The British Parliament instantly set aside the charter of Massachusetts, declared Boston to be no longer a port, and prohibited the landing therein of any

goods whatsoever. General Gage was sent out as Governor of Massachusetts with an army. He transferred the seat of government from Boston to Salem, a step which quickly resulted in a vast depreciation of the value of property in the former place, and a complete collapse of trade. This terrible disaster was, however, mitigated by the patriotic exertions of the inhabitants of other towns, who willingly sent subscriptions for the relief of the distressed. A proclamation was issued prohibiting all public meetings, but in face of the proclamation a meeting was held at which a "solemn league and covenant" was entered into to suspend all commercial intercourse with Britain until the repeal of the obnoxious Act. Congress approved these decisions, devised means for the arming of the people, in order that if need were they might fight for their liberties, and determined that the British troops should be attacked if they presumed to march in field equipment beyond Boston. It also insisted on the right of the Americans to tax themselves, and protested against the introduction of a standing army. General Gage's troops marched from Boston to seize some insurgent stores, but were so harassed by the native militia that they were obliged to return to Boston with heavy loss. Blood was thus first drawn on the 19th of April, 1775, a few months after Paine's arrival in America. Volunteers immediately enrolled themselves in every province. George Washington was appointed commander-in-chief, and military operations commenced. Hopeful of an amicable settlement, the colonists sent another petition to the king; Mr. Penn the bearer was informed by Lord Dartmouth that "no answer would be given." From various motives many held aloof from the national cause; some shrank from bloodshed, some were timorous and hesitating, some lukewarm, and some disinclined to continue the struggle; but fortunately the majority were resolute in the defence of their rights. A mouthpiece was wanted, an articulate voice to express unmistakably the people's aims and aspirations. On the very day that the mad king's firebrand and insulting speech reached America, it was, by a singularity of fate, confronted by Paine's "Common Sense." Within three months American Independence was declared.

"Common Sense" is written with Paine's customary vigour, incisiveness, and lucidity, and heightened in impressiveness by an occasional loftiness and fervour of sentiment. The preface rightly declares the cause of America to be, in a measure, the cause of all mankind, and that the waging of war against the natural rights of man, the laying of a country under fire and sword, and the extirpating of its defenders from the face of the earth, is the concern of every man to whom nature has given the power of feeling. The body of the pamphlet opens with a dissertation on the Origin and Design of Government in General, with Concise Remarks on the English Constitution, written in the most serious and trenchant manner, as a fitting prologue to

the swelling act of the imperial theme. With a conciseness never surpassed, he delineates the true principles of government, and expresses that difference between government and society which is now coming to be regarded as fundamental in politics. The province of government is simply to restrain evil-doers who encroach on their neighbour's rights; all beyond is relegated to the domain of society, where public opinion is the sole judge and punisher. "Security being the true end of government, it unanswerably follows that whatever *form* thereof appears most likely to ensure it to us, with the least expense and greatest benefit, is preferable to all others." Then follows the most trenchant criticism on our ramshackle Constitution, wherein the radical defects of Monarchical and Aristocratical government among civilised peoples are unsparingly exposed; the whole abounding in truth and wit. The hereditary principle is overwhelmed with refutation and ridicule, as indeed it richly deserved to be; and the various apologies for Monarchical government are torn to shreds in the logic-mill of Paine. The first part concludes with this startling passage: "In England the king hath little more to do than to make war, and give away places, which, in plain terms, is to impoverish the nation and set it together by the ears. A pretty business, indeed, for a man to be allowed £800,000 sterling a year for, and worshipped into the bargain! *Of more worth is one honest man to society than all the crowned ruffians that ever lived.*" This denunciation of Monarchy was followed by reflections on the Present State of American Affairs. The author declared *reconciliation* to be an idle and fallacious dream, for every great method for peace had been ineffectual, and every prayer rejected with disdain; *independence* was the only bond that could tie and hold the Americans together. The pamphlet ended with a scathing fire of oburgations against the Quakers, who had put forward a policy of "peace at any price," and a trumpet blast to battle for the defence of liberty.

The popularity of "Common Sense" was unprecedented in the history of the press. Anonymously published, it provoked tremendous excitement and speculation as to its authorship, which was ascribed to Dr. Franklin, John Adams, and others. No one, except a favoured few, was aware that a poor recent immigrant from England was the cause of such profound public agitation. "The unknown author," says Cheetham, "in the moments of enthusiasm which succeeded, was hailed as an angel sent from heaven, to save from all the horrors of slavery, by his timely, powerful, and unerring counsels, a faithful but abused, a brave but misrepresented, people." "Nothing could be better timed than this performance," writes Ramsey, in his "History of the American Revolution." "In union with the feelings and sentiments of the people, it produced surprising effects; many thousands were convinced, and led to approve and long for separation from the mother country; though that

measure was not only a few months before foreign to their wishes, but the object of their abhorrence, the current suddenly became so much in its favour, that it bore down all before it." More than a hundred thousand copies were circulated throughout the States, and the author continued the subject at intervals, under the title of "American Crisis," until the complete establishment of independence.

Paine's disinterestedness and disregard of self conspicuously shone in these transactions. The copyright of "Common Sense," as of all Paine's subsequent works, was freely given to mankind; his object was not to make money from the sale of a timely pamphlet, but to rouse a nation into enthusiasm and energy; and although the circulation of his work was so extensive, he was, after the sale was completed, in debt to his publisher £29 12s. 1d. "My reward," says Paine, "existed in the ambition of doing good, and in the independent happiness of my own mind.....In a great affair where the good of mankind is at stake, I love to work for nothing; and so fully am I under the influence of this principle, that I should lose the spirit, the pride, and the pleasure of it, were I conscious that I looked for reward." The same disinterested course was pursued in the publication of the "Rights of Man," and although some little egotism may be perceived in Paine's allusions thereto, we may readily pardon a trifling vanity when the man's gifts are so great and precious.

We must briefly record the rest of Paine's life in America, as our space is so limited, and the necessity so pressing of viewing his actions in another sphere. In 1776 he accompanied the army with General Washington, and was with him in his retreat from Hudson's River. Undismayed by the apparent successes of the British troops, he published, on the 19th of December, the first number of "The Crisis," wherein he exposed the folly of yielding while such resources as he indicated were available for the continued conduct of the war. Various other publications were written during the eventful years intervening between that date and the 19th of April, 1783, when a cessation of hostilities was proclaimed. In 1777 he left the army, on being unanimously appointed by Congress Secretary to the Committee for Foreign Affairs, which office, however, he resigned in January, 1779, in consequence of a disagreement with Congress relative to the fraudulent proceedings of Silas Deane, who had been deputed to negotiate a loan with the French Government. This worthy, taking advantage of the pledge by the American Commissioners to preserve the affair secret, presented a demand for hush-money, which provoked replies from Paine in the public papers. This was regarded as a breach of official confidence, and a motion was made for Paine's dismissal. The motion was lost; but as the Congress refused to admit Paine's demand to be heard in explanation, he tendered his resignation in a letter, wherein he declares it "inconsistent with

his character as a free man to submit to be censured unheard." In 1781 he accompanied Colonel Laurens to France, for the purpose of obtaining another loan, which object was accomplished in a few months. He returned in August of the same year, and found himself the object of increased admiration. His company was eagerly sought by the notabilities of the day, literary, scientific, and philosophical; Franklin spent much time in his society, and there is extant a letter from Washington, inviting him to Rocky Hill, and expressing a "lively sense of the importance" of his works. Congress, in 1785, granted him three thousand dollars on account of his "early, unsolicited, and continued labours in explaining the principles of the late Revolution." In the same year the State of Pennsylvania presented him with £500; that of New York gave him the confiscated estate of a Royalist, situate at New Rochelle, and consisting of three hundred acres of valuable land. Before closing this portion of our memoir, we feel bound to mention one more circumstance which greatly redounds to Paine's honour, and shows how he was, in fact, the very genius of the Revolution; far more so, indeed, than Washington, who only employed the enthusiasm which Paine evoked and sustained, and but followed out the policy which he had conceived. In 1780, when clerk to the Pennsylvanian Assembly, Paine had to read a terrible message from Washington; a "despairing silence pervaded the House"; the treasury was exhausted, and the people already overburdened with taxation. Paine hurried home, drew the salary due to him, proposed a public subscription, and laid down five hundred dollars as his own contribution. Happily, the bank scheme proved successful, and the difficulties were effectively met; but the credit of initiating the movement rests with Paine, who, in this instance, as in most others, walked steadily where other men hobbled, and discerned clearly when to them all was mystery or confusion.

American Independence being fully and finally achieved, Paine turned his attention to English affairs. Even during the war he had meditated a visit to England, for he thought that he might employ his pen to advantage in opening the eyes of his countrymen to the madness and stupidity of their rulers; but now his vague inclinations took definite shape, and he resolved to proceed to England forthwith. Accordingly in April, 1787, he set sail from the United States for France, having decided to visit Paris before proceeding to London. In Paris he made a brief sojourn, enjoying the society of the chief savans and politicians, and exhibiting at the Academy of Sciences the model of an iron bridge which he had invented. From Paris he arrived in England on the 3rd of September, just thirteen years after his departure for Philadelphia. His first act was to hasten to his native place, and inquire after his parents; and his conduct in this instance may be cited in refutation of the infamous calumnies of that shameless traducer Oldys, a hireling

scribe who seventeen years before Paine's death drew up and published for a pecuniary consideration a tissue of bare-faced lies which was designated an account of his life. This venal scribbler, not content with charging against Paine the vilest ill-treatment of his wife, and the most flagrant irregularities with other women, accuses him besides of having manifested such an utter lack of filial affection as to cause his mother to pen a piteous complaining letter to her sympathising daughter-in-law. Not a single particle of evidence is produced in corroboration of this charge ; in fact, we have but the bare word of the lying writer himself. Now Paine's present conduct gives the lie direct to all such scandalous stories, for we find that on discovering his mother to be in indigent circumstances, owing to the death of his father, he settled upon her an allowance of nine shillings a week ; a sum which at that time was amply sufficient to provide the old lady with all the necessaries and some of the luxuries of life.

Here perhaps it will be as well to introduce the engineering experiments made by Paine about this time. Few are aware that Thomas Paine was the inventor of the arched iron bridge ; but such undoubtedly is the fact. Before quitting America he had designed the model which was exhibited, as already stated, to the Academy of Sciences at Paris ; and that body appointed a committee of three of its members to examine and report upon the invention, which was highly approved and commended. Soon after his arrival in England Paine set himself at great expense to build a bridge on a large scale. The task was at length completed, the structure being erected at Paddington, then a village some distance from London. In May, 1789, he wrote an account of his proceeding to Sir George Staunton, who forwarded it to the Society of Arts ; and that Society determined that it was well worthy of a place in their "Transactions" ; but the appearance of the "Rights of Man" soon after marvellously depreciated their estimate of the value of the invention. Paine, however, persevered, and indeed expended so much money in his enterprise that he got arrested for debt before its termination ; but fortunately he soon cleared himself, and proceeded with the work. At length Mr. Rowland Burdon, a member of Parliament, in company with his colleague, Mr. Milbanke, was attracted by the skilfulness of the invention, and decided to adopt it in the erection of a bridge across the river Wear, to connect Sunderland and Monkwearmouth, between which communication had always been exceedingly tedious and costly. The following account is from the report of a lecture by Mr. W. W. Robson, delivered on St. Patrick's Day, 1874, in the Sunderland Theatre :—"The cast-iron bridge over the Wear was the invention of Tom Paine, the notorious Infidel writer. So far as he was concerned, his invention might have been a barren one ; but Mr. Rowland Burdon, of Castle Eden, who was remarkable for his mechanical genius, at once saw the applicability of

Paine's invention. He obtained an Act of Parliament, took all the risk of the experiment on his own shoulders by finding nearly the whole, if not the whole, of the money [*not the whole, for Milbanke and others subscribed four thousand pounds*], and at a cost of no more than about £30,000 built that bridge which stood until 1857, and really and truly made the present town of Sunderland. If Mr. Burdon did adopt the invention of an Atheist [*what condescension!*], he modestly and gratefully consecrated and dedicated his bold and successful work by the pious motto, '*Nil Desperandum Auspice Deo.*' Many years afterwards a worthy Dissenting minister, who did not know Latin, was asked to explain the inscription. Having heard something about Tom Paine, and catching a suggestion from the unknown tongue itself, he confidently translated the Latin, 'This desperate job was the work of a Deist.'" We feel grateful to Mr. Robson for proving incontestibly, from accurate and independent research, that Paine was the real inventor of the iron bridge, and also for preserving so exquisitely laughable a story as that with which he concludes his account of the matter; but we cannot help remarking that, like many other talented men, he is still the slave of prejudice, or he would not have so slurred over Paine's merits as the inventor, and heaped compensatory praise on Mr. Burdon, who merely appropriated the invention; nor, had he been unbiassed by vulgar preconceptions, would he have so familiarly styled the inventor "Tom," or called that man an Atheist who wrote a paper expressly to prove the existence of God. But so it ever is; a man has only to proclaim himself heterodox in religious matters, and at once he is robbed of all credit due to him for his personal achievements. How few, alas! are there who, when walking over the splendid bridges which now span the Thames, and other rivers, think for a moment of their obligations to the despised "Infidel," and heave a sigh of regret for the calumnies that have been heaped upon his memory!

Accordingly to Sherwin, Paine was in France in 1790, where probably he learned the true account of the stirring incidents of the preceding year. In November, 1790, Burke's "Reflections" appeared, and Paine at once commenced a reply thereto, in accordance with a promise he had made on seeing the pensioner's production advertised in the newspapers. Although self-interest may be supposed to have stimulated Burke's readiness to attack the principles of the Revolution, and the conduct of the revolutionists, there can be no doubt that he was deeply moved, and wrote at fever heat. Master of the resources of the English language, and gifted with splendid rhetorical and declamatory power, Burke rushed into the arena as the most redoubted paladin of political controversy, confident of success and defiant of opposition. His book teemed with wit, sarcasm, and invective, and abounded in passages of majestic eloquence; and above all it artfully appealed to the traditional prejudices

of English politics, so as to evoke sympathy where it could not produce conviction. But, nothing daunted, Paine took up the gauntlet, and within three months from the issue of Burke's "Reflections," produced the first part of his famous and immortal "Rights of Man." The work was first printed for Mr. Johnson, of St. Paul's Church Yard, but he declined to publish it on finding certain passages that might render him liable to prosecution, but which Paine would not erase. After some difficulty a willing publisher was found in Mr. Jordan, of Fleet Street, and the book was brought out by him on the 13th of March, 1791. Its rapid sale was unprecedented, except in the case of "Common Sense." Rickman asserts that many hundred thousands copies were sold, but possibly there is some exaggeration in this estimate. The vigour and directness of the reply were well adapted to the occasion, and were far more forcible than all Burke's furious invective. Nowhere does Paine appear to greater advantage than in this production. The "Rights of Man" will long survive as a model of political wisdom, just reasoning, accurate discrimination, and terseness of style. There is no attempt at meretricious display; Paine had an object in view, and drove straight to it without circumlocution or superfluity of effort. Burke's defiant taunt that the people of England never had, nor claimed, the right to cashier and depose kings, or that if they ever had such a right, had renounced it in the very language employed in settling the crown on William and Mary in 1688, was met by Paine with the crushing rejoinder that Parliament had actually deposed some previous sovereigns; that it had to declare the throne vacant before settling William III. in it; and that while Parliament then had a perfect right to elect a new monarch it had no right to bind and control posterity, and decide to the end of time how the world should be governed. The circumstances of the world change, and the opinions of men change also; that which may be thought right and found convenient in one age, may be thought wrong and found inconvenient in another; and in such cases not the dead but the living must decide. To Burke's objection that the French had rebelled against the most amiable and mild of the Bourbon race, Paine replies that the nation rose not against the man, but the system; it was against the hereditary despotism that they revolted; a despotism which had its unalterable traditions, and innumerable ramifications, and which Louis XVI. was powerless to change, however much he might be inclined to do so. Then a brief historical account is given of the various tyrannies which oppressed France before the Revolution, and of the events which had occurred to precipitate the crisis. In justification of the levelling of the Bastille Paine urges that it was the *symbol* of despotism; and when the Assembly was provoked by the knowledge of a royalist plot against its very existence, and the people themselves were insulted and outraged by the troops in the streets, it became inevitable that a conflict

should ensue. The Bastille was to be either the prize or prison of the assailants, for they well knew how dreadfully vindictive and cruel are all old governments when they are successful against what they call a revolt. As for the exiles whom Burke so compassionated they were clearly shown to be the mere foiled plotters against the safety of the Assembly and the liberties of France. The deplorable atrocities of some of the Revolutionists Paine does not attempt to condone, nay, he expresses his utter abhorrence of them; but he justly argues that it was by no means surprising that brutality should be found to exist amongst a people who had not only been oppressed by centuries of monarchical despotism, but who had been accustomed to the sanguinary punishments of the old régime and had repeatedly witnessed such barbarous atrocities as hanging, drawing, and quartering; they had been governed by terror and had naturally followed the evil example set them. Paine then proceeds with a most philosophical and felicitous dissertation on the origin and nature of governments, all of which he classifies under three heads: first, *Superstition*; secondly, *Power*; thirdly, *The Common Rights of Man*: the first was a government of Priestcraft, the second of Conquerors, and the third of Reason. Burke's apology for the aristocracy and the church is likewise demolished with the same ease as his apology for the monarchical part of our constitution. Paine points out that our aristocracy arose naturally under the feudal system, which was essentially military, wherein they had a mission and a purpose to fulfil; but now they are simply archæological survivals of former times serving no useful purpose except to remind us of their historical origin. Now the noble of nature asserts pre-eminence, and before him the artificial noble shrinks into the dimensions of a dwarf. Next comes a powerful vindication of the Declaration of Rights, which is followed by a miscellaneous chapter on minor matters incidental to the main argument. The work was dedicated to George Washington.

In May of the same year Paine again visited France, and was in Paris at the time of the king's flight. On this occasion he is said to have remarked to a friend: "You see the absurdity of monarchical governments. Here will be a whole nation disturbed by the folly of one man." In July he returned to London, where he spent some time in a quiet round of philosophical enjoyment, in the society of numerous friends, amongst whom may be mentioned Lord Edward Fitzgerald, the French and American ambassadors, Mrs. Woolstonecraft, Sharp the engraver, Romney the painter, Dr. Priestley, Horne Tooke, and Joel Barlow. He was engaged in preparing a second part of the "Rights of Man" for publication. The Ministry, anxious to suppress it, induced the publisher to attempt the purchase of the copyright; and he, beginning with a hundred, increased his bidding to a thousand pounds, but without avail; for Paine bravely and honestly declared that "he would never

put it in the power of any printer or publisher to suppress or alter a work of his, by making him master of the copy, or give him the right of selling it to any minister, or to any other person, or to treat as a matter of traffic that which he intended should operate as a principle." In fact, he cared nothing for money, but all for principle, and, therefore, bribes were altogether useless. After some delay, the second part appeared, dedicated to Lafayette, on the 16th of February, 1792. Its sale was as extensive as that of the first part. Besides enunciating democratic principles, Paine, in the present work, fully developed them, combining principle with practice; and, in particular, he addressed himself to the subject of taxation, by the manipulation of which, as he clearly proved, the English aristocracy, since the Revolution of 1688, had freed themselves from their feudal burdens, and cast upon the people a disproportionate share of the expenses of government, which, of course, had been all the more costly because those who levied the taxes were not those who chiefly paid them. Hazlitt, in his "Life of Napoleon," pays a glowing tribute to the "Rights of Man," which he affirms to have been "the only really powerful reply to Burke's Reflections on the Revolution." So powerful and explicit was it that the Government resolved to crush the author, and so suppress the work which no bribe could secure from publication. On the 14th of May, Jordan, the publisher, was served with a summons to appear at the Court of King's Bench, and Paine immediately provided a solicitor, and engaged to furnish the necessary expenses for his defence. Jordan, however, compromised the matter, and gave up to the Government all papers in his possession relative to the "Rights of Man," in order to facilitate the conviction of the author. On the 21st of May, legal proceedings were commenced against Paine, but he was not to be intimidated; he prepared a reply to the Addressers on the Late Proclamation, in which he declares his unalterable determination to persevere in the spread of Republican principles, and overwhelms his accusers with fiery sarcasm and glowing eloquence. Before his trial came on, however, he had to quit England for France, having been elected deputy for the departments of Calais and Versailles. But the Government did not neglect him in his absence; and on the 18th of December, 1792, his trial came on at the Guildhall, London, before Lord Kenyon. As a mere matter of course, the jury found him guilty "without the trouble of deliberation." Erskine made a splendid speech in defence, which will for ever remain as one of the brightest examples of forensic eloquence, notwithstanding that the defendant himself was ill-pleased with it, calling it a "good speech for Mr. Erskine, but a poor defence of the 'Rights of Man.'" Fortunately, Paine was beyond the reach of the vindictive Ministry; his journey to France probably saved his neck.

Paine's reception at Calais was most enthusiastic; a salute o

guns was fired, the soldiers were drawn up in his honour, and crowds of people accompanied him to the Town Hall with reiterated shouts of "Long live Thomas Paine." On his road to Paris he met with similar demonstrations of respect. Of his doings in the Convention we know but little. We have extant his speech on voting for the trial of the king; and happily also another on voting for the king's banishment instead of execution. The whole tenour of this speech reflects infinite credit on Paine, and well would it have been if the Assembly had acted on his advice. "It becomes us," said he, "to be strictly on our guard against the abomination and perversity of monarchical examples: as France has been the first of European nations to abolish royalty, let her also be the first to abolish the punishment of death, and to find out a milder and more effectual substitute." Paine was one of the committee appointed to frame the new Constitution of '93; but in the close of that year he lost his seat in the Convention on a motion, made by Bourdon de L'Oise, for expelling foreigners from that body; and immediately afterwards was arrested and conveyed to the Luxembourg.

Of Paine's private life in Paris, Rickman gives a very pleasing account, to which our readers are referred. He spent his leisure time in the society of a host of English, American, and French friends; some of them, curiously enough, being men of rank, and others literary, scientific, or philosophical celebrities. An anecdote, recorded by the worthy biographer, well deserves place here. At the dinner table, on the day of the trial of Marat, Captain Grimstone, a young man of aristocratic connections, being probably a little heated with wine, became loud and impertinent in his talk; and at last growing even more violent, rose from his seat and dealt Paine a violent blow, which nearly knocked him from his seat. The company at once gave him in charge of the National Guard; and probably it would have gone hard with the cowardly fellow, for an act of the Convention had made it death to strike a Deputy; but Paine, with characteristic generosity, procured his release, obtained for him a passport, and even gave him money to defray his travelling expenses home to England. And this is the man who is represented by a certain mendacious Christian scribe as fit only for "the pillory of public infamy"!

We have now to contemplate Paine in a new light. Hitherto he has been a staunch friend of political liberty, now he is to become the faithful champion of religious freedom; the Republican is to appear as a Heretic. At the time of his arrest he had confided to Joel Barlow the manuscript of the first part of the "Age of Reason"; and during his imprisonment he composed most of the second part. A violent fever nearly terminated his existence in prison, and the dampness and coldness of his cell brought on an abscess in his side, which no medical treatment could subsequently remove, and which was eventually the proxi-

mate cause of his death. In addition to these terrible sufferings, which lasted all through the Reign of Terror, he was in constant apprehension of death by the guillotine, not knowing what a day might bring forth. Yet, in the midst of this pain and distraction, he penned nearly all the second part of the "Age of Reason," and treated the mysteries of the Christian faith with as trenchant a logic as that he applied to them when in the enjoyment of health and repose. Surely this is a sufficient reply to those extra-pious souls so filled with the love of God that they must invent lies to discomfort his foes, and who have spun out from their own internal consciousness a fictitious death-bed recantation for Paine, as well as for other notorious heretics. Every sentence of the "Age of Reason" composed in prison was penned, so far as Paine knew, in the very presence of Death. Indeed, he narrates an anecdote of his most extraordinary escape from the fate which overtook so many of his fellow prisoners. One night the door of his cell was chalked with the secret mark which heralded death to its occupants; but the door opened outward, and was accidentally chalked on the wrong side; and so the next morning the destroying angel passed by, leaving Paine and his three comrades in safety.

The "Age of Reason" and the "Rights of Man" are undoubtedly Paine's major works; both are memorable productions, and marked by rigorous logic and graceful lucidity of style; every sentence bites into the subject. Of the former work we have already spoken at length; it remains to indicate the merits of the latter, which we shall do in our next number.

Liberated from prison soon after the fall of Robespierre and the termination of the Reign of Terror, Paine resumed his seat in the Convention in compliance with an unanimously voted request of that body. He spoke against constituting the payment of *direct* taxes, the qualification for the suffrage, and altogether proved himself far too democratic for the representatives of the new constitution, who were tainted with reactionist tendencies. At the general elections which soon followed he did not succeed in getting again returned as deputy: probably his attack on Christianity had weakened his popularity as well as his defence of democracy against the bourgeois element. Seeing that his presence in France was no longer needed, he grew desirous of returning to America; but found it impossible to proceed thither, as the British cruisers round the French coast were keeping a sharp look-out for him, with instructions to search all the vessels, and take him prisoner wherever found. He was therefore obliged to resign himself to the inevitable, and to console himself as best he could with the society of valued friends, and with literary and scientific pursuits.

(To be continued.)

# HEROES AND MARTYRS

OF

## FREETHOUGHT.

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### 6.—THOMAS PAINE (*Concluded*).

**T**HE first part of the "Age of Reason" was probably published by Joel Barlow during Paine's imprisonment. The second part made its appearance about the end of 1795. The third part did not appear until 1807, after Paine's return to America, and will be spoken of in due course. The work sets out by declaring the author's positive religious creed, which consists in the belief in God and in a future life; and then proceeds with a vehement attack on Christianity as founded on the Bible. Without pretence to accurate scholarship, with no grade of learning, the author simply applies to the Bible story the universally-admitted principles of common sense. Its flagrant discrepancies and self-contradictions are adduced to prove that it could not have proceeded from a God of wisdom and truth; its manifold moral defects are cited in disproof of its origination from omnipotent justice. It is not denied that the Almighty could deliver a revelation if he chose; but it is argued that there is no evidence of his having chosen to do so. A revelation, to be effective, must be an immediate communication from God to man, and could not be based upon miracles or testimony; for miracles, although they may be considered evidence for those who witness them, cannot be deemed evidence by succeeding generations, to whom the narrative of their occurrence is mere hearsay. Miracles, it is argued, are altogether incredible, for they diminish in frequency as men become more intelligent and cultured, until at length they entirely cease happening; so that we are justified in deeming it more probable that superstitious people should be deceived than that any violation of the laws of nature should take place. The laws of the universe, as ascertained by science, are directly in opposition to nine-tenths of the Bible story. The means whereby priests, in all countries and ages, have palmed their books on the people as the veritable word of God, are divided into three classes—Mystery, Miracle, and Prophecy. Each of these is then attacked; after which the first part closes. The second part is mainly

concerned with the discrepant statements and incredible fictions of the Bible narrative; but includes also a fierce and caustic criticism on the atrocious barbarities with which it abounds. For perspicacity of thought and luminous exposition the "Age of Reason," on this subject, has no equal. Every person can easily understand its arguments and allusions; in short, it is admirably adapted to the intelligence of the multitude. Modern Biblical exegesis and modern science have shed new light on this subject, light of which Paine caught but few gleams; and the student will hardly find much sustenance in the book; but, although written nearly a century ago, and in the infancy of Biblical criticism, it still remains as the very best book that can be placed in the hands of the inquiring sceptic as an introduction to Freethought. Paine was not a great scholar, it is true; but he deserves the highest commendation for having bravely spoken out, in defiance of orthodoxy, at a time when greater scholars, who shared his heresy, held their tongues in fear.

During his residence in Paris Paine resided with Mr. Bonneville, a bookseller, and associated with the most eminent men of the day. It is recorded even that Buonaparte, on his return from Italy, called on him, and invited him to dinner; and declared, in the course of his rapturous ecstasies, that a statue of gold ought to be erected to him in every city in the universe. He also assured him that he always slept with the "Rights of Man" under his pillow, and conjured Paine to honour him with his correspondence and advice. Those who know the character of Buonaparte may judge of his sincerity for themselves; the story is merely mentioned here as an incident in the life of Paine. In 1796 Paine published his famous letter to George Washington, wherein he accuses the great President of gross, unpardonable neglect of his countryman during his incarceration in the Luxembourg. Paine's charges against Washington are definite and serious; if substantiated, they certainly detract from the President's reputation; if not substantiated, they as assuredly detract from that of Paine. As, therefore, the matter is so gravely important, we shall place before our readers the evidence for plaintiff and defendant, and then allow them to judge between these great men.

During Paine's confinement the American residents in Paris had petitioned for his release, but without success; the Convention replied that he was born in England, and intimated that the American government had authorised no such solicitation. The American ambassador, Morris, although repeatedly urged by his countrymen, made no attempt to interfere on Paine's behalf. Washington must have heard of his friend's misfortune, but he too remained quiescent while his former associate slowly rotted in gaol. For more than seven months Paine was deprived of all opportunity of communicating with the outer world; and a violent fever, which almost terminated his life, laid him prostrate and weak. The first news he received on recovering

his senses was of the fall of Robespierre: about a week after, Mr. Monroe came to succeed Mr. Morris; and Paine, as soon as he was able to write legibly, contrived to convey a letter to the new Ambassador by means of the man who lighted the prison lamps. In a few days he received a reply from Monroe, expressing deep friendship and esteem, and desiring that the case might be left in his hands; but as a fortnight or more passed without any further intelligence, Paine wrote to a friend then in Paris, a citizen of Philadelphia, requesting to be informed of the true situation of things. His friend replied to the effect that Monroe had no order from the American Government respecting him, but was doing everything in his power to obtain his liberation. Upon receipt of this letter Paine sent a memorial to Monroe, and received an answer most flattering in expressions of admiration and regard, but holding forth no hope of immediate release. "To the welfare of Thomas Paine," says Monroe, "the Americans are not, nor can they be indifferent. All your countrymen—I speak of the great mass of the people—are interested in your welfare." Of Washington he speaks evasively thus:—"Of the sense which the President has always entertained of your merits, and of his friendly disposition towards you, you are too well assured to require any declaration of it from me. That I forward his wishes in seeking your safety is what I well know; and this will form an additional obligation on me to perform what I shall otherwise consider as a duty." In fact it was clear that Washington had not even troubled to inquire whether Paine was dead or alive, nor to give any order concerning him. In the mean time the prisoner's health was suffering exceedingly; the dreary prospect of winter was coming on; and an abscess had formed in his side, which ever afterwards remained immovable. But at length Monroe's *unofficial* efforts procured his liberation on the 4th of November, 1794. Immediately upon his liberation he repaired to Monroe's house, where he remained as a guest more than a year and a half.

Now it is simply absurd to dismiss this grave charge of inhuman neglect against Washington out of a mere tender regard for his general character. He must have known of Paine's incarceration; and a word from him would have enabled Monroe to *demand* Paine's release; but he made no sign, and the ambassador was obliged to use his private influence *unofficially* on his friend's behalf. The only defence that can be set up for Washington is that he no longer deemed Paine an American citizen, and therefore did not feel justified in interfering between him and the government of France; but as Paine very justly argues, the very fact of his being expelled from the Convention, and imprisoned as a foreigner, was convincing proof that he was not regarded as a *French* citizen; and thus the President's defence entirely breaks down. But even if the defence were tenable, it would still be but a *technical* one; other considerations arise; the obligations of friendship

demand to be heard. Washington, during and after the war in America, had conversed freely with Paine, and had written to him a letter (already alluded to) expressing the highest friendship and esteem; surely, then, he ought to have stirred himself, and not to have supinely witnessed the misfortunes of an old friend who had been publicly thanked for his services to that country of which Washington was proud to be called the saviour and father. And surely such inhuman treatment was sufficient to justify Paine's vehement attack on the President and his party who connived at the injustice. There was a deal of cold-blooded respectability about Washington, which allowed him to behold the misfortunes of another with indifference; and probably the very same constitutional apathy powerfully assisted in preventing his playing the part of a Cromwell. He was, as Carlyle says, "no immeasurable man," and rather had greatness thrust upon him than achieved it. He undoubtedly possessed many amiable and some admirable traits of character, but, after all, he falls far behind, in legitimate fame, the man whom he so grossly neglected. The commanders and statesmen like Washington obtain the applause of the multitude, but the men of ideas really move the world. It would take the united talents of any number of politicians to make up the genius of a Paine.

For some time Paine occupied himself in Paris with his mechanical inventions, with his favourite studies in mathematics and natural philosophy, and especially with bridge and ship modelling. His models exhibited an extraordinary degree of skill and taste, and were wrought entirely by his own hands. The largest of them, the model of a bridge, was nearly four feet in length; the iron-works, the chains, and every other article belonging to it were forged and manufactured by himself. It was intended as the model of a bridge to be constructed across the river Delaware, extending 480 feet, with only one arch. Another was to be erected over a narrower river, and was likewise a single arch. He was offered £3,000 for these models, and refused it. He also forged himself the model of a crane of a new description, which, when put together, exhibited the power of the lever to a most surprising degree. During this time he also published his "Dissertation on First Principles of Government," his "Essay on Finance," his "Address to the Theophilanthropists," his "Letter to Erskine," and other pieces. His detention in France was indeed longer than he desired or expected; the British cruisers were still vigilant round the coast. "When Monroe left to return to France," he writes in his fourth "Letter to the Citizens of the United States," "I was to have gone with him; it was fortunate I did not. The vessel he sailed in was visited by a British frigate that searched every part of it for Thomas Paine. I then went the same year to embark at Havre; but several British frigates were cruising in sight of the port, who knew I was there, and I had

to return again to Paris. Seeing myself thus cut off from every opportunity that was in my power to command, I wrote to Mr. Jefferson, that if the fate of the election should put him in the chair of the Presidency, and he should have occasion to send a frigate to France, he would give me the opportunity of returning by it, which he did ; but I declined coming by the Maryland, the vessel that was offered me, and waited for the frigate that was to bring the new minister, Mr. Chancellor Livingston, to France ; but that frigate was ordered round to the Mediterranean ; and as at that time the war was over, and the British cruisers called in, I could come by any way, I then agreed to come with Commodore Barney in a vessel he had engaged. It was again fortunate I did not, for the vessel sunk at sea, and the people were preserved in the boat. Had half the number of evils befallen me that the number of dangers amount to through which I have been preserved, there are those who would ascribe it to the wrath of heaven ; why, then, do they not ascribe my preservation to the protecting favour of heaven ?”

On the first of September, 1802, Paine got safely away from France, embarking in the London packet, at Havre de Grace, for America, where he arrived after an absence of fifteen years. His arrival caused profound agitation ; from New Hampshire to Georgia (an extent of 1,500 miles) every newspaper was filled with applause or abuse. Fortunately his property had been taken care of by his friends, and was then worth six thousands pounds sterling, or about £400 a year. One is glad to know that Paine’s last days, unlike those of many other noble reformers, were not spent amidst poverty as well as loneliness. The indefatigable old man lost no time in throwing himself into American politics ; his vehement attack on George Washington and his policy had of course provoked the resentment of the Federalists, and others of the Democratic party were estranged from him on account of his “Infidelity” ; but Jefferson, then President, warmly welcomed him with every mark of friendship and esteem. An amusing story is told of Paine’s progress from Baltimore to New York. He was interrupted by a Mr. Hargrove, Minister of the New Jerusalemites. “You are Mr. Paine,” said Mr. Hargrove. “Yes.” “My name, Sir, is Hargrove ; I am Minister of the New Jerusalem Church here. We, Sir, explain the Scriptures in their true meaning. We have found the key which has been lost above four thousand years.” “It must have been very rusty,” said Paine quietly ; and the New Jerusalemite had to retire discomfited, without being able to demonstrate to the great heretic the virtue of his Swedenborgian key of interpretation. Paine found many of his former friends gather round him, but many also shunned his society as that of one tainted with the leprosy of irreligion. Some public demonstrations of joy at his arrival were made, but numbers of people, while admiring his politics, could not stomach his heresy, and wrote and spoke against him. All this was sufficient to

disturb his natural serenity, and it is not to be wondered at if the neglect of friends, added to his terrible physical sufferings from the abscess in his side, should have brought on occasional attacks of irritability and peevishness. But surely our judgment on such natural weakness need not be harsh. The traducers of this man have lavishly urged such faults as these; but being Christians we cannot expect from them much charity. Against the reputation of Freethought heroes these partial critics direct a fierce light of moral analysis, and if any blemish is discovered, they have no eye for preponderating excellence; if they detect spots in the sun they forthwith deny its brightness. The worthies of Freethought must be absolutely immaculate and impeccable; a pitch of virtue be it remarked which most Christian heroes have fallen terribly and lamentably short of.

There were some praiseworthy exceptions to the desertion of Paine by his old friends. Jefferson corresponded with him to the day of his death; De Witt Clinton hailed him as a dear friend; Elihu Palmer, the eloquent Deistical lecturer, cultivated his acquaintance. To the last of these, who was blind, Paine showed great kindness, and, after his death, rendered his widow essential service. Benevolent even to the end was the maligned "Infidel," and full of high-minded independence, as the following extract from his "Second Letter to the Citizens of the United States" will prove. "As this letter is intended to announce my arrival to my friends, and to my enemies, if I have any, for I ought to have none in America, and as introductory to others that will occasionally follow, I shall close it by detailing the line of conduct I shall pursue. I have no occasion to ask, nor do I intend to accept, any place or office in the Government. There is none it could give me, that would be any ways equal to the profits I could make as an author, for I have an established fame in the literary world, could I reconcile it to my principles to make money by my politics or religion; I must be in everything what I have ever been, a disinterested volunteer; my proper sphere of action is on the common floor of citizenship, and to honest men I give my hand and my heart freely. I have some manuscript works to publish, of which I shall give proper notice, and some mechanical affairs to bring forward, that will employ all my leisure time. I shall continue these letters as I see occasion; and as to the low party prints that choose to abuse me, they are welcome; I shall not descend to answer them. I have been too much used to such common stuff to take any notice of it. The Government of England honoured me with a thousand martyrdoms, by burning me in effigy in every town in that country, and their hirelings in America may do the same." Paine continued these letters to the number of seven, the last appearing on March 12th, 1803. The remainder of his public life was brief. In June, 1803, he forwarded to Congress an account of the "Construction of Iron Bridges," and presented therewith his models. He also busied

himself in electioneering proceedings, and made some attempts to establish a Deistical church. In September, 1804, he wrote against the supposed "right" of importing negroes; Paine always hated slavery, and so, perhaps, did Washington, but he nevertheless kept slaves. In 1807, two years before his death, he published the "Third Part of the Age of Reason;" his minor publications during these years of still active life are as follows: "The Cause of the Yellow Fever and the Means of Preventing it;" "On Political Emissaries;" "The Liberty of the Press;" "Affairs of Europe;" "Gunpowder Fortifications;" "Examination of the Prophecies;" "An Essay on Dreams;" "Private Thoughts on a Future State;" "Essay on the Origin of Freemasonry;" and "Reply to the Bishop of Llandaff." In June, 1803, he left New York for New Rochelle, where he mostly spent his few remaining years. His farm was managed by a qualified person, and he himself took lodgings in the neighbourhood. On Christmas Eve of 1804, he narrowly escaped a bullet fired through his window by a man who was considerably in his debt. He suffered, too, from epilepsy, from the abscess in his side, and from the general infirmities of old age. His long life was drawing to a close; his body was fast wearing out; but his mental vigour seems to have been unabated even to the very end.

Paine's last hours were disturbed by the mistaken zeal of superstitious bigots, anxious to save him from the hell which the God of their faith had graciously appointed for the everlasting torture of impenitent heretics. "One afternoon," says Rickman, 'a very old lady, in a large scarlet cloak, knocked at the door, and inquired for Thomas Paine.' Mr. Jarvis (a portrait painter friend) told her he was asleep. 'I am very sorry for that,' said she, 'for I want to see him very particularly.' Thinking it a pity to make an old woman call twice, Mr. Jarvis waked him. He arose upon one elbow, and with an expression of eye that staggered the old woman, asked, 'What do you want?'—'Is your name Paine?'—'Yes'—'Well, then, I come from Almighty God to tell you, that if you do not repent of your sins, and believe in our Blessed Saviour, Jesus Christ, you will be damned, and—' 'Poh, poh, it is not true. You were not sent with any such impertinent message. Jarvis, make her go away. Pshaw! he would not send such a foolish, ugly old woman about his messages. Go away; go back; shut the door.' The old lady retired in mute astonishment. During the last few days before death he suffered most excruciating pain; his body was in many places covered with ulcers, and his feet with discoloured blisters; and he was at the same time labouring under a confirmed dropsy, attended with frequent cough and vomiting; for all of which he had to thank the tender mercies of those politicians who had imprisoned him for months in a damp, cold cell of the Luxembourg. Even in this deplorable condition he could gain no peace from the persistence of pious people.

Mrs. Hadden, his nurse, frequently read the Bible to him, probably in order to give him a foretaste of approaching damnation. Her pious efforts were assisted by two clergymen, the Rev. Mr. Milledollar, a Presbyterian, and the Rev. Mr. Cunningham. 'The latter gentleman said,' according to Sherwin, 'Mr. Paine, we visit you as friends and neighbours. You have now a full view of death; you cannot live long, and whoever does not believe in Jesus Christ will assuredly be damned'—'Let me have none of your Popish stuff, replied Paine. 'Get away with you, good morning, good morning.' Mr. Milledollar attempted to address him, but he was interrupted with the same language. When they were gone, he said to Mrs. Hadden, 'Don't let 'em come here again; they trouble me.'” Even the Doctor, one Manley, must need exceed his professional duties, and strive to extort a recantation from the dying man; but Paine replied to him as to his other tormentors. Surely there is something infinitely disgusting in this wretched intrusion on the parting agonies of a fellow-mortal “rapt in the whirlwinds and thick ghastly vapours of death.” The old man was happily released from pain and torment on the 8th of June, 1809, dying about nine in the morning, “placidly and without a struggle.” He was interred on his own farm at New Rochelle, the Quakers' Committee having refused him burial, and a stone was placed over his grave according to his will, bearing the following simple inscription:—

THOMAS PAINE,  
AUTHOR OF “COMMON SENSE,”

Died June 8, 1809, aged seventy-two years and five months.

And assuredly to a discerning and appreciative mind this simple inscription conveys fuller meaning than any possible effort of panegyric eloquence. Monumental alabaster or sculptured cenotaph could add nothing to this man's fame; his name alone speaks louder praise than any funeral oration could afford. Architectural genius rears costly monuments to victorious generals, ambitious kings, and successful statesmen, who need such to preserve their memory, although in their day of fret upon the stage of life they strut in the full blaze of public notoriety; but the men of ideas, who move the world, need no such testimony as this. The truest, the noblest, the indestructible monument to Thomas Paine lies in the grateful recollection of those who have recognised the incorruptible purity of his life and the value of his services in the cause of human freedom, and for whom the “Rights of Man” and the “Age of Reason” are the veritable watchwords of progress. This man of the people was greater than any king, for he rules over posterity by whom kings are forgotten.

Thomas Paine, like other great men, has his traducers. Their charges may be reduced to three—namely, Intemperance,

Licentiousness, and Recantation. Let us examine the evidence for each.

The charge of *drunkenness* is unsupported by the least particle of evidence, and yet how readily is the libellous statement received. Even so impartial and able a writer as Mr. Winwood Reade, author of the "Martyrdom of Man," can condescend to countenance it, without probably having stayed to consider whether it contained any truth. "Tom Paine took to drink," says Mr. Reade, echoing and spreading the scandal of the malignant liars who have cast their filth against the memory of the "Infidel," concerning whom people are ready to believe any stories, however monstrously untrue or absurd. Rickman says that, under the terrible pressure of public and private affliction in Paris, he did once give way to excess, but that he ever afterwards partook moderately of wine and spirit. Paine's friends in America declared that he never did get drunk; Mr. Fellows, with whom he lived for more than six months, said that only once did he ever see him even slightly excited with liquor, and then he had been to dinner with an Irish friend. Dr. Manley said: "While I attended him he never was inebriated." The charge of drunkenness is a mere weak invention of the enemy. Cheetham first disseminated this libel, as he was the first to spread another yet to be considered, citing as his authority Mr. Jarvis, Paine's friend; but Mr. Vale, writing in the *New York Beacon*, in July, 1837, distinctly says: "*Mr. Jarvis tells us that Cheetham lied, and we are authorised to say so.*" Here, then, is an end to the first count of the indictment.

The charge of *licentiousness* comes from the same quarter as that of intemperance—namely, from Cheetham. During his stay in Paris Paine had lodged at the house of M. Bonneville, who, besides being a bookseller, was proprietor of a Republican paper, which was suppressed on the usurpation of Buonaparte. Hearing of his misfortune, and grateful for former kindness, Paine invited him and his family to America. Madame Bonneville and her children came at once, and the husband afterwards followed them. For the children Paine generously provided during his life, and both children and parents were remembered in his will. A man named Carver, of New York, having quarrelled with Paine over some money matters, wrote a hasty, scurrilous letter to him, containing gross aspersions, which he afterwards explained away. This letter was somehow obtained by Cheetham, who amplified it in his "Life." Madame Bonneville prosecuted him for libel, and obtained damages. There is fortunately extant a letter from Paine to Cheetham, dated Oct. 27th, 1807, wherein that worthy is informed that, if he do not make public apology for certain abuse and falsehood in his paper, he will be prosecuted for lying, and further that he cannot be trusted even to state truth without running it to falsehood. Who would believe anything on the mere word of a convicted liar like this fellow? Surely, no one. Besides, the charge of

licentiousness is *prima facie* absurd. Against Paine, in his years of virile manhood, when full of health and strength, no one ever whispered such an accusation; and can we believe that he began a career of licentiousness in his old age, when, in addition to the infirmities natural to his time of life, he suffered dreadful tortures from an inveterate abscess in his side, which often made him loathe life, and hope for death? Why nobody but a confirmed lunatic, or worse, would profess belief in such a charge, supported by such evidence.

The charge of recantation is of a piece with the two first counts of the indictment against Paine. Even if true, one is at a loss to know what conceivable purpose of usefulness it could serve. Is it deemed by good Christians that a man's testimony to the truth of their faith is most valuable if made at a time when he is least able to form a dispassionate judgment? at a time when the body is racked with pain, and the brain enfeebled by disease? or when, his intellect being reduced to the level of his tormentors', he shrinks with awful terror from the imaginative horrors of the approaching damnation of hell, and manifests a mental weakness which in his time of health and sanity he would be the first to treat with ineffable disdain? Not how a man dies, but how he lives, is the matter of supreme importance. Yet, fortunately, we are in possession of ample proof that Thomas Paine died as he lived, "an enemy to the Christian religion." Already we have narrated the fruitless attempts made by pious and zealous persons to obtain from him a recantation of his heresy, and a confession of faith in Christ; the truth of that narrative is incontestible, and the traducers do not attempt to call it in question. They have concocted, to support their slanders, the following story, which, if it did not come from Christians, one would be surprised how any human being was ever foolish enough to give it credence:—Mr. Willet Hicks, a Quaker gentleman, who resided near Paine during his last illness, used to send him in little niceties, which, probably, he could not otherwise obtain. These delicacies used to be conveyed to Paine by Mr. Hicks's servant girl, Mary Hinsdale; and to *her*, say the libellers, Paine made a recantation, and said that if ever there was an agent of the Devil on earth, he was assuredly that instrument of evil. The story was extensively circulated by the Religious Tract Society, and copied into almost all the religious journals. It appeared also in the *Norwich Mercury*, edited by one Burke, and luckily fell in the way of William Cobbett, who had been to America and learnt all the facts about Paine's death from the original witnesses, and who forthwith, burning with indignation and disgust, wrote the following reply, which is preserved in Richard Carlile's *Republican* of February 13th, 1824. Cobbett's testimony is all the more valuable because of the fact that years before, when writing under the pseudonyme of Peter Porcupine, in Philadelphia, he had heaped mountains of abuse on Paine;

but age brought wisdom, and William Cobbett repented of Peter Porcupine's sins. Nay, he became instead of a reviler an intense admirer of Paine's character, and even exhumed his bones and brought them to England, because he thought the Americans who had forgotten his services were unworthy to have his bones amongst them. The following is William Cobbett's reply to the recantation story, and after reading it the reader will dismiss the canting lie from his mind for ever.

"I happen to know the *origin* of this story; and I possess the real, *original document*, whence have proceeded the divers *editions* of the falsehood, of the very *invention* of which I was, perhaps, *myself*, the innocent cause!

"About two years ago, I, being then on Long Island, published my intention of writing an account of the life, labours, and death of Paine. Soon after this, a Quaker at New York, named *Charles Collins*, made many applications for an *interview* with me, which at last he obtained. I found that his object was to persuade me that Paine had *recanted*. I laughed at him, and sent him away. But he *returned again and again to the charge*. He wanted me to promise that I would say 'that *it was said*' that Paine recanted. 'No,' said I; 'but I will say that *you say it*, and that you *tell a lie*, unless you *prove the truth* of what you say; and if you do that, I shall gladly insert the fact.' This posed 'friend Charley,' whom I suspected to be a most consummate hypocrite. He had a *sodden face*, a *simper*, and manœuvred his features, precisely like the *most perfidious wretch that I have known, or ever read or heard of*. He was precisely the reverse of my honest, open, and sincere Quaker friends, the Pauls, of Pennsylvania. Friend Charley plied me with remonstrances and reasonings; but I always answered him: 'Give me *proof*; name *persons*; state *times*; state *precise words*; or I denounce you as a *liar*.' Thus put to his trumps, friend Charley resorted to the aid of a person of his own stamp; and, at last, he brought me a paper containing matter, of which the above statement of Mr. Burks is a *garbled edition*! This paper, very cautiously and craftily drawn up, contained only the *initials* of names. This would not do. I made him, at last, put down the full name and the address of the *informer*, 'Mary Hinsdale, No. 10, Anthony Street, New York.' I got this from friend Charley, some time about June last, and had no opportunity of visiting the party till late in October, just before I sailed.

"The informer was a Quaker woman, who, at the time of Mr. Paine's last illness, was a *servant* in the family of Mr. Willet Hicks, an eminent merchant, a man of excellent character, a Quaker, and even, I believe, a Quaker preacher. Mr. Hicks, a kind and liberal and rich man, visited Mr. Paine in his illness, and from his house, which was near that of Mr. Paine, little nice things (as is the practice in America) were sometimes sent to him, of which this servant, friend Mary, was

the bearer, and *this* was the way in which the lying cant got into the room of Mr. Paine.

"To 'friend Mary,' therefore, I went on the 26th of October last, with friend Charley's paper in my pocket. I found her in a lodging in a back room up one pair of stairs. I knew that I had no common cunning to set my wit against. I began with all the art that I was master of. I had got a prodigiously broad-brimmed hat on. I patted a little child that she had sitting beside her; I called her *friend*; and played all the awkward tricks of an undisciplined wheedler. But I was compelled to come quickly to *business*. She asked, 'What's thy name, friend?' and the moment I said *William Cobbett*, up went her mouth as *tight* as a purse! Sack-making appeared to be her occupation; and that I might not extract through her eyes that which she was resolved I should not get out of her mouth, she went and took up a sack, and began to sew; and not another look or glance could I get from her.

"However, I took out my paper, read it, and stopping at several points asked her if it was *true*. Talk of the *Jesuits*, indeed! The whole tribe of Loyala, who have shaken so many kingdoms to their base, never possessed a millionth part of the cunning of this drab-coloured little woman, whose face simplicity and innocence seemed to have chosen as the place of their triumph! She shuffled; she evaded; she equivocated; she warded off; she affected not to understand me, not to understand the paper, not to remember; and all this with so much seeming simplicity and single-heartedness, and in a voice so mild, so soft, and so sweet, that, if the Devil had been sitting where I was, he would certainly have jumped up and hugged her to his bosom!

"The result was: that it was *so long ago*, that she could not speak *positively* to any part of the matter; that she *would not say that any part of the paper was true*; that she had *never seen the paper*; and that she had never given 'friend Charley' (for so she called him) authority to say *anything about the matter in her name*. I pushed her closely upon the subject of the '*unhappy French female*.' Asked her whether she should *know her* again,—'Oh, no! friend; I tell thee that I have *no recollection* of any person or thing that I saw at Thomas Paine's house.' The truth is, that the cunning little thing knew that the French lady was at hand, and that detection was easy, if she had said that she should know her upon sight!

"I had now nothing to do but to bring friend Charley's nose to the grindstone. But Charley, who is a grocer, living in Cherry Street, near Pearl Street, though so pious a man, and doubtless, in great haste to get to everlasting bliss, had *moved out of the city for fear of the fever*, not liking, apparently, to go off to the next world in a yellow skin. And thus he escaped me, who sailed from New York in four days afterwards; or Charley should have found that there was something else on this side

the grave pretty nearly as troublesome and as dreadful as the Yellow Fever.

"This is, I think, a pretty good instance of the lengths to which hypocrisy will go. The whole, as far as relates to recantation, and to the '*unhappy French female*,' is a lie from the beginning to the end. Mr. Paine declares in his last Will, that he retains all his publicly expressed opinions as to religion. His executors, and many other gentlemen of undoubted veracity, had the same declaration from his dying lips. Mr. Willet Hicks visited him to nearly the last. This gentleman says that there was no change of opinion intimated *to him*; and will any man believe that Paine would have withheld from Mr. Hicks that which he was so forward to communicate to Mr. Hicks's *servant girl*?"

"Observe, reader, that in this tissue of falsehoods is included a most foul and venomous slander on a woman of virtue and of spotless honour. But hypocrites will stick at nothing. Calumny is their weapon, and a base press is the hand to wield it."

The reader may consult :—

Linton's Life of Thomas Paine. (London : C. Watts.)

Rickman's do.

Oldys's do.

Cheetham's do.

Sherwin's do.

Paine's Works, Edited by Richard Carlile, 2 vols., London, 1819.

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### GOLDEN SAYINGS FROM PAINE.

SOME writers have so confounded Society with Government, as to leave little or no distinction between them : whereas they are not only different, but have different origins. Society is produced by our wants, and Government by our wickedness ; the former promotes our happiness *positively*, by uniting our affections : the latter *negatively*, by restraining our vices. The one encourages intercourse, the other creates distinctions. The first is a patron, the last a punisher. Society, in every state, is a blessing, but government, even in its best state, is but a necessary evil ; in its worst state, an intolerable one ; for when we suffer, or are exposed to the same miseries *by a Government*, which we might expect in a country *without Government*, our calamity is heightened by reflecting, that we furnish the means by which we suffer. Government, like dress, is the badge of lost innocence ; the palaces of kings are built on the ruins of the bowers of paradise. For, were the impulses of conscience clear, uniform, and irresistibly obeyed, man would need no other lawgiver ; but that not being the case, he finds it necessary to surrender up a part of his property to furnish means for the protection of the rest ; and this he is induced to do by the

same prudence which, in every other case, advises him out of two evils to choose the least. Wherefore, security being the true design and end of Government, it unanswerably follows, that whatever form thereof appears most likely to ensure it to us with the least expense and greatest benefit, is preferable to all others.—*Common Sense.*

The most plausible plea which hath ever been offered in favour of hereditary succession is, that it preserves a nation from civil wars; and were this true, it would be weighty; whereas, it is the most barefaced falsity ever imposed upon mankind. The whole history of England disowns the fact. Thirty kings and two minors have reigned in that distracted kingdom since the Conquest, in which time there have been (including the Revolution) no less than eight civil wars and nineteen rebellions. Wherefore, instead of making for peace, it makes against it, and destroys the very foundation it seems to stand on.—*Ibid.*

If we inquire into the business of a king, we shall find that in some countries they have none; and after sauntering away their lives without pleasure to themselves or advantage to the nation, withdraw from the scene, and leave their successors to tread the same idle ground. In absolute monarchies the whole weight of business, civil and military, lies on the king; the children of Israel in their request for a king urged this plea, "that he may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles." But in countries where he is neither a judge, nor a general, a man would be puzzled to know what *is* his business.—*Ibid.*

In England the king hath little more to do than to make war and give away places; which, in plain terms, is to impoverish the nation and set it together by the ears. A pretty business, indeed, for a man to be allowed eight hundred thousand sterling a year for, and worshipped into the bargain! Of more worth is one honest man to society, and in the sight of God, than all the crowned ruffians that ever lived.—*Ibid.*

The sovereignty of a despotic monarch assumes the power of making wrong right, or right wrong, as he pleases or as it suits him. The sovereignty in a Republic is exercised to keep right and wrong in their proper and distinct places, and never to suffer the one to usurp the place of the other. A Republic, properly understood, is a sovereignty of justice, in contradistinction to a sovereignty of will.—*Dissertations on Government.*

The vanity and presumption of governing beyond the grave, is the most ridiculous and insolent of all tyrannies. Man has no property in man; neither has any generation a property in the generations which are to follow.—*Rights of Man.*

A race of conquerors arose, whose Government, like that of William the Conqueror, was founded in power, and the sword assumed the name of a sceptre. Governments thus established last as long as the power to support them lasts; but that they might avail themselves of every engine in their

favour, they united fraud to force, and set up an idol which they called Divine Right ; and which, in imitation of the Pope, who affects to be spiritual and temporal, and in contradiction to the Founder of the Christian religion, twisted itself afterwards into an idol of another shape, called Church and State. The key of St. Peter and the key of the Treasury became quartered upon one another, and the wondering cheated multitude worshipped the invention.—*Ibid.*

The greatest characters the world has known have arisen on the democratic floor. Aristocracy has not been able to keep a proportionate pace with democracy. The artificial noble shrinks into a dwarf before the noble of Nature ; and in the few instances of those (for there are some in all countries) in whom Nature, as by a miracle, has survived in aristocracy, those men despise it.—*Ibid.*

Toleration is not the opposite of Intoleration, but the counterfeit of it. Both are despotisms. The one assumes to itself the right of withholding Liberty of Conscience, and the other of granting it. The one is the Pope armed with fire and faggot, and the other is the Pope selling or granting indulgences. The former is church and state, and the latter is church and traffic.—*Ibid.*

The laws which common usage ordains, have a greater influence than the laws of Government. In fine, society performs for itself almost every thing which is ascribed to Government.—*Ibid.*

We have heard the Rights of Man called a levelling system ; but the only system to which the word levelling is truly applicable, is the hereditary monarchical system. It is a system of mental levelling. It indiscriminately admits every species of character to the same authority. Vice and virtue, ignorance and wisdom, in short, every quality, good or bad, is put on the same level. Kings succeed each other, not as rationals, but as animals. It signifies not what their mental or moral characters are. Can we then be surprised at the abject state of the human mind in monarchical countries, when the Government itself is formed on such an abject levelling system ?—*Ibid.*

I have always believed that the best security for property, be it much or little, is to remove from every part of the community, as far as can possibly be done, every cause of complaint, and every motive to violence ; and this can only be done by an equality of rights. When rights are secure, property is secure in consequence. But when property is made a pretence for unequal or exclusive rights, it weakens the right to hold the property, and provokes indignation and tumult : for it is unnatural to believe that property can be secure under the guarantee of a society injured in its rights by the influence of that property.—*Dissertation on First Principles of Government.*

As it is impossible to separate the improvement made by

cultivation from the earth itself, upon which that improvement is made, the idea of landed property arose from that inseparable connection ; but it is nevertheless true that it is the value of the improvement only, and not the earth itself, that is individual property. Every proprietor, therefore, of cultivated land, owes to the community a *ground-rent*, for I know no better term to express the idea by, for the land which he holds ; and it is from this ground-rent that the fund proposed in this plan is to issue.—*Agrarian Justice.*

He that would make his own liberty secure, must guard even his enemy from oppression ; for if he violates this duty, he establishes a precedent that will reach to himself.—*Ibid.*

Each of those churches show certain books, which they call *revelation*, or the word of God. The Jews say that their word of God was given by God to Moses, face to face ; the Christians say that their word of God came by divine inspiration ; and the Turks say that their word of God (the Koran) was brought by an angel from Heaven. Each of those churches accuse the other of unbelief ; and, for my own part, I disbelieve them all.—*Age of Reason.*

The human mind has a natural disposition to scientific knowledge, and to the things connected with it. The first and favourite amusement of a child, even before it begins to play, is that of imitating the works of man. It builds houses with cards or sticks ; it navigates the little ocean of a bowl of water with a paper boat, or dams the stream of a gutter, and contrives something which it calls a mill ; and it interests itself in the fate of its works with a care that resembles affection. It afterwards goes to school, where its genius is killed by the barren study of a dead language, and the philosopher is lost in the linguist.—*Ibid.*

Of all the modes of evidence that ever were invented to obtain belief to any system or opinion to which the name of religion has been given, that of miracle, however successful the imposition may have been, is the most inconsistent. For, in the first place, whenever recourse is had to show, for the purpose of procuring that belief (for a miracle, under any idea of the word, is a show), it implies a lameness or weakness in the doctrine that is preached. And, in the second place, it is degrading the Almighty into the character of a showman, playing tricks to amuse and make the people stare and wonder. It is also the most equivocal sort of evidence that can be set up ; for the belief is not to depend upon the thing called a miracle, but upon the credit of the reporter, who says that he saw it ; and, therefore, the thing, were it true, would have no better chance of being believed than if it were a lie.—*Ibid.*

All the *World* is my *Country*, and to do *Good* my *Religion*.

# HEROES AND MARTYRS

OF

## FREETHOUGHT.

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### 7.—SOCRATES.

**T**HE name of Socrates is the most striking and memorable of antiquity, and is held in reverence by all except a few rabid sectarians incapable of perceiving greatness or goodness outside the petty limits of their own creed. Philosopher and hero, wise and virtuous, the martyred Athenian towers sublimely and conspicuously even among the great figures of old Greece. Others approached him in profundity of wisdom, and some even in simple nobility of character; but nowhere else in ancient times shall we find such a blending of intellectual and moral greatness, or a figure at once so exquisitely simple and so august. Fervid without fanaticism, wise without arrogance, and pure without taint of pharasaic self-sufficiency, he stands one of the noblest heroes in the Walhalla of the world. Born amidst comparative poverty, and deprived in youth of the advantages of that highest culture which only opulence can certainly secure, he nevertheless climbed to the highest pinnacles of wisdom by virtue of original genius and inherent power. In order to pursue truth untrammelled, he embraced a life of voluntary poverty, the best part of which was spent in stimulating and expanding the minds of his fellow men; and at last, ripe in genius and age, he set the seal of a brave death to the testimony of a noble and exalted life.

Socrates was born at Athens 469 B.C., and suffered death 399 B.C., at the age of seventy. His father, Sophroniscus, was a sculptor, and his mother, Phenarete, a midwife. He seems to have been trained to follow his father's profession, in which he attained to considerable skill; even down to the time of Pausanias there was preserved among the art-treasures of the Acropolis a draped group of the Graces wrought by his hands. Of his early private life little, if any thing, is known; but he appears to have been a noticeable personage before the commencement of his public career. Crito, a wealthy Athenian of his own age, charmed with his manners, is said to have withdrawn him from the shop, and to have educated him. Crito afterwards became

one of the most reverential and devoted disciples of the genius he had discovered. In person Socrates was brawny and squab; his face was ugly, the lips being coarse and sensual, the nose flat, and the brow like that of a bull. Never was such another spiritual jewel enshrined in such uncomely setting. His constitution was remarkably robust, healthy, and enduring, enabling him to bear with equal facility and unconcern the heat of summer and the winter's cold; and the same homely clothing covered him in every season. He was habitually abstemious, believing that if the body were clogged by gluttonous eating and drinking, the mind would inevitably suffer and abate its activity; yet on jovial occasions he would outdo the greatest toppers without getting intoxicated. His temper was naturally irascible, and sometimes betrayed him into great improprieties of language and demeanour; but by practising rigid self-restraint he managed to bring it under control; so that eventually he became one of the most equable of men.

The domestic relations of Socrates may be briefly recorded. Like many another philosopher he strayed into matrimony, and discovered how great a plague a perverse, scolding woman may become. The name of Xanthippe, his wife, is of universal notoriety, and synonymous with shrew. The good woman seems to have been little sparing of her tongue, and her proneness to objurgatory eloquence was nowise restrained even by the presence of strangers. On one occasion, being unusually exasperated by the mildness with which he bore her abuse, she emptied a vessel of water over him; on which he remarked, "Did I not say that Xanthippe was thundering and would soon rain?" When interrogated by his friends as to his reason for marrying such a shrew, he playfully replied, "Those who wish to become skilled in horsemanship select the most spirited horses; after being able to bridle those, they believe they can bridle all others. Now, as it is my wish to live and converse with men, I married this woman, being firmly convinced that in case I should be enabled to endure her, I should be able to endure all others." This reply must, however, be taken with a liberal allowance; probably it was only his ironical way of reconciling himself to his bad bargain. In others he tolerated no disrespect of Xanthippe. Xenophon records a grave and impressive conversation between Socrates and Lamprocles, his son, wherein the latter is wisely rebuked for showing contempt and anger at his mother's temper, and bidden to remember the pains she had to bear and nourish him and to preserve him till the time when manhood brought the power of self-protection. Notwithstanding his unfavourable experience of matrimonial life, he appears to have deemed marriage and celibacy alternatives most difficult to choose between; for Diogenes Laërtius relates that once on being asked by a young man whether it were better to marry or remain single, the philosopher replied, "Whichever you do you will repent."

We have already said that Socrates was abstemious and contented with poverty while he could pursue truth. Temperance he considered the foundation of every virtue; and although by no means neglectful of the body he disapproved of excess and immoderate exercise, and recommended the working off by proper exercise of so much food as the palate pleasurably received. Idleness he detested, and the man who did absolutely nothing except gratify his personal desires he regarded as a pestilent nuisance. According to Xenophon he used to say that "the best men, and those most beloved by the gods, were those who, in agriculture, performed their agricultural duties well; those who, in medicine, performed their medical duties well; and those who, in political offices, performed their public duties well; but he who did nothing well was neither useful for any purpose nor acceptable to the gods." Socrates never made any distinction between rich and poor; he conversed freely with sensible men of all stations, and accepted the hospitality of all classes with the same urbanity and grace. Not the table but the company was his criterion of enjoyment; "Other men," said he, "live to eat, I eat to live." On one occasion his wife was sadly annoyed and disconcerted at having nothing appropriate to offer some rich men whom he had invited to dinner; but he said: "Be of good cheer; for if our guests are sensible men they will bear with us; and if they are not, we need not care about them." Eschines, the orator, once lamented—"I am a poor man and have nothing else, but I give you myself;" to whom Socrates replied: "Do you not perceive that you are giving me what is of the greatest value?" But there was no ostentation about the philosopher's poverty; he regarded wealth and social position as merely extrinsic, and penetrated through the husk and shell of circumstances to the heart of reality; and therefore he neither despised the poor nor flouted the rich. A man's dress, whether leathern or purple, made absolutely no difference to him. When Atisthenes turned the ragged side of his cloak to the light, Socrates said: "I see your silly vanity through the holes in your cloak."

The superlative ugliness of Socrates was matter of notoriety, and so also was the witchery of his tongue; exemplification of which is afforded in the following extract from Shelley's beautiful translation of Plato's *Symposium* or *Banquet*: "I assert then (-says Alcibiades) that Socrates is exactly like those Silenuses that sit in the sculptors' shops, and which are carved holding flutes and pipes, but which, when divided in two, are found to contain within side the images of the gods.....If any one will listen to the talk of Socrates, it will appear to him at first extremely ridiculous; the phrases and expressions which he employs, fold around his exterior the skin, as it were, of a rude and wanton satyr. He is always talking about brass founders, and leather-cutters, and skin-dressers; and this is his perpetual custom, so that any dull and unobservant person might easily

laugh at his discourse. But if any one should see it opened, as it were, and get within the sense of his words, he would then find that they alone of all that enters into the mind of man to utter, had a profound and persuasive meaning, and that they were most divine; and that they presented to the mind innumerable images of every excellence, and that they tended towards objects of the highest moment, or rather towards all that he who seeks the possession of what is supremely beautiful and good, need regard as essential to the accomplishment of his ambition." The panegyric of Alcibiades is corroborated by all that we know of its object; never before or since was there such a talker as Socrates, never such a mouth as his so overflowing with golden speech which all might listen to alike. Dr. Johnson declared that when you had seen one green field you had seen all green fields, and that he preferred a walk down Cheapside to a country ramble; and Socrates appears to have in a measure shared this feeling; for, said he, "I am very anxious to learn; and from fields and trees I can learn nothing: I can only learn from men in the city." Accordingly, he was constantly in public, visiting the gymnasia and the places for walking in the morning, going to the market when it was full, and spending the rest of the day where he was likely to meet the greatest number of people. But the greatest peculiarity of his public life was that every one was free to hear him, and to engage him in discourse. Generally he fastened his dialectical fangs on the Sophists, or professional teachers, who undertook to instruct the youthful Athenian, and to fit him for private or public life: for these Sophists he greatly disliked; not, indeed, because they sophistically endeavoured to make the worse appear the better reason, as was generally supposed before Mr. Grote demolished that theory, but because they received payment for their tuition, and thus both restricted their choice of subject, and made that a matter of barter, which should have been a matter of friendship simply. The Athenians loved discussion above all things; they were ever ready to hear of some new thing; and every man of them could speak out his sentiments and his criticisms with a freedom unparalleled in the ancient world, and hardly paralleled in the modern. The populace, too, had a natural distrust of professional persons, and enjoyed keenly the manner in which Socrates exposed the pretence of wisdom without the reality, which often characterised them in spite of their flowing robes and authoritative demeanour. His method of discourse in itself possessed an exquisite charm; he would step up to some pretentious teacher after the delivery of a fluent speech, and, with an air of great simplicity, request to be instructed. Question after question followed in rapid succession, the answers all saturated in contradiction, until at last, baffled and bewildered, the orator would retire convicted of manifest ignorance or inconsistency. Mr. Grote gives the following graphic description of this dialectical method.

“Socrates never presented himself as a teacher, nor as a man having new knowledge to communicate. On the contrary, he disclaimed such pretensions, uniformly and even ostentatiously. But the subjects on which he talked were just those which every one professed to know perfectly and thoroughly, and on which every one believed himself in a condition to instruct others, rather than to require instruction for himself. On such questions as these—What is Justice? What is Piety? What is a Democracy? What is a Law?—every one fancied that he could give a confident opinion, and even wondered that any other person should feel a difficulty. When Socrates, professing ignorance, put any such question, he found no difficulty in obtaining an answer, given off-hand and with very little reflection. The answer purported to be the explanation or definition of a term familiar indeed, but of wide and comprehensive import—given by one who had never tried to render to himself an account of what it meant. Having got this answer, Socrates put fresh questions, applying it to specific cases, to which the respondent was compelled to give answers inconsistent with the first; thus showing that the definition was either too narrow, or too wide, or defective in some essential condition. The respondent then amended his answer; but this was a prelude to other questions, which could only be answered in ways inconsistent with the amendment; and the respondent, after many attempts to disentangle himself, was obliged to plead guilty to the inconsistencies, with an admission that he could make no satisfactory answer to the original query, which had at first appeared so easy and familiar.”

Such questioning and probing was certain to make enemies, as indeed Socrates ultimately discovered to his cost; but it made many friends also amongst discerning people, who perceived that this philosopher of the streets, who protested his ignorance, was after all wiser than all the pretenders of the city. Many, however, were offended by the epithet “wisest of men,” which was applied to him by his disciples. The use of the appellation thus began: Chaerephon inquired of the Delphian oracle whether any man existed excelling Socrates in wisdom, and the good Apollo made answer that no one exceeded Socrates in wisdom, that he was indisputably the wisest of men. In his great speech, as reported by Plato in the magnificent “Apology,” Socrates thus alludes to the oracular utterance:—

“When I heard the answer I said to myself, What can the god mean? and what is the interpretation of this riddle? for I know that I have no wisdom, small or great. What, then, can he mean when he says that I am the wisest of men? And yet he is a god, and cannot lie; that would be against his nature. After long consideration, I at last thought of a method of trying the question. I reflected that if I could only find a man wiser than myself, then I might go to the god with a refutation in my hand. I should say to him, ‘Here is a man who is wiser than

I am ; but you said that I was the wisest ? Accordingly I went to one who had the reputation of wisdom, and observed him ; and the result was as follows. When I began to talk with him, I could not help thinking that he was not really wise, although he was thought wise by many, and wiser still by himself ; and I went and tried to explain to him that he thought himself wise, but was not really wise ; and the consequence was that he hated me, and his enmity was shared by several who were present and heard me. So I left him, saying to myself, as I went away, Well, although I do not suppose that either of us knows anything really beautiful and good, I am better off than he is, for he knows nothing, and thinks that he knows. I neither know nor think that I know. In this latter particular, then, I seem to have slightly the advantage of him."

Socrates was by nature far removed from that contemptible arrogance of some philosophers and religionists who affect a settled disregard of all mundane things, including their fellow men. He was a hearty, genial soul, and felt himself linked to his fellow men by manifold sympathetic bonds, recognising a brother in every human form. Did not the same temptations assail him and them alike ? Was he not quickened and deadened by the same influences as they were ? And did not all men alike live amidst imperative duties, and unfathomable mysteries, treading the same mother earth, overarched by the all-enfolding azure canopy of heaven ? No recluse nursing supercilious self-esteem was he, but a great, robust nature, whose every vein pulsed with warm human blood, and whose heart throbbed in sympathy with the hoping, fearing mankind around him. Like a true citizen, he was ready to perform every public duty devolving upon him, and anxious to acquit himself with an eye to his own honour, and to the interests of the State. He performed military service, and was present at three pitched battles. How he comported himself therein let Plato, through the English lips of Shelley, relate ; and not a weaker voice, in another excerpt from the precious Symposium already cited, and from the same lofty panegyric of Alcibiades.

"At one time we were fellow-soldiers, and had our mess together in the camp before Potidæa. Socrates there overcame not only me, but every one beside, in endurance of toils : when, as often happens in a campaign, we were reduced to few provisions, there were none who could sustain hunger like Socrates ; and when we had plenty, he alone seemed to enjoy our military fare. He never drank much willingly, but when he was compelled he conquered all, even in that to which he was least accustomed ; and what is most astonishing, no one ever saw Socrates drunk, either then, or at any other time. In the depth of winter (and the winters there are excessively rigid) he sustained calmly incredible hardships ; and amongst other things, whilst the frost was intolerably severe, and no one went out of their tents, or if they went out, wrapt themselves up care-

fully, and put fleeces under their feet, and bound their legs with hairy skins, Socrates went out only with the same cloak on that he usually wore, and walked barefoot upon the ice; more easily, indeed, than those who had sandalled themselves so delicately; so that the soldiers thought that he did it to mock their want of fortitude. It would indeed be worth while to commemorate all that this brave man did and endured in that expedition. In one instance he was seen early in the morning standing in one place wrapt in meditation; and as he seemed not to be able to unravel the subject of his thoughts, he still continued to stand as inquiring and discussing within himself, and when noon came the soldiers observed him, and said to one another—‘Socrates has been standing there thinking ever since the morning.’ At last some Ionians came to the spot, and, having supped, as it was summer, bringing their blankets, they lay down to sleep in the cool; they observed that Socrates continued to stand there the whole night until morning, and that when the sun rose, he saluted it with a prayer and departed.

“I ought not to omit what Socrates is in battle. For in that battle after which the generals decreed to me the prize of courage, Socrates alone of all men was the saviour of my life, standing by me when I had fallen and was wounded, and preserving both myself and my arms from the hands of the enemy. On that occasion I entreated the generals to decree the prize, as it was most due, to him. But this, O Socrates, you cannot deny, that the generals wishing to conciliate a person of my rank desired to give me the prize, you were far more earnestly desirous than the generals that this glory should be attributed not to yourself but me.

“But to see Socrates when our army was defeated and scattered in flight at Delius, was a spectacle worthy to behold. On that occasion I was among the cavalry, and he on foot, heavily armed. After the total rout of our troops, he and Laches retreated together; I came up by chance, and seeing them, bade them be of good cheer, for that I would not leave them. As I was on horseback, and therefore less occupied by a regard of my own situation, I could better observe than at Potidæa the beautiful spectacle exhibited by Socrates on this emergency. How superior was he to Laches in presence of mind and courage! Your representation of him on the stage, O Aristophanes, was not wholly unlike his real self on this occasion, for he walked and darted his looks around with a majestic composure, looking tranquilly both on his friends and enemies; so that it was evident to every one, even from afar, that whoever should venture to attack him would encounter a desperate resistance. He and his companion thus departed in safety; for those who are scattered in flight are pursued and killed, whilst men hesitate to touch those who exhibit such a countenance as that of Socrates even in defeat.”

Socrates, as Mr. Lewes observes, was one of the very few

examples of inflexible justice of whom we have record, able at once to resist the power of tyrants and defy the despotism of mobs. During the government of the Thirty Tyrants, whose policy was to implicate in their misrule as many citizens as possible, he was summoned with four others into the Tholos or Rotunda, where the Prytanæ took their meals, and there commanded to bring Leon, of Salamis, from Athens. Leon had obtained the right of Athenian citizenship, but, fearing the rapacity of the tyrants, had retired to Salamis. To bring back Leon Socrates steadily refused. He says himself that "the Government, although it was so powerful, did not frighten me into doing anything unjust; but, when we came out of the Tholos, the four went to Salamis and took Leon, but I went away home. And perhaps I should have suffered death on account of this, if the Government had not soon been broken up."

On another occasion he showed how stedfastly he could withstand the clamours of an excited, imperious mob. The Athenian Senate was composed of five hundred members elected from the ten tribes; during thirty-five days the members of each tribe in turn had the presidency, and were called Prytanæ; of the fifty Prytanæ ten had presidency each seven days; and on each day one enjoyed the highest dignity, being called the Epistetes, and entrusted with the keys of the citadel and the treasury of the Republic. After the battle of Arginusæ, the admirals were objects of public disapprobation, because they had left unburied the dead who fell in battle, and who were, being deprived of burial rites, supposed, therefore, to be doomed to wander forlorn for a period of one hundred years on the banks of the Styx. The admirals, when summoned to trial, pleaded that, owing to a violent storm, the burial of the dead had been utterly impracticable; besides, they had left behind attendants to perform the obsequious rites, upon whom, and not upon them, all blame should properly rest. Moved by this sensible defence, the Senate would have acquitted the admirals; but the prosecutors, under the plea that it was too dark to count the show of hands, procured the adjournment of the trial. Meanwhile the relatives of the unburied dead were hired or urged to make public lamentation for the evil which had befallen them, and by this means popular prejudice was fully aroused. The next day the trial was continued, and with unseemly haste it was sought to condemn the admirals by a single, collective vote; but against this, as an illegal procedure, Socrates, being Epistetes for that day, strongly objected, and he was supported by the Prytanæ. The mob clamoured loudly for sentence and execution, and even threatened to immolate those who resisted their will. The Prytanæ wavered, and at last yielded, but Socrates remained firm: he was there to administer justice and not injustice, and would faithfully observe his sacred trust even at the risk of his life. With the day his term of office expired and

on the morrow the admirals were condemned. Such noble examples of inflexible justice are worthy of preservation, and are themselves sufficient to cast a lustrous halo around him by whom they were manifested.

Yet this man, so noble and reverend, had at last to stand before the tribunal of the State, and answer to the charges of impiety and corruption. The indictment was presented by Meletus, and seconded by two auxiliaries, Anytus and Lykon, all of whom were personal enemies of Socrates. According to Xenophon it ran thus : "Socrates offends against the laws in not paying respect to those gods whom the city respects, and introducing other new deities ; he also offends against the laws in corrupting the youth : the penalty due is death." Summoned before the Dikastery, Socrates treated these charges with contempt. In obedience to the internal monitor which, he declared, had from childhood warned him on eminent occasions, he refused to make any set defence, and even declined that prepared for him by one of the most skilful orators of the city. Mr. Grote thinks that any moderately able defence would have gained an acquittal, especially as the majority which condemned him exceeded the minority only by six ; and that he deliberately resolved to meet death then while in the fulness of mental vigour, before the approach of senile old age ; to set the seal of death to the testimony of his life, and to leave to the Athenian youth a memorable example of fortitude, and of constancy even to the bitter end. Assuming a tone of grave superiority, he addressed his judges rather as an illustrious teacher than as an arraigned culprit ; and instead of making submission, or craving mercy, or adducing witnesses to rebut the evidence of his prosecutors, he calmly warned the tribunal against the injustice of condemning to death a man whom they all necessarily knew to be innocent. After the verdict, he was allowed the customary privilege of proposing an alternative to the extreme penalty of death ; and his reply is preserved in the immortal "Apology" of Plato. He said :—

"What counter proposition shall I make to you as a substitute for the penalty of Meletus? Shall I name to you the treatment which I think I deserve at your hands? In that case, my proposition would be that I should be rewarded with a subsistence at the public expense in the Prytaneum ; for that is what I really deserve as a public benefactor—one who has neglected all thought of his own affairs, and embraced voluntary poverty, in order to devote himself to your best interests, and to admonish you individually on the serious necessity of mental and moral improvement. Assuredly I cannot admit that I have deserved from you any evil whatever ; nor would it be reasonable in me to propose exile or imprisonment, which I know to be certain and considerable evils, in place of death, which may perhaps be not an evil, but a good. I might indeed propose to you a pecuniary fine ; for the payment of

*that* would be no evil. But I am poor and have no money : all that I could muster might perhaps amount to a mina ; and I therefore propose to you a fine of one mina, as punishment on myself. Plato, and my other friends near me, desire me to increase this sum to thirty minæ, and they engage to pay it for me. A fine of thirty minæ, therefore, is the counter penalty which I submit for your judgment."

Such a speech was no wise calculated to placate his judges, but rather to incense them, contempt of court being then as now a most heinous and unpardonable offence. Sentence of death was pronounced, death by poison. Then the condemned man arose, towering loftily in spirit over his unjust judges, and addressed them in probably the grandest and most impressive speech that ever proceeded from the mouth of man :—

"Not much time will be gained, O Athenians, in return for the evil name which you will get from the detractors of the city, who will say that you killed Socrates, a wise man ; for they will call me wise even although I am not wise when they want to reproach you. If you had waited a little while, your desire would have been fulfilled in the course of nature. For I am far advanced in years, as you may perceive, and not far from death. I am speaking now only to those of you who have condemned me to death. And I have another thing to say to them : You think that I was convicted through deficiency of words—I mean, that if I had thought fit to leave nothing undone, nothing unsaid, I might have gained an acquittal. Not so ; the deficiency which led to my conviction was not of words—certainly not. But I had not the boldness or impudence or inclination to address you as you would have liked me to address you, weeping and wailing and lamenting, and saying and doing many things which you have been accustomed to hear from others, and which, as I say, are unworthy of me. But I thought that I ought not to do anything common or mean in the hour of danger : nor do I now repent of the manner of my defence, and I would rather die having spoken after my manner, than speak in your manner and live. For neither in war nor yet at law ought any man to use every way of escaping death. For often in battle there is no doubt that if a man will throw away his arms, and fall on his knees before his pursuers, he may escape death ; and in other dangers there are other ways of escaping death, if a man is willing to say and do anything. The difficulty, my friends, is not in avoiding death, but in avoiding unrighteousness ; for that runs faster than death. I am old and move slowly, and the slower runner has overtaken me, and my accusers are keen and quick, and the faster runner, which is unrighteousness, has overtaken them. And now I depart hence, condemned by you to suffer the penalty of death, and they too go their ways condemned by the truth to suffer the penalty of villany and wrong ; and I must abide by my award—let them abide by theirs.

“And now, O men who have condemned me, I would fain prophesy to you : for I am about to die, and that is the hour in which men are gifted with prophetic power. And I prophesy to you who are my murderers, that immediately after my death punishment far heavier than you have inflicted on me will surely await you. Me you have killed because you wanted to escape the accuser, and not to give an account of your lives. But that will not be as you suppose, far otherwise. For I say that there will be more accusers of you than there are now ; accusers whom hitherto I have restrained ; and as they are younger they will be more severe with you, and you will be more offended at them. For if you think that by killing men you can avoid the accuser censuring your lives, you are mistaken ; that is not a way of escape which is either possible or honourable ; the easiest and the noblest way is not to be crushing others, but to be improving yourselves. This is the prophecy which I utter before my departure to the judges who have condemned me.....

“Still, I have a favour to ask of them. When my sons are grown up, I would ask you, O, my friends, to punish them ; and I would have you trouble them, as I have troubled you, if they seem to care about riches, or anything, more than about virtue ; or if they pretend to be something when they are really nothing, then reprove them, as I have reprovèd you, for not caring about that for which they ought to care, and thinking that they are something when they are really nothing. And if you do this, I and my sons will have received justice at your hands.

“The hour of departure has arrived, and we go our ways—I to die and you to live. Which is better God only knows.”

Under ordinary circumstances Socrates would have drunk the hemlock in prison the next day after his trial ; but the day of his sentence happened to be immediately after that on which the sacred ship started on its yearly ceremonial pilgrimage from Athens to Delos for the festival of Apollo. Thirty days elapsed before its return ; and as the infliction of death was unlawful during that sacred period, the prisoner was respited until its expiry. The interval was passed in high discourse between the philosopher and his friends on subjects of imperishable interest, such as the immortality of the soul and the existence of Deity. Crito bribed the gaoler, and made every necessary arrangement for escape ; but Socrates steadily refused to flee from death, or to violate his country's laws. The following account of the great man's last moments is from Plato's *Phaedo* (Dr. Jowett's translation) :—

“When he had spoken these words he arose, and went into the bath-chamber with Crito, who bad us wait, and we waited, talking of the subject of discourse, and also of the greatness of our sorrow ; he was like a father of whom we were being bereaved, and we were about to pass the rest of our lives as orphans. When he had taken the bath his children were

brought to him—(he had two young sons and an elder one)—and the women of his family also came, and he talked to them, and gave them a few directions in the presence of Crito ; and he then dismissed them, and returned to us.

(The gaoler here enters with the poison ; and professing his belief that Socrates is the noblest, gentlest, and best of men, desires forgiveness for coming on so unthankful an errand, and departs in tears. Socrates bids Crito to tell the man to prepare the poison forthwith, and refuses further delay as an undignified paltering with fate.)

“Crito when he heard this made a sign to the servant ; and the servant went in and remained for some time, and then returned with the gaoler carrying the cup of poison. Socrates said : You, my good friend, who are experienced in these matters, shall give me directions how I am to proceed. The man answered : You have only to walk about until your legs are heavy, and then to lie down, and the poison will act. At the same time he handed the cup to Socrates, who in the easiest and gentlest manner, without the least fear or change of colour or feature, looking at the man with all his eyes, as his manner was, took the cup.....Then, holding it to his lips, quite readily and cheerfully he drank off the poison. Hitherto most of us had been able to control our sorrow ; but now, when we saw him drinking, and saw too that he had finished the draught, we could no longer forbear, and in spite of myself my own tears were flowing fast ; so that I covered my face and wept over myself, for certainly I was not weeping over him, but at the thought of my own calamity in having lost such a companion. Nor was I the first, for Crito, when he found himself unable to restrain his tears, had got up and moved away, and I followed ; and at that moment Apollodorus, who had been weeping all the time, broke out into a loud cry which made cowards of us all ! Socrates alone retained his calmness : ‘What is this strange outcry ?’ he said. ‘I sent away the women mainly in order that they might not offend in this way, for I have heard that a man should die in peace. Be quiet, then, and have patience.’ When we heard that, we were ashamed, and restrained our tears ; and he walked about until, as he said, his legs began to fail, and then he lay on his back, according to the directions, and the man who administered the poison now and then looked at his feet and legs ; and after a while he pressed his foot hard, and asked him if he could feel ; and he said, No ; and then his leg, and so upwards and upwards, and showed that he was cold and stiff. And he felt them himself, and said : ‘When the poison reaches the heart, that will be the end.’ He was beginning to grow cold about the groin, when he uncovered his face—for he had covered himself up—and said (they were his last words)—he said : ‘Crito, I owe a cock to Esculapius ; will you remember to pay the debt ?’ ‘The debt shall be paid,’ said Crito ; ‘is there anything else ?’ There was

no answer to this question ; but in a minute or two a movement was heard, and the attendants uncovered him ; his eyes were set, and Crito closed his eyes and mouth.

“Such was the end of our friend, whom I may truly call the wisest, the justest, and the best of all the men whom I have ever known.”

Although Socrates professed to be guided by an internal voice, which had from his childhood acted as his monitor, he yet reprehended as impious constant resort to the gods for such knowledge as men could obtain by the exercise of their natural faculties. He frequently reprov'd the philosophers of his age for discoursing so often and so fluently about celestial matters while they were grossly ignorant of terrestrial matters ; they occupied themselves about recondite or merely speculative questions, always soaring into the cloud-lands of thought ; but he concerned himself simply with subjects of importance to mankind in this life, and desired only to gain enough wisdom to enable him to walk sure-footedly upon this earth. He was anxious to perform his duties as a citizen, and to fulfil his moral obligations as a man ; but while the philosophical teachers waxed eloquent on the imperativeness of righteous conduct, and glibly talked about such virtues as Duty, Justice, Fortitude, Freedom, they were utterly unable to give him any adequate or even approximate definition of those terms—utterly unable, in fact, after discoursing eloquently on righteousness, to tell him, wherein it consisted, and what it actually implied. Everywhere he found that pestilent evil, which, notwithstanding our increased civilisation, still exists, and powerfully hinders the progress of truth, of employing phrases and terms relating to matters of the highest import, without having any clear idea as to what those terms and phrases actually mean. On all sides abounded the conceit of knowledge without the reality. The first step of improvement, Socrates thought, was to open men's eyes to their ignorance, to convict them of professing to know without really knowing at all, and so arouse them from their first stage of unconscious ignorance. The next step was the attainment of actual knowledge. He never professed himself a teacher, but likened himself to an accoucheur. He had no pro-creative power, but only the power of a midwife who assisted at the delivery of ideas, scrutinising the mental offspring, accepting those which were sound, and rejecting those which were deformed or defective. “His conversations,” says Mr. Grote, “exhibit the main features of a genuine inductive method, struggling against the deep-lying, but unheeded, errors of the early intellect acting by itself, without conscious march, or scientific guidance.....and the end towards which all of them point is one and the same, emphatically signified—the good and happiness of social man.” Other philosophers speculated about the Cosmos, whether its essential principle were fire, water, air, or intelligence ; but Socrates resolutely turned away from such

flights of thought, and directed his mind to the study of man ; and was, in fact, the first who emphatically declared that the proper study of mankind is man. He was virtually the founder of ethical science, and he applied to it that inductive method of investigation and proof which he of all men was the first to clearly grasp, and whose importance he was the first to comprehend.

His ethical theory was clear and simple. "Socrates," says Mr. Grote, "resolved all virtue into knowledge ; all vice into ignorance or folly. To do right was the only way to impart happiness, or the least degree of unhappiness compatible with any given situation. Now this was precisely what every one wished for—only that many persons, from ignorance, took the wrong road ; and no man was wise enough always to take the right. But as no man was willingly his own enemy, so no man ever did wrong willingly ; it was because he was not fully or correctly informed of the consequences of his own actions ; so that the proper remedy to apply was enlarged teaching of consequences and improved judgment." Now this is, as Mr. Grote justly observes, the most commanding portion of ethics, but not the whole. Certainly men never can properly secure happiness without a knowledge of the conditions on which it depends, and such knowledge is an indispensable preliminary ; but beyond that there is another province ; for besides knowing what is right, men must possess the desire to do it, and this necessitates a training of the emotions as well as an instruction of the intellect ; so that thought and feeling may work in unison for the attainment of the highest possible good of all.

Socrates, like the late John Stuart Mill, clearly perceived that men may discard particular errors, one after another, without in the least undergoing any change in respect to the frame of mind which induced them to embrace those errors ; and consequently, to use Mr. Grote's words, "to preach, to exhort, even to confute particular errors, appeared to him useless, so long as the mind lay wrapt up in its habitual mist or illusion of wisdom ; such mist must be dissipated before any new light could enter." He therefore devoted himself mainly to the object of quickening and expanding men's minds, and of putting them upon the right track for the attainment of truth. And by so doing he certainly acted with wisdom, for one of the most startling and discouraging facts of human nature is the placid way in which, after manifold errors are individually dislodged from the popular mind, it still continues to argue as irrationally as ever, as if the mind had been swept clean of old errors only to make room for a fresh crop. Authority and custom are still omnipotent now as of yore in England, as once in Athens, and the masses unfortunately take their opinion at second-hand to-day just as they did three thousand years ago.

In politics Socrates was a thorough-going Democrat, hating tyranny, however, when it came from the multitude as much

as when imposed by a single despot. His view of government was somewhat similar to that of Thomas Carlyle, although differing from it in some important respects. Says Xenophon: "He affirmed that the legitimate king or governor was not the man who held the sceptre—nor the man elected by some vulgar persons—nor he who had thrust himself in by force or fraud—but he alone who knew how to govern well." This utterance assuredly contains a most important truth—namely, that fitness to govern ought to be made the chief qualification for the highest public offices; but Socrates does not state how we are to discover who is the fittest to govern, in order to bestow upon him political power. This difficulty is one which Mr. Carlyle, our great modern preacher of the government of the ablest, also never attempts to surmount. Until some better system than election and representation be found, we must adhere to that as the only possible government compatible with public liberty. Probably Socrates would himself have been ready to admit the validity of this assumption. While the mere fact of being elected by vulgar or other persons is no more a qualification for the wielding of power than the fact of usurpation by force or fraud, it is nevertheless some kind of guarantee that the interests of citizens and legislators will be in a great measure identical.

As a fair representation of Socrates' philosophy of conduct in life, the reader may take the following glorious quotation from the "Apology": "A man who is good for anything ought not to calculate the chance of living or dying; he ought only to consider whether in doing anything he is doing right or wrong, acting the part of a good man or of a bad..... For, wherever a man's place is, whether the place which he has chosen or that in which he has been placed by a commander, there he ought to remain in the hour of danger; he should not think of death or of anything but disgrace." Surely after so sublimely moral an utterance as that it is the most contemptible sophistry for Christians to argue that the highest morality was unknown until the advent of their faith.

The philosophy of Socrates may be learnt fully from the writings of Plato and Xenophon, to which, of course, the student will refer for further guidance and knowledge. But, after all, his positive philosophy was not so valuable as that dialectical method which he perfected and bequeathed—a method which probes into and analyses every argument and dissects every term, which dispels that mist or illusion of wisdom in which the mind is wrapped up, which resolutely rejects all fancied knowledge, and compels every asserted truth to make good its claim on human credence. To the logician and the seeker for truth that method is invaluable, being a direct appeal to experience and the test of verification. But besides that there is for us all the example of a noble life, fraught with lessons of virtue. Who can measure the moral influence exer-

cised over the young aspiring minds of all subsequent ages by the exemplar which Socrates furnished? Who can count the number of generous hearts that have been inspired, while reading of the grand life and death of the martyred Athenian, to go and do likewise; to scorn, as he scorned, the base repose of material comfort and intellectual indifference, to reach after that higher life which he embraced and for which he died? The influence of such a career it is impossible to estimate. While the page of history endures which records the life of Socrates, tear-flushed eyes and glowing cheeks and bounding pulse will attest its power of kindling reverential love and emulous enthusiasm.

The reader may consult:—

- Lewes, G. H., *Biographical History of Philosophy*, vol. i.  
 Maurice, F. D., *Moral and Metaphysical Philosophy*, vol. i.  
 Wiggers' *Life of Socrates*.  
 Plato's *Dialogues*, translated by Dr. Jowett. 4 vols.  
 Xenophon's *Memorabilia* (Bohn).  
 Diogenes Laërtius' *Lives of the Philosophers* (Bohn).  
 Grote, G., *History of Greece*, vol. viii.  
 Shelley's *Essays*, vol. i., *Translation of Plato's Symposium*.

# HEROES AND MARTYRS

OF

## FREETHOUGHT.

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### 8.—ROBERT OWEN.

**T**HE name and services of this once illustrious and popular reformer are now scarcely known except to a small knot of old Socialists or Co-operators, who retain a personal recollection of him and his labours, united in many cases with a reverential regard for his nobility of character. Even before his death Robert Owen had outlived his renown, partly because his increased age brought with it a necessary diminution of practical energy, and partly because he deliberately chose, late in life, to declare his invincible hostility to every existing or pre-existent form of religious faith. Other men with greater eloquence and popular ability had set about advocating so much of Owen's suggested reforms as seemed practically obtainable, and thus had secured the ear of the multitude, who can scarcely ever, unless in times of general distress, be brought to contemplate very extensive schemes of improvement; while wealthy and influential persons, who might otherwise have continued assistance to Owen's ameliorative plans, shrank from all recognition and support of the man who had charged the religion which they professed with being the most powerful obstruction to progress. And since his death a generation has arisen which knows not Owen, so that the mention of his name, even in educated circles, generally raises only the idea of a wild utopist who promulgated and endeavoured to practise the absurdest principles of Communism. Nevertheless, the name of Robert Owen should be dear to all Freethinkers, and indeed to all lovers of humanity; for he spent a long life and a great fortune in the pursuit of human improvement on purely natural and rational grounds, and created probably a far greater desire amongst the rich to assist the poor, and amongst the poor to seek after their own social salvation, than was possible to any other man of his epoch. He conspicuously exhibited and enforced, although he did not originate, the great doctrine of circumstance, or the power of external conditions over human development. He propounded the utility of association.

instead of division, in all departments of human industry, and produced in the minds of his disciples and followers so powerful a belief therein that the most earnest and energetic of them never rested until they had applied that principle in the form of co-operation. He insisted on the necessity of intellectual and moral training in infancy and youth, when the mind is susceptible and plastic, and proved experimentally what could be effected by judicious education of the young. And last he stigmatised every species of theology as a hindrance to human progress; because all of them operated as deterrents from freedom of thought, and promulgated the monstrous doctrine that man can control and determine his belief, and is therefore morally responsible for it to God. In his senile old age Owen was seduced by the delusions of Spiritualism, but the courage and perspicacity of his mature manhood are more than sufficient to cover the dotage of mental decay, and to secure him from any severity of criticism on its account.

Robert Owen was born at Newtown, Montgomeryshire, North Wales, on the 14th of May, 1771, and was baptised on the 12th of June following. His father, Robert Owen, was a saddler and ironmonger, and acted also as postmaster of Newtown, then a small market-town containing not more than a thousand inhabitants. His mother's maiden name was Williams. The family consisted of seven children, of whom Robert was the youngest but one. Their position was indifferently comfortable, but they might have been comparatively rich if the rascality of a lawyer had not lost them an estate worth five hundred pounds a year. Young Robert was sent to school between four and five years of age, and remained there until the completion of his ninth year, although during the last two years of that period he learned next to nothing, in consequence of being employed as an under-usber or monitor. An accident which happened to him at this time laid the basis, according to his own account, of his future habits of temperance and reflection. Hastily returning from school one day he swallowed some hot flummery, thinking it to be cool, which nearly cost him his life, and seriously affected his digestion ever after. Other accidents also are related, but none of them of importance to a brief biographical sketch.

Although the boy's schooling was none of the best, he learned how to read and write and cipher; and, manifesting a remarkable taste for reading, he found the libraries of the local magnates, such as the doctor, lawyer, and parson, thrown open for his use, he being allowed to take home whatever books he pleased. In this way he read glorious Robinson Crusoe, Philip Quarle, Pilgrim's Progress, Paradise Lost, Hervey's Meditations, Young's Night-Thoughts, Richardson's and other standard novels, and the voyages of Cook and the other circumnavigators. Three maiden ladies of the Methodist persuasion endeavoured to convert him to their sect, and introduced him to

many works on theology, from which Owen gained his first impression of the opposition between the various religions of the world, all of which appeared to him somehow fundamentally wrong. The boy took to writing sermons, but preserved none of them, although he himself says that one of them much resembled a sermon he afterwards read in Sterne's works. He was also an adept at all youthful games, took lessons in dancing, and even attempted to play upon the clarionet to the presumable disturbance and dismay of his neighbours. In his eighth year Mr. Donne, a Cambridge student, visited Newtown, and made Owen his companion in his rambles through the beautiful surrounding country : and these excursions awakened in him a sense of pleasure in the observance of nature in all her varieties, a pleasure which as he advanced in years continued and increased.

Such was the precocity of young Robert that his parents used gravely to consult him in all important matters ; already he was becoming a kind of oracle ; and doubtless this parental deference, in conjunction with the general esteem of the inhabitants of Newtown, contributed largely to the formation of that self-reliance which Owen subsequently exhibited. His parents usually treated him with great kindness, and only once did they ever apply to his shoulders the rod of correction kept in pickle for his brothers. On one occasion, owing to the indistinctness of his mother's speech, he replied "No" to a question which required an affirmative response, which was construed into an offensive spirit of disobedience. As the boy imagined that to say "Yes," after saying "No," would be a palpable lie, he refused to retract, and accordingly was severely chastised by his father. He refused, however, to submit, and said quietly, but firmly, after receiving several lashes, "You may kill me, but I will not do it ;" and that ended the contest. There was no attempt ever afterwards made to correct him, and he continued to be the general favourite he had always been.

At the age of nine Owen left school, and was employed by a Mr. Moore, who carried on a haberdashery and grocery business at Newtown, and with whom he remained about twelve-months. On attaining to his tenth birthday he started off by coach to London, to seek his fortunes, with the sum of forty shillings in his pocket, after paying travelling expenses. In London he lodged for the space of six weeks with his brother, at the end of which time he accepted a situation in the drapery establishment of Mr. James McGuffog, of Stamford, Lincolnshire, at a salary of eight pounds a year, independent of board, lodging, and washing. McGuffog's business lay principally amongst the nobility and gentry, and was, therefore, conducted mostly between the hours of ten and four ; so that the young assistant had ample time to run over the contents of his master's library. In the summer mornings he walked, book in hand, through the noble avenues of Burleigh Park, drinking to health

from the sweet fresh air, and cogitating deeply on many problems from which even maturer minds might have turned despairingly away. McGuffog was a prudent, industrious, and honest tradesman, who, by dint of perseverance and conscientious dealing, had worked his way upwards from indigence to comparative wealth; and the influence of such a man on Owen's youthful mind must have been incalculably beneficial. In religion McGuffog was of the Church of Scotland, and his wife of the Church of England; but they agreed to compromise their theological difference in the following way: namely, by attending the service of one church in the morning, and that of the other in the afternoon. Robert always accompanied them, and listened attentively to the sermons, which were generally of a sectarian or polemical character. "I was all this time," says Owen, in his Autobiography, "endeavouring to find out the *true religion*, and was greatly puzzled for some time by finding all of every sect over the world, of which I read, or of which I heard from the pulpits, claim each for itself to be in possession of the *true religion*. I studied and studied, and carefully compared one with another, for I was very religiously inclined, and desired most anxiously to be in the right way. But the more I heard, read, and reflected, the more I became dissatisfied with Christian, Jew, Mahomedan, Hindoo, Chinese, and Pagan. I began seriously to study the foundation of all of them, and to ascertain on what principle they were based. Before my investigations were concluded, I was satisfied that one and all had emanated from the same source, and their varieties from the same false imaginations of our early ancestors—imaginations formed when men were ignorant of their own nature, were devoid of experience, and were governed by their random conjectures, which were almost always, at first, like their notions of the fixedness of the earth, far from the truth. It was with the greatest reluctance, and after long contests in my mind, that I was compelled to abandon my first and deep-rooted impressions in favour of Christianity; but being obliged to give up my faith in this sect, I was at the same time compelled to reject all others, for I had discovered that all had been based on the same absurd imagination; 'that each one formed his own qualities, determined his own thoughts, will, and action, and was responsible for them to God and his fellow men.' My own reflections compelled me to come to very different conclusions. My reason taught me that I could not have made one of my own qualities; that they were forced upon me by Nature; that my language, religion, and habits were forced upon me by Society; and that I was entirely the child of nature and society; that nature gave the qualities, and society directed them. Thus was I forced, through seeing the error of their foundation, to abandon all belief in every religion which had been taught to man. But my religious feelings were immediately replaced by the spirit of universal charity, not for a sect, or a

party, or for a country or colour, but for the human race, and with a real and ardent desire to do them good."

Before, however, the thoughtful boy had advanced so far he was disgusted with the quiet way in which professing Christians set aside the more onerous injunctions of their faith. In particular, it seemed to him highly censurable that so little heed should be paid to the sacredness of the Sabbath; and he therefore penned a letter to Pitt, the great Premier, praying that the Government would adopt some measures to enforce a better observance thereof. A few days after a royal proclamation on the subject was sent forth, but, of course, was in nowise the result of Owen's representations.

After spending four years in the service of McGuffog, Owen, being then between fourteen and fifteen years old, resolved to seek a wider field for the exercise of his abilities; and, notwithstanding urgent solicitations to remain, he set off once more for London, where he obtained a situation with Messrs. Flint and Palmer, an old established drapery house on the Borough side of London Bridge, overlooking the Thames. The duties of the assistants in this establishment were insufferably onerous and irksome; poor Owen relates that frequently, after serving in the shop from eight in the morning until ten at night, he was obliged to remain till two in the morning to replace the goods in proper order, after which he was sometimes so weary as to be scarcely able to crawl upstairs, even with the assistance of the banisters. From this wretched slavery he determined to liberate himself, and at length, through the agency of his brother and a friend, he procured a new situation in a first-rate Manchester establishment—that of Mr. Satterfield—at a salary of forty pounds a year, clear of all expenses of board and lodging. Here he made the acquaintance of a mechanic, named Jones, who supplied the firm with wire bonnet-frames, and who was infected with the cotton-spinning fever then incipient, and soon afterwards raging. Jones declared that he had seen these spinning machines at work, that he could make and work them, and that handsome profits might be realised from the business if only sufficient capital could be accumulated to proceed. These representations induced Owen to borrow a hundred pounds from his brother in London, and to enter into partnership with the aspiring mechanic. They soon had forty men at work making "mules" for spinning, and were apparently doing a good business; but poor Owen quickly discovered the inaptitude of Jones, and was obliged personally to superintend all their operations as well as keep the accounts. A capitalist of moderate means being desirous of joining the concern, Owen agreed to the proposal on condition that he was bought out. They offered to give him six mules, a reel, and a making-up machine; but only three of the machines were forthcoming. However with these Owen, still a mere lad of nineteen, commenced cotton spinning on his own account, and became so

successful that in a short time he found himself to be making a net profit of six pounds a week. One day at his little factory he read in the paper an advertisement for a manager at the great factory of Mr. Drinkwater, a rich Manchester manufacturer and foreign merchant, who had built a mill for finer spinning, and was beginning to fill it with machinery under the superintendence of Mr. George Lee, a very superior scientific person in those days. Mr. Drinkwater had been deserted by Mr. Lee, who had entered into partnership with Mr., afterwards Sir George Philips, and was consequently in urgent need of a capable manager, especially as he knew but little of the business himself. Without any reflection Owen put on his hat, and went straight to Mr. Drinkwater's counting-house and applied for the situation. He was only twenty, and his rosy cheeks made him look still less. "You are too young," said the merchant. "That," replied the applicant, "might have been a good objection four or five years ago." "How often do you get drunk in the week?" "I was never drunk in my life." "What salary do you require?" "Three hundred a year." "What? three hundred a year! I have had this morning I know not how many seeking the situation, and I do not think that all their askings together would amount to what you require." "I cannot be governed by what others ask, and I cannot take less; I am now making that sum by my own business." "Can you prove that to me?" "Yes; I will show you the business and my books," and away they went to Owen's factory. The upshot was that Owen was engaged as manager on his own terms, and his three mules and other stock were bought at cost price.

Aspiring Robert now found himself the controller of five hundred male and female operatives, and that too without the requisite knowledge. However, he diligently studied Mr. Lee's plans, looked very wise, replied in monosyllables to all questions, and within a few weeks made himself complete master of the business. And now he began to falsify the predictions of those croakers who foreboded evil results from Mr. Drinkwater's rash engagement of so young a man. The finest yarn produced by his predecessor, Mr. Lee, made 120 hanks to the pound, but Owen soon increased the fineness to 250 hanks, and afterwards to 300; so that there arose an insatiable demand for the Drinkwater goods at exceedingly high prices, and the young manager soon found himself the most illustrious amongst the cotton spinners of Manchester. Shortly after, at Mr. Drinkwater's request, an agreement was drawn up and signed, whereby Owen was to receive four hundred pounds the second year, five hundred the third, and the fourth year to be taken into partnership with the principal's two sons and receive one-fourth of the profits.

Robert Owen was apparently the first manufacturer of American Sea Island cotton; but as that is not of special importance, it may be treated with simply a passing notice. Of

more interest is the fact that at Manchester he attended meetings for philosophical discussion held in the rooms of Dalton, the modern developer of the atomic theory, then an assistant at the Manchester College. Samuel Taylor Coleridge was occasionally admitted to these meetings, and generally opposed Owen, who rigidly set his face against the religious prejudices of all sects. Golden-tongued Coleridge had all the eloquence and learning on his side, but the strength of the argument usually lay with his opponent. These meetings were forbidden by Dr. Baines, the principal of the College, who feared that Owen would convert his assistants from orthodoxy; but the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society afforded similar opportunities for discussion. One night, at a meeting of this Society, Owen said that the universe appeared to him to be one great laboratory; that all things were chemical compounds, and that man was only a complicated chemical compound. Thenceforth he was called "the philosopher who intended to make men by chemistry."

The engagement with Mr. Drinkwater was broken off under the following circumstances. Mr. Oldknow, a manufacturer reputed to be very wealthy, aspired to the hand of Miss Drinkwater, and desired that Owen's partnership might be cancelled, so as to join the two businesses in one family. Mr. Drinkwater requested Owen to annul the contract, and to name any salary he pleased for his services as manager. Owen replied by putting the contract into the fire before the elder partner's eyes, and declaring that he would never connect himself with parties who were not desirous of being united with him. He, however, remained with Mr. Drinkwater until another manager could be secured; and then established the "Chorlton Twist Company" in partnership with Messrs. Borrodale, Atkinson, and Barton. The sole management devolved upon Owen, and he also made occasional journeys through the north of England and into Scotland on behalf of the firm. On one of these tours he first beheld the "New Lanark Mills," some miles from Glasgow, belonging to Mr. David Dale, an eminent manufacturer. Calling to inspect the mills, Owen found the proprietor from home; but Miss Dale explained the cause of her father's absence, and invited the visitor to accompany her and her younger sisters in a walk along the banks of the Clyde. Twice these walks were repeated, and it happened not unnaturally that the young pair began to feel something more than friendship for each other. Owen was soon over head and ears in love, and fortunately discovered that his passion was reciprocated. But the young lady, although declaring her intention to wed her lover or remain a maid, refused ever to marry without her father's consent. How to propitiate the father poor Owen knew not; his love prospect seemed hopelessly forlorn. After much reflection, he hit upon a feasible plan. Hearing that Mr. Dale was desirous of disposing of the mill, he called and made

inquiries as to the conditions and terms of sale. The sceptical proprietor had no belief in the applicant's ability or inclination to purchase the factory, but he was soon undeceived. Owen's partners readily agreed to his suggested plan, and the New Lanark establishment passed into their hands as "The New Lanark Twist Company," at the price of sixty thousand pounds. Still Mr. Dale would not entertain Owen's proposal to become his son-in-law, but ultimately he was mollified by his daughter's solicitations, and induced to sanction their union. The marriage took place on the 30th of September, 1799.

David Dale was a very religious man, and the head of a sect of Independents. He had the charge of about forty churches in various parts of Scotland, and preached every Sunday to his congregation in Glasgow. In him, however, theology produced none of its noxious fruits. He was universally respected for his conscientiousness and simplicity, and was one of the most genial and humane of men, expending his private fortune freely to aid and assist the needy and suffering. He deplored Owen's heresy, but never allowed religious differences to slacken the bonds of friendship. Frequently the pair engaged in animated discussion on religious and social questions, which ended, as most discussions do, in confirming each disputant in his previous faith; but no asperities of language were ever used; and Mr. Dale would often terminate the debate by saying, with one of his peculiar kind and affectionate expressions: "Thou needest be very right, for thou art very positive." When Mr. Dale died some years later, Owen acutely felt his loss, and experienced an emotional shock as if a portion of his own nature had been violently wrenched away. This circumstance is in itself a sufficient reply to those who loosely assert the absence in Owen of true domestic affections.

Robert Owen entered upon the government of New Lanark on January 1st, 1800, determined to try the social experiment which had so long been latent in his mind. In his own words: "I had now to commence the great experiment which was to prove to me, by practice, the truth or error of the principles which had been forced on my convictions as everlasting principles of truth, and from which all great and permanent good in practice must proceed—to commence the most important experiment for the happiness of the human race that had yet been instituted at any time in any part of the world. This was, to ascertain whether the character of man could be better formed, and society better constructed and governed, by falsehood, fraud, force, and fear, keeping him in ignorance and slavery to superstition; or by truth, charity, and love, based on an accurate knowledge of human nature, and by forming all the institutions of society in accordance with that knowledge. It was to ascertain, in fact, whether, by replacing evil conditions by good, man might not be relieved from evil, and transformed into an intelligent, rational, and good being—whether

the misery in which man had been and was surrounded, from his birth to his death, could be changed into a life of goodness and happiness, by surrounding him through life with good and superior conditions only." From this determination to put his principles into practice Owen never swerved, and his efforts were ultimately crowned with success. At first difficulties almost insuperable presented themselves. The operatives were averse from change, and could not be persuaded that the new master had any real aim other than his own profit. The officials were ignorant and obstinate, and discharged all their duties in a merely perfunctory manner. But patient perseverance conquered all difficulties and removed all obstacles. Gradually the sympathies of the workpeople were gained; to be finally won, however, not until 1806, during the terrible disturbance of the cotton trade, in consequence of diplomatic disagreement between England and the United States, when Owen for several months paid his employés full wages, on condition of their keeping the machinery clean, during the stoppage of production, at a cost of £7,000. Dwelling-places were erected, combining all the requirements of decency and comfort. The factory was splendidly ventilated; good wages were paid; and the hours of labour shortened. Punishment was discarded, and in its stead the silent monitor system adopted; a tablet being hung near every person employed, of various shades of colour, ranging from black to white, indicative of corresponding degrees of good or bad conduct. A magnificent educational and recreative institute was built and opened by Owen himself in an appropriate address. Infant schools were projected; but were not at once built, as the other partners objected to the lavish expenditure which the scheme involved. Owen got rid of their interference by buying them out of the concern. Unfortunately he took two other gentlemen into partnership, Messrs. Dennistown and Campbell; these also very soon caused him a similar annoyance, and were more refractory. They refused Owen's offer to purchase their interest in the concern, and demanded a sale by auction. Nothing daunted, the great reformer repaired to London, enlisted the support of six philanthropists—John Walker, Jeremy Bentham, Joseph Foster, William Allen, Joseph Fox, and Michael Gibbs—returned to New Lanark, and at the auction purchased the estate for £114,000. The arrangement between the new shareholders was that all profits above 5 per cent. interest on capital were to be devoted to the social improvement of the operatives and their families. An idea of the amount thus nobly sacrificed by these philanthropic capitalists may be gained from the statement that, over and above 5 per cent. interest on capital, there had been distributed amongst the old partners during the previous four years of their coalition no less than £160,000 in the shape of profits. Of benevolent and philosophical Bentham it is related that his investment in this noble scheme was the only

one of all his adventures that ever paid. Owen was now able to exercise undisputed and complete control over the whole establishment. At once the infant schools were erected at a cost of several thousand pounds. Bath rooms, class rooms, and spacious playgrounds were provided, sufficing for the accommodation of from four to five hundred children. No charge was made, and not only the children of the work-people, but also the children of all families living within a mile of the village, were thus gratuitously instructed. The children were trained to habits of order and cleanliness, and punishment was absolutely prohibited, so that they might never witness exhibitions of anger or uncharitableness from their elders. There was no formal teaching, for Owen believed that children should not use books until their tenth year ; but some amount of book instruction was given, as the parents usually sent their little ones to the mill at the age of twelve. Never before or since was there seen such a collection of bright, clean, good-tempered, happy little faces. Pleasant was it, too, we are told, to witness the rivalry amongst them for the smile and glance of Mr. Owen, whom they all loved as their common father and benefactor.

The New Lanark Mills were visited by distinguished men from all parts, for Owen's experiment had caused a profound interest in many benevolent minds. Amongst the numerous visitors were the following : Lord Stowell, Sir Samuel Romilly, Joseph Hume, Dr. Bowring, Henry Brougham, Vansittart, Canning, Cobbett, Wilberforce, Godwin, Carlile, Clarkson, Zachary Macaulay (father of Lord Macaulay), the first Sir Robert Peel, Malthus, James Mill, Southey, Ricardo, Sir James Mackintosh, Colonel Torrens, Francis Place, Edward Baines. The Czar of Russia paid Owen a visit at New Lanark, and was so deeply impressed by the effects of the social scheme, that he proposed that Owen should emigrate to Russia and bring along with him two millions of the surplus British population. The Dukes of York, Kent, and Sussex, the Archbishop of Canterbury and many Bishops, together with several leading statesmen, were Owen's correspondents. During one of his visits to London he met the Prussian Ambassador, Baron Jacobi, who professed great approbation of his views, and who had forwarded his celebrated four essays on the Formation of Character to the King of Prussia. The king esteemed the essays highly, and wrote with his own hand a letter of thanks, and added that he had given instructions to his Minister of the Interior to carry out the system of education recommended, as far as circumstances would permit. This, says Owen, was the origin of the celebrated system of Prussian national education, which to this day is carried on. Prince Esterhazy, the Austrian Ambassador, was introduced by Jacobi on another occasion. He was much struck by some of Owen's pithy, trenchant remarks, and entertained a high esteem for his

ability and character. In after years he rendered Owen valuable services.

In 1812 Owen presided at a meeting of friends to popular education in Glasgow, to welcome Lancaster, the educational reformer, to whose plans he had, many years before, when by no means rich, subscribed one thousand pounds. It was the spontaneous approval of Owen's views by this meeting that induced him to write his essays on the Formation of Character and his *New Views of Society*. Copies of these essays were sent to all the leading reformers, clergymen, and statesmen. Lord Liverpool, the Prime Minister, expressed his emphatic approval of them; and Lord Sidmouth, Secretary for the Home Department, at Owen's suggestion, sent two hundred copies, bound with alternate blank leaves, to the leading Governments of Europe and America, and to the chief Universities. Owen affirms that even Bonaparte, then in captivity at Elba, obtained a copy; and after diligently studying it, professed his determination, if ever he regained power, to do as much for peace and progress as he had previously done for war. Ingenuous Owen believed this declaration to be sincere, and lamented the refusal of the Sovereigns of Europe to allow the deposed Corsican an opportunity of practising the "New Views" in France. Alas for the innocent simplicity of ardent reformers with world-wide schemes of regeneration!

In 1814 Owen resolved to induce the Government to remit the heavy duty then paid on the importation of cotton, and to consider measures for improving the condition of young children employed in the various textile manufactures. He interested the leading members of both Houses of Parliament, and the first Sir Robert Peel was entrusted with the introduction of a bill on the subject. Sir Robert, however, was himself a manufacturer, and perhaps naturally inclined to the views of his own class. Certain it is that he manifested no disposition to accelerate the progress of the measure. Owen was exasperated by the wretched dilatoriness thus exhibited, and expressed his wonder at finding men of wealth and ability reluctant to admit that fourteen, fifteen, or sixteen hours' work per day, in a close, over-heated factory, was injurious to the health of little children, some of whom were under six years of age. He attended the Parliamentary Committee almost daily, was obliged to counteract the interested and unscrupulous opposition of the great manufacturers, and had, besides, to put up with gratuitous insults and irrelevant questions from shameless persons unworthy to lift the latchet of his shoe. The wealthy cotton-spinners proved too strong for the great reformer; affluence as usual triumphed over justice; and when the Bill was at length passed, it was shorn of every useful clause, being nothing but an inoperative non-entity.

Soon after the final termination of the great European war a meeting was held in London for the purpose of considering

the impoverished condition of the country. The meeting was held at the City of London Tavern, and was attended by all the chief notabilities of the day, political and clerical. Not one of them, however, could in any way account for the general distress, except Owen, who was also present. He explained the causes, which were very simple. Production had been greatly stimulated during the war, and now that the demand for commodities had necessarily diminished in consequence of the peace, barns and warehouses were full of goods which could not then realise their prime cost. The very superabundance of wealth was the sole cause of all the distress. Instead, however, of suggesting an immediate remedy for this temporary distress, Owen gravely propounded his "new views;" in this instance exhibiting that great failing of almost all radical social reformers. If starving men were to wait for relief until the inauguration of the new millennium, it was perfectly clear that they would never live to partake of its benefits. But one portion of the discussion which followed was extremely interesting. In reply to a question, Owen stated that in his opinion the mechanical and chemical power employed in manufacturing industry exceeded the whole manual labour of the country. This fairly staggered the meeting; but the statement was subsequently found to be far short of the real truth; for, according to authentic statistics compiled for another purpose by the cotton-lords themselves, it proved that the mechanical power employed in cotton-spinning alone was equal to the manual labour of a population of eighty millions. But Owen was led to base too much assertion on this fact. Extensive cotton-spinning is no guarantee of general comfort; it may make clothing marvellously cheaper, but does not diminish the cost of the necessities of life. Compared with the cost of food the expenditure in clothes is a small item of outlay in the families of the poor. In fact, agricultural and manufacturing industry follow different laws of development; it is impossible to increase the productive power of land in proportion to the additional cultivation bestowed on it. Our great manufacturing trade during this century has blinded all but a few to the pressing evils of our land system, which is about the worst in the civilised world.

In London Owen naturally discussed with the political economists James Mill, Bentham, Place, Malthus, Torrens, and Ricardo. They resolutely opposed his somewhat paternal theories, and while they admitted the necessity of educating and protecting children, they objected to government interference with adults as a violation of their first great principle of individual liberty. Discussion between these hostile camps was often fierce but always friendly. Owen admits the good intentions of his opponents, but with the audacity characteristic of most world-wide reformers he designates them as *narrow-minded*, and decidedly altogether on the wrong track. When will social reformers learn that no system ever did, or ever can, contain

the whole truth, and that the independent, and sometimes seemingly antagonistic, efforts of many minds are necessary to the due development of humanity?

In August, 1817, Owen attended a great meeting at the City of London Tavern, where he delivered an address which entirely alienated the sympathy and support of his orthodox friends. After deprecating small peddling reforms, the great Socialist proceeded to indulge in an exalted strain of rhetoric. What were the causes of all the misery and degradation of so many generations of mankind? Who could answer that important question? Who dared answer it except with his life in his hand, a ready and willing victim to truth? He, however, Robert Owen, would risk every hazard in the cause of human emancipation. The feelings of the meeting were wound up to a state of intense expectancy; and there was a manifest pause. The orator, assuming prophetic dignity, proceeded: "My friends, I tell you, that you have hitherto been prevented from even knowing what happiness really is, solely in consequence of the errors—gross errors—that have been combined with the fundamental notions of every religion that has hitherto been taught to men. And in consequence they have made man the most inconsistent, and the most miserable being in existence. By the errors of these systems he has been made a weak, imbecile animal; a furious bigot and fanatic; or a miserable hypocrite; and should these qualities be carried, not only into the projected villages, but *into Paradise itself, a Paradise would be no longer found!*" Owen had taken the bull by the horns at last. The meeting was divided between hisses and applause, and quickly broke up. This day Owen regarded as the most important of his life; the day in which he had dealt the deathblow to falsehood, bigotry, and superstition. Alas! the hydra-headed monster still lives, and is capable of suffering a multitude of further shocks without imminent danger of yielding up the ghost. What the orator *had* done was to ruin his reputation. He entered that meeting the most popular man in England, and left it with the consciousness of having deliberately blown his popularity away with his own breath. From that day his name was treasured only by the common people, who knew and loved him.

Soon after Owen made a journey to France. For six weeks he was the lion of Paris, where he met Cuvier, La Place, and Humboldt. Thence he proceeded to Geneva, and visited Sismondi, and the celebrated Oberlin and Pestalozzi. Frankfort was next visited, and there he was introduced to most of the twenty-two representatives of the Germanic Diet. From Frankfort he hastened to Aix-la-Chapelle to be present at the Congress there. Lord Castlereagh presented two memorials to the Congress, drawn up by Owen, which were duly read, and considered important. Owen then returned to England where he found himself, notwithstanding his having been lionised on

the continent, a reprobated man. Since that fatal 21st of August the whole religious world was resolutely set against him; and the newspapers, previously obsequious, would have nothing to do with such a dangerous character. How uniformly are heretics treated by religionists with hatred and reprobation! The demeanour of the orthodox towards Owen only the more fully justified his attack on their pestilent and divisive superstition.

In 1829 Owen retired from New Lanark; a place which, as Mr. Sargent says, "will always be associated with his name; and one which deserves to be handed down in history, as the germ of those efforts that have honourably distinguished the present century, to ameliorate the physical and moral condition of the labouring classes." Whatever failures subsequently attended Owen's efforts, the glories of New Lanark were all his own. In 1824 he set sail for America, having determined to make a trial of his plans in another hemisphere. A large tract of land consisting of thirty thousand acres was purchased from a community of seven hundred Germans, who called the place Harmony, and themselves Harmonists. The estate lay in Indiana and Illinois, at the mouth of the Wabash. The Harmonists removed not on account of ill success, but because the outer world was profanely pressing on their primitive, and decidedly lackadaisical, communistic regimen, in which neither literature nor laughter was permitted to dwell. New Harmony the place was re-christened, and ever-aspiring and undaunted Robert Owen perceived at last the near prospect of attempting the great experiment of community life. But alas! he had to learn by bitter experience that men were not yet prepared to practise his views. Differences about religion and the admission of outsiders speedily arose, and at last even Owen was compelled to admit that communism would have to be abandoned. In 1828 the community ceased altogether to exist. The lands remained in possession of the Owen family, and the institution of private property again proved triumphant. After failing in another intended project in Mexico, the indefatigable old reformer returned to the United States.

At Cincinnati he discussed with a Rev. Mr. Campbell, both sides claiming the victory. From Cincinnati he travelled to Washington, where he rendered important service as a negotiator between England and the United States. Thence he returned to England in order to educate the working classes in his social views. He commenced a course of secular teaching at the Mechanics' Institute, Southampton Building, but was obliged to desist in consequence of sectarian bigotry provoked by his employing the Sabbath for opportunities of instruction. Owen then removed to the Sans Souci Institute, Leicester Square, and afterwards bought a chapel in Burton Street, where he gave continual lectures to crowded audiences. On the 14th of April, 1832, appeared the first number of the *Crisis*, a penny

paper devoted to co-operative matters, and edited by Owen. The Equitable Labour Exchange was established in Gray's Inn Road, for the exchange of labour for labour, without the cost of intermediate distribution ; but the scheme ultimately proved a failure.

Of Owen's remaining years of life we cannot speak at length, neither is there much need to expatiate thereon. But a word must be said as to the strange delusion into which he ultimately fell. Under the guiding influence of Mrs. Hayden, a "medium," and an adept at table-rapping, Owen was seduced into believing the drivelling inanities of modern Spiritualism. The messages he received were extremely puerile, and Mrs. Hayden's swindle was completely exposed by Mr. G. H. Lewes, but nothing could henceforth shake the old man's faith. He was in fact falling into his dotage. Let us draw a charitable veil over the sad picture of mental decay.

At the ripe age of eighty-nine Robert Owen died, after making an inefficient attempt to address the Social Science Association at Liverpool. He desired to be taken to his native place to breathe his last, and thither his faithful servant Rigby conducted him. On the 17th of November, 1858, the good old man passed quietly away, just before the day began to break. His remains were interred in the churchyard of St. Mary's, Newtown, "under the ancient tower, where glorious Severn ripples;" the Church of England ceremony being performed. Around the grave were met the small remnant of Owen's disciples—G. J. Holyoake, Robert Cooper, E. Truelove, Colonel Clinton, Mr. and Mrs. Pears, Thomas Allsop, and a few others. They submitted as quietly as possible to hear the Church burial service—to them so unmeaning, or rather mocking—read over the dead clay ; and then departed through the dense fog into the humming world of life, whose clamour and bustle might then have seemed but the tread of multitudinous feet towards the narrow yet all-embracing House of Death.

Vain were the attempt to give here a faithful outline of Owen's philosophy. The principles of his first four essays are briefly these : 1. Man does not form his own character ; it is formed for him by the circumstances that surround him. 2. Man is not a fit subject of praise or blame. 3. Any general character, good or bad, may be given to the world by applying means which are, to a great extent, under the control of human governments. The first proposition is in the main true ; for to talk of a man forming his own character is to put the effect antecedent to the cause ; but Owen was decidedly mistaken in supposing that he was the original discoverer of the principle. The denial of free will had been made by Spinoza, by Hobbes, and even by Priestley in Owen's own times. As to the second principle, praise and blame are as necessary as the actions which evoke them. The practical application Owen made of this principle, which is in itself quite meaningless, is, however,

of profound importance. All punishment should be reformatory, and not vindictive. How far still are we remote from a full apprehension of this truth! As to the third principle, it is partly true and partly untrue. Institutions affect human development; but, on the other hand, institutions themselves are moulded by social necessities and opinions. From perceiving the former truth more vividly than the latter, Owen was led to place too much reliance on government agency, and to enter into social schemes for which men were unprepared and unfitted. Even if government were to split the country up into communities, what likelihood is there of obtaining a Robert Owen to direct the operations of each of them? What Owen, after all, did was this. He directed men's minds to the great social problem, and bade them never rest while the present disparities of fortune exist. The nation, he pithily remarked, dwells in the cottage, not in the mansion; and unless the homes of the people are blessed with comfort, it is vain to talk of a happy and prosperous nation. To Robert Owen's earnest and patient efforts to ameliorate the social condition of the people may be clearly traced that widely-spreading co-operation which has taken deep root in the North of England, and which bids fair to work a complete social revolution; making individual liberty compatible with the utmost association. Owen's protest against superstition and intolerance also effected incalculable good. If he founded Socialism, he is no less the founder of Secularism; of that creed, if creed it may be called, which absolutely banishes all other-worldly considerations, and teaches that the promotion of human happiness here on earth is the only legitimate aim of human effort. No reformer of this century has more powerfully enforced the necessity of complete freedom in the exercise of reason upon problems of vital interest to society; and no one more clearly than he perceived that in order to secure that freedom a determined onslaught is needful upon those noxious superstitions of theology, hatched in ignorance and productive of error and evil and misery. That Freethinker is unworthy of the title who, when he hears mention of Robert Owen's name, feels no stirring of reverence and love for the noble old man who lived stainless in character and independent in mind, with his eye ever on the one aim of emancipating his fellow men from the tyranny of ignorance and error, and from the galling oppressions of social injustice.

The reader may consult:—

Robert Owen's Autobiography. 2 vols.

Sargant, W. L., Life of Robert Owen.

Booth, A. J., Life of Robert Owen.

Owen, Robert Dale, Threading My Way.

Holyoake, G. J., Life and Last Days of Robert Owen.

The list of Owen's works is too voluminous for insertion.

# HEROES AND MARTYRS

OF

## FREETHOUGHT.

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### 9.—JOSEPH PRIESTLEY.

**F**REETHOUGHT is not a set of definite intellectual conclusions, but rather a mental attitude ; or, to vary the metaphor, not the goal of the human mind in its pursuit of truth, so much as the path which it must tread to get thither. The positive beliefs of Freethinkers have in all ages necessarily varied, but their method, whether fully pursued or not, has been one and the same. They have all asserted and claimed the right to think freely, to attempt the discovery of truth in their own way, unimpeded by any restrictions, and to announce the result of their investigations without respect to the wishes of temporal or spiritual rulers. And truly this perpetual vindication of Freethought, these incessant efforts to clear the road of speculation, so that earnest men may travel therein uninterruptedly, have been productive of greater good than has resulted from any declaration of positive faith, or from any mere assertion of even unpopular truth. For freedom of thought is the indispensable preliminary to intellectual progress, and given it, the attainment of truth is but a question of time. How erroneous were the opinions of many of that noble band of warriors who did battle with the tyranny of the Church in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and yet how can we be sufficiently grateful to them for their gallant assault on spiritual despotism, and their unwearied ardour in the struggle for that freedom of thought and speech, without which all progress is absolutely impossible? These heroes do not recommend themselves to intoxicated system-mongers, but the great generous heart of humanity acclaims them as worthy of all praise, justly reckoning nobility of character and invincible courage as infinitely higher than mere intellectual strength.

The hero of this sketch prided himself mainly on his persistent dissemination of that species of theological belief known as Unitarianism ; and assuredly every one must admire his devotion to his ideal, and his sacrifice of everything which interfered with its service. But besides practising a noble

self-abnegation, Priestley strenuously and repeatedly maintained his right, and the right of every man, to pursue truth without dictation or interference from others. In following his chosen course of life, he lighted upon truths of the gravest import and consequence. His scientific discoveries have been celebrated in the highest language of eulogy by persons qualified to pronounce on their merits. His philosophical speculations went to the root of some of the most important questions which occupy human attention, and were presented with a force and perspicuity deserving of all admiration and praise. In political matters, also, he was greatly, although not pre-eminently, interested, and the same freedom and independence characterised his treatment of them, as are everywhere apparent in his treatises on other subjects. He was a simple, earnest, loveable man, who honourably forewent the tempting material prizes which assuredly were within easy reach of his perseverance and facile talents, in order the more effectually to apply himself to the investigation of nature and the search after truth.

Joseph Priestley was born at Fieldhead, about six miles south-west of Leeds, on the 13th of March, 1733. His father, also named Joseph, a worthy man but not greatly embarrassed with wealth, was twice married and blessed with a full quiver of filial arrows; having six children by his first wife and three by the second. His first wife was the only daughter of a farmer named Joseph Swift. After bearing him six pledges of love (of whom Joseph was the eldest) in almost as few years, she died, her death being accelerated by the rigorous winter of 1739. Of this mother very little is recorded, but that little is highly creditable. She was above all punctiliously honest, and Priestley relates that she once made him carry back to his uncle's house a pin which he had stolen thence, and with which he was innocently playing.

After the death of his mother young Joseph was taken in charge by an aunt on the father's side, who acted indeed as a mother to him until her decease in 1764. This worthy woman and her husband were theoretical Calvinists, but their abundant milk of human kindness led to grave inconsistencies, and made them vastly better than their creed. However, they were strict observers of religious discipline. They eschewed light literature, and rigidly kept the Sabbath as a day of fleshly mortification. On that day no cooking was permitted, nor even any recreation, however slight. The boy managed to read, with fear and trembling, dear old Robinson Crusoe, but beyond that he never ventured. He even adds that on one occasion he became so exasperated with his brother's levity of mind that he knocked out of the lad's hands a horrible book on Knight Errantry which smacked overmuch of a pagan love of earth and disregard of heaven. Greatly exercised too was Priestley's youthful mind about the abstruser mysteries of theology; *new birth*, and other such fictitious torments. Yet this mental perturbation interfered but

little with his progress in carnal knowledge. He successively attended various schools, and especially a large free school under the care of a Rev. Mr. Hague, where he learned Latin and Greek. Hebrew also he acquired during the vacations under the generous tuition of a dissenting minister named Kirby. His aunt intended him for the ministry, and his education was mainly directed to that end, but ill-health and an impediment of speech compelled him to turn his attention to trade. Accordingly he set himself to acquire French, Italian, and High Dutch, all of which he mastered in a marvellously short time. His indefatigable energy impelled him to further conquests. He learned geometry, algebra, and various branches of mathematics of another dissenting minister, a Rev. Mr. Haggerstone, together with Chaldee and Syriac and a smattering of Arabic. He also read Watts' Logic (a fair performance in its time) and Locke's Essay on the Human Understanding. The result of this metaphysical study with Locke as a guide may be anticipated. The boy's mind took a sceptical turn, and refused continued assent to the repulsive dogmas of Calvinism. This backsliding was quickly detected by the keen inquisitors of the Church which he attended; so that when, in 1752, he desired to be admitted as a communicant, he was refused because of his disbelief in Adam's fall, and the consequent damnation of all his posterity. Fortunately for him the secular laws permitted no more extreme expression of religious disapproval.

At the Daventry Academy Priestley remained three years with much intellectual profit. The academy was conducted on peculiar principles; not much systematic instruction was given, but the teachers discussed important questions with their pupils, each of whom was required to know the arguments for and against every position: a method of instruction, as Professor Huxley maliciously remarks, "rather calculated to make acute than what are called sound divines, a sound divine being one who never looks at any side of a question but his own." This atmosphere of mental freedom was necessarily bracing to the youthful mind of Priestley. He naïvely confesses in his autobiography that he generally found himself on the unorthodox side. One by one what he considered the irrational excrescences of Christianity were expelled from his mind; and at last, after the reading of Hartley's great work, "Observations on Man," he gravitated finally towards the Unitarian faith, in which he ever after remained.

On leaving Daventry Priestley accepted the office of assistant minister to a congregation at Needham Market, Suffolk, at the miserable salary of forty pounds a year, on which he found himself by no means "passing rich," especially as it was never paid in full. In this retired situation the chief occupation of his leisure was the compiling of a multitude of Scripture texts antagonistic to the doctrine of the Atonement. The manuscript was confided to Dr. Lardner and Dr. Fleming, on the occasion

of a journey to London, and portions of it were published by them under the title of the Doctrine of Remission. By this time Priestley had relinquished his belief in the plenary inspiration of the Scripture writers, and in the idea of supernatural influence except for the purpose of miracles.

On quitting Needham Market, in consequence of theological differences with Mr. Meadow's congregation, Priestley attempted to earn his bread as a teacher of mathematics, but the rancour of his religious enemies prevented his success. Pupils would not come to be taught even mathematics by a professor of questionable orthodoxy. The heretical poison might be conveyed even in doses of exact science. The unfortunate mathematician was, therefore, obliged to accept another engagement as preacher for one year to a congregation at Nantwich in Cheshire. There he remained no longer than the stipulated term, at the expiration of which he removed to Warrington, where he resided for a period of six years as a preacher and teacher. In the second year of his ministry at Warrington, he married a daughter of Mr. Isaac Wilkinson, an ironmaster of Wrexham, Wales. This union appears to have been productive of mutual happiness and comfort.

While residing at Warrington, Priestley composed his *Essay on Government*, a liberal and philosophical production, in which it is emphatically maintained that the end and sole duty of government is to promote the happiness of the governed. The spirit of the work is Republican enough, and it is boldly asserted that peoples have an unquestionable right to depose evil rulers by revolutionary means if no others will avail; but the author considered a government by King, Lords, and Commons as most consonant with the traditions and prejudices of the English people. Not until his emigration to America was he convinced of the practicability as well as of the advantages of Republican Government.

In the *Autobiography* he mentions that at that time he read a deal of polite literature, and practised the composition of verse himself, as well as enjoining it upon his pupils, as a great assistance to facility in the composition of prose. Also he mentions that the reading of some of his early verses induced Mrs. Barbauld to commence writing poetry, and thus, says he, "England is indebted to me for one of the best poets it can boast"; after which critical deliverance we may safely affirm that Priestley's mind was by no means of a poetical cast.

Priestley's scientific proclivities were already strongly pronounced. He had been experimenting more or less for some years, and had always contemplated science with the fondness of a lover. But it was not until meeting with Franklin, the great American philosopher and electrician, on the occasion of a visit to London, that his attachment to scientific pursuits was stimulated to an ardent devotion. Induced by Franklin, he soon after published his *History of Electric Discovery*. His

experiments in electricity also procured for him an introduction to the Royal Society; and in addition to that honour, he had conferred upon him, through the generous interest of Dr. Percival, the degree of Doctor of Laws from the University of Edinburgh. In September, 1767, Priestley removed to Leeds, where he engaged himself as minister of Mill-hill Chapel. While resident there he commenced his famous experiments on air, and in 1772 he issued his first publication on the subject. His fame was by this time rapidly spreading in the scientific world; so much so indeed that a proposal was made for his accompanying Captain Cook on his second voyage; but the scheme was frustrated by the objections of some powerful clergymen, who had taken umbrage at the Doctor's boldly-declared heresy.

After spending six years at Leeds, divided between professional avocations and scientific pursuits, Priestley accepted a generous offer from the Earl of Shelburne, afterwards Marquis of Lansdowne, of the post of Librarian to his Lordship, at a salary of £250 a year, with the promise of an allowance for life in case of his patron's decease. The duties of the situation were very trifling, and the Earl treated the Doctor more as a confidential friend than as a servant; allowing him also occasional gratuities for the purchase of costly instruments and appliances necessary to the finer practice of his chemical experiments. In the second year of his residence with the Earl he made his famous discovery of oxygen gas, which marks an era in the history of chemical science, and with which his name will be for ever associated. In 1774 he travelled with his patron through Flanders, Holland, and Germany. Naturally, he met and conversed with the chief scientific and philosophical celebrities of the various places through which he passed; and in other respects also the journey was advantageous, for his experience of mankind was thereby widened after a fashion which never can be wrought by any amount of mere reading. On returning to England he published his *Miscellaneous Observations on Education, Lectures on Oratory and Criticism*, and the third part of the *Institutes of Natural and Revealed Religion*, the two first parts of which had been published many years preceding. In the last work he maintained, with remarkable force and ingenuity, his doctrine of the immateriality of the soul, of which we shall have hereafter to speak at length. So bold a theory, running, as it did, directly counter to the orthodox teaching on the subject, excited much animosity among the "sound divines." The cry of "Atheist" was immediately raised, and lustily vociferated, until at length the poor Doctor, who deemed the existence of Deity capable of being substantiated by irrefragable arguments, found himself pretty generally regarded as a horrible heretic, who actually denied the being of God. Such a man, says Huxley, is ordinarily looked upon as a person with whom a cash-box is not quite safe; and therefore

it is no matter for wonder that the Earl became desirous to part company with his over-bold Librarian. Shelburne agreed to grant Priestley an annuity of £150 a year, and the amount was always punctually paid. It was, however, inadequate to meet all the philosopher's requirements, for, in addition to his very costly experiments, there was the burden of a somewhat numerous family that had grown up around him. Offers of court pensions were made, but were honourably refused. Probably Priestley recollected what Johnson himself subsequently forgot, that a pensioner is "a slave of State." Nevertheless, he accepted private subscriptions from friends to science who desired a continuance of his chemical researches—in particular that of Wedgwood, always honourably distinguished for ready assistance to indigent genius, and whose generous and unsolicited aid to Coleridge and Wordsworth will long be remembered by all lovers and students of English poetry.

Priestley now settled at Birmingham, where he joined a Mr. Blyth as minister of an Unitarian congregation. Here he continued his scientific, philosophical, and religious labours, and published amongst other works his *History of the Corruptions of Christianity*, *History of Early Opinions Concerning Jesus Christ*, and *Disquisitions on Matter and Spirit*. He also became a member of the Lunar Club, so called because of its meetings being held near the full moon, which comprised most of the advanced thinkers of the district. At Birmingham he might have remained in quiet and comfort until his death if he had not, unfortunately for his personal peace, associated himself with a political club consisting mainly of Dissenters, who openly avowed their sympathy with the revolutionists in France. That great political and social convulsion had startled all Europe out of its apathy, and at the mighty roar which announced the advent of Democracy reactionary and obscurantist powers stood abashed and terrified, while the reformers took further heart of grace and prognosticated great results from the revolutionary movement. Party passion ran high; and every man was compelled to take a side. One party prophesied a coming millennium, and the other foretold the approach of final chaos. Both parties erred, but the latter the more egregiously. Some men of sterling character and splendid ability, blinded by passion and prejudice, ranged themselves on the side of despotism and retrogression, and loudly denied that men had even any rights at all; and their feelings were the more exasperated by the exuberant, triumphant audacity with which their opponents pointed out the tyrannical slough into which their foolish arguments would inevitably precipitate them, if logically followed. Even the glorious genius of Burke quailed before the misapprehended apparition of democracy. All his magnificent powers of eloquence and matchless invective were employed to assail the revolution, and to heap reproach and contempt on its human instruments. So carried away was he by a tempest

of passion that he degraded himself to the use of expressions concerning Priestley worthy of a political lampooner. He even called upon the government to crush the rising spirit of rebellious liberty, not knowing that material agencies of persecution were as unavailing against it as the harmless weapons of midnight sentinels against the majesty of buried Denmark.

In Parliament, and outside it, everybody was in a state of unprecedented excitement. The masses of the people, ignorant and superstitious, were artfully stirred up against the English sympathisers with French Republicanism; and Church and State mobs in all towns were prepared, whenever called upon, to vindicate the outraged honour of their glorious constitution, which apparently they regarded, like Cæsar did the honour of his wife, as mortally injured even by suspicion. At Birmingham, political passion knew no bounds; the turbulent populace was prepared for any measures, and the responsible guardians of law and order were by no means reluctant to urge it on to deeds of violence. The political club already alluded to, held a meeting on the 14th of July, 1791, to celebrate the anniversary of the capture and destruction of the Bastille. This insult to the British constitution was too much for the patience of the insurgent mob and its secret impellers. Priestley was not at the meeting, but most of those who were present were Dissenters, and so was Priestley himself. The poor philosopher was conspicuous, and discrimination was not easy. The mob, therefore, politely burned his meeting-house wherein he preached and his dwelling house, as a sign of its disapprobation, and would have served him with the same sauce if he had not prudently made himself scarce. The merry rioters smashed his experimental apparatus, and burned his library and all his manuscript records; and with indescribable glee ground sparks of fire out of the victim's own electric machine to assist in the work of demolition. The houses of many of Priestley's friends were burned or greatly damaged. Nearly all whose property was so served were Dissenters, and Priestley asserts that the clergy of the Established Church instigated the riot and directed its operations. The injured philosopher brought an action against the authorities for damages, alleging that they had neglected to suppress the riot. Fortunately, he obtained a favourable verdict, but he received £2,000 less than his claim, the jury refusing to admit the value of his apparatus and manuscripts.

Birmingham was of course no longer a safe residence, and Priestley therefore repaired to London. The members of the Royal Society shamefully gave him the cold shoulder, and assiduously shunned his company; but the congregation of Dr. Price, at Hackney, requested him to become their minister, and he gladly accepted the invitation. Many of his friends gathered around him at this crisis, and tendered pecuniary assistance, in particular, his brother-in-law, John Wilkinson, who presented him with £500, and transferred to him £10,000 invested in the

French Funds, which, however, never brought in a penny. From France numerous flattering messages were received; some ardent cosmopolites even desired him to become a candidate for membership in the Convention. This offer he declined, but his son visited France, and was not only well received, but was also invested with the rights of French citizenship. In England, however, Priestley and his family dwelt in insecurity. Threatening letters poured in from all quarters, some merely promising damnation in the life to come, but others more than insinuating the possibility of more terrible and certain chastisement in this. Frequently he was burnt in effigy along with Paine, whose political writings he publicly and emphatically approved, although he utterly dissented from his opinions on other subjects. His son was obliged to dissolve partnership with a Manchester merchant by the pressure of religious prejudice. At last, reluctantly and sorrowfully, the persecuted philosopher resolved to quit his native land, which no longer afforded him a safe shelter. On the 8th of April, 1794, he set sail from London, bidding dear old England a long, last adieu, and on the 4th of June, arrived at New York.

Priestley's reception in the newly-adopted land was of the most flattering character, and atoned largely for the insults and reproach cast against him in the country he had forsaken. The notabilities of the day flocked around him, and testified their admiration of his manly independence. The trustees of the Philadelphia University elected him as Professor of Chemistry; and many additional honours would have been showered upon him if he had not declared his intention not to accept them. Only one powerful voice was raised against him—the voice of William Cobbett. The sturdy English spirit of Cobbett naturally inclined him to take his country's side. He was then, as he afterwards confessed, “a mere prattler in politics;” but his anger and combativeness were both aroused by the abundant censure pronounced against England by the American Democrats. Cobbett delighted in a single-handed fight against a host of foes, and therefore was in his element. The men around him were Americans and Republicans, he was an Englishman and a Monarchist. There was no timidity in his composition; he ever loved to tweak his enemy by the nose, and pluck at his very beard. Peter Porcupine he called himself, and, like a porcupine, he stood self-collected, with a quill for every comer. He was on the wrong side, and in a woeful minority; but he was master of a style matchless in its vigour and directness. Before his tremendous blows the Democrats reeled, and as they fell he shot them through and through with the arrows of his malicious wit. Priestley and his Appeal fared badly at Cobbett's hands; his grammar, his composition, his logic, were all mercilessly criticised. The Doctor might be an angel of light, but he was no match for the polemical vigour of his assailant. Priestley was right, and Cobbett utterly wrong; but nobody with a sense

of humour or with a touch of gusto in his composition, can fail to relish the ex-soldier's racy wit and potent mother-English.

Priestley settled finally at Northumberland, residing in a house surrounded by delicious gardens, and situated so as to command the finest prospect on the Susquehanna. Still full of scientific ardour, he endeavoured to establish a college there. He drew up the plans, and was chosen president; but the promised support was not forthcoming, and only the shell of the building was erected. That scheme failing, he set about erecting a laboratory and a library in his own grounds. And there, beloved by all his neighbours, he spent his few remaining years of life, still, as of yore, philosophising and experimenting. One is glad to learn that his English friends still remembered and assisted him. Independently of £50 per annum which Mrs. Elizabeth Rayner allowed him from the time he left England, she left him by her will £2,000 in the four per cents. Mr. Michel Dodson left him £500, and Mr. Samuel Salt £100. The Duke of Grafton remitted to him annually the sum of £40—a mark of aristocratic generosity which one is pleased to find and to chronicle, seeing how infrequent the signs of that virtue are in the history of our peerage.

In 1801 Priestley was prostrated by a fever, which left him sadly debilitated. His digestion was greatly impaired, so that he was obliged to refrain from a solid diet, and to subsist entirely on pulpy food or liquids. Gradually he grew worse and worse, but to the last, even to the very day of his death, he persisted in his studies. On the morning of Monday, February 6th, 1804, he died as peacefully as a child slumbers. A few hours before his death he had assembled around his bedside the little ones of the family, who all dearly loved him; after kissing them and bidding them be good and laying upon them a few religious injunctions, full of that loving piety which accompanied him through his long life, he serenely composed himself for the last long sleep, from which the good old man hoped there would be a glorious awakening.

Priestley's constitution was naturally robust, but in early youth he had suffered from ulcerated lungs brought on by youthful indiscretions, which he himself thought worked no other injury than the toning of his constitution down to that degree of nervous sensibility most favourable to a studious life. His mental faculties were vigorous, and he never suffered from headaches or abnormal nervous excitement. In the morning he awoke fresh and active, and anxious to recommence his labours. He had a large measure of that perseverance and pluck which is said to characterise Englishmen, and a full share of that energy which Mr. Matthew Arnold affirms to be the indicator of genius. Those who delight in bewailing the brevity of life should take a lesson from the history of Joseph Priestley's labours. The length of life depends not altogether

on the clock register, but on the intensity and completeness with which it is lived.

Priestley's labours may be divided into four kinds,—theological, philosophical, political, and scientific. A brief account of each will be necessary before the reader can in any way appreciate what this philosopher wrote, thought, and discovered.

In politics Priestley was a Democrat. He believed that all legitimate governments are based upon the people's will, and conducted solely in the people's interest. For years before his emigration to America this was his publicly-declared political faith, and subsequently to that event he became fully convinced of the utility of Republican institutions. John Locke had affirmed that "the end of government is the good of the governed," long before Priestley wrote; but his theory had not met with general acceptance, although probably no one would have asserted that any government could rightfully exist in antagonism to the manifest welfare of its subjects. To-day Locke's dictum is a theoretical commonplace, but a hundred years ago the ruling classes secretly entertained, and the masses tacitly admitted, a semi-divine right inherent in wealth and title to govern the plebeian poor in any manner short of absolutely insupportable tyranny. Priestley, however, was too clear-sighted and too large-hearted to rest satisfied with such a monstrous theory as that. He rather thought, with Paine, whose political writings he highly approved and admired, that the rights of man should receive full recognition, and that justice should be no respecter of persons. This paragraph, from his famous papers on the *First Principles of Government*, is well worth reading even now:—"It must necessarily be understood, therefore, whether it be expressed or not, that all people live with society for their mutual advantage, so that the good and happiness of the members, that is, the majority of the members of any State, is the great standard by which everything relating to that State must finally be determined. And though it may be supposed that a body of people may be bound by a voluntary resignation of all their interests to a single person, or to a few, it can never be supposed that the resignation is obligatory on their posterity, because it is manifestly contrary to the good of the whole that it should be so." This brief and emphatic utilitarian utterance is worth a vast deal of that windy eloquence which often passes current for political wisdom. Again, let us quote another passage full of vigour and earnestness, which doubtless proved most obnoxious to the governing politicians of Priestley's time, furnishing as it did an indirect justification of the revolutionary movement in France:—"But in the largest States, if the abuses of Government should at any time be great and manifest; if the servants of the people, forgetting their masters and their masters' interest, should pursue a separate one of their own; if, instead of considering that they are made for the people, they should consider the people as

made for them; if the oppressions and violations of right should be great, flagrant, and universal; if the tyrannical governors should have no friends but a few sycophants, who had long preyed upon the vitals of their fellow citizens, and who must be expected to desert a Government whenever their interests should be detached from it; if, in consequence of these circumstances, it should become manifest that the risk which would be run in attempting a revolution would be trifling, and the evils which must be apprehended there were far less than those which were actually suffered, and which were daily increasing; in the name of God I ask, what principles are there which ought to restrain an injured and insulted people from asserting their natural rights, and from changing, or even punishing, their governors—that is, their servants—who had abused their trust, or from altering the whole form of their Government, if it appeared to be a structure so liable to abuse?"

In Priestley's time Dissenters practised their religious worship only on sufferance, and as for more extreme heretics, they were quite beyond the pale of toleration or justice, being regarded as a species of noxious vermin, who might justly be expelled from society, or deprived of life, if fitting occasion arose for so treating them. The Established Church arrogantly claimed exclusive rights, and superciliously looked down upon all other sects from the elevation of its monstrous privileges. Against the existence of a State Church Priestley always argued. He boldly asserted what even many of his Dissenting brethren were unprepared to admit, that the government had no legitimate control over conscience, nor the right to support any opinions whatever.

In theology Priestley was an Unitarian, believing in one God, and denying the asserted divinity of Christ. He maintained that the divinity of Christ is nowhere asserted in Scripture, and was not acknowledged by the Early Christians. Primitive Christianity, he argued, was characterised by none of the excrescences of later developments of that faith, but was simply a recognition of the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. This position he maintains in his *History of Early Opinions Concerning Jesus Christ*, and in his *History of the Corruptions of Christianity*. These works are marked by great learning, and the latter is still popular and esteemed amongst Unitarians. The existence of God, Priestley thought, could be completely proved by the argument from design, which of course was the only one that he, as an experientialist, could consistently deem valid. With the conclusive force of the Design Argument he seems to have been quite content, for he never evinced any sense of its manifold difficulties and defects. Probably, if he had lived a century later, in these days of evolution and development, his lucid intelligence would have perceived that looking through Nature up to Nature's God is a far more difficult process than it was once believed to be.

Priestley was in philosophy an experientialist of the school of Hobbes and Locke and Hartley. He believed that man has no native intuitions, no innate ideas, but that his conceptions and beliefs are determined by his powers of perception and his faculty of reason. All knowledge, he held, is the result of experience, and can come in no other way. Man he contemplated as an organised system of matter, regulated by purely mechanical laws, and no more than the lower animals possessing an independent soul. In his celebrated *Disquisitions on Matter and Spirit* he maintains this position with a remarkable force, which has probably never been equalled by any other writer on the same side. The following quotation summarily expresses his views on this subject, and conveys a fair idea of his style and method of reasoning :—

“The powers of sensation or perception and thought, as belonging to man, have never been found but in conjunction with a certain *organised system of matter*; and therefore those powers necessarily exist in, and depend upon, such a system. This, at least, must be our conclusion, till it can be shown that these powers are incompatible with other known properties of the same substance; and for this I see no sort of pretence.

“It is true, that we have a very imperfect idea of what the power of perception is, and it may be as naturally impossible that we should have a clear idea of it, as that the eye should see itself. But this very ignorance ought to make us cautious in asserting with what other properties it may, or may not exist. Nothing but a precise and definite knowledge of the nature of perception and thought can authorise any person to affirm, whether they may not belong to an extended substance, which has also the properties of attraction and repulsion. Seeing, therefore, no sort of reason to imagine, that these different properties are *inconsistent*, any more than the different properties of *resistance* and *extension*, I am, of course, under the necessity of being guided by the phenomena in my conclusions concerning the seat of the powers of perception and thought. These phenomena I shall now briefly represent.

“Had we formed a judgment concerning the necessary seat of thought, by the *circumstances that universally accompany* it, which is our rule in all other cases, we could not but have concluded, that in man it is a property of the *nervous system*, or rather of the brain. Because, as far as we can judge, the faculty of thinking, and a certain state of the brain, always accompany and correspond to one another; which is the very reason why we believe that any property is inherent in any substance whatever. There is no instance of any man retaining the faculty of thinking, when his brain was destroyed; and whenever that faculty is impeded, or injured, there is sufficient reason to believe that the brain is *disordered in proportion*; and therefore we are necessarily led to consider the latter as the seat of the former.

“ Moreover, as the faculty of thinking in general ripens and comes to maturity with the body, it is also observed to decay with it ; and if, in some cases, the mental faculties continue vigorous when the body in general is enfeebled, it is evidently because, in those particular cases, the brain is not much affected by the general cause of weakness. But, on the other hand, if the brain alone be affected, as by a blow on the head, by actual pressure within the skull, by sleep, or by inflammation, the mental faculties are universally affected in proportion.

“ Likewise, as the mind is affected in consequence of the affections of the body and brain, so the body is liable to be reciprocally affected by the affections of the mind, as is evident in the visible effects of all strong passions, hope or fear, love or anger, joy or sorrow, exultation or despair. These are certainly irrefragable arguments, that it is properly no other than *one and the same thing* that is subject to these affections, and that they are necessarily dependent upon one another. In fact, there is just the same reason to conclude, that the powers of sensation and thought are the necessary result of a particular organisation, as that sound is the necessary result of a particular concussion of the air. For in both cases equally, the one constantly accompanies the other, and there is not in nature a stronger argument for a necessary connection of any cause and any effect.”

Singularly enough, however, Priestley tenaciously adhered to his belief in immortality. He had discarded the immaterial soul, but he contended for the literal resurrection of the body in accordance with the Christian revelation. The overwhelming difficulties of this doctrine, when viewed in the light of man's antiquity on earth, never presented themselves to the philosopher's mind. We can only regard this sophistical theory of Priestley's as one of those crazes which sometimes lurk in the secret recesses of great minds, defying all efforts to dislodge them, and actually compelling the sober reason to contrive arguments to justify their presence.

The logical corollary from this materialism was the doctrine of Philosophical Necessity, the absolute denial of the unintelligible doctrine of the freedom of the will. In his correspondence with Price he argues and illustrates this theory with great power. Man as an organised system of matter is subject to the inevitable laws of his nature, and his actions depend upon his general frame of mind in presence of the conditions which surround him. Owing to the complexity of his structure, and the multiplicity of envioning circumstances, it is often impossible to predict in what precise manner a man will act in any particular instance ; but we ought not, therefore, to infer that his actions conform to no laws whatever. It may be impossible to predict how the wind will blow to-morrow, but the winds are nevertheless subject to the laws of meteorology. This doctrine of philosophical necessity was not new ; it had been propounded by Hobbes, by Spinoza, by Toland in his Letters to Serena, by

Dr. Coward, by Collins, and by a number of less distinguished writers ; but Priestley presented and defended it with trenchant and irrefragable logic, and so perspicuously presented it that it never could again be misunderstood, except by wilfully perverse persons or imbeciles.

In his treatment of the problem of the existence of evil, he by no means manifested his customary rigour of logic and clearness of perception. Moral evil, he argues, is ultimately resolvable into physical pain, and physical pain is necessary to the progress of the human race. If we were not stimulated by hunger to partake of food, we should die of inanition. Throughout nature what seems evil is only a necessary part of the great providential scheme of good. Now this is the veriest sophistry ; it is an evasion of the difficulty. The human suffering complained of by those who deny that the existence of evil is irreconcilable with the existence of a being at once omnipotent and good, is not that pain which is a beneficent stimulus to action, but that appalling misery which, in the shape of congenital disease or social servitude or semi-starvation, attends from the cradle to the grave vast numbers of the human race, even in some of the most civilised countries of the world. Priestley, however, was not the first philosopher who sacrificed reason in the attempt to gloss over the difficulties of Theistic conceptions. His belief in the ultimate perfectibility of mankind does credit to his humane feelings, if not to his intellect. Even if it be a delusion it is a very harmless one. Many people, as Huxley says, would be glad to share it, if it could be reconciled with scientific truth. The earth is cooling very fast, and the rate of human progress is very slow, so that the perfected man is likely to be only a perfected Esquimaux.

Of Priestley's contributions to chemical science only a scientific man is competent to speak with authority. We, therefore, prefer to borrow from Professor Huxley's address on Priestley's Life and Labours, rather than attempt an independent account ourselves. The quotation is not characterised by the Professor's customary grace of style ; but that is readily accounted for by the fact of its being taken from a newspaper report :—

“ To estimate what Priestley did in chemistry, you must carry your minds back to the beginning of the last century, and try, difficult as it is, to form a notion of what was then the condition of chemical science. At that time there was no one who believed, hardly any one who suspected, that the doctrine of the ancients, that air and water and fire are elements, was other than true. The researches, indeed, of Boyle and Hayles had tended to define the qualities of air, had tended to show that there were different kinds of air ; but that there was anything like a multiplicity and diversity of elementary bodies, which we now branch under the name of gases, was entirely unsuspected. But immediately at the commencement of the second half of the last century—about the year 1755—a most remarkable young

man, a young Scotch doctor, Dr. Black, had made investigations upon the nature of what was then called fixed air. He had shown that this substance could be combined with such matters as lime, and such matters as alkali, and could be got again from these combinations ; that it was an acid substance, capable of neutralising the strongest alkali ; and had then paved the way for the conception of an air-like body, an aeriform elastic substance, which, nevertheless, was independent, and could play the character of an independent existence totally distinct from common air. And then a little later, in 1766, Henry Cavendish, one of the most remarkable men who ever adorned the science of this or of any other country, in a series of researches which strike one at present by their precision, and by their exactness of statement, showed the nature of sundry other gases, particularly that gas which is called hydrogen now, which was then termed ' inflammable air ;' and the special peculiarity of Cavendish was that to the investigation of these questions he applied a rigour of method which was almost unknown before. For he brought the balance into play, and he implied, although he did not express, that great truth which it remained for the French chemist Lavoisier to formulate, the doctrine that ' matter is never created and never destroyed.' It was following immediately after Cavendish's work that Dr. Priestley commenced his inquiries, and if we look upon them as contributions to our knowledge of chemical science they are something surprising—not only surprising in themselves, but still more surprising when we consider that he was a man devoid of the academic training of Dr. Black, that he had not the means and appliances which practically unlimited wealth put at the disposal of Cavendish, but that he had to do what so many Englishmen have done before and since—to supply academic training by mother-wit, to supply apparatus by an ingenuity which could fabricate what he wanted out of washing tubs, and other domestic implements and then to do as many Englishmen have done before, and many have done since—to scale the walls of science without preparation from the outside. The number of discoveries that he made was something marvellous. I certainly am well within the limit when I say that he trebled the number of gases which were known before his time, that he gave a precision and definition to our knowledge of their general characteristics, of which no one before had any idea ; and, finally, on the 1st of August, 1774, he made that discovery with which his name is more especially connected—the discovery of the substance which at the present day is known as oxygen gas."

On the 1st of August, 1874, a great gathering took place at Birmingham to do honour to Joseph Priestley. There, in the very place whence the noble-minded man had been driven by political and theological hate, was unveiled a statue erected by the lovers of science and liberal thought to his great memory. It was the centenary anniversary of his discovery of oxygen gas,

and Professor Huxley was chosen to present the statue to the Mayor of Birmingham, and to deliver a commemorative address in the Town Hall. And not in Birmingham alone on that day had thinkers and men of science assembled to celebrate Priestley's praise. Away on the far-distant banks of the Susquehanna, by the grave of the good old man, American savans met for a similar purpose; and another gathering assembled at Leeds near the place which gave him birth. Surely some progress has been made since Joseph Priestley was hunted from his native land, and compelled to lay his bones in alien soil. It is to him, and to such as he, that we owe much of that great and beneficial change. In the eloquent language of Huxley, "Such men as he are not men who care very much for honours and rewards; happily for them, for their generation is not usually disposed to give them any very great share of these matters. They are men who say in another spirit than Falstaff's,

"What is honour, who hath it, he who died o' Wensday?"

But whether such men undergo after their death that sort of lay canonisation which we have to-day bestowed upon Priestley, whether posterity erects statues to their memory, or whether their name and fame and remembrance are blotted out from the recollection of man, there still remains to them one thing which shall never die—every truth which they advocated. The whole progress of truth has been helped by them, and for all generations and for all time to come truth will be stronger for their efforts; and for every lie which they have smitten, and every imposture they have detected, falsehood and imposture will be weaker until time is no more."

The reader may consult—

Priestley Memoirs. 2 vols. London, 1806.

Priestley's Lectures on History. 2 vols.

———— Experiments on Air. 3 vols.

———— History of Electric Discovery. 3 vols.

———— Disquisitions on Matter and Spirit. 2 vols.

———— Correspondence with Dr. Price on the Doctrine of Materialism and Philosophical Necessity.

———— Account of Hartley's Theory of Mind, Matter, and Spirit. 2 vols.

———— Letters to a Philosophical Unbeliever.

———— History of the Corruptions of Christianity.

———— History of Early Opinions Concerning Christ.

———— Institutes of Natural and Revealed Religion. 3 parts.

———— Treatise on Civil Government.

Huxley, Prof., Joseph Priestley. Article in *Macmillan's Magazine*, October, 1874.

# HEROES AND MARTYRS

OF

## FREETHOUGHT.

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### 10.—RICHARD CARLILE.

**N**OW potent an instrument of progress is a free press ; what havoc it works in the ranks of oppression, what hope and inspiration it imparts to the soldiers of freedom. It is the daily expositor of public opinion, of that force which moulds institutions and arbitrates every dispute. By it political revolutions are obviated, and peaceful advance is assured. Silently, yet surely, it settles every public question without appeal to senseless violence. It is indeed the safety valve of society, preventing explosion and ruin. Angry passions fret themselves to impotence, righteous indignation finds articulate utterance, and adverse opinions and principles confront in bloodless conflict under its benign sway. A free press is still more ; it is the unflagging and invincible opponent of tyranny, which it ever strives to drag from its usurped throne, to strip of its lying pretensions, and expose to public abhorrence and disgust. Despots tremble before its persistent aggression, and invariably war against its very life. Napoleon dreaded one independent newspaper more than an army of foes ; for the one could be seized, beaten, destroyed, while the other baffled all such movements ; scotched it might be, but never slain.

In proportion as we value this possession, so ought we to be grateful to those who achieved it for us at the cost of personal comfort and public repute. Their number is great, and the memory of most must perish, but others will never be forgotten ; their splendid championship or loyal devotion being their passport to deathless fame. These memorable ones are of two kinds, those who have adduced impregnable arguments for the cause, adorned with the eloquence of conviction, and those who have practically striven for it in actual warfare. Of the former John Milton is the supreme English type, of the latter Richard Carlile.

In England the ruling classes always dreaded freedom of discussion and criticism, and were ever ready to exercise a rigid censorship over the press. When arbitrary suppression was

possible it was invariably employed ; since then, until quite recently, invidious legislation has been resorted to. This century has witnessed the trial of each method and the final extinguishment of both. During the first twenty years of it high-handed acts of power were levelled against authors and publishers ; during the second twenty years stamp duties on newspapers were imposed, to obstruct their sale amongst the poorer classes. Fortunately, both evils were broken down by the resolute opposition of noble-minded men, who valued "the liberty to know, to utter, and to argue freely, according to conscience, above all liberties ;" of whom Richard Carlile was the noblest, the most sincere, the most intrepid.

Richard Carlile was born at Ashburton, in Devonshire, on the 8th of December, 1790. Of his parents not much is known. His father possessed some talent as an arithmetician, and published a collection of arithmetical, mathematical, and algebraical questions. His trade was shoemaking, but he early quitted it to become an exciseman. Intoxication beset him in that profession, and he betook himself to teaching as a schoolmaster. Subsequently he became a soldier, and died at the age of thirty-four, "nobody's enemy but his own," leaving his wife with three infant children, Richard and two sisters. The widow was for several years in a flourishing business, but the hard times about 1800 greatly diminished it, and alternate sickness and poverty afflicted her. She was through all changes an indulgent mother and a virtuous woman. At the age of sixty she died, being supported by her son until then, from the time when he was able to earn a living for them.

Carlile's education was but scant ; it comprised reading, writing, arithmetic, and sufficient Latin to read a physician's prescription. On leaving school he engaged in the service of Mr. Lee, chemist and druggist, in Exeter ; but he soon left it on account of being put to do things deemed derogatory to his office. Following that he idled away three months at home, where he amused himself with colouring pictures to sell in his mother's shop. His mother's principal customers, says Mr. Holyoake, were the firm of Gifford and Co., which consisted of the brothers of that Attorney-General who had such extensive dealings with the son afterwards, in a different line. Carlile was then apprenticed to the tin-plate business, and although he never liked it, he continued to work at it for many years. His apprenticeship lasted seven years and three months, and was marked by great hardships, and consequent conspiracies and rebellions. His master, a Mr. Cummings, allowed five or six hours for sleep, but no leisure for recreation. On being released from this galling bondage, he determined to forsake the trade as soon as possible, but for a long time he was compelled to follow it, and thereby earn his subsistence. After travelling in various parts as a journeyman tinman, he came to London in 1811, but he returned to Exeter the same year. In

1813 he was in London again, working at Benham and Sons, Blackfriars Road. During the interval he had formed an acquaintance with a lady who, after two months' courtship, became his wife, she being then thirty years of age and he twenty-three. This union does not seem to have been productive of great happiness. Mrs. Carlile was a woman of considerable personal attractions, and possessed all the business qualities necessary to a tradesman's wife. In after years of persecution she bravely stood by her husband's side and shared his imprisonment. But their tempers were ill-matched, their ages disparate, their mental characters irreconcilably diverse. By mutual consent they parted in 1832. No blame is legitimately ascribable to either; their conflicting idiosyncracies were their misfortune and not their fault.

During the years of his labour as a tinman, Carlile had not been mentally quiescent. He was ambitious to win a public reputation and to earn his living by his pen. Very early in life he had dreams of purifying the Church, which certainly needed purging. Heresy had not found a home in his mind, and necessarily his reforming tendencies concerned themselves with what he was acquainted. He relates how, in his youth, he gathered faggots to burn "Old Tom Paine," instead of Guy Fawkes, being then totally ignorant of Paine's writings, and, like other people, incensed against him by irrational prejudice. Not until 1810, in his twentieth year, did he even see a copy of the Rights of Man. But towards 1816 he read Paine's works and the writings of other reformers; his mind became excited by his newly-acquired idea, and he essayed public life. Cobbett and other editors were plagued at first by his literary scraps, which were uniformly refused. But in the following year, 1817, Wooller's *Black Dwarf* made its appearance, and being more to Carlile's taste than Cobbett's *Register*, which did not go far enough for him, he determined to push it amongst the news-vendors, as the sale was very low. "The Habeas Corpus Act," says Mr. Holyoake, "was suspended, and Sidmouth had sent forth his circular; there was a damp amongst the news-vendors, and few would sell. This excited Carlile with a desire to become a bookseller. The story of Lackington beginning with a stall encouraged him. He resolved to set a good example in the trade of political pamphlets. Finding the sale of the *Black Dwarf* very low, he borrowed £1 from his employer, and invested it in one hundred *Dwarfs*, and on the 9th of March, 1817, he sallied forth from the manufactory, with his stock in his handkerchief, to commence the trade of bookselling. He traversed the metropolis in every direction to get news-vendors to sell the *Dwarf*, and called every day to see how they sold. He inquired also after Cobbett's *Register*, and Sherwin's *Republican*, but finding that they did not want pushing, he took none of those round. Indeed, he refused to avail himself of the profit he could have made by taking Cobbett's *Register*, because it did not go far

enough. He carried the *Dwarf* round several weeks, walking thirty miles a day, for a profit of fifteen or eighteen pence. At length an information was lodged against the publisher, and Mr. Steill was arrested. Carlile at once offered to take his place. Mr. Wooller, however, arranged the matter, and Carlile's offer was declined. Mr. Sherwin, then a young man, editing the *Republican*, perceived Carlile's value, and offered him the publishing of his paper, which he accepted. Carlile guaranteed Mr. Sherwin against arrest, which left him free to be bold without danger. The shop on which he now entered was 183, Fleet Street, which Mr. Cobbett afterwards occupied. Carlile's first ideas of politics were, that neither writers, printers, nor publishers were bold enough; and he now commenced to set the example he thought wanted."

Those were stirring times, and Carlile stepped into the ranks of publishers just at the moment when his sturdy independence and resolute will were needed to stem the torrent of Government prosecutions. The Tory Government made war upon the press, and to effect its designs furnished up every rusty instrument of tyranny. "It is difficult," says Knight, "to imagine a more degraded and dangerous position than that in which every political writer was placed during the year 1817. In the first place, he was subject, by a Secretary of State's warrant, to be imprisoned upon suspicion, under the Suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act. Secondly, he was open to an *ex-officio* information, under which he would be compelled to find bail, or be imprisoned. The power of *ex-officio* information had been extended, so as to compel bail, by an Act of 1808; but from 1808 to 1811, during which three years forty such informations were laid, only one person was held to bail. In 1817 numerous *ex-officio* informations were filed, and the almost invariable practice then was to hold the alleged offender to bail, or, in default, to commit to prison. Under this Act Mr. Hone, and others, were committed to prison during this year. To complete a triple cord with which the ministers believed they could bind down the 'man mountain' of the press, came forth Lord Sidmouth's Circular." Sidmouth's famous Circular to the Lords-Lieutenants of Counties, urging the importance of preventing the circulation of blasphemous and seditious pamphlets, stated that he had obtained the opinion of the law officers, "that a justice of the peace may issue a warrant to apprehend a person charged before him, on oath, with the publication of libels of the nature in question, and compel him to give bail to answer the charge." This was practically a deprivation of every particle of liberty, and placed every writer at the mercy of informers and unpaid magistrates. It did away with trial by jury, and substituted for it the arbitrary caprice of judges. Earl Grey, in the House of Lords, asked: "If such be the power of the magistrate, and if this be the law, where are all the boasted securities of our independence and freedom?" These proceed.

ings were the most daring invasion of public liberty that had been attempted since the time of the Stuarts. The reformers, however, stood firm; only one fled—William Cobbett. But no cowardice dictated his movement. He sacrificed an incredibly profitable business, and departed with his family to America, being determined not to be gagged by judges, or magistrates, or Secretaries of State. There he continued to write his *Register*, the first numbers of which, dated from Long Island, preserve as an indelible brand on the oligarchy the story of the Last Hundred Days of English Freedom.

Carlile vigorously set to work at printing and publishing works under the ban of legal prohibition. He was determined at whatever cost to defy the Government, and resolved to publish, on principle, every forbidden book. His first step was to resist Southey's attempt to suppress his early poem *Wat Tyler*, composed in former days of Republican and Communistic convictions, when, with Coleridge, he fondly contemplated the progress of extreme principles, and longed to see them put into practice. Of that poem Carlile sold twenty-five thousand copies in 1817. His next publication was the prosecution and defence of Wooller, of the *Black Dwarf*. Next came a reprint of Paine's political works, edited by Carlile and Sherwin conjointly. Immediately afterwards he reprinted William Hone's suppressed political squibs, called the *Parodies on the Book of Common Prayer*. This forced on the trial of Hone for blasphemy; but happily the old book-worm, after making one of the most remarkable defences on record, was acquitted. The publication, however, of the *Parodies* cost Carlile eighteen weeks' imprisonment in the King's Bench Prison, from which he was liberated on the acquittal of Hone.

By the end of 1818 Carlile had published the theological works of Paine, which, with the political writings and miscellaneous pieces, were collected in two handsomely-printed volumes, forming the only complete edition of Paine ever published. No expense was spared to render the collection as complete as possible. The prosecutions set on foot against him, gave to these works an unprecedented sale; and other publications of a similar character were proceeded with, such as the *Doubts of Infidels*, *Watson Refuted*, *Palmer's Principles of Nature*, and the *God of the Jews*. By the month of October, 1819, six indictments were pending against him; two of which were tried from the 12th to the 16th of that month. "When he came to trial," says Mr. Holyoake, "he had no clear understanding of the subject of his defence; it was compiled from the pleadings of others for toleration and free discussion." His defence, however, so alarmed the Emperor Alexander of Russia, that he issued an Ukase, forbidding any printed report of it from being brought into his territory. The verdict was gained against him, and he was sentenced to fifteen hundred pounds fine, and three years' imprisonment in Dorchester Gaol, whither he was driven

off handcuffed in the middle of the night. This imprisonment was, of course, endured with no grateful feelings, but it produced a good result in affording opportunity for patient study of religious questions. "He had taken the impression," says Mr. Holyoake, "from the hint of an aged political friend, that all the evils of mankind rooted in the superstition and consequent priestcraft practised upon them, and was resolved to devote the solitude of his imprisonment to the study of religious mysteries, and fearlessly and faithfully to make the revelation for the common good of man." The brave man was true to his resolve. He did study those questions, and very speedily saw reason to disclaim all belief in dogmas and creeds based on revelation.

The first thing he did after the close of his trial was to publish a report of his defence, in which he had taken care to read the whole of Paine's *Age of Reason*. The sale was immense, and to stay it a prosecution was begun against Mrs. Carlile, but was dropped on her declining the sale. She was not, however, long unmolested. "Under pretence of seizing for Mr. Carlile's fines," says Mr. Holyoake, "the sheriff, with a writ of *levari facias* from the Court of King's Bench, took possession of his house, furniture, and stock in trade, and closed the shop. It was thus held from the 16th of November to the 24th of December. Rent became due, and it was then emptied. Under Mr. Carlile's desire, Mrs. Carlile renewed a business, in January, 1820, with what could be scraped together from the unseized wreck of their property. In February she was arrested; but the first indictment failed through a flaw in its construction. She was immediately proceeded against by the Attorney-General, and became her husband's fellow-prisoner in Dorchester Gaol in February, 1821." The sentence passed upon her was two years' imprisonment; not one jot of which was abated, although her accouchement in gaol without proper attendance seemed so terrible to her husband that he did for her what he never did for himself, and begged of Peel to grant her a release.

Carlile's sister Mary Ann carried on the business after Mrs. Carlile's imprisonment. She likewise was prosecuted by the relentless Government, and in November, 1821, found herself a fellow-prisoner with her brother, under a fine of five hundred pounds. The business was continued by Mrs. Wright, and a troop of other assistants, whose names should be put on record—George Beer, John Barkley, Humphrey Boyle, Joseph Rhodes, William Holmes, John Jones, Joseph Trust, Charles Sanderson, Thomas Jefferies, William Haley, William Campion, Richard Hassell, Michael O'Connor, William Cochrane, John Clarke, John Christopher, and Thomas Riley Perry. All of these were imprisoned for terms varying from six months to three years. A second seizure of house and stock was made, on pretence of satisfying the fines. But no abatement was made from the amount of fines, and, notwithstanding Carlile's persistent appli-

cations to "Christian Judge Bailey," he was obliged to serve out the extra three years' imprisonment in lieu thereof.

Carlile's imprisonment was rendered as irksome to him as possible. Inside the gaol the utmost indignities were practised upon him, his wife, and his sister. The chaplain laughed at their complaints, and more than hinted that no degradation could exceed their deserts. He even professed a fear that the thieves confined there might be contaminated by communication with a heretic and Republican, and suggested precautions against such a deplorable contingency. The prisoner's opportunities of exercise in fresh air depended on the caprice of the gaoler; and even when permitted that luxury, he was led out as a caged animal and exhibited to the gaze of the passing curious. In consequence of this he passed two years and a half in his own chamber, for which he paid two guineas and a half a week, without going into the open air. During the whole period he continued to edit the *Republican* as vigorously as before, and made it more decided on theological questions. To spite his persecutors, he dated it in the era of "the Carpenter's Wife's Son." None of his publications had been suppressed, and the Cabinet was reported to have acknowledged Carlile invincible in his course of moral resistance. When he was liberated from Dorchester Gaol, in 1825, the freedom of the press was virtually complete, so far as Government was concerned. His incarcerated shopmen had still to finish their terms of imprisonment, but no fresh arrests were made. One brave, unflinching man had done battle against the power and wealth of the oligarchy, and issued from the contest victor. His practical sagacity, even while imprisoned, provided against every unfavourable contingency, and devised means to surmount every obstacle. When he found that the Government could not be beaten by straightforward means, he adopted others; laws which could not be broken he eluded. The intention of Government to exhaust his means of resistance by repeated arrests of his shopmen, he frustrated by providing a mechanical process of sale. Books were sold through an aperture; so that the buyer was unable to identify the seller. Afterwards they were sold by clockwork. On a dial was written the name of every publication for sale; the purchaser entered, and turned the hand of the dial to the book he wanted, which, on depositing his money, dropped down before him without the necessity of any one speaking. The circulation of his books was quadrupled, and cheering crowds assembled daily around his shop windows. In the provinces, at public dinners, the health was drunk of "Carlile's invisible shopman." The number of copies of Paine's works sold was amazing; from December, 1818, to December, 1822, 20,000 copies were sent into circulation. While in prison his friends liberally supported him; subscriptions to the amount of £500 a year were acknowledged in the *Republican*. The profits of the business also amounted to about £50 per week. Occasion-

ally the trade was prodigious : in one week, while a trial was pending, Mrs. Carlile took £500 over the counter. On his leaving Dorchester Gaol, one friend lent him £1,000 to extend his business in the new shop at 62, Fleet Street. The triumph was on the side of Right against Might ; the war had lasted six years, and Might was worn out and obliged to retreat. Henceforth, although newspaper duties, or "taxes on knowledge," still continued to impede the sale of literature amongst the working classes, Bourbon misrule was absolutely impossible. Editors and publishers enjoyed a pleasant peace, won for them mainly by Carlile's invincible hostility to oppression.

"Though the freedom of the press," says Mr. Holyoake, "was accomplished in 1829, something more remained to be accomplished, which was the freedom of public oral discussion ; and on this subject Carlile set his thoughts. When Mr. Taylor was prosecuted and imprisoned, in 1828, Carlile was called into action in his new character. He immediately converted a large room in his house, 62, Fleet Street, into a Sunday School of Free Discussion, and introduced a public debate on all useful political subjects on the Sabbath Day. This had not been done before by any one anywhere. By a subscription he got Mr. Taylor well supported in prison, and on his liberation accompanied him to Cambridge, as an Infidel missionary, to challenge the University to public discussion. They passed from Cambridge to Liverpool, presenting a printed circular of public challenge to every priest on the road. Only one accepted it, the Rev. David Thom, of Liverpool, who quailed at the very onset and withdrew. This was done in 1829.

"In 1830 he sought a larger sphere of action for public meetings than his own dwelling house, and engaged a series of buildings and theatres called the Rotunda, in Blackfriars Road. Soon after he gained possession of this building, the second French Revolution broke out, which gave a new impetus to political feeling in London. Giving to every man liberty of speech in his theatres, the Rotunda was attended by all the public men of note out of Parliament ; and the public meetings there became so frequent and so large that the Government took alarm, and the prophecy of the day was, that the Rotunda would cause a Revolution in England. While the Tories remained in office they did not molest him (*probably they were sick of former fruitless attempts*), but the Whigs no sooner took office, than they very foully made war on him, and caused him thirty two months' imprisonment in the Compter of the City of London. The Rev. Robert Taylor (*author of Diegesis and Devil's Pulpit*) was also prosecuted under the Whig Administration, and filled out two years in Horsemonger Lane Gaol, for his preaching in the Rotunda."

Those were the days of Church and State tryanny, and Carlile was destined to feel the claws of the ecclesiastical part of that bold monster. In 1834 and 1835, he passed ten weeks more

in the Compter for refusing to pay Church Rates assessed upon his house in Fleet Street. When his goods were seized he retaliated by putting into his window two effigies—one of a bishop and the other of a distraining officer. Subsequently the trinity was completed by the addition of a devil, who was jovially linked arm-in-arm with the bishop. This curious sight naturally attracted the attention of large crowds, which led to Carlile's being indicted as a nuisance. He was sentenced to pay a fine of 40s. to the King, and give sureties in £200 (himself in £100 and two others in £50 each) for good behaviour for three years. He refused, however, to involve any one in his troubles; no security would he give, neither would he truckle to the minions of power. "They have sentenced me," said he, "to three years' imprisonment. So much for their leniency! It is a mockery to say that I may, if I please, purchase my liberty. I cannot do it. I shall have more liberty in prison than in walking the streets at the discretion of one set of men, and at the hazard of £100 penalty to two others. It is a case in which I will not interfere to abate one hour of the imprisonment. When the gates are open to me I will walk out, but I will not pay or do anything to procure release." Carlile's total of imprisonment amounted to nine years and four months.

Carlile had always been Republican; even at the outset of his career, when traversing London to find customers for the *Black Dwarf*, he had disliked Cobbett's *Register* because "it did not go far enough." Before his imprisonment he had identified himself with the extreme party of reformers. He was present at the Manchester Massacre (Peterloo), and narrowly escaped being captured. The ignorance of his person on the part of the soldiers and police secured his safety. He was threatened with dangers from other quarters also. Edwards, the Government spy, the main instrument in hatching the Cato Street conspiracy, attempted to inveigle him into secret illegal practices, which, however, his native good sense rejected. Edwards took a shop next door to Carlile, where William Hone had published his famous Parodies, and under various pretences courted Carlile's society. He talked to him about meeting the Archbishop of Canterbury in Windsor Castle, as a modeller, and undertook for him a bust of Paine. Speaking of this, Carlile says: "I revere the name of Thomas Paine; the image of his honest countenance is constantly before me. I have him in bust in whole length figure; for which I have to thank the late Government of Liverpool, Castlereagh, and Sidmouth, who appointed Edwards the spy to this task—he who, when he failed to get me hanged, caused the death of Thistlewood and others." Secret practices had no attraction for Carlile; he preferred to do everything openly in the light of day. Not, indeed, that there was any tincture of timidity in his composition; no more resolute, intrepid man ever breathed. When other reformers shrank back he always pushed forward. Said he: "Timidity

may be seen sitting on the countenance of almost every politician. He speaks and speculates with a trembling which generates a prejudice in others. As it is the slave who makes the tyrant, so it is timidity in the politician which creates the prejudice of the persecutor." Even a resort to physical force he would have approved and assisted in, if no other method of remedying abuses had been possible, although he never did see reason to sanction any particular act of violence. "In the beginning of my political career," he wrote, "I had those common notions which the enthusiasm of youth and inexperience produces, that all reforms must be the work of physical force. The heat of my imagination showed me everything about to be done at once. I am now enthusiastic, but it is in *working* where I can work *practically* rather than theoretically; and though I would be the last to oppose a well-applied physical force, in bringing about reforms or revolutions, I would be the last in advising others to rush into useless dangers that I would shun, or where I would not lead. I have long formed the idea that an insurrection against grievances in this country must, to be successful, be spontaneous and not plotted, and that all political conspiracies may be local and even individual evils. I challenge the omniscience of the Home Office to say whether I have ever countenanced anything of the kind in word or deed. I will do nothing in a political point of view which cannot be done openly." These surely are wise words, and evince that Carlile had learnt a lesson of political wisdom a whole generation before many more ardent but less sagacious reformers.

Carlile's Republicanism was of a purely practical type. "Liberty," said he, "is the property of man: a Republic only can protect it;" and on behalf of that Republic he ever faithfully laboured. Even against the powerful disparagement of William Cobbett he boldly championed it. Yet he would never listen to Socialistic schemes, no matter by whom propounded. "Equality," said he, "means not an equality of *riches*, but of *rights* merely." He once discussed Socialism with Mr. Lloyd Jones, and, as might be expected, treated it as chimerical in the present stage of human progress, and probably of but little advantage in any.

As an editor Carlile was industrious and indefatigable. His literary ability was never transcendent, but he wrote nervous terse English, and always showed a thorough knowledge of his subject. Thomas Paine was his model; for Paine's practical spirit much resembled his own. But he depreciated other writers with unjustifiable severity: their impassioned prose seemed to him flighty because he was not a man of passionate nature. Of Milton he wrote with graceless asperity, apparently forgetting that it was nothing wonderful that the great Republican should be ignorant of political reforms deemed advisable by people who had the advantage of living nearly two centuries later. Milton's noble *Areopagitica* will be read and admired,

and his name revered, when much of Richard Carlile's writings will be utterly forgotten.

Carlile's deficient education was at first a deplorable detraction from his editorial efficiency, but he gradually remedied the defect by dint of assiduous self-culture. During his long imprisonment in Dorchester Gaol he continued to edit the *Republican* with increasing success. The circulation reached as high as 15,000; and in all fourteen volumes were issued. After its discontinuance he edited other religious periodicals, the *Lion*, and the *Christian Warrior*; and each of them with ability and success.

In theological matters Carlile professed various shades of belief. Indeed he graduated from Deism to Atheism insensibly. In his first controversy with Cobbett he avowed himself a believer in a great controlling power in nature; but not long afterwards he observed, "I may have said that changes observed in phenomena argue the existence of an active power in the universe, but I have again and again renounced the notion of that power being intelligent or designing." By that time he had reached the stage of thought of our great modern philosopher, Herbert Spencer, who declares that "the power which the universe manifests to us is utterly inscrutable." After his imprisonment he boldly avowed himself an Atheist. He reached the climax of his Atheism, as Mr. Holyoake remarks, on the title page to his tenth volume of the *Republican*, where he declared "There is no such God in existence as any man has preached; nor any kind of God"; and this declaration was so far carried out in detail as to exclude from the *Republican* the terms *God, nature, mind, soul, and spirit*, as words without prototypes.

Later in life Carlile degenerated into a kind of Swedenborgian mysticism. Not indeed that he discarded his Atheism; he was virtually an Atheist to the last; but he chose to veil it under a delusive nomenclature, and to employ to express his own Naturalism the very supernatural terms he had previously discarded. He professed to have discovered "that the names of the Old Testament, either apparently of persons or places, are not such names as the religious mistakes have constructed, but names of states of mind manifested in the human race, and that, in this sense, the Bible may be scientifically read as a treatise on spirit, soul, or mind, and not as a history of time, people, and place." In editing the *Christian Warrior* he professed himself a Christian, defining the appellation as "a man purged from error." His conduct scandalised his friends, who deplored his seeming departure from the old clear ways, and when he proceeded so far as to take out his diploma as a preacher their indignation and sorrow knew no bounds. Carlile, however, was not to be deterred from pursuing his own independent course; the same sturdy spirit which impelled him to resist the minions of power in former days induced him

now to disregard the adverse representations and reproaches of his friends. And beneath his mystical phraseology there were undoubtedly concealed truths of vast importance. The following passage, for instance, is pregnant with meaning: "Science, thrown into the Church as a substitute for superstition in the education of the people, begins at once to regenerate the people, the institutions, and the throne. It is the substitution of the known for the unknown, the real for the unreal, the certain for the uncertain. Religion is the erroneous mind's chief direction. It must be corrected by and through the medium which it most respects. It rejects all other opposing conditions, and increases its tenacity for its errors. To reform religion by science, is to regenerate fallen man, and to save a sinking country." In this passage he seems to be straining after some positive conceptions as substitutes for the old negative notions of Free-thought, and dimly to perceive that every system claiming human adherence and aiming at extensive, permanent success, must satisfy the natural emotions of the human heart, and direct them to some ultimate purpose capable of being apprehended and aspired to.

It is a mistake to suppose that Carlile ever really departed from the Atheism of his maturity. Thirteen days before his death he penned these words: "*The enemy with whom I have to grapple is one with whom no peace can be made. Idolatry will not parley; superstition will not treat on covenant. They must be uprooted for public and individual safety.*" Neither is there any truth in the story of his recantation. He lost his power of speaking long before the near approach of death. The story is simply incredible, and could only have proceeded from the inventive charity of some over-zealous religionist.

"Carlile's habits," writes Mr. Holyoake, who can here speak with authority, "were marked by great abstemiousness. Seldom taking animal food, he refused wine when offered a dozen at Dorchester Gaol, preferring good milk. He was morally as well as physically particular. In the rules of the Deistical Society he provided that only persons of good character should be eligible. 'It is important to you Republicans,' wrote he from Dorchester Gaol, 'that however humble the advocates of your principles may be, they should exhibit a clear, moral character to the world.' He never sold a copy of any work which he would hesitate to read to his children. He expressed a hope, when fairs were popular, that fairs would be put down all over the country. He was one of the first thus to oppose what the pious then approved." His large charity also was conspicuous. He would assist even a struggling and unfortunate foe, and stand by his friends to the last. When George Jacob Holyoake was tried at Gloucester Carlile sat by his side for fourteen hours, and handed him notes for his guidance. After Mr. Holyoake's conviction, Carlile brought him the first provisions with his own hand. As a speaker, he was direct and perspicuous. Generally

he was not eloquent, but occasionally he was as eloquent as the best speakers. Bold as a lion in fight, he quailed before a public audience, and only after long practice was he able to conquer his diffidence. At first his friends believed he never would make a speaker, but by dint of patient cultivation he contrived to falsify their unfavourable predictions.

A few words will be necessary respecting Carlile's domestic relations, and the publication of his "Every Woman's Book." A tract recently issued by the Bible Institute charges him with having "exhibited his harlot on the public platform, during the lifetime of his wife," and with "having made proposals concerning the thinning of the population, the most beastly that ever polluted paper." These charges, preferred before a public ignorant of Carlile's life and character, are calculated to mislead, as probably the malignant libeller who penned the tract well knew, but they are entirely groundless, and fall away before an impartial examination. Already we have alluded to the disparity of temper between Carlile and his wife. "Their difference in education, in age, in intellectual aspiration, and their opponency in disposition, early converted their union into an intimacy tolerated rather than prized." In 1819 their separation was arranged, but it did not actually take place till 1832, because until then an independent provision for Mrs. Carlile could not be made. They parted in 1832 with mutual consent, and besides the separate maintenance for the wife, she took with her all the household furniture and £100 worth of books." Afterwards Carlile allied himself with a lady by whom he had two children, and doubtless would readily have married her if the holy laws of England had permitted him to do so by granting a divorce from his first wife. But the law refused, and still refuses, to grant a divorce on any ground except adultery; and Carlile very properly observed his own counsel without a legal sanction. He was not the man to *desert* his wife, but when they mutually desired separation he was just the man to burst through the cobwebs of ecclesiastico-political restraint and even to defy worldly conventionalities. Herein he has the approval of one of the sternest moralists of any age or country—John Milton; who in his tractate on divorce censures the legislators who impose marriage bonds upon mutually rebellious souls, and pronounces the union unholy and desecrate when unsanctified by love. The legislation of England is not yet level with this teaching, which is two centuries old. The reader will now be in a position to estimate aright the accusation urged against Carlile by Christian scribes who are everlastingly maligning our sacred dead in order to bolster up their own creed.

The other charge concerning "beastly proposals" is equally groundless. It refers to Carlile's *Every Woman's Book*, which is a plain statement of his opinions on "the all-important question of population." He believed in Malthus's law of population, which as Professor Huxley observes, has never been and

never will be disproved; and he was anxious to induce his fellow men to adopt means to prevent the bringing of redundant children into life, so as to obviate the slaughter of them afterwards by nature's positive checks on numerical increase. Possessing the courage of his convictions, he set forth his views in print, and described preventive human checks on the growth of families. His intent was humane and pure, and even if he were erroneous, he could not deserve to be stigmatised as immoral or beastly. He had as much moral right to publish his book as Dr. Acton has to publish a work on Prostitution, or Dr. Bull his Hints to Mothers. Dr. Acton and Dr. Bull are justified by the fact of their being physical physicans; and Richard Carlile was justified by being a moral physician. He had earned the right, by his courage on behalf of righteous causes, to address the public on any question he chose.

"Carlile's death," writes Mr. Holyoake, "took place on this wise. He had come up from Enfield to Bouverie Street, Fleet Street, to live on the old field of war, and edit the *Christian Warrior*. While a van of goods was unpacking at the door, one of his boys strayed out and went away. Carlile was fond of his children, and he set out anxiously to seek his child. The excitement ended in death. On Carlile's return he was seized with a fatal illness. Bronchitis, which he was told by his medical advisers would soon destroy him if he came to live in the city, set in, and the power of speech soon left him. Dr. Lawrence, the author of the famous Lectures on Man, whom Carlile always preferred in his illnesses, was sent for. He promptly arrived, but pronounced recovery hopeless; and Richard Carlile expired February 10th, 1843, in his fifty-third year.

"Wishing to be useful in death as in life, Carlile devoted his body to dissection. Always above superstition, in practice as well as in theory, his wish had long been, that his body, if he died first, should be given to Dr. Lawrence. At that time the prejudice against dissection was almost universal, and only superior persons rose above it. His wish was complied with by his family, and the post mortem examination was published in the *Lancet* of that year.

"Carlile's burial took place at Kensal Green Cemetery. He was laid in the consecrated part of the ground, nearly opposite the Mausoleum of the Ducrow family. At the interment, a clergyman appeared, and with the usual want of feeling and delicacy, persisted in reading the Church Service over him. His eldest son Richard, who represented his sentiments as well his name, very properly protested against the proceeding, as an outrage upon the principles of his father and the wishes of the family. Of course the remonstrance was disregarded, and, Richard, his brothers, and their friends left the ground. The clergyman then proceeded to call Carlile 'his dear departed brother,' and to declare that he 'had died in the sure and certain hope of a glorious resurrection.'

“Carlile left six children—Richard, Alfred, and Thomas Paine, by his wife Mrs. Jane Carlile; and Julian, Theophila, and Hypatia, by ‘Isis,’ the lady to whom he united himself after his separation from his wife. Mrs. Carlile survived him only four months. She died in the same house and was buried in the same grave.”

Thus ended the life of this sturdy warrior for freedom of thought and speech. It cannot, of course, be pretended that Richard Carlile was a man of great genius, or that his writings are destined to survive; neither can we admit, with Mr. Holyoake, that such workers as journalists, orators, and politicians, who popularise ideas and principles, confer greater good on mankind, and more powerfully promote progress, than the great creative minds; for if those minds did not originate ideas, it is certain that the writers and speakers of smaller calibre could not popularise them. But this at least may be claimed for Carlile, that he spent one-fourth of his mature life in prison as the consequence of his manly persistence in the course of conduct which his conscience approved; that he never once flinched from danger, never temporised with the oppressor, never once looked back after putting his hand to the plough. There was no contemporary publicist who wrote so boldly as he, no one who shrank less from the freest expression of principles the most extreme. The example he set is worthy of emulation; and his courage and endurance, while they give fresh ardour to the wavering, ought also to shame those who are persuaded that superstitions abound, and yet will lift no finger to remove them, who perceive a great work of reformation to be performed, and yet never bestir themselves in any degree to assist it. When Carlile wrote and spoke and struggled he stood face to face with an almost implacable enemy, that gave no quarter, showed no mercy. The blows of oppression rained upon his devoted head at every step of his march, and the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune constantly assailed him; but he never quailed before any danger, nor was deterred by any difficulty. His life of incessant warfare deprived him of the sense of literary taste, and frequently he was guilty of a violence of expression which would be deemed unjustifiable by the present generation. But our censure need not therefore be severe. As Mr. Holyoake observes, Christians who persecute with relentless zeal have no right to demand of their victims a perennial delicacy of treatment in return. If Carlile dedicated a volume of the *Republican* to Castlereagh, “who did that for himself which millions wished some honest man would do for him—cut his throat,” that statesman had given good cause for public execration. If he dated in the era of “the carpenter’s wife’s son,” the professors of Christianity had done their best to induce in his mind the utmost contempt and hatred of their creed. Society has no right to require soft speech of a man whom it loses no opportunity to ill-use.

At the time when monuments are impartially reared to celebrate public benefactors one will be apportioned to Richard Carlile. The work he achieved for Freethought was impossible of accomplishment by any other man; no other possessed at once so dogged a courage and so clear a conception of principle. "I have accomplished," wrote he just before his death, "the liberty of the press in England, and oral discussion is now free. Nothing remains to be reformed but the ignorance and vices of the people, whose ignorance cannot be removed while their bodies are starved, and their Church remains a theatre of idolatry and superstition." These words both express his own achievement, and indicate the reformatory method of those who were to follow him. Theirs is the task to spread knowledge, to uproot error, to destroy superstition, to feed men's bodies before canting about their souls; his was to prepare the field for such labours, to remove obstacles, to make straight and plain the paths. While we do battle with the noxious evils of society to-day without oppressive sense of personal danger, let us now and then remember the pioneers who went before, who toiled weary and footsore where we now travel so easily, who bore the first shattering brunt of war, and left for us the defeat of an already half-conquered foe.

The reader may consult :—

Holyoake, G. J., *Life and Character of Richard Carlile.*

*Carlile's Republican, the Lion, and Christian Warrior.* (These are of course out of print, and not readily procurable.)

Knight's or Howitt's *History of England*, for a description of the struggle for a free press.

# HEROES AND MARTYRS

OF

## FREETHOUGHT.

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### 11.—PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY.

**P**OETS are the unacknowledged legislators of the world, as Shelley himself grandly said in that divine fragment, the Defence of Poetry. They are the creators and preservers of the beautiful, the explorers and revealers of truth, the fountains of moral inspiration to countless myriads of mankind. The influence of political legislators, of logicians, and of ethical analysts, sinks into insignificance compared with theirs. From the serene heaven of song they are constant sources of illumination to the dazed and struggling pilgrims of earth. By the potent wand of imagination the supreme poets transform the grossness of material life into a nobler essence, and invest the sensual with a holier spirituality. Poets are nearer earth and nearer heaven than their fellows; they possess at once the childlike love of the savage for the beauty of external nature, and the god-like power to discern and reproduce the mightiest and the faintest notes of responsive music which the human mind yields to the affluent tides of life.

Poets are the moral regenerators of the world. Poetry furnishes the inspiration, the glowing heat, which changes cold propositions of moral truth into a resplendent ideal capable of evoking aspiration and devotion. Its instrument, imagination, widens and quickens sympathy, and enables man to feel more acutely the pleasures and pains of others. There are a hundred people who know what to do for every one ready to do it. Poetry furnishes the enthusiasm which impels and which converts knowledge into desire.

Shelley may be called the poet of Freethought, not because poetry as such has aught to do with Freethought, or because a poet is greater because of any speculative opinions; but because Shelley, besides being the greatest poet, and therefore the greatest Englishman, of modern times, was essentially also a lover of freedom in every form—mental, spiritual, or actual. He is the singer of human emancipation—political, social, and religious.

Percy Bysshe Shelley was born at Field Place, near Horsham, Sussex, on August 4th, 1792. The family from which he derived origin was both ancient and illustrious; it dated back to the reign of Edward I., and had numbered in its descent valorous warriors and men otherwise renowned. Bysshe Shelley, the poet's grandfather, was twice married; the second time to Elizabeth Jane Sydney, who inherited the blood of Sir Philip and other Sydneys. Both his wives were heiresses, and titles accrued to his progeny; in the first generation a baronetcy, in the second a peerage. Sir Bysshe, therefore, could not have been an altogether common-place character. He was a staunch adherent of the Whig house of Norfolk from motives of interest, but in speculative matters a great Latitudinarian, and apparently as sceptical as his grandson. He is said to have been a "complete Atheist," and a believer in annihilation. Curiously enough, he eloped with both his wives, and thus furnished a family precedent to Percy, by whom it was religiously observed. For years before his death he lived in retirement at Horsham, on bad terms with his eldest son Timothy, whom he would often vigorously curse to his very face. Neither parental nor filial affection ran in the family; even the divine poet and his father, as we shall hereafter see, manifested an amount of mutual repulsion hardly explicable, save on the ground of mental hallucination. Sir Timothy was left one of the most opulent heirs of the kingdom, with £300,000 in the funds, and £20,000 per annum. He married Elizabeth Pilfold, a rare beauty, by whom he had a family of two sons and five daughters; and of these children Percy Bysshe was the eldest. The mother was "mild and tolerant, yet narrow-minded," but clever, and an excellent letter-writer. Sir Timothy himself had few positive faults or virtues. He lived to the good old age of ninety without incurring much censure or receiving much praise. As member of Parliament for Shoreham, he voted as he thought conscientiously, according to ducal and party ties. In religion he was an acquiescent Christian, as became a man of good family. For the rest he much resembled his father, being pompous, self-assertive, rather niggardly, very eccentric, and a robust swearer. From such parents—one entirely, and the other almost, common-place—sprang the divine phenomenon, Percy Bysshe Shelley, a being "all compact of fire," the greatest poet of modern times.

Beyond the fact that Percy was a very beautiful boy, with ringlets, deep-blue eyes, a snowy complexion, and exquisitely-formed hands and feet, and of gentle and affectionate disposition, we know nothing whatever of his infancy. Mr. Rossetti conceives of him as fondling "the great old snake of Field Place," an ophidian specimen traditionally held to be of immense antiquity; and conjecturally traces to that serpentine friend of his babbling years the curious love of snakes and serpents frequently noticeable in his poems. At the early age of six years Percy was sent to a day school, kept by the Rev.

Mr. Edwards, of Warnham, where he began learning Latin. At the age of ten he was transferred to Sion House School, Brentford, of which Dr. Greenlaw was principal. His experience at this school was terrible indeed to a youth of his exquisite sensitiveness. The coarseness and hard discipline of the principal, and the taunts and persecutions of his unappreciative schoolfellows, keenly afflicted him, and rendered him inexpressibly miserable. "But," as Mr. Rossetti eloquently says, "there dawned one glorious moment in which Percy ceased to be the possible refined milksop, and became the incipient poetical demi-god." In the Revolt of Islam Shelley himself expresses his feelings at that moment :—

I do remember well the hour which burst  
My spirit's sleep. A fresh May-dawn it was,  
When I walked forth upon the glittering grass,  
And wept, I knew not why : until there rose  
From the near schoolroom voices that, alas !  
Were but one echo from a world of woes—  
The harsh and grating strife of tyrants and of foes.

And then I clasped my hands, and looked around ;  
But none was near to mock my streaming eyes,  
Which poured their warm drops on the sunny ground.  
So, without shame, I spake : " I will be wise,  
And just, and free, and mild, if in me lies  
Such power ; for I grow weary to behold  
The selfish and the strong still tyrannise  
Without reproach or check." I then controlled  
My tears, my heart grew calm, and I was meek and bold.

And from that hour did I with earnest thought  
Heap knowledge from forbidden mines of lore ;  
Yet nothing that my tyrants knew or taught  
I cared to learn—but from that secret store  
Wrought linked armour for my soul, before  
It might walk forth to war among mankind.

Even here we perceive how noble were his aims, how marvellously intense his human susceptibilities. Oppression never brutalised or hardened his fine nature, but rather wrought it to a more exquisite sensitiveness. From the first moment that his communings with nature were blended with sterner reflections upon human crime and suffering, his aspirations became lofty as heaven, his sympathies wide as the ends of the earth. Amid all his teeming opulence of imagination and commensurate plenitude of thought, the one supreme ardent hope of social regeneration conspicuously shines and reigns, lighting up his whole life and work with a divine radiance, and constituting him above all others the poet of emancipated man, not of the present alone, but of centuries yet unborn.

In his fifteenth year, Shelley passed to Eton, where he experienced much the same bullying and uncongeniality that he had endured at Sion House. But he was no longer disposed to tamely acquiesce in tyranny; often he was provoked into paroxysms of rage, which, however, would soon subside; then, instead of revenge he would practise charity and so disarm his school-fellows of their ill-will. Although averse from grinding studies, he attained to considerable proficiency in several branches of learning. He took a particular fancy for chemistry, and expended most of his money in purchasing chemical instruments and books. A good portion of his means was devoted to acts of liberality. His vivid imagination inclined him to read unlimited quantities of German romance, mostly horrific; an indulgence which subsequently bore peculiar fruit. Also, to quote from Mr. Rossetti; "he went in for ghosts and fiends with a real eye to business. He studied the occult sciences, watched for spectres, conjured the Devil, and speculated on a visit to Africa for the purpose of searching out the magic arcana, which her dusky populations are noted for." His chemical experiments were regarded by his fellows and superiors with aversion and distrust, and, indeed, his singular practices were little calculated to allay such feelings. Amongst a variety of erratic feats, he set fire to a tree on the common by lighting gunpowder with a burning glass, and overthrew his tutor, Mr. Bethel, who incautiously touched an electrical machine in his room, while the young scapegrace was endeavouring to raise the Devil. His speculative opinions were notoriously free, so much so that he passed by the name not only of "Mad Shelley," but also of "Shelley the Atheist." Some of his earliest writings are apologies for Atheism; and although perhaps a schoolboy's opinions on such a subject are not of immeasurable worth, the fact itself is of biographical importance, indicating as it does the inherent strength of his antipathy to all forms of superstition.

From Eton Shelley was thrice expelled. After the two first times he had been re-admitted on his father's instance, but the third expulsion was final. The immediate cause of his quitting Eton is reported to have been that in a fit of rage he struck a penknife through the hand of one of his persecutors. Immediately after leaving Eton the inflammable youth fell madly, or sentimentally, in love with his charming young cousin, Harriet Grove, who was then on a visit at Field Place. They swore mutual vows of deathless love, and agreed to correspond until they could marry. Two years later this excellent young lady, dismayed at her lover's increasing scepticism, and influenced by her father's disfavour towards her engagement with him, married a man of property, whom the rejected lover regarded, not unnaturally, as "a clod of earth." Poor Shelley passed safely through the stages of affliction common to amorous disappointment. First he contemplated suicide, then resolved

to live a prey to melancholy, then subsided into a gentle sorrow, and finally fell in love with some one else.

While at Eton Shelley had written several small pieces ; for he had long practised the art of versification. But he had also tried a more ambitious flight : under the influence of the aforementioned horrific romances of German growth he had written a novel entitled *Zastrozzi*, a specimen of magnificent balderdash, of the Mrs. Radcliffe type, concerning a virtuous lover led astray by an alluring Siren, beautiful and voluptuous, assisted by a dark-browed and mysterious stranger, who eventually has a family grievance to clear off. A live publisher was found in the person of Mr. Robinson, of the firm of Wilkie and Robinson, Paternoster Row, who actually consented to pay £40 for the privilege of publishing this marvellous production ; with which sum the generous young author furnished forth "a magnificent banquet to eight friends." How fervidly they must have drunk to the health and prosperity of amiable, munificent publishers ! Besides this venture, he induced Stockdale to publish a volume of *Original Poetry by Victor and Cazire*. But this volume was withdrawn after one hundred copies were sold, on account of its containing some plagiarised or stolen verses from Monk Lewis.

Towards the middle or end of October, 1810, Shelley entered University College, Oxford, where he became acquainted with Thomas Jefferson Hogg, the subsequent author of a graphic and amusing, though decidedly inaccurate, life of the poet. Shelley was then approaching manhood ; he was strong and tall (nearly 5 ft. 11 in.), though slight, and marked by the scholar's stoop, with an abundance of wavy dark-brown hair, enshrining a face somewhat feminine and small, but infinitely mobile and expressive. His eyes were open and prominent and near-sighted. He dressed carelessly, but wore good clothes. Mr. Hogg emphatically styles him "a ladies' man." His voice was high and discordant, but sometimes musical enough, especially when greatly excited or when reading poetry aloud. His chief delights were argumentation, reading, and country rambles. His diet was of the simplest kind, approaching vegetarianism, which he adopted absolutely soon after. Long fasts injured his health, and heightened the severity of the "occasional spasms" from which he suffered. He considered himself consumptive, and doomed to an early grave ; the shadow of death hung darkening over his young life. Often he would roll on the ground in agony when the spasmodic attacks seized him ; and this induced a deleterious use of opium to alleviate the pain. This torturing disorder continued for some few years, but abated after his continental visits. "In the spring of 1815," wrote Mrs. Shelley in her note on *Alastor*, "an eminent physician pronounced that he was dying rapidly of consumption ; abscesses were formed in his lungs, and he suffered acute spasms. Suddenly a complete change took place ; and, though through life he was a martyr to pain and debility, every symptom of pulmonary disease

vanished. His nerves, which nature had formed sensitive to an unexampled degree, were rendered still more susceptible by the state of his health."

Hogg gives a graphic delineation of Shelley at Oxford ; but we are compelled to reject his admirably-drawn picture for less amusing, but certainly more authentic, details. The student-poet's rooms were probably, as Hogg relates, in a perfect litter, crowded with an incongruous mixture of books, papers, chemical instruments, and various odds and ends. Assuredly he was busy enough, for he soon engaged in fresh literary enterprises. *St. Ivryne*, or the *Rosicrucian*, his third publication, was brought out by Stockdale. Like *Zastrozzi*, it is almost unmitigated rubbish ; but it shows that the young author had acquired great command of imaginative language, although his poetic wings were as yet not strong enough for high and strenuous flight. Commercially, the book was an ignominious failure. To cover the loss, Shelley offered Stockdale the copyright of some *Moral and Metaphysical Essays* ! What sublime and naïve generosity ! Ardent hopeful youth is the time for splendid dreams. Shelley lived to see works of magnificent scope and performance, infinitely superior to any moral or metaphysical essays, drop almost still-born from the press.

His next publication was entitled *Posthumous Fragments of Margaret Nicholson*, and purported to be relics of the demented female who attempted the life of George III. in 1786. The author assumed the sonorous name of Fitz Victor, and the poems, of a revolutionary nature, and which had been composed as serious effusions, were, at the instigation of Hogg, turned into burlesques. According to Hogg's amusing account, "Shelley had torn open the large square bundle before the printer's boy quitted the room, and holding out a copy with both his hands, he ran about in an ecstasy of delight, gazing at the superb title page." The story has an air of truth, and is at least highly characteristic ; but after Mr. MacCarthy's exposures one hardly knows how much importance to attach to Hogg's highly-coloured narrative.

Shelley next published a volume of satirical poems, the existence of which was utterly unknown until Mr. MacCarthy's recent investigations resulted in the discovery of an advertisement of its publication. No copy has yet been unearthed, but there can be little doubt that it was a sample of scathing and caustic verse. It was entitled *A Poetical Essay on the Existing State of Things*, and the title page bore as motto four terrible lines from Southey's *Curse of Kahma*. The title page also denotes that it was published to assist Mr. Peter Finnerty, then imprisoned for libel. This gentleman had been unfortunate enough to fall into the vulture-clutches of that incarnation of impassive, devilish cruelty and oppression—Castlereagh. In Dublin he had been condemned to the pillory and imprisonment on account of his connection with *The Press* newspaper ; and

now again, in 1811, he had been sentenced to eighteen months' imprisonment in Lincoln Goal, and to give securities for his good conduct for five years, himself in £500 and two sureties in £250 each. The sale of *The Poetical Essay* contributed £100 to the Finnerty subscription; for once in his life Shelley had rightly calculated the public market for literary wares. The hitherto unknown fact of this publication furnishes an additional illustration of Shelley's youthful ardour for liberty; and if the letter to the editor of the *Statesman*, published in Mr. Browning's suppressed volume, submitting proposals for the establishment of an association of lovers of freedom for the purpose of better resisting oppressors, be authentic, we may safely pronounce that the young poet, then but eighteen, was fairly launched upon that glorious course of struggle for freedom from which he never afterwards swerved.

But another pamphlet produced less pleasant consequences and suggests less pleasant reflections. Shelley had been assiduously studying metaphysics, and was particularly influenced by Hume's profound *Essays* and D'Holbach's *Système de la Nature*, that most eloquent but prolix defence of Atheism. The thoughtful young student himself became an Atheist, and with characteristic proselytism, drew up from his various notes a pamphlet boldly entitled *The Necessity of Atheism*. Hogg's narrative places Shelley in an offensive light in reference to this: he pretends that the young collegian surreptitiously introduced the pamphlet into unwelcome places under pretence that he had casually come across it, and was unable to answer its arguments. Shelley's previous and subsequent boldness, not to say temerity, has always cast a shade of suspicion over Hogg's account; but now, thanks to Mr. MacCarthy again, we are able to regard it as utterly untrue. *The Necessity of Atheism* was published and advertised in *The Oxford University and City Herald* of Saturday, Feb. 9th, 1811. On the 25th of March, Shelley was summoned before the college authorities, questioned as to authorship of the obnoxious pamphlet, and required to declare whether or not he had written it. He declined to reply, and threw upon his accusers the onus of proving his guilt if they could. "Then you are expelled," replied the master, "and I desire you will quit the college early to-morrow morning at the latest." A regular sentence of expulsion, ready-written, under the seal of the college, was then handed to him, and he departed. Hogg protested against this summary proceeding, in a note to the master and fellows, and he also was forthwith summoned to appear. Like Shelley he refused to declare whether or not he had written the Atheistic pamphlet, and like Shelley he was expelled for contumacious refusal to disavow his imputed guilt. On the following morning the two young men left Oxford. Much has been written for and against the conduct of the college authorities on this occasion. That their proceedings were unwarrantably summary may justly be

maintained, but they could not have long tolerated the infectious presence of a suspected and almost avowed Atheist. No other course than expulsion was open to them. The deplorable thing is that opinions should anywhere be under a ban. However, Shelley being expelled had finally done with schools and colleges. Henceforth, unhampered by routine, so uncongenial to his bright nature, he was free to study whatever he thought fit, and after his own fashion to imbibe the sustenance necessary to support the flight of a spirit which scorned the ground and winged the blue deep "like a cloud of fire."

Shelley and Hogg came up to London, and took lodgings at 15, Poland Street, Oxford Street, where at the end of about a month Shelley was left by Hogg, who repaired to York for the purpose of studying with a conveyancer. Of course, consternation reigned at Field Place, but forgiveness was soon proffered on condition that Percy should relinquish all intercourse with his companion. This he refused, preferring honourable poverty to disgraceful comfort purchased by a sacrifice of friendship. Fortunately his sisters came to his aid, and averted absolute impecuniosity by transmitting to him their saved up pocket-money. These remittances were brought to him by a young girl, named Harriet Westbrook, a fellow-pupil of the Misses Shelley at a school at Clapham. Harriet was an acknowledged beauty, with brilliant pink and white complexion, and splendid light brown hair, the colour which Shelley most admired. She dressed with exquisite neatness and propriety, was accomplished in music, and generally well educated, with a pleasant voice and lady-like manners. Her father was a retired hotel keeper with competent means; her mother a nonentity. There was besides a sister, named Eliza, of unattractive appearance, with aspect indeed decidedly Jewish, who subsequently plagued Shelley more than any other human being he ever met.

With this charming girl, Harriet Westbrook, inflammable Shelley speedily became entangled. Her visits with remittances from his school-girl sisters were sufficiently romantic to throw a fictitious charm around her youthful beauty, and she further excited his interest and chivalric regard by tales of domestic coercion and incompatibilities. The upshot was that after professing her inability to follow Shelley's advice to resist parental persecution she declared her readiness to fly with him—in short, to become his mistress. Gratitude and admiration, he thought, demanded that he should love her for ever. Accordingly he eloped with her early in September, 1811, and went straight off to Edinburgh, where they became man and wife according to the law of Scotland. Shelley in this instance sacrificed his pet theory of marriage, which he considered unnecessary and impolitic, and chivalrously made Harriet his wife for her protection; although she also was indoctrinated with his sexual theories, and quite willing to become simply his mistress. It should be remembered, too, that Shelley was but nineteen at this

time ; for his noble resistance to the pressing temptations of youth and opportunity in this instance will have to count when we hereafter come to deal with more perplexing circumstances connected with the tragic Nemesis which followed the future mutual lives of this hastily-united pair.

The bridegroom and bride took ground-floor lodgings in George Street, Edinburgh, where they were joined by Hogg. The £200 a year which Sir Timothy had just previously agreed to allow his son was withdrawn in consequence of this runaway match, but Mr. Westbrook made an allowance to the young couple which has been stated at £200 per annum. Besides this Shelley raised money on his expectations from time to time, but towards the beginning of October, 1812, Sir Timothy's allowance was renewed, and accompanied by a characteristic message from the old bear that "his sole reason for so doing was to prevent his son's cheating strangers." "This meagre but convenient result," says Mr. Rossetti, "closed a series of attempts at coming to terms, in the course of which Bysshe gave a noble proof of his ideal purity of principle. About the beginning of December, Captain Pilfold told him of a meditated proposal from his father and grandfather of an immediate income for him of £2,000 per annum (Shelley wrote of it as a capital fund of £120,000) on condition that he would entail the estate on his eldest son, or, in default of issue, on his younger brother, John. This Shelley rejected, not only with peremptory decision, but with consuming indignation. That *he* should be supposed capable of entailing all this 'command over labour,' upon a possible fool or scoundrel!" Said not Shelley rightly, that cruelty, envy, revenge, *avarice*, and the passions purely evil, are altogether alien to the poet's essential nature?

At York, their next place of residence, they were joined by Eliza Westbrook, who took quiet possession of Harriet, snubbed Hogg, and treated Shelley himself as a nobody and an interloper. She constituted herself regulator of finance also, and doled out monetary supplies from the common exchequer as occasion required. Well had it been for Shelley, and Harriet too, if this fussy spinster had continued to air her amiable propensities in the parental domicile instead of inflicting her odious presence on them.

After a brief residence at Keswick, in the lake-country of Cumberland, whence Shelley had opened a correspondence with William Godwin, the author of *Political Justice*, the young couple, with the inevitable Eliza, proceeded to Dublin, where they arrived on the 12th of February, 1812. The small party had not come for pleasure merely ; Shelley as usual had "a project" in view. For some time his sense of justice had revolted at the oppression which Ireland had long endured at the hands of England, or of the English Government. He justly regarded the Union as having been brought about by bribery and intimidation ; he deplored the invidious laws which deprived

Catholics of the rights of citizenship enjoyed by their Protestant fellow countrymen, and the evils arising from a system of absentee proprietorship of land; above all, he lamented the ignorance and superstition of the priest-ridden people, and their proneness to resort to violent measures for the attainment of their liberties. All this the enthusiastic young reformer hoped in some considerable degree to remedy. He was perfectly unknown in Ireland, almost unknown in England; but the object of this little immigrant band, as Mr. MacCarthy humorously says, "was, 'as far as in them lay'—to use the language of the chief organiser—to effect a fundamental change in the constitution of the British Empire, to restore to Ireland its native Parliament, to carry the great measure of justice called Catholic Emancipation, and to establish a philanthropic association for the amelioration of human society all over the world." O Heavens, what generous dreams haunt the mind of ardent youth! What noble visions of social improvement cheer and stimulate the courageous young soul! How slowly the world seems to move, and how rapidly it will progress when a brave, stout heart appears possessed of clearest verity and with words of fire to inspire the wavering and nerve the timid! Alas! the generous illusion fades away before the stern reality of things, and too often blighted hopes leave the mind ineffacably seared; abject with despair or worse with cynical contempt of man and his cherished dreams. Happy those who preserve their enthusiasm, tempered by the wisdom of experience, whose maturity is illumined and warmed by the ideal, which was as a fiery beacon to youth, who aspire undespondent even unto the end.

Before Shelley had been in Dublin a week he had issued an Address to the Irish People, with his name on the title-page. No publisher, it appears, would become responsible for it, and the author had to distribute copies as best he could. From the balcony of 7, Lower Sackville Street he threw copies to passers-by who looked "likely" recipients. On one occasion, walking out with Harriet, he popped a copy into a lady's hood, making his bride "almost die of laughing." The Advertisement accompanying this ambitious production set forth that "*the lowest possible price is set on this publication, because it is the intention of the Author to awaken in the minds of the Irish poor a knowledge of their real state, summarily pointing out the evils of that state, and suggesting rational means of remedy.*" Of the pamphlet itself Mr. Rossetti says: "Shelley pitched his diction in a purposely low key, to suit his readers; the tone is juvenile, as well as common-place." Here, however, with all respect for Mr. Rossetti's critical insight, we beg to differ. The tone is juvenile, as was to be expected from a lad of nineteen treating on political affairs, the philosophy of which does not come by inspiration; but it is not common-place. The young author may have reiterated the usual tritenesses about the violence which destroyed the French Revolution, but his remarks there-

anent were quite justifiable, considering the audience he was addressing, and the pacific counsels he was anxious to impart. The same observation applies to his vindication of freedom of conscience. Had he been appealing to a philosophical audience, he would, as an Atheist, undoubtedly have argued the principle on higher grounds; but appealing as he was to poor Irishmen, he was bound to enforce it by illustrations from the religion which they professed. We forbear to quote from the Address to the Irish People, because, thanks to the enterprising spirit of Messrs. Chatto and Windus, a reprint of it, along with other juvenile pieces, can now be obtained by the poorest of Shelley's admirers.

The Address was quickly followed by another pamphlet, for which a publisher had been found—"Proposals for an Association of those Philanthropists who, convinced of the inadequacy of the moral and political state of Ireland to produce benefits which are nevertheless attainable, are willing to unite to accomplish its regeneration." This pamphlet, like the former, was characterised by wonderful moderation. In both Shelley pointed out that violence would retard, instead of accelerate, progress, that individual improvement must precede political and social amelioration. He desired that the proposed Association should rely solely on moral and legal agencies, and that all its proceedings should be conducted in the open face of day, with the utmost possible publicity; in which case he prophesied that its efforts would, at no distant period, be crowned with success. The Proposal concluded with a Declaration of Rights, comprising thirty-one Articles, and bearing much resemblance to that adopted by the Constituent Assembly in 1789, and the one proposed in April, 1793, by Robespierre. The following Articles we select by way of sample:—

## I.

Government has no rights; it is a delegation from several individuals for the purpose of securing their own. It is therefore just only so far as it exists by their consent, useful only so far as it operates to their well-being.

## IX.

No man has a right to disturb the public peace by personally resisting the execution of a law, however bad. He ought to acquiesce, using at the same time the utmost powers of his reason to promote its repeal.

## XIII.

A man has not only a right to express his thoughts, but it is his duty to do so.

## XVIII.

Expediency is inadmissible in morals. Politics are only sound when conducted on principles of morality; they are, in fact, the morals of nations.

## XIX.

Man has no right to kill his brother. It is no excuse that he does so in uniform ; he only adds the infamy of servitude to the crime of murder.

## XXVI.

Those who believe that Heaven is, what earth has been, a monopoly in the hands of a favoured few, would do well to reconsider their opinion ; if they find that it comes from their priest or their grandmother, they could not do better than reject it.

These political axioms may be demurred to by a Benthamite who abhors the jargon about Rights, but they exhibit much wisdom nevertheless, and some of them are most felicitously expressed, especially the exquisitely neat definition of the shadowy difference between a soldier and a murderer. The Declaration terminated with a clarion cry to action, in the words with which Milton's Satan made all the hollow deep of hell resound—**Awake ! arise ! or be for ever fallen !**

Besides writing on behalf of Irish freedom, Shelley also employed his tongue. He attended a public meeting, on the 28th of February, in Fishshamble Street Theatre, at which he spoke for more than an hour before a crowded and applause assembly. There is every reason to believe that if Shelley had devoted himself to politics instead of poetry, which happily he did not, he would have won a distinguished place, and have become a consummate orator. After a sojourn in Dublin long enough for the indefatigable young reformer to write, in conjunction with "a literary friend," 250 pages of a projected History of Ireland, he was induced to return to England by the entreaties of William Godwin, who was a determined opponent to all political associations, and had even devoted a whole chapter of his Political Justice to their especial reprehension. Shelley's departure was accelerated by a hint from the Government that his absence would be a great convenience. Early in April the party left the Emerald Isle, and after flitting about in Wales, settled down, in July, for a short time, in a small cottage at Lymouth, in North Devonshire. At the end of August they suddenly quitted their residence, a fact which was quite inexplicable until Mr. Rossetti and Mr. MacCarthy unearthed documents in the Record Office and elsewhere, which amply account for this abrupt departure. It appears that Shelley, on public reformation bent, had instructed his Irish servant, Daniel Hill, to distribute in and around Barnstaple a quantity of large posters containing the Declaration of Rights. This unfortunate distributor of revolutionary papers was apprehended, and there was discovered on his person another document containing the Devil's Walk, a Ballad, being a pungent, seditious satire on the powers that were, also by Mr. P. B. Shelley. Daniel was imprisoned for six calendar months for his offence, notwithstand-

ing his master's representations as to his innocence. The Town Clerk of Barnstaple, with praiseworthy zeal, communicated these facts to Lord Sidmouth, and added that Mr. Shelley had been observed floating boxes and bottles out to sea, in one of which there had been discovered a copy of the Declaration of Rights. How exquisitely Shelleyan! floating the germs of universal reform away to sea for the special benefit of mariners! Lord Sidmouth approved of what had been done, and suggested that "it would be proper to instruct some person to observe his future behaviour, and to transmit any information that may be obtained respecting him." This arrest of his servant, and espionage on himself, made Lymouth an unsafe residence, and Shelley had doubtless hurried off precipitately so as to baffle surveillance.

While at Lymouth Shelley had not only been active in disseminating his Republican principles, he had also boldly and eloquently championed the cause of human freedom against the oppression of unjust judges and persecuting laws. A London bookseller, named Eaton, had been sentenced to prison for publishing the third part of Paine's *Age of Reason*. Shelley's letter from Lymouth to Lord Ellenborough, the judge who presided at the trial, is one of the most eloquent and logical defences ever made of freedom of thought, and one of the most powerful vindications of outraged innocence.

Shelley's next residence was at Tanyrallt, in Carnarvonshire. Here he took as an additional inmate of his house a Miss Elizabeth Hitchener, a Republican and Deist, whom with misjudging haste he had invited to share the hospitality of his house. Shelley was always committing some act of rash generosity. The woman proved a tartar. She had originally come "for ever," but eternity in her society was soon too horrible to contemplate. Shelley, in a letter to Hogg, describes her in phrases too absolutely Swiftian for quotation, and ends by saying "what would Hell be, were such a woman in Heaven?" She was at length got rid of, and indemnified for probable loss. "A much more signal instance," writes Mr. Rossetti, "of his splendid generosity and public large-heartedness occurred about this time. An uncommonly high tide broke through the embankment of Mr. Madock's earth works, (*that gentleman, a neighbour, was reclaiming land from the sea*), to the great dismay and peril of the cottagers. Shelley went about personally soliciting subscriptions (a task which was likely to be especially unpleasant to him, as his letters speak of his neighbours as being in a high degree bigoted and prejudiced), and himself headed the list with £500—much more than a year's precarious income. He also hurried up to London early in November to push the subscription there, and had the satisfaction of saving the work." In fact Shelley's purse was ever open for the furtherance of every good cause, and the relief of unmerited suffering. He was perpetually devising schemes to benefit others, and lavish of time and means for the assistance of his friends. Godwin, his

future father-in-law, used frequently to go on his knees, dagger in hand, and threaten to stab himself if his dutiful son-in-law would not accept his bills. To Leigh Hunt he made the munificent gift of £1,400, to Mr. Peacock several sums. He was at the mercy of every distressed person around him. Mr. MacCarthy justly observes: "Of the 'trash' which was seldom allowed to remain long in the purse of the poet, he might well have said, alluding to almost any of his friends—

"'Twas mine, 'tis his, and has been slave to thousands.'"

On the night of the 26th of February an attempt was made to assassinate Shelley. Hearing a voice in one of the parlours, he got out of bed with his pistols, and saw a man, who fired on him. A struggle ensued, and the villain got away after vowing to kill Harriet and ravish Eliza. About three hours after he returned, and fired through the window curtains, the shot actually penetrating Shelley's night-shirt. Another struggle ensued, with sword and pistols, which was only terminated by the sudden entry of the servant, Daniel Hill, who had served his imprisonment and re-entered his master's service. The assassin made off again safely, and was not identified. Various explanations have been attempted. Mr. Browning thought it all a delusion: Shelley had been taking laudanum and imagined it all. Mr. Rosseti thinks that some gaol-bird may have accompanied Daniel Hill to Tanyrallt, and taken advantage of his gained knowledge of the premises to attempt a robbery. Mr. MacCarthy suggests that Miss Hitchener, smarting under disappointment and urged by hatred, may have been the instigator of the dastardly outrage. Shelley of course, had a theory of his own. Mr. Browning's laudanum theory seems irreconcilable with the testimony of Miss Westbrook, but either of the others is plausible enough. At any rate, Shelley moved off from the locality. After visiting Dublin and Killarney, they returned to London, where, on the 28th of June, Harriet gave birth to her first child, Ianthe Eliza.

In London, Shelley printed his *Queen Mab*. At first he intended to publish the poem, but eventually he limited himself to a private edition of 250 copies, for which he bespoke fine paper, thinking that though the aristocrats would not read it themselves, "it was probable their sons and daughters would." Shelley sent many copies to known writers, among the rest to Byron. The poem was soon pirated and purchasable. Richard Carlile circulated innumerable copies of it from his house in Fleet Street. Of the qualities of *Queen Mab* we refrain to comment until, after completing the biography, we come to deal with Shelley's entire works. Early in 1814 he published also a *Refutation of Deism*, in a dialogue between Eusebes and Theosophus; a bold extension of the logical method pursued by Butler in his *Analogy*. Theosophus fiercely attacks Christianity in the name of human reason, whereupon Eusebes

proceeds to show that the difficulties of Theism are no whit less than those attending the Christian faith. Finally he staggers, Theosophus, who declares his readiness to reject reason as a faithful guide, and to subscribe to the wildest and most monstrous creed, rather than yield up his fond belief in a Supreme Being.

We have now to approach a subject both painful and perplex, namely, the severance of Shelley and Harriet. The whole extant evidence is not yet in possession of the public: Mr. Garnett, Lady Shelley, and Mr. Forster affirm the existence of explanatory evidence yet unpublished. Every biographer is, therefore, necessarily hampered by lack of authentic material. However, we shall deal with the data at command, and place before our readers apparently indubitable facts.

Already we have called attention to Shelley's nobility of character, which shone through the circumstances of his rash marriage with Harriet. She had offered to become his mistress; both of them regarded the marriage bond with aversion; yet he made her his wife. How many faultlessly Christian young heirs of opulent baronets, asks Mr. Rossetti, would have acted like the Atheist Shelley? Unfortunately Harriet was unfitted to occupy the position of wife to such a man. She was beautiful and accomplished, but comparatively commonplace; probably above the general run of educated girls, but decidedly without those higher mental qualities necessary for companionship with her husband. As his powers matured Shelley discovered this to his cost. She was a noble animal, as he himself said; nothing more. Harriet made home also distasteful to her husband, by her complacent submission to the domestic tyranny of her sister, and disgusted him by handing over Ianthe to the tender mercies of a wet-nurse instead of nursing the child herself. Towards the end of 1813 their estrangement widened; she had yielded to the suggestions of interested persons, and importuned him to act in ways repugnant to his feelings and convictions, and conjugal quarrels ensued. Early in March, 1814, Shelley, in a letter to Hogg, pours out his state of mind as that of one utterly despondent and hopeless of possible relief. His acquaintance with Mary Godwin did not begin until some time between the 18th of April and the 8th of June. It is therefore clear that love for Mary was not the cause of Shelley's estrangement from Harriet. It is also equally clear that he did not forsake his wife to elope with a new love, for Mary Godwin lived under her father's roof forty days after his separation from Harriet before departing with him from London.

It appears that somewhere about the 17th of June the married life of Shelley and Harriet came to a close. That Shelley quitted home precipitately, and without sufficient explanation, seems also certain; but his frequent use of laudanum at that time to mitigate his sufferings from spasmodic attacks may be urged in extenuation. Certain it is that he did not neglect her material comfort. He ordered a settlement for her benefit, corresponded

with her during his stay on the continent, called on her on his return, and repeatedly took trouble to advantage her. At the same time it is not provable that Harriet consented to the parting; but she acquiesced, she made no protest. If her love for Shelley continued, we cannot but pity her. Nevertheless, we have no right to blame Shelley. Two people who never should have met parted; and it was a step calculated to be mutually advantageous.

Mary Godwin was then in her seventeenth year, rather short, with brownish-grey eyes, a great forehead, and striking features; possessing also "extraordinary powers of heart as well as head." Her sexual theories were identical with Shelley's, and after he had separated from his wife there seemed to her no moral bar against their union. "To her," writes Lady Shelley, "as they met one eventful day in St. Pancras churchyard, by her mother's grave, Bysshe, in burning words, poured forth the tale of his wild past—how he had suffered, how he had been misled, and how, if supported by her love, he hoped in future years to enrol his name with the wise and good who had done battle for their fellow men, and been true through all adverse storms to the cause of humanity. Unhesitatingly she placed her hand in his, and linked her fortune with his own." On the 28th of July they left England together.

Different persons will judge of these events according to their various ethical standards; but there is nothing in them inconsistent with the principles deliberately adopted and professed by the three persons directly concerned. Shelley connected himself with Mary, and Harriet, after the separation, connected herself with another protector.

(To be continued.)

# HEROES AND MARTYRS

OF

## FREETHOUGHT.

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### 12.—PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY.—(*Concluded.*)

SHELLEY left England with Mary Godwin, who was accompanied also by a friend, Miss Clairmont, on the 28th of July. Crossing from Dover to Calais in a small boat they encountered a furious and perilous thunder-storm, through which with difficulty they succeeded in reaching the French coast. After remaining a week in Paris they proceeded southwards. The country everywhere retained abundant traces of the devastation of Cossacks and other invaders upon lately re-Bourbonised France. Two leagues from Neufchâtel the Alps loomed in sight, the immensity and grandeur of which did not fail to impress most powerfully the imagination of the travellers. From Brunnen, where they rested, could be perceived at a distance, on the shores of Lake Uri, the chapel of Tell. High mountains encompassed them, darkening the waters, and embosomed the little village where the Swiss patriot is said to have matured the conspiracy which overthrew the tyrant of his country. The next day a furious south wind ploughed up the waters of the lake and afforded a spectacle tremendous and sublime. Towards evening the fierce elemental conflict subsided, and Shelley and Mary walked on the banks and sat on the rude pier, where the former read aloud the account of the Siege of Jerusalem from Tacitus. Shelley commenced a romance, *The Assassins*, of which, however, only four chapters were completed, to the nowise irreparable loss of his admirers. Want of money soon dictated a return to England, and water conveyance was chosen as most economical. While voyaging along the Reuss to Loffenberg occasion arose for the poet to display his physical courage, which was no whit less eminent than his moral fortitude. Landing for refreshments in the middle of the day, they found, on returning, that their former seats were occupied. They took others, when the original possessors angrily, and almost with violence, insisted upon their leaving them. Their brutal rudeness to strangers unacquainted with their language, provoked Shelley to knock one of the fore-

most of them down. The blow was not returned, but angry vociferations were continued until the boatmen interfered and provided them with fresh seats. Returning by Basle, Mayence, Cologne, Cleves, and Rotterdam, the travellers landed at Gravesend, after a rough passage, on the 13th of September.

Sir Bysshe Shelley died on Jan. 6, 1815, and Percy now became next heir to the baronetcy and the entailed estate. By arrangement with Sir Timothy, Shelley secured for himself a clear income of £1,000 a year, a portion of which was immediately set aside for Harriet's use. Henceforth the poet was placed beyond absolute want; but his lavish, and sometimes quite unjustifiable generosity, which would have played havoc with a brilliant fortune, sometimes reduced him to distressful impecuniosity. In the winter of 1814-15 Shelley walked a London hospital, partly because he had an idea of studying medicine professionally, but chiefly in order to acquire some knowledge of surgery, which might enable him to be of service to the poor; and this notwithstanding the delicate and precarious state of his own health. A tour along the South Coast of Devonshire was made in the summer; and on returning a house was rented at Bishopgate Heath, near Windsor Forest. At the end of August, Shelley and Mary, with two other friends, went in a wherry to the source of the Thames, beyond Lechlade, in Gloucestershire. The beautiful Lines in Lechlade Churchyard were the result; in which we begin to perceive the ripening of poetical power under genial influences of natural beauty and love. The fourth verse, "The dead are sleeping in their sepulchres," has a strong foretaste of oncoming maturity. In the *Alastor*, written soon after the Lechlade excursion, we have at last, as Mr. Rossetti says, the genuine, the immortal Shelley. The morning mists are instantly dispelled before the sudden fiery dawn; the sun rises ardent in presage of its fervent luminous noon.

In May, 1816, Shelley and Mary, with their infant son William, again went abroad. Their second continental trip was more prolonged and interesting than the first. Just before their departure a married lady of fashion, young, handsome, rich, and nobly connected, called upon him, and avowed that the author of *Queen Mab* was her ideal of everything exalted in man, and that she had come to be the partner of his life; but her generous offer had, of course, to be declined. This story was narrated subsequently by Shelley himself to Byron and Medwin; by the former it was disbelieved, but the latter deemed it worth preserving. It may have been one of Shelley's hallucinations, but it involves no great stretch of probability. An English lady had almost a century previous paid a similar compliment to the sentimental and witty *Crébillon*.

At Sécheron, near Geneva, Shelley met Byron for the first time, on the 27th of May. Here they found themselves in daily and intimate intercourse. These eminent men naturally formed an exalted opinion of each other's poetical merits; but while

Shelley, certainly far the greater poet of the two, expressed his estimate with characteristic frankness and self-depreciation, Byron made but tardy and reluctant admission of his rival's powers. Evidently, however, he did appreciate Shelley's splendid gifts and noble performance, for on one occasion he remarked "If people only appreciated Shelley, where should I be?" Byron bears testimony to his friend's moral excellence also. "He is," said he, "to my knowledge, the least selfish and the mildest of men—a man who has made more sacrifices of his fortune and feelings for others than any I ever heard of." And again: "You should have known Shelley to feel how much I must regret him. He was the most gentle, the most amiable and least worldly-minded person I ever met; full of delicacy, disinterested beyond all other men, and possessing a degree of genius joined to simplicity as rare as it is admirable. He had formed to himself a *beau idéal* of all that is fine, high-minded, and noble, and he acted up to this ideal even to the very letter." Byron also declared that Shelley was the only companionable man under thirty years of age whom he knew.

Byron and Shelley together undertook a voyage round the Lake, which lasted nine days. They visited Meillerie, Clarens, and other places immortalised by the genius of Rousseau, whose *Nouvelle Heloise* Shelley now read for the first time; also the towers and dungeons of the Castle of Chillon, and the decayed summer house at Lausanne in which Gibbon finished his magnificent *History*. Being overtaken in a tempest, the voyagers narrowly escaped drowning; the boat was nearly upset through the mismanagement of one of the boatmen, and Shelley, who notwithstanding his love of aquatic adventures, somehow never could be taught to swim, refused assistance and resolved to go down. This near prospect of death he describes as "a mixture of sensations, among which terror entered though but subordinately;" he experienced great sense of humiliation from reflecting that his companion might have risked his own life to preserve his. The lake trip was followed by a land trip with Mary and Miss Clairmont. Profoundly was the poet's imagination excited by the spectacle of those towering Alps, with their pinnacles of snow shooting into the bright blue sky; and especially by the sight of the lofty king of mountains, Mont Blanc, and its great ravine clothed with gigantic pines, through which the untameable Arve rolled and roared. At the *Chatreuse* at Montanvert, an album was kept for visitors, wherein Shelley discovered that his predecessor had, to quote Mr. Swinburne, given "vent to an outbreak of overflowing foolery, flagrant and fervid with the godly grease and rancid religion of a conventicle; some folly about the Alps, God, glory, beneficence, witness of nature to this or that divine thing or person, and such-like matter." The author of *Queen Mab* signed his name with an appendage of Greek verse, which being translated means, "I am a Philanthropist, Democrat, and Atheist." Some would-be

wag added in Greek, the word "fool," and, says Mr. Swinburne, the other remarks on Shelley's entry added by Christian pilgrims who came after are, in the phrase of the archetypal Pecksniff, "very soothing." After returning to his Genevese villa, and spending some time with Byron and Monk Lewis, Shelley set off once more for London, where he arrived on the 7th of September.

While staying at Bath Shelley was startled by the information that Harriet had, on the 10th of September, drowned herself in the Serpentine. The poor girl's tragic end came amidst abasement and despair; the bright, golden bridal days had become a portion of the dead and buried Past, and, without guide or restraint, the frail vessel had drifted into shoreless waters unlit by heaven. Her dreadful death was a keen and abiding affliction to Shelley; and cast a measure of gloom over his whole future life. That he himself was nowise responsible for the dire event we are perfectly assured. As a young unfledged eaglet, he had paired with a tender dove, but it was inevitable that the time should come when the kingly bird would assert its native greatness, soar aloft to mountainous heights and kindle its eyes at the full mid-day beam. Neither eaglet nor dove was to blame. Harriet, after her separation from Shelley, had comported herself so as to forfeit her claim to return to her husband, even in the eye of the law. Mr. Thornton Hunt avers that, unknown to Shelley, her father, whose faculties were failing, had driven her from the paternal roof; that she had been deserted by a man in a very humble grade of life, and it was in consequence of this desertion that she killed herself. Also it is manifest that she had suicidal proclivities; often, says Hogg, she discoursed of her purpose of killing herself, some day or other, and at great length, in a calm, resolute manner. Even in 1813 she "had not renounced her eternal purpose of suicide, and she still discoursed of some scheme of self-destruction as coolly as another lady would arrange a visit to an exhibition or a theatre." Mr. Garnett adverts to a series of letters written by Shelley at the time, some of the most beautiful and characteristic that ever proceeded from his pen, at present in the possession of his family, which afford the most unequivocal testimony of his grief and horror being unmingled with any self-reproach. And Lady Shelley, in the Memorials, asserts the existence of papers written by Shelley's own hand which make the story of his life complete, and incontestibly prove that there was no immediate connection whatever between Harriet's tragic end and any conduct on the part of her husband. For ourselves our faith in Shelley is full and implicit; we believe him to have been altogether incapable of meanness or of cruelty to any sentient being; but we decidedly prefer knowledge to faith, and are compelled to protest against the reservation of extant proof of his perfect and stainless honour. Shelley's name and fame are a national, nay, cosmopolitan, possession; he has passed

through mortality to immortality ; and every scrap of evidence as to his rectitude rightfully belongs to the human race who are his heirs. Considering that more than fifty years have elapsed since Shelley's death, and nearly sixty years since the oblivious waters closed over the unfortunate partner of his early adolescent years, the withholding of necessary biographical matter seems a foolish disrespect to his sacred memory.

On the 30th of December, 1816, Shelley legitimatised his union with his dearly-beloved Mary ; their sexual views had undergone no change, but they were probably anxious to shield their offspring from the troubles that might arise from legal deficiency. They now entered upon their residence at Marlow, a large house with extensive gardens and numerous well-furnished rooms, where Shelley kept open house for his friends, and lived like a country gentleman. Leigh Hunt thus describes the poet's daily routine of life at Marlow : " He rose early in the morning, walked and read before breakfast, took that meal sparingly, wrote and studied the greater part of the morning, walked and read again, dined on vegetables (for he took neither meat nor wine), conversed with his friends (to whom his house was ever open), again walked out, and usually finished with reading to his wife till ten o'clock, when he went to bed. This was his daily existence. His book was generally Homer, or one of the Greek tragedians, or the Bible, in which last he took a great, though peculiar and often admiring interest." Yet slanderous and malicious enemies asserted that all the while he was keeping a scraglio at Marlow, and wallowing in the grossest sensualities ; even adultery and incest were adverted to as his habitual practices. But facts speak more eloquently than abuse. Shelley's splendid generosity and unflagging benevolence were manifested here with more than usual conspicuousness. Out of his income he was allowing £100 a year to a needy man of letters, and his liberality to Leigh Hunt was such that the latter confesses " his last sixpence was ever at my service, had I chosen to share it." His charity to the poor of the neighbourhood was exemplary ; he inquired personally into the circumstances of his petitioners, visited the sick in their beds, and kept a regular list of industrious poor, whom he assisted with small sums to make up their accounts. In attending some of the poor in their cottages, reckless of infection, he caught a bad attack of ophthalmia, of which malady he had two subsequent relapses. Of his peculiar intensity of feeling in reference to grave public questions Hunt narrates the following comical illustration. Visiting his friend at Hampstead one day after an unusual absence, Shelley grasped his hand fervently in both his own, and regarded him very earnestly with a deep, though not melancholy interest in his face. They sat silently together before the fire for some time when the poet raised his head and asked seriously what was " the amount of the national debt."

But the crowning anecdote is yet to come. One night at

Hampstead, near Hunt's house, Shelley discovered a poor woman lying near the top of the hill in fits; snow lay thick upon the ground and she bade fair to perish without relief. Shelley knocked at the first houses he reached, but the occupiers unanimously refused to admit the woman, although all of them probably were orthodox Christians, and mighty admirers of the parable about the poor Samaritan. At last Shelley saw a carriage drive up to a house at a little distance, he hastened to accost the elderly gentleman issuing from it, and assumed his most winning address. The smug respectability treated the affair as an imposition, flatly refused even to go and verify the story, and pronounced his petitioner's conduct most extraordinary. "Sir," cried Shelley, "I am sorry to say that *your* conduct is *not* extraordinary; and if my own seems to amaze you, I will tell you something which may amaze you a little more, and I hope will frighten you. It is such men as you who madden the spirits and the patience of the poor and wretched; and if ever a convulsion comes in this country (which is very probable), recollect what I tell you: you will have your house, that you refuse to put the miserable woman into, burnt over your head." "God bless me, sir! dear me sir!" exclaimed the poor frightened man, and fluttered into his mansion. Shelley got the poor woman after all to Hunt's house, and a doctor's services were procured just in time to save her life. The next morning rumour gave out that Mr. Shelley, no Christian, had brought a female into the house "no better than she should be." In these latter days, when controversial divines emphatically declare that Atheism springs from moral corruption, it may be profitable to contemplate the spectacle of a condemned Atheist wandering about amidst snow and wind on a dark bitter night, and vainly soliciting respectable Christians to practise ever so little of the charity which they claim to possess in such abundance.

Shelley had not yet lost all hope of politically reforming the nation. While residing at Marlow he had published two pamphlets under the pseudonym of The Hermit of Marlow. The first was entitled *A Proposal for putting Reform to the Vote throughout the Kingdom*; and the author proposed that the country should be divided into three hundred districts, and every inhabitant of each personally canvassed as to his views on reform, so as to learn whether the people really desired it; towards the expenses of which scheme the proposer himself offered to subscribe £100. The author disclaimed immediate Republican desires, and suggested the propriety of extending the suffrage to "all who register their names as paying a certain small sum in *direct taxes*," nevertheless, he expressed a conviction that mankind would, after passing through many gradations of improvement, eventually learn to disregard the monarchical and aristocratic symbols of its childhood. The second pamphlet was entitled *We Pity the Plumage, but Forget the Dying Bird*;

an Address to the People on the Death of the Princess Charlotte. Shelley's biographers have wondered greatly at this singular title, and speculated sagely as to its origin. They will find the phrase in the opening of Paine's Rights of Man, a work which Shelley much admired, where it is beautifully employed to stigmatise Burke's insane drivellings over the woes of King Louis and Marie Antoinette, and the aristocratic rabble at their royal heels, while utterly regardless of the terrible woes of the people whom these lamented tyrants misruled and plundered. It was while residing at Marlow also that Shelley wrote Laon and Cynthia, a poem which exhibits a distinct advance in general power both of conception and presentation. After a few copies were sold, the characteristic audacities of the poem, whose main incident was conjugal love between a sister and brother, were pruned away, and the title transformed into the Revolt of Islam ; by which appellation it is now denoted.

After Harriet's death Shelley claimed his children ; while their mother lived she was their proper guardian, but now the duty of superintending their education rightfully devolved upon him. Mr. Westbrook, however, sturdily resisted the claim, and commenced a Chancery suit to determine who was their lawful custodian. He filed a petition, alleging in it that Shelley had deserted his wife, was in opinion an Atheist, and intended to bring up his children in accordance with his own views, and held most condemnable ideas as to the relation of the sexes. Lord Chancellor Eldon decided that Shelley, the Atheist, was too immoral to be trusted with his own children, who were accordingly transferred to the gracious care of the retired hotel-keeper, to be educated according to his respectable, commonplace notions and tastes ; and the father was condemned to set apart £200 a-year for the especial purpose of providing for the due performance of the judge's order. This atrocious sentence deeply affected Shelley, so much so that he never afterwards dared to trust himself with mentioning the names of the children of whom he was thus legally bereaved. His poetical epistle to Lord Eldon shows how profoundly, even to the utmost depths, his nature was stirred, and how passionate was his indignation ; and subsequently in *The Masque of Anarchy* he winged another quivering shaft of verse against the wretched old Tory Chancellor. Fearing that the son of his second marriage might also be wrested from him, Shelley contemplated instant departure from England ; as is evident from the verses addressed to his infant William. It was in those verses that Shelley gave utterance to the oft-quoted prophecy of destruction to Kingcraft and Priestcraft.

Fear not the tyrants will rule for ever,  
Or the priests of the evil faith ;  
They stand on the brink of that raging river,  
Whose waves they have tainted with death.

It is fed from the depth of a thousand dells,  
 Around them it foams and rages and swells ;  
 And their swords and their sceptres I floating see,  
 Like wrecks, on the surge of eternity.

In the spring of 1818 Shelley quitted England never to return ; the brief remainder of his life was spent amidst the natural beauties and glorious art-treasures of Italy. Passing through Milan, he visited the Lake of Como, then went on to Pisa and thence to Leghorn and the Bagni di Lucca. Here he finished *Rosalind and Helen*, a beautiful though not great poem, which had been begun at Marlow, and made an abridged and not rigidly correct, but exquisitely beautiful, translation of Plato's *Symposium* ; a piece of prose unsurpassed by anything of its kind extant, and revealing new possibilities of our English tongue. Shelley indeed possessed an extraordinary faculty for rendering extraneous poetry into his native language ; and it may be confidently averred that no other man was capable of such a consummate translation as that of the exquisitely delicious *Hymn to Mercury*. In August, Shelley went to Venice, where he spent a few weeks with Lord Byron. His visit there produced one imperishable result, the poem of *Julian and Maddalo*, which Mr. Rossetti thinks "was the abolition of the anarch's power over Shelley : as he set the finishing hand to that work, he ceased to be a subject of Time, and became a citizen of Eternity." Shelley's masterpieces followed each other in rapid succession—*Prometheus Unbound*, *The Cenci*, *The Witch of Atlas*, *Peter Bell*, *Œdipus Tyrannus*, *Epipsychidion*, *Adonais*, and *Hellas* ; with an astonishing quantity of subordinate poems. It seemed as if his fervid genius was realising its utmost capabilities, and rapidly expending its wondrous energies, in anticipation of approaching fate. "If I die to-morrow," said Shelley, just before his untimely death, "I have lived to be older than my father : I am ninety years of age."

Impossible will it be for us to give a detailed record of the poet's life in Italy ; only a few salient features can be noted. Most of the time was spent in company with Byron, Hunt, the Gisbornes, the Williamses, and later with noble Trelawny and other friends. Ever anxious to promote the welfare of mankind, he endeavoured to introduce steam navigation into the Gulf of Lyons. The steamboat projected to ply between Marscilles and Leghorn was to be constructed by Mr. Reveley, an English engineer ; Shelley to find nearly all the money, and yet receive no profit. In this scheme he was deeply interested ; but after he had expended much time and money on its promotion, it had to be relinquished as a failure. Visiting Rome he beheld the wrecks of what a great nation once dedicated to the abstractions of the mind, the relics of "those who cannot die, and who survive the puny generations which inhabit and pass over the

spot which they have made sacred to eternity." There and at Florence he studied the great works of art, paintings and sculptures, modern and antique, many beautiful descriptions of which are preserved in his delightful Letters from Italy. The death of poor Keats caused him much grief, and in the splendid monody, the *Adonais*, Shelley sang the glories and nobilities of his friend, and overwhelmed with scorn the miserable critics who were deemed to have hastened his death. Hearing that a man had been condemned to be burned to death at Lucca for an act of sacrilege—the scattering of the eucharistic wafers off an altar Shelley forthwith proposed to Byron and Medwin that they and himself should arm and rescue the man at all costs on his coming forth for execution. He also communicated with Lord Guildford, the English minister at Florence, and prepared a general memorial to the Grand Duke. Ultimately the poor wretch's sentence was commuted to labour at the galleys. Of his last residence near Lerici Mr. Rossetti says, "Shelley's constant habits of benevolence did not abate in this wild and half-inhabited region: wherever there was sickness in a house within his range, there would he be found, nursing and advising." With these brief indications of characteristic nobility and benevolence we hasten on to the sad end.

Shelley's residence during the last three months of his life was the *Villa Magni*, situated in a wild spot in the Bay of Spezzia, on the very border of the sea, and under the shadow of a steep hill which rose behind it. Frequent squalls churned up the foam from the blue waters of the tideless bay, and sometimes the *sirocco* raged along, bringing a wide dimness with it. But often the sunshine broke over the scene, and the precipitous shores, dark foliage, and wavering ocean lay calm beneath the lustrous glory of an Italian sky. The natives of this wild spot were wilder still, and frequently passed Bacchanalian nights upon the great beach. Early in May a small schooner yacht, christened *Don Juan*, arrived in the bay from Genoa, and during the next two months Shelley's delight was perfect. In this swift boat he and Williams passed a great portion of their time, and explored a good deal of the coast of Italy. Shelley always had writing materials on board, and, says Lady Shelley, "much of the *Triumph of Life* was composed as the poet glided down the purple seas of Southern Europe, within sight of noble objects of natural scenery, made trebly glorious by the crowding memories of a splendid history and the golden halo of poetical associations." Sometimes, too, when the sea was placid under moonlight, he rowed alone in his little shallop to the rocky caves, and sat weaving his wild verses to the measured beat of the processional waves; here, as elsewhere, gratifying his great love for the sea, which was to be his bed of death, as it had been his joy of life.

On the 1st of July Shelley started with Williams for Leghorn, where he met Leigh Hunt, whom he accompanied to Pisa. His

appearance at that time evinced a considerable change for the better ; his chest had expanded to fuller girth, his voice was stronger, and his general bearing more manly. His hair, although tinged with grey, as it had been for years, was still abundant ; and neither care nor thought had written a single wrinkle on the beautiful face or brow. According to Hunt, he was "less hopeful than of old ;" but he assented warmly to an opinion expressed by his friend in the Cathedral of Pisa, while the organ was playing, that a truly divine religion might yet be established, if charity were really made the principle of it, instead of faith. At Pisa Shelley saw Byron for the last time, and parted from him in no very friendly mood, in consequence of his lordship's shiftiness in relation to the projected *Liberal* magazine. On Monday, the 8th, Shelley and Williams set sail from Leghorn for Lerici, taking with them the sailor lad, Charles Vivian. Trelawny, who was in charge of Byron's yacht, the "Bolivar," bade them adieu, and their progress over the waves was watched by Captain Roberts from the top of Leghorn light-house.

The day was terribly hot, and dense thunder clouds were gathering up from the south-west ; a sea fog came up, and wrapped the boat from sight. The sea, says Trelawny, "was of the colour of, and looked as solid and smooth as, a sheet of lead, and covered with an oily scum. Gusts of wind swept over without ruffling it ; and big drops of rain fell on its surface, rebounding as if they could not penetrate it. There was a commotion in the air, made up of many threatening sounds coming upon us from the sea." Presently the storm burst overhead in thunder, wind, and rain ; it raged furiously for twenty minutes, and then the horizon cleared. Trelawny looked to seaward anxiously, in the hope of descrying Shelley's boat among the many small craft scattered about. No trace of her was to be seen ; she had gone down in the storm, and probably had been run into by a felucca from behind.

A fortnight afterwards two corpses were found, and identified as those of Shelley and Williams ; the latter was in a piteous state, and of the former "the face and hands, and parts of the body not protected by the dress, were fleshless." In Shelley's pockets were a copy of Sophocles, and another of Keat's last book, doubled back at the Eve of St. Agnes, as if hastily thrust away when the squall burst on the devoted boat. The skeleton of the lad, Charles Vivian, was discovered three weeks later. Trelawny now proved the depth and sincerity of his friendship. To the bereaved widows he was tender as a woman, and indefatigable in completing the arrangements for cremating the bodies of his dead friends. Corpses thus cast ashore were, by the Tuscan law, ordered to be burned as a precaution against plague ; and Trelawny obtained permission to superintend the process, and carry it out in a manner consonant to the feelings of the survivors. This process was executed with the body of

Williams on the 15th of August ; on the 16th with Shelley's. A furnace was provided by Trelawny of strong sheet-iron, with iron bars ; into this the relics were placed ; frankincense, salt, wine, and oil were thrown on the pyre, and a light was set to the materials. Byron left before the conclusion of the rites, finding his fortitude unequal to the occasion ; Leigh Hunt witnessed the ceremony from his lordship's carriage ; the others stood around the pyre. The cruel sea lay before them, broad, bright, and calm, under the fervid midday sun ; behind rose the white marble peaks of the Apennines. The flame arose, golden and towering, and the corpse soon decomposed. The only portions that were not consumed were some fragments of bones, the jaw and the skull, with the heart, which surprised the spectators by remaining entire. Trelawny snatched this relic from the fiery furnace, and in doing so severely burned his own hand. The ashes were coffered, and soon after buried in the *new* Protestant Cemetery at Rome, close by the *old* cemetery where William Shelley and Keats were interred—a beautiful open space, covered in summer with violets and daisies, of which Shelley himself had said : “ It might make one in love with death to think that one should be buried in so sweet a place.” Around the grave Trelawny planted six young cypresses and four laurels ; and on the tomb-stone there was inscribed a Latin epitaph by Leigh Hunt, to which Trelawny added three lines from Shakspeare's *Tempest*, one of Shelley's favourite plays. The complete inscription runs exactly as follows :—

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

cor cordium

Natus IV Aug. MDCCXCII

Obit VIII Jul. MDCCCXXII

“ Nothing of him that doth fade  
But doth suffer a sea-change  
Into something rich and strange.”

And there at Rome, shadowed by cypress and laurel, covered with sweet flowers, and surrounded by the crumbling ruins of a dead empire, rests the heart of hearts.

Mary Shelley, left a widow at the early age of twenty-four, was prostrated by the terrible blow. The scenes of such ineffable bliss in companionship with her beloved husband becoming unbearable, she returned to England in the autumn of 1823, and died in February, 1851. Her surviving son, the present baronet, Sir Percy Florence Shelley, succeeded to the baronetcy and the estate on the death of Sir Timothy.

#### SHELLEY'S OPINIONS.

The definite opinions of Shelley on the most tremendous of all questions, the Existence of God and the Immortality of the Soul, are not easily reached ; partly because, upon these questions, dogmatic precision of utterance was alien to his maturer

mind, and partly because it is difficult to resolve into exact logical formulæ the spiritual or speculative essence of a great poem. Nevertheless, we can apprehend with some measure of exactitude the central, permanent element of the poet's thought ; that element which, if reduced to rigid propositions, he might be averse from subscribing, but which, nevertheless, really controls and shapes his whole life and utterance, and constitutes, as it were, his mental individuality. Shelley's early Atheism was unmistakably clear and precise ; he had graduated in the school of French eighteenth-century Materialism, and in the notes to *Queen Mab*, as well as in the poem itself, came out as a full-pledged positive Atheist. He makes the Fairy in *Queen Mab* say 'There is no God,' and seems fully satisfied with that as a logical deduction from philosophical premisses demonstrated by experience. But this dogmatism vanished as his mind matured. Towards the beginning of 1812 he read Berkeley's writings, at the instance of Southey ; and although the Idealism of that subtle and profound metaphysician did not at once dislodge the crass materialism which occupied his mind, it took root within him and gradually extruded its precursor. Being more of an Immaterialist than a Materialist, Mr. Rossetti infers that he could not have been an Atheist, for the Berkeleyan argument pre-supposes a Deity. This, however, seems a misconception. Berkeley's argument not only does not pre-suppose a Deity, it also is incapable of reaching to an actual, demonstrable God ; for once admitting that it is unphilosophical to predicate an external matter as the cause of our sensations, it becomes also unphilosophical to predicate an external spirit as their cause. Absolute Idealism disables us from ever getting outside ourselves, and terminates in pure Phenomenalism. God becomes then a mere hypothesis, incapable alike of proof or disproof. Shelley, therefore, while a Berkeleyan Idealist, might also have been a suspensive, although not a dogmatic Atheist. We are then necessarily thrown back upon his writings and conversations.

Shelley's conversations are not numerous recorded. To Trelawny he once said : "My mind is at peace respecting nothing so much as the constitution and mysteries of the great system of things." And again : "With regard to the great question, the System of the Universe, I have no curiosity on the subject. I am content to see no farther into futurity than Plato and Bacon. My mind is tranquil : I have no fears and some hopes. In our present gross material state, our faculties are clouded : when Death removes our clay coverings the mystery will be solved." Before we can decide upon what importance should be attributed to these sayings we should know in what *mood* Shelley was when he uttered them ; that question is of supreme moment in regard to such a mind as his, so emotional and so imaginative. Trelawny asked, "Do you believe in the immortality of the

spirit?" Shelley replied, "Certainly not: how can I? We know nothing; we have no evidence." The words quoted by Mr. Rossetti from the letter dated June 29th, 1822, seem to us susceptible of quite another interpretation than that which he puts upon them. The citations from Shelley's poems, adduced by Mr. Rossetti, are by no means confirmatory of the opinion that he was a Pantheist—if any one can define that compromising term. We are not at liberty to take a convenient and striking poetical symbol, and interpret it as a literal expression of the poet's innermost thought; that is what Blake called seeing *with* not *through* the eye. By such a method of interpretation any great imaginative mind may be proved to have entertained a vast variety of irreconcilable ideas. Isolated passages, from a poet like Shelley, cannot be admitted as demonstrative of his convictions; we must be guided rather by the general spirit of his writings. Suppose we cite parallel cases. Mr. Swinburne of our living poets is most akin to Shelley, both in religious and social conceptions and in lyrical power. Mr. Swinburne concludes his fine verses to Walt Whitman with these words—

The earth-soul Freedom, that only  
Lives, and that only is God.

Yet he concludes the penultimate verse of his magnificent *Mater Triumphalis* thus:—

That supreme song which shook the channelled waters  
And called thee skyward as God calls the sun.

This last metaphor is perfect and sublime: but charge upon Mr. Swinburne the onus of a literal interpretation, and it becomes an absolute contradiction to the previous lines. From the visionary William Blake a dozen of such instances might easily be cited.

"Mind cannot create, it can only perceive," wrote Shelley to Leigh Hunt; and in the *Essay on Life* he wrote, "It is infinitely improbable that the cause of mind, that is, of existence, is similar to mind." These passages, taken together, completely negative an Intelligent First Cause; and besides that there is no God worth naming. In the *Essay on Christianity* the following passage occurs: "That those who are pure in heart shall see God, and that virtue is its own reward, may be considered as equivalent propositions. The former of these propositions is a metaphorical repetition of the latter." Surely this is sufficiently explicit. It appears then that Shelley, to the last, held no belief in a personal God, or in the immortality of the soul; neither did he dogmatically assert the negative of those beliefs. Mr. Browning's notion that Shelley was gradually advancing towards that state of spiritual perfection termed Christianity, seems utterly unwarrantable and quite unworthy a great genius of Mr. Browning's quality.

Shelley in politics was a democratic Republican, a thorough hater of tyranny, whether of priest or king, and lover of liberty in every possible form. His sexual views were also advanced and pronounced. In the *Epipsychidion*, addressed to the beautiful, gifted, and unfortunate Emilia Viviani, he thus declares himself :—

I never was attached to that great sect  
Whose doctrine is that each one should select  
Out of the crowd a mistress or a friend,  
And all the rest, though fair and wise, commend  
To cold oblivion.

Nevertheless it must be distinctly understood that Shelley considered his union with Mary sacred, consecrated by the beatitude of mutual love ; and neither was himself ever induced to violate that bond, nor would have permitted any violation of its obligations by his partner.

#### SHELLEY'S POEMS.

Shelley's chief poetical characteristics were a teeming and inexhaustible opulence of imagination, and an unsurpassed, even if ever equalled, lyrical power. Thought he possessed abundantly enough, but intellectual strength was not his supreme gift. His imagination plays around every mental object with lightning rapidity, transfuses it with emotional fervour, and makes of the whole a compound not to be apprehended by the mere intellectual eye, but to be comprehended by the strenuous and simultaneous exertion of every mental and spiritual faculty. Combined with this power existed the highest lyrical endowment, which enabled him to translate into mellifluous verse alike the simplest and the most exalted things of sense or spirit. His melody is not that of the professional versifier, a mere reverberation of senseless vacuity, but a subtle music of words in complete unison with the wedded harmony of emotion and thought.

By his poem of *Queen Mab* Shelley is chiefly known to Freethinkers, who are too prone to admire him for incidental, instead of essential, qualities. It is comparatively a jejune performance, although full of promise ; and while containing many majestic and sonorous lines of blank verse, and some ideal beauty, it cannot be ranked as a masterpiece. Being written at the early age of eighteen, it necessarily contains many crudities both of thought and expression. Shelley himself thought lightly of it in after years, and sought to restrain the sale of it as an immature production.

The great poems written after *Alastor* range higher and higher until they reach the sublimity of *Prometheus Unbound*, Shelley's masterpiece. Mr. Rossetti's brief exposition of the peculiar merits of this magnificent poem is so fine a specimen of his critical insight and literary style that we give it in prefer-

ence to any other. "There is, I suppose, no poem comparable in the fair sense of that word, to the Prometheus Unbound. The immense scale and boundless scope of the conception; the marble majesty and extra-mundane passions of the personages; the sublimity of ethical aspiration; the radiance of ideal and poetic beauty which saturates every phase of the subject, and almost (as it were) wraps it from sight at times, and transforms it out of sense into spirit; the rolling river of great sound and lyrical rapture; form a combination not to be matched elsewhere, and scarcely to encounter competition. There is another source of greatness in this poem neither to be foolishly lauded nor (still less) undervalued. It is this: that Prometheus Unbound, however remote the foundation of its subject-matter, and unactual its executive treatment, does in reality express the most modern of conceptions—the utmost reach of speculation of a mind which burst up all crusts of custom and prescription like a volcano, and imaged forth a future wherein man should be indeed the autocrat, and renovated renovator of his planet. That it is, I apprehend, which places Prometheus clearly, instead of disputably, at the summit of all latter poetry: the fact that it embodies, in forms of truly ecstatic beauty, the dominant passion of the dominant intellects of the age, and especially of one of the extremest and highest among them all, the author himself. It is the ideal poem of perpetual and triumphant progression—the Atlantis of Man Emancipated."

Next to the Prometheus the Cenci should rank for maturity and general power. It is indisputably the greatest dramatic poem produced in England since the Shaksperian age, and proves that Shelley could restrain his exuberant flow of fancy in deference to the strict requirements of art. The figure of Cenci is not so colossal as that of the incestuous father in Massenger's Unnatural Combat, but the Beatrice is an exquisite creation, instinct with life, and consummately beautiful. For lyrical excellence perhaps the grand and resonant choruses of Hellas stand as high as any other part of Shelley's work. The Adonais, that noble monody on the death of Keats, is one of Shelley's finest pieces, perfect in conception and execution; nothing similar can be compared with it except perhaps Walt Whitman's sonorous and majestic Funeral Hymn of President Lincoln. The Epipsychidion and the Witch of Atlas rank together as eminently characteristic poems, overflowing with spiritual and sensuous beauty. The Alastor and Julian and Maddalo deserve especial study as poems of biographical significance, independent of their melodious versification and pure pathos. Byron was the original Maddalo of the latter poem. Peter Bell the Third exhibits considerable power, and contains a good many pungent lines, but is not a *chef d'œuvre*. Shelley moved awkwardly in satire: he lacked the gall and cynicism, and perhaps the racy animal relish for such work, all of which Byron abundantly possessed.

Besides these great works Shelley composed a multitude of minor poems sufficient to furnish forth a goodly number of poetical reputations. Many of them are perfect, and bear upon them Shelley's unmistakable mark; for instance, the Hymn to Intellectual Beauty, the Mont Blanc, the Ode to a Skylark, the fragmentary but amazing Triumph of Life, the Lines written among the Euganean Hills, and the wonderful Ode to the West Wind, that quintessence of imaginative beauty and mysterious rapture of spiritual exaltation.

Here we must leave the divine poet, "beyond all others beloved." Faithfully we have striven to do justice to our task according to the measure of our possibilities; but we experience trepidation at the close, lest peradventure we have committed sin like unto that of Uzzah, who placed sacrilegious hands upon the hallowed ark.

The reader may consult:—

- Shelley's Poetical Works; edited, with a Prefatory Memoir, by W. M. Rossetti. 2 vols. (This work contains the best memoir and the best text of the poems.)
- Essays, Letters from Abroad, Translations and Fragments; edited by Mrs. Shelley.
- Hogg's Life of Shelley. 2 vols.
- Shelley Memorials; edited by Lady Shelley. Third edition, 1875.
- Trelawny's Recollections of the Last Days of Shelley and Byron.
- Medwin's Life of Shelley. 2 vols.
- Peacock, T. L.; articles in *Fraser's Magazine* in 1858 and 1860.
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- Thornton; Article in *Atlantic Monthly* for February, 1863.
- Garnett's Relics of Shelley.
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- Shelley's Prose Pieces. Chatto and Windus.

THE END OF VOLUME THE FIRST.

# HEROES & MARTYRS

OF

# FREETHOUGHT

BY

G. W. FOOTE & CHARLES WATTS.

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# HEROES AND MARTYRS

OF

## FREETHOUGHT.

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### 1.—GALILEO.

**A**LREADY in our lives of Bruno, Campanella, Telesio, and Vanini, we have described the great conflict which raged, in the sixteenth and early part of the seventeenth centuries, against the theological and scientific domination of the Church. Of the four great Freethinkers just cited two died at the stake, one suffered imprisonment, and the other much distressing persecution from the malignity of his enemies. Bruno and Vanini not only gladly embraced the Copernican astronomy, but they also accepted the philosophical and theological conclusions which necessarily followed therefrom, and with admirable courage and enthusiasm devoted themselves to the spread of these truths amongst those in Europe who were able and willing to understand or receive them. And assuredly it was because of this chivalric love of truth, and this settled disregard of the power and malice of her foes, that these noble knights of philosophy paid a heavier penalty for their daring than did many others who speculated in the retirement of their closets, and announced their opinions only to a favourite and esoteric few. Such heroic warriors are of course deserving of the foremost place and the highest esteem; but there are others also justly entitled to admiration and respect for their service to the sacredest of causes, although they lacked that invincible ardour of temperament which goes to the making of supreme martyrs; men who are willing to submit to the most rigorous discomforts and hardships of life rather than forsake the truth, but who shrink, with excusable weakness, from the utter penalty of death by fire.

The struggle against the mental tyranny of the Catholic Church was twofold : first against the theological astronomy of the Church, and secondly against the religious dogmas which that astronomy was employed to support. Copernicus, Tycho Brahe, Kepler, and Galileo confined themselves to asserting the truth of the new astronomy and proving the falsity of the old, and did not, like Bruno and others, actively attack the dogmas of the Church on correlative questions, although they occasionally aimed the shafts of their logic and wit against the Aristotelian philosophy, which the Church had implicitly adopted. Probably they had little inclination to carry their researches, or extend their speculations, beyond the legitimate bounds of positive science, and were content simply to labour for the establishment of scientific truth, without demonstrating its incompatibility with Biblical assumptions. Perhaps, too, they still clung to a semi-belief in the Divine origin of the Bible. Nevertheless, their researches and speculations, although purely scientific, were destined to produce important results in philosophy and theology ; for the human mind is synthetic, and compelled to shape its cosmical views in accordance with every admitted and incontestible truth, however apparently trifling or independent at the time of its origination. The new astronomy was destined, not only to displace and succeed the old, but also to overthrow the old theology. It was impossible that men should continue to believe in the human destiny of the universe after they had fully apprehended the comparative insignificance of this world in the mighty universe of things.

Galileo Galilei was born at Pisa on the 15th of February, 1564, the very year in which the authorities drew up the first act of accusation against Bruno, then a boy novice, sixteen years of age, in the convent of San Domenico Maggiori. He was the eldest of a family of three sons and three daughters. Under the name of Bonajuti, his noble ancestors had filled high offices at Florence ; but about the middle of the fourteenth century they seem to have abandoned this surname for that of Galileo. Vincenzo Galilei, our hero's father, was himself no mean philosopher ; and though his talents seem to have been exercised only in the composition of treatises on the theory and practice of music, yet he appears to have anticipated even his son in a just estimate of the philosophy of the age, and in a distinct perception of the right method of investigating truth.

Early in life Galileo manifested an aptitude for scientific experiment, and he amused himself even while at school by constructing instruments and pieces of machinery. His father's straitened circumstances somewhat restricted his educational opportunities, yet he managed to acquire the elements of classical literature and general learning. Music, drawing, and painting were the favourite occupations of his leisure; he was reckoned a skilful performer on several musical instruments, and his knowledge of pictures was held in esteem. He seems to have been desirous to become a painter, but his father resolved on his becoming a physician, and sent him to the university to pursue the study of medicine. He was accordingly enrolled as a scholar in arts at the University of Pisa, on the 5th of November, 1581, where he pursued his medical studies under the celebrated botanist Andrew Cæsalpinus. Being desirous of acquiring a knowledge of geometry, he read Euclid under Ostilio Ricci, one of the professors at Pisa; and so enchanted was he by this new study, and so engrossed with the new and sublime truths which burst upon his understanding, that his attention was entirely withdrawn from professional pursuits, much to his father's dismay. From elementary works on geometry he passed on to the writings of the great Greek geometrician, Archimedes, after reading which he wrote his first work on the geometrical balance, which gained for him the esteem of the distinguished Guido Ubaldi.

Through the Cardinal del Monte, the brother-in-law of Ubaldi, the reigning Duke of Tuscany, Ferdinand de Medici, was made acquainted with the merits of the young philosopher, and in 1589 procured him the appointment of lecturer on mathematics at Pisa; but as the salary attached to this office was only sixty crowns, he had to enlarge his income by private teaching. At the early age of eighteen his innate antipathy to the Aristotelian philosophy began to display itself, and this feeling was strengthened by his subsequent inquiries. Burning with zeal he, like Bruno, denounced the blind adherence to the ancient Stagirite which characterised the age. He waged bitter war against the followers of Aristotle, who were the most powerful party in the Church, and so exasperated their bigoted minds as to bring upon him their rancorous malignity, which pursued him through his whole after life. Galileo's experimental method did not convince, it only further incensed them; so wedded were they to superstition and prejudice that they

resented an appeal to nature as an insult to the dignity of their belief. It was one of the axioms of the Aristotelian mechanics, that the heavier of two falling bodies would reach the ground sooner than the other, and that their velocities would be proportional to their weights. This doctrine Galileo refuted by dropping bodies of various weight, but of the same specific gravity, from the leaning tower of Pisa. But the Aristotelians refused to believe anything opposed to their preconceived notions, even when demonstrative proof was presented before their very eyes.

In 1592 Galileo resolved to quit Pisa, where his enemies had become unpleasantly numerous, and to accept the chair of mathematics in the University of Padua offered to him by the Republic of Venice. Lovers of coincidences may be glad to learn that the first period of six years, from 1592 to 1598, during which Galileo occupied the mathematical chair at Padua, and openly opposed the Aristotelians, was spent by Bruno in the dungeons of the Inquisition, whither he had been consigned for a precisely similar but more outspoken heresy. At Padua Galileo found time for composing several works and completing various inventions. His manuscripts were circulated privately amongst his friends and pupils, but some of them strayed into the hands of persons who did not scruple to publish them as their own.

About this time Galileo became a convert to the Copernican astronomy. The following account of his conversion is from his own dialogues on the Copernican system. "I cannot omit this opportunity of relating to you what happened to myself at the time when this opinion (the Copernican system) began to be discussed. I was then a very young man, and had scarcely finished my course of philosophy, which other occupations obliged me to leave off, when there arrived in this country from Rostoch, a foreigner, whose name, I believe, was Christian Vurstisius, a follower of Copernicus. He delivered, on this subject, two or three lectures in a certain academy, and to a numerous audience, several of whom were attracted more by the novelty of the subject than by any other cause. Being firmly persuaded that this opinion was a piece of solemn folly, I was unwilling to be present. Upon interrogating, however, some of those who were there, I found that they all made it a subject of merriment, with the exception of one, who assured me that it was not a thing wholly ridiculous. As I considered this individual to be prudent and circumspect, I repented that I

had not attended the lectures ; and, whenever I met any of the followers of Copernicus, I began to inquire *if they had always been of the same opinion*. I found that there was not one of them who did not declare that he *had long maintained the very opposite opinions*, and had not gone over to the new doctrines till he was driven by the force of argument. I next examined them one by one to see if they were *masters of the arguments on the opposite side* ; and such was the readiness of their answers, that I was satisfied they had not embraced this opinion from ignorance or vanity. On the other hand, whenever I interrogated the Peripatetics and the Ptolemeans—and, out of curiosity, I have interrogated not a few respecting their perusal of Copernicus's work—I perceived that there were *few who had seen the book, and not one who understood it*. Nor have I omitted to inquire among the followers of the Peripatetic doctrines, if any of them *had ever stood on the opposite side* ; and the result was, that there was not one. Considering, then, that nobody followed the Copernican doctrine who had not previously held the contrary opinion, and who was not well acquainted with the arguments of Aristotle and Ptolemy ; while, on the other hand, nobody followed Ptolemy and Aristotle who had before adhered to Copernicus, and had gone over from him into the camp of Aristotle—weighing, I say, these things, I began to believe that, if any one rejects an opinion which he has imbibed with his milk, and which has been embraced by an infinite number, shall take up an opinion held only by a few, condemned by all the schools, and really regarded as a great paradox, it cannot be doubted that he must have been induced, not to say driven, to embrace it by the most cogent arguments. On this account I have become very curious to penetrate to the very bottom of the subject.” And to the very bottom of the subject Galileo did penetrate, so that he became convinced of the truth of the Copernican system and of the falsity of the old astronomy supported by the Church. His conversion must be placed somewhere between 1593 and 1597 ; but for some time he was obliged to continue teaching the Ptolemaic system, in compliance with popular feeling, taking care, however, to disseminate his new views amongst his trusted friends.

An unfortunate accident in 1593 undermined the philosopher's health, and although he lived to a ripe old age, he ever afterwards suffered from the natural disorders of a weakened constitution. While sitting at an open window,

enjoying a current of air artificially cooled by a fall of water, Galileo fell asleep; and the consequence was that he contracted a severe chronic disorder, accompanied with acute pains in his body, and loss of sleep and appetite.

His reputation was now widely extended over Europe. The Archduke Ferdinand (afterwards Emperor of Germany), the Landgrave of Hesse, and the Princes of Alsace and Mantua honoured his lectures with their presence; and Prince Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden also received instructions from him in mathematics, during his sojourn in Italy. On the completion of the first period of his engagement at Padua, he was re-elected for other six years, with an increased salary of 320 florins, which enabled him to dispense with much private teaching, and devote himself more assiduously to scientific research.

In the year 1606 Galileo was again appointed to the professorship at Padua, with an augmented stipend of 520 florins. His popularity had now risen so high that his audience could not be accommodated in his lecture-room; and even when he had assembled them in the school of medicine, which contained one thousand persons, he was frequently obliged to adjourn to the open air.

During the progress of negotiations between the philosopher and the illustrious Cosmo de Medici, who had succeeded his father Ferdinand as Grand Duke of Tuscany, and who was desirous that Pisa should receive back the distinguished man to whom she gave birth; Galileo went to Venice, to visit a friend, in the month of April or May, 1609. "Here he learned," says Sir David Brewster, "from common rumour that a Dutchman had presented to Prince Maurice of Nassau an optical instrument, which possessed the singular property of causing distant objects to appear nearer the observer. This Dutchman was Hans or John Lippershey, who, as has been clearly proved by the late Professor Moll, of Utrecht, was in the possession of a telescope made by himself so early as the 2nd of October, 1608. A few days afterwards, this report was confirmed in a letter from James Badorere, at Paris, to Galileo, who immediately applied himself to the consideration of the subject. On the first night after his return to Padua, he found, in the doctrines of refraction, the principle which he sought. Having procured two spectacle glasses, both of which were plain on one side, while one of them had its other side convex, and the other its second side concave, he placed one at each end of a

lead tube ; and having applied his eye to the concave glass, he saw objects pretty large and pretty near him. This little instrument, which magnified only three times, he carried in triumph to Venice, where it excited the most intense interest. Crowds of the principal citizens flocked to his house to see the magical toy ; and after nearly a month had been spent in gratifying this epidemical curiosity, Galileo was led to understand from Leonardo Deodati, the Doge of Venice, that the Senate would be highly gratified by obtaining possession of so extraordinary an instrument. Galileo instantly complied with the wishes of his patrons, who acknowledged the present by a mandate conferring upon him for life his professorship at Padua, and raising his salary from 520 to 1,000 florins." It is thus clear that Galileo was not the inventor of the astronomical telescope, which existed in a rude form before 1609, but he is indisputably the inventor of the telescope as we now have it, consisting of *concave* and *convex* lenses. The art of grinding and polishing lenses was then in its infancy, so that Galileo and those whom he instructed were alone capable of making tolerable instruments.

His first instrument magnified only *three* times, but after great labour and expense he succeeded in constructing a larger and better one, with a magnifying power of more than *thirty* times. The first object to which he directed his new telescope was the moon, which he discovered to be something else than a mere luminous disc ; and he was able to trace in every part of its surface ranges of mountains, deep hollows, and other inequalities, which reverberated from their summits and margins the rays of the rising sun, while the intervening hollows were still buried in darkness.

These discoveries provoked the bitter opposition of the Aristotelians, who seemed to resent every new truth as an insult to their wisdom. According to their preconceived notions, the moon was round and flat, fixed in the firmament on purpose to give light by night to the inhabitants of this globe ; and they declared it to be an act of impiety to cover it with mountains, and scoop it out into valleys, and so deface the regular forms which Nature herself had imprinted. Nothing daunted, however, Galileo placidly pursued his way, heedless of the barking of his rabid foes. His next discovery was the difference between the planets and the fixed stars, the former of which, under the telescope, appeared with round globular discs, while the latter re-

sembled lucid points sending forth twinkling rays. Next he discovered that the nebulae consisted of vast numbers of stars, no less than *forty* being counted in the single cluster of the Pleiades, or Seven Stars. In January, 1610, he discovered that "there were in the heaven three stars which revolved round Jupiter, in the same manner as Venus and Mercury revolved round the sun;" and two days after he detected the *fourth* secondary planet of that nobly-attended orb. Of these discoveries he drew up an account, which he published under the title of "Nuncius Sidereus," or the "Siderial Messenger," and dedicated to his patron Cosmo de Medici.

The immense importance of these discoveries was instantly felt by both the friends and the enemies of the Copernican system. The planets and the fixed stars, being shown to be variously distant, fatally discredited the old notion of a vaulted firmament spanning the earth; while the fact of Jupiter being illuminated by four moons proved the comparative insignificance of our own globe. Indeed, it is extremely difficult for any man living in full nineteenth century to enter into the feelings of those who, more than two centuries and a half ago, were startled by these wondrous new truths. The most intelligent of them must have felt, to use the noble language of Keats' great sonnet on Chapman's Homer:—

"Like some watcher of the skies,  
When a new planet swims into his ken;  
Or like stout Cortez when, with eagle eyes,  
He stared at the Pacific—and all his men  
Looked at each other with a wild surmise—  
Silent, upon a peak in Darien."

Even the great Kepler was intensely excited when his friend Wachenfels brought him the intelligence. "Such a fit of wonder," says he, "seized me at a report which seemed to be so very absurd, and I was thrown into such agitation at seeing an old dispute between us decided in this way, that between his joy, my colouring, and the laughter of both, confounded as we were by such a novelty, we were hardly capable, he of speaking, or I of listening."

The theological astronomers treated Galileo's discoveries with their customary bigotry and senselessness. The principal professor of philosophy at Padua resisted Galileo's repeated and urgent entreaties to look at the moon and planets through his telescope, and argued that the satellites

of Jupiter could not possibly exist. Ziggi, a Florentine astronomer, maintained that as there were only *seven* apertures in the head—*two* eyes, *two* ears, *two* nostrils, and *one* mouth—and as there were only *seven* metals and *seven* days in the week, so there could be only *seven* planets. He admitted that the circumjovian satellites were visible through the telescope, but argued that, as they were invisible to the naked eye, they could exercise no influence on the earth; and being useless, they did not therefore exist. One astronomer, named Horky, in a volume which he wrote against Galileo, declared “that he would never concede his four new planets to that Italian from Padua, even if he should die for it.” He even declared that he had examined the heavens *through Galileo’s own glass*, and that no such thing as a satellite round Jupiter existed. This was, of course, a deliberate lie; but pious frauds have ever been deemed legitimate supports of religious dogmas. How amusing to behold this wretched bigot puffed out with the fancy that his falsehoods and expostulations could stay the progress of astronomical science, or nullify the great laws of the Cosmos!

Galileo on accepting the office of philosopher and principal mathematician to Cosmo de Medici, the Grand Duke of Tuscany, took up his residence at Florence. His official duties here were very slight and allowed him ample time to pursue his studies and researches. During the same year he discovered the triple nature of Saturn and the phases of Venus. Early in 1611 he visited Rome, where he was welcomed with the greatest marks of esteem by the chief lovers of science; and even princes, cardinals, and prelates hastened to do him honour. Having taken with him his telescope, he was able to exhibit to his admiring disciples the spots on the sun, which he had discovered in October or November of the previous year. These spots he found revolved regularly with the sun, which appeared to complete its revolution in about twenty-eight days. In the following year, 1612, he published his work on “*Floating Bodies*,” which was dedicated to his patron, Cosmo de Medici, and which, says Sir David Brewster, is now chiefly remarkable, as a specimen of the sagacity and intellectual power of its author.” This work, like all his others, encountered violent opposition, and Galileo was “more than once summoned into the field to repel the aggression of his ignorant and presumptuous opponents.”

Hitherto the current of the philosopher's life had been comparatively smooth ; but he was now to enter upon a period of turbulence and distress. The sleepless hatred of the Inquisition, and of the ignorant rabble of bigoted and interested priests, was not to be allayed by any semblance of submission to mother Church ; and finding how inveterate was their hostility to truth, Galileo not only confuted their theories and answered all their objections, but wielded against them the powerful weapons of ridicule and sarcasm. The boldness of his attack only further incensed them against him. "The various classes of his opponents," says Brewster, "marshalled themselves for their mutual defence. The Aristotelian professors, the temporising Jesuits, the political Churchmen, and that timid but respectable body who at all times dread innovation, whether it be in legislation or in science, entered into an alliance against the philosophical tyrant, who threatened them with the penalties of knowledge." The philosophical party, however, did not flinch : they entered into the conflict with the courage of conviction and confident of ultimate success.

Just as the battle was commencing Galileo addressed a letter to his friend and pupil, the Abbé Castelli, the object of which was to prove that the Scriptures were not intended to teach us science and philosophy. Hence he inferred, that the language employed in the Bible, in reference to such subjects, should be interpreted only in its common acceptation. Of course this was an illogical position, and can clearly be perceived as such, now that the marvellous progress of positive science has proved how irreconcilable with ascertained truth are many essential parts of the old Hebrew legend. But probably Galileo was sincere in asserting it, and was supremely desirous to win for himself and his friends the right to pursue scientific truth without fear of persecution or suppression by the priesthood. Unfortunately for him, the Church was more logical than he. Instinctively it felt the insecurity of its power when once any of its dogmas, even the smallest, were touched. The slave of immutable traditions, it was impossible, and still is impossible, for the Catholic Church to abate one jot of its ancient doctrines ; and to-day, as always throughout its history, it resolutely refuses to make peace with "liberalism or modern progress."

The Inquisition silently prepared its charges against Galileo, whom it was determined to suppress, and sum-

moned him to appear before its tribunal. He was charged with maintaining the motion of the earth and the stability of the sun ; with teaching these doctrines to his pupils ; with corresponding on the subject with several German mathematicians ; and with having published it, and attempted to reconcile it with Scripture. He was enjoined to pledge himself that he would neither teach, defend, nor publish these doctrines in future. In the event of his refusing to acquiesce in this sentence, it was decided that he should be thrown into prison. Galileo felt no inclination to resist absolute power. He declared that he abandoned the doctrine of the earth's motion, and would neither defend nor teach it in his conversations or in his writings, and was then dismissed from the bar of the Inquisition. This promise he neither kept nor meant to keep. He treated the Inquisition just as a man would treat a powerful robber with fingers at his throat and fully armed. Abstractly, it is of course immoral to violate a pledge ; but the criminality of its violation should rightfully be laid to the charge of those who forcibly extort it from the reluctant victim.

Although the works of Galileo, Kepler, and Copernicus were now inserted amongst the prohibited books, the Pope, Paul V., received Galileo very graciously, spent some time in his company, and promised to guarantee his safety from further molestation. The following interesting letter from Querenghi to the Cardinal D'Este proves that the condemned philosopher, even a few weeks after his sentence, was still propagating and defending his heresies :—

“Your eminence would be delighted with Galileo, if you heard him holding forth, as he often does, in the midst of fifteen or twenty persons, all violently attacking him, sometimes in one house, sometimes in another. But he is armed after such fashion, that he laughs all of them to scorn ; and even if the novelty of his opinions prevents entire persuasion, he at least convicts of emptiness most of the arguments with which his adversaries endeavour to overwhelm him. He was particularly admirable on Monday last in the house of Signor Frederico Ghisilieri ; and what especially pleased me was, that before replying to the opposite arguments, he amplified and enforced them with new grounds of great plausibility, so as to leave his adversaries in a more ridiculous plight, when he afterwards overturned them all.”

On the succession of Urban VIII. to the papal throne, Galileo repaired to Rome to present his congratulations

chiefly because the new pope was reputed as a lover of science, and therefore likely to grant a larger measure of tolerance to the persecuted philosophers. He arrived at Rome in the spring of 1624, and received a reception exceeding his most sanguine expectations. Pope Urban loaded him with presents, and promised him a pension for his son Vicenzo. Evidently there were some intelligent men in the church who respected Galileo and esteemed philosophy, although they were unable to stem the general torrent of priestly persecution.

Galileo published, in 1632, his chief work, under the title of "The System of the World of Galileo Galilei," which was meant to defend the Copernican against the Ptolemean astronomy. This work, like many of Bruno's and Vanini's, was written in dialogue, conducted by three persons, Salviati, Sagredo, and Simplicio. Salviati is the true philosopher and a follower of Copernicus; Sagredo performs a secondary and unimportant part; while Simplicio is a resolute follower of Aristotle and Ptolemy. "Between the wit of Sagredo, and the powerful philosophy of Salviati," says Brewster, "the peripatetic sage is baffled in every discussion; and there can be no doubt that Galileo aimed a more fatal blow at the Ptolemaic system by this mode of discussing it, than if he had endeavoured to overturn it by direct arguments. The influence of this work on the public mind was such as might have been anticipated. The obnoxious doctrines which it upheld were eagerly received, and widely disseminated; and the Church of Rome became sensible of the shock which was thus given to its intellectual Supremacy."

Galileo was again summoned to appear at Rome before the Inquisition, to answer in person the charges that had been prepared against him. The Tuscan ambassador expostulated warmly with the Court of Rome on the inhumanity of this proceeding; and urged his advanced age, his infirmities, the discomforts of the journey, and the miseries of the quarantine observed in consequence of a contagious disease which had broken out in Tuscany, as motives for reconsidering their decision. But they remained obdurate under all appeals. Worn out with age and infirmities, and exhausted with the fatigues of the journey, Galileo arrived at Rome on the 14th of February, 1633. Before the tribunal he was treated with respect as a sage, although an arraigned heretic, and he was spared the indig-

nities to which prisoners generally were obliged to submit. On the 22nd of June he was clothed in a penitential dress, and conducted to the convent of Minerva, where the Inquisition was assembled to give judgment. After an invocation of the name of Jesus, and of the Virgin, Galileo was declared to have brought himself under strong suspicion of heresy, and to have incurred all the censures and penalties which are enjoined against such delinquencies; but from all these consequences he was to be held absolved, provided that, with a sincere heart, and a faith unfeigned, he abjured and cursed the heresies he had cherished, as well as every other heresy against the Catholic Church. In order, however, that his offence might not go altogether unpunished, that he might be more cautious in future, and be a warning to others, to abstain from similar offences, it was also decreed that his dialogues should be prohibited by public edict; that he himself should be condemned to the prison of the inquisition during its pleasure, and that, in the course of the next three years, he should recite once a week the seven penitential psalms.

“The ceremony of Galileo’s abjuration,” says Brewster, “was one of exciting interest and of awful formality. Clothed in the sackcloth of a repentant criminal, the venerable sage fell upon his knees before the assembled cardinals; and laying his hands upon the Holy Evangelists, he invoked the Divine aid in abjuring and detesting, and vowing never again to teach the doctrine of the earth’s motion, and of the sun’s stability. He pledged himself that he would never more, either in words or in writing, propagate such heresies; and he swore that he would fulfil and observe the penances which had been inflicted upon him. After this ceremony, in which he recited his abjuration, word for word, and then signed it, he was taken, in conformity with his sentence, to the prison of the Inquisition.” Tradition says that, on rising from his knees, the venerable sage muttered through his teeth “*E pur si muove*”—“And yet it does move.” All the biographers of Galileo, however, discredit this story as a mere fable. Nevertheless it is good enough to be authentic, and, like many another fable, is worth preserving for its intrinsic truth.

Sir David Brewster waxes eloquent against the weakness of Galileo in abjuring the heliocentric theory which he knew to be true. It should be considered that Galileo was seventy years of age, that his constitution was debilitated

by his early misfortune and subsequent hard study, that the fatigues of a journey from Pisa to Rome had greatly diminished his little remaining natural strength, and that he had been put to the torture to make him more compliant. Is it surprising that, under such circumstances, his strength was insufficient to make him dare the utmost malice of his foes?

The aged philosopher was favoured by a relaxation of the rigour of his sentence. Instead of rotting in prison, he was allowed to reside in his own house at Arcetri, but was debarred from all intercourse with his friends. Nay, even when he desired to visit Florence with the view of obtaining medical assistance, his application was refused.

Late in 1641 Galileo was attacked by fever and palpitation of the heart, which terminated fatally on the 8th of January, 1642. The Inquisition disputed his right of making a will, and of being buried in consecrated ground; and though a large sum was subscribed for erecting a monument to him in the Church of Santa Croce, in Florence, the Pope would not permit the design to be carried into execution. But a splendid monument was erected to his memory in 1737.

In private life Galileo was esteemed and loved by all who knew him. He was distinguished for his hospitality and benevolence; he was liberal to the poor, and generous in the aid which he furnished to men of genius and talent. He was abstemious in his diet, and warmly attached to a country life, much of his leisure having been devoted to the cultivation of his vineyards. His scientific eminence is admitted by all; indeed he ranks next to Newton and Kepler in the lists of original and inventive genius. Ardently loving the truth, he disregarded the malicious persecution of her foes; and although he shrank from "the clean pain of dying by fire," he never desisted from his endeavours to penetrate the secrets of nature, or from disseminating the discoveries he made.

THE READER MAY CONSULT—

Brewster, Sir D., *Martyrs of Science.*

Draper's *Intellectual Development of Europe.*

Galileo, *Life of, Library of Useful Knowledge.*

Galileo, *Private Life of; compiled principally from his Correspondence and that of his eldest daughter (Macmillan, 1870).*

# HEROES AND MARTYRS

OF

## FREETHOUGHT.

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### 2.—JOHN STUART MILL.

**P**ROBABLY no thinker of this century has exercised so wide and potent an influence as John Stuart Mill. There have been one or two philosophers of greater intellectual strength, but none to equal him for gracious wisdom and patient benevolence. He was not merely a speculator upon abstruse subjects, but a noble enthusiast who laboured to discover truth, that he might make it minister to the welfare of his fellow men. Endowed with splendid natural gifts, and a versatility unequalled in his generation, he devoted himself from his earliest manhood to the great cause of human progress, from which he never once swerved. He not only conceived, but was profoundly convinced, that truth alone was the real panacea for every remediable evil; and therefore he resolutely brushed aside the obscuring webs of prejudice and custom, and patiently penetrated with mental vision into the remotest regions of verity. With this purpose nothing was permitted to conflict; passionate impulses and social temptations were firmly over-ruled by his masterful will. In the completest sense of the word he was a Freethinker; and his noble steadfastness, tempered by wise tolerance, gave, and still gives, to his readers an exalted conception of the dignity of reason. But while vindicating the dignity of reason, Mill persistently asserted the tremendous importance of right feelings. He knew that while abundant knowledge equips the human vessel for its voyage upon the sea of life, and reason guides the helm, the breath of enthusiasm is still required to fill the sails, and waft the goodly ship along. And it was this which impelled him to break away from the wintry Utilitarianism of Bentham and

his school, and to develop for himself and others a nobler system, which should preserve the great truths of Benthamism, and incorporate with them important complementary truths from other schools of thought. Many-sidedness was a distinguishing characteristic of his mind; he could fearlessly encounter the keenest dialectician, or test the hardest problems with his solvent logic, and yet readily turn from such things to discuss the province and scope of poetry, or revel in the beauties of nature and art. Such versatility of power and taste is so important because so rare amongst great teachers who devote themselves to the propagation and maintenance of definite principles of thought and theories of life. Mill was one of the few supreme Free-thinkers of the world who have claimed to stretch forth the hand and appropriate the mental treasures of every age, and to hold unquestioned possession of whatsoever would assimilate with their constitution and temperament.

John Stuart Mill was born in Rodney Street, Pentonville, London, on the 20th of May, 1806. Of his mother nothing is publicly known. His father, James Mill, was probably the most robust intelligence of that age, a man who dominated almost all persons brought within the circle of his influence. He was the son of a petty tradesman and farmer of Northwater Bridge, in the County of Angus, Scotland; but his abilities as a boy attracted the notice of Sir John Stuart, who sent him to the University of Edinburgh to study for the Scottish Church. He there went through the usual course of study, and was licensed as a preacher, but never followed the profession; having satisfied himself that he could not believe the doctrines of that or any other Church. After spending a few years as a private tutor in various families in Scotland, he came to London resolved to earn his subsistence by his pen. Until 1819, when he obtained an appointment in the India House, he had no other support than the precarious one which authorship afforded; yet so remarkably energetic was his character that he managed to bring up a numerous family without ever incurring debt, and still devote a great portion of his time to the composition of a History of British India—a magnificent philosophical production, which he achieved in the brief space of ten years. In addition to this, he personally superintended the education of his eldest son, the subject of this sketch; being determined to preserve him from the debasing effects of public-school education, which

was then, as now, more fitted to load the mind with ill-digested knowledge than to educe its native powers of thought.

This fortunate boy early evinced most peculiar abilities. His father began the process of education as soon as he was at all capable of learning; and so assiduously was it conducted that when the lad left home for France, at the age of fourteen, he was already a generation ahead of his contemporaries in deep and varied knowledge. He began to learn Greek at the age of three years, and Latin at the age of eight; and by the time he had attained his twelfth year he had gone through most of the literature of those languages, not superficially, but in a manner which made him master of its ideas and principles. With English literature also he had made a tolerable acquaintance. Jeremy Bentham, an attached friend of James Mill, jealously watched the education of this extraordinary boy, and arranged to take him under his own care if anything should happen to the father. The aim of these philosophers was to leave him a worthy successor of both of them. Mrs. Grote, in her "Personal Life of George Grote," has described Mill as he appeared in 1817, when but eleven years old. "John Stuart Mill, then a boy of about twelve years old, was studying, with his father as his sole preceptor, under the paternal roof. Unquestionably forward for his years, and already possessed of a competent knowledge of Greek and Latin, as well as of some subordinate though solid attainments, John was, as a boy, somewhat repressed by the elder Mill, and seldom took any share in the conversation carried on by the society frequenting the house." It is, perhaps, not strange that a boy of eleven should be backward in conversation with adults; but the repression by the elder Mill was undoubtedly practised, although without intention. James Mill was a severe teacher, and kept his son in constant awe of his superior attainments. The relation of pupil and teacher, under such circumstances, tended to dry up the fountains of filial and parental affection. Nevertheless, the son always in after years spoke of his father with deep reverence.

From about the age of twelve Mill entered upon a more advanced stage of instruction. His father drilled him in Logic and Political Economy; how thoroughly the following passage from the Autobiography will show: "I do not believe that any scientific teaching ever was more thorough,

or better fitted for training the faculties, than the mode in which logic and political economy were taught to me by my father. Striving, even in an exaggerated degree, to call forth the activity of my faculties, by making me find out everything for myself, he gave his explanations not before, but after, I had felt the full force of the difficulties; and not only gave me an accurate knowledge of these two great subjects, as far as they were then understood, but made me a thinker on both. I thought for myself almost from the first." It was this zealous avoidance of mere cram, and rigorous observance of the proper *eductive* method of education, which gave Mill that surpassing patience and impartiality which shine in his works. From early youth it was his custom to dissect every argument, and analyse every proposition, to ascertain both what could be urged in support of any position and what could be urged against it. In almost every case when, in any of his writings, he has to assail opposite opinions to his own, he expresses them with a fulness and perspicuity which even their supporters could not hope to excel.

This education was absolutely devoid of all religion. James Mill had been educated in the creed of Scotch Presbyterianism, but had outgrown it, as already stated. His bold and vigorous intellect spurned the theological compromises which many super-subtle minds affected; soon he was led to reject not only Revealed but Natural Religion, and yielded to the conviction, that concerning the origin of things nothing whatever can be known. The following extract from the Autobiography, although long, is too valuable and interesting to be omitted from this sketch. "My father's rejection of all that is called religious belief, was not, as many might suppose, primarily a matter of logic and evidence: the grounds of it were moral, still more than intellectual. He found it impossible to believe that a world so full of evil was the work of an author combining infinite power with perfect goodness and righteousness. His intellect spurned the subtleties by which men attempt to blind themselves to this open contradiction.....His aversion to religion, in the sense usually attached to the term, was of the same kind with that of Lucretius: he regarded it with the feelings due not to a mere mental delusion, but to a great moral evil. He looked upon it as the greatest enemy of morality: first, by setting up fictitious excellences—belief in creeds, devotional feelings, and ceremonies not

connected with the good of human-kind—and causing these to be accepted as substitutes for genuine virtues : but above all, by radically vitiating the standard of morals ; making it consist in doing the will of a being, on whom it lavishes indeed all the phrases of adulation, but whom in sober truth it depicts as eminently hateful. I have a hundred times heard him say, that all ages and nations have represented their gods as wicked, in a constantly-increasing progression, that mankind have gone on adding trait after trait till they reached the most perfect conception of wickedness which the human mind can devise, and have called this God, and prostrated themselves before it. This *ne plus ultra* of wickedness he considered to be embodied in what is commonly presented to mankind as the creed of Christianity. Think (he used to say) of a being who would make a Hell—who would create the human race with the infallible foreknowledge, and therefore with the intention, that the great majority of them were to be consigned to horrible and everlasting torment.”

It was wholly inconsistent with James Mill's ideas of duty, to allow his son to be taught religious opinions from which he himself utterly dissented ; he impressed upon him that the manner in which the world came into existence is a subject on which nothing can be known, but at the same time took care that he should learn what mankind had thought on that impenetrable problem. “I am thus,” says Mill, “one of the very few examples, in this country, of one who has, not thrown off religious belief, but never had it: I grew up in a negative state with regard to it. I looked upon the modern exactly as I did upon the ancient religion, as something which in no way concerned me. It did not seem to me more strange that English people should believe what I did not, than that the men I read of in Herodotus should have done so. History had made the variety of opinions among mankind a fact familiar to me, and this was but a prolongation of that fact.” Fortunate, indeed, was Mill in having his mind thus kept free from the debasing influence of theological dogmas, instilled before the mind is capable of testing them ; but unfortunate in that his father warned him that such unbelief could not prudently be avowed to the general world. Happily Mill outgrew the effects of this evil counsel, and has left on record a powerful admonition against it. “On religion in particular,” he wrote, “the time appears to me to have come

when it is the duty of all who, being qualified in point of knowledge, have on mature consideration satisfied themselves that the current opinions are not only false but hurtful, to make their dissent known; at least, if they are among those whose station or reputation gives their opinion a chance of being attended to. Such an avowal would put an end, at once and for ever, to the vulgar prejudice, that what is called, very improperly, unbelief, is connected with any bad qualities either of mind or heart. The world would be astonished if it knew how great a proportion of its brightest ornaments—of those most distinguished even in popular estimation for wisdom and virtue—are complete sceptics in religion; many of them refraining from avowal, less from personal considerations, than from a conscientious, though now in my opinion a most mistaken apprehension, lest by speaking out what would tend to weaken existing beliefs, and by consequence (as they suppose) existing restraints, they should do harm instead of good.”

James Mill, although possessed of great amiability of character, capacity of tenderness, and strength of feeling, deliberately repressed his emotional nature, in subordination to an exaggerated estimate of the province of reason. Passion he regarded as synonymous with madness, and, even in a bad cause, a fanatic as more dangerous than one who adopted it from self-interest. His ethical theory was utilitarian, and rightfully he belonged to the Epicurean school; but his practice was a combination of Stoicism and Cynicism. He thought life a poor thing at the best, although he sometimes said that if good government and education made it what it might be, it might be worth having. Temperance, in the large Greek sense, he deemed the highest virtue. If destiny were harsh, all the more should a rational man play a noble part upon the stage of life; and even if human improvement were ever so slow, yet was it a duty to labour for so much of it as could possibly be realised. James Mill stands out in the pages of his son's Autobiography as a noble, august figure, worthy to have walked with Socrates in brotherly affection, or to have discussed philosophy with golden-mouthed Plato. His teaching and his example produced bountiful and benign fruit in the mind of his son. He was fond of putting into the boy's hands books which exhibited men of energy and resource in unusual circumstances, striving against difficulties and overcoming them; and inculcated upon him justice, temperance, veracity,

perseverance, readiness to encounter pain, and especially labour; regard for the public good; estimation of persons according to their merits, and of things according to their intrinsic usefulness; a life of exertion in contradiction to one of self-indulgent ease and sloth. This lofty standard was so firmly erected in the pupil's mind, that subsequent experience never weakened but only strengthened it, as the winds of heaven invigorate and establish the firmly-rooted oak. But whereas in the father this lofty standard was a tree barren of blossom, though of stately growth, in the son it grew rich in foliage, and blossomed into a splendid affluence of sweet beauty.

At the age of fourteen Mill left home on a visit to Sir Samuel Bentham, Jeremy Bentham's brother, whose residence lay in the South of France. There he learned French, and attended lectures on chemistry and zoology. His mind, too, was greatly expanded by the continual presence of the highest order of mountain scenery, and by the freedom and frankness prevalent in the social intercourse of the French people. In his way through Paris, both going and returning, he spent some time in the house of Jean Baptiste Say, the political economist, where he met many chiefs of the Liberal party, and other noteworthy persons, among whom Saint Simon may be particularly mentioned. Early in July, 1821, he returned to England, and resumed his ordinary course of education under his father's eye.

Being destined by his father for the bar, Mill read Roman law with John Austin; and next went through Bentham's "Traité de Législation," the reading of which was an epoch in his life, a turning point in his mental history. The Benthamic "greatest happiness" principle had been impressed upon him by his father; but in the pages of Bentham it burst upon him with the force of novelty. The feeling rushed upon him that all previous moralists were superseded, and that here indeed was the commencement of a new era of thought. "When I laid down the last volume of the 'Traité,'" says Mill, "I had become a different being. The 'principle of utility,' understood as Bentham understood it, and applied in the manner in which he applied it through these three volumes, fell exactly into its place as the keystone which held together the detached and fragmentary component parts of my knowledge and beliefs. It gave unity to my conceptions of things. I now had opinions; a creed, a doctrine, a philosophy; in one among

the best senses of the word, a religion ; the inculcation and diffusion of which could be made the principal outward purpose of a life. And I had a grand conception laid before me of changes to be effected in the condition of mankind through that doctrine."

The next book which contributed materially to Mill's development was one compiled from Bentham's manuscript notes, and published by George Grote, under the pseudonyme of Philip Beauchamp, entitled " Analysis of the Influence of Natural Religion on the Temporal Happiness of Mankind." This little work was an examination, not of the truth, but of the usefulness, of theology ; and never was there a more severe, yet withal philosophical, exposure of its terrible de-traction from the secular welfare of mankind. It was about this time that Mill laid the foundation of his life-long friend-ship with George Grote, the great historian of Greece, who, having been introduced to James Mill by Ricardo, assidu-ously sought his society and conversation. John and Charles Austin also soon figured in his list of friends, and through them he became acquainted with Macaulay, Hyde and Charles Villiers, Strutt (afterwards Lord Belper), Romilly (afterwards Lord Romilly), and many others who subse-quently figured in literature or politics. In the winter of 1822-3 he planned a little society of young men, to be called the Utilitarian Society, and to meet once a fortnight for the discussion of philosophical subjects. The Society never numbered more than ten members, and it broke up in 1826, after an existence of about three years and a half ; but all the members were young men of considerable, and some of great, ability. Among them were William Eyton Tooke, William Ellis, George Graham, and John Arthur Roebuck.

Early in 1823 Mill entered the India House as a clerk in the department of which his father was chief, and in that office he remained five and thirty years, until the company's abolition in 1858 ; before which time he had risen to occupy the post of Chief Examiner. For three and twenty years of that time he had immediate charge of the Political Department, and wrote almost every despatch of any im-portance that conveyed the instructions of the merchant princes of Leadenhall Hall Street to their pro-consuls in Asia. The quantity of these despatches was so great that a descriptive catalogue of them completely fills a small quarto volume of between 300 and 400 pages, in their author's own handwriting. Also, says Mr. Thorton, a fellow-clerk in the

office, his share of the correspondence between the Court of Directors and the Indian Governments used to average annually two huge foolscap-size volumes, five or six inches thick. Mill's work, as may be expected, was always thoroughly done, and his habits were business-like and precise. Yet he managed to find time outside his official engagements to work out and compose his "Logic" and "Political Economy," and to contribute a vast variety of sterling articles to the *Westminster Review*, and other more frequent publications. His was indeed a life well spent, with utmost profit and without the slightest waste. To a strenuous temperament there was allied in him a humanitarian fervour which impelled him to labour unintermittedly to promote the highest and noblest of all causes, the societary progress of mankind.

Mill's first writings which got into print were published in the *Traveller* evening newspaper, towards the end of 1822, and consisted of two letters in reply to an attack by Colonel Torrens upon some politico-economical opinion of Ricardo. Soon after he attempted something more ambitious. The prosecutions of Richard Carlile and his wife for publications hostile to Christianity were then exciting much attention. Freedom of discussion being one of the chief principles of the Utilitarians, Mill wrote a series of five letters in its defence, under the signature of Wickliffe; three of which were published in the *Morning Chronicle*, and the others excluded as containing things too outspoken for that journal. During the whole of 1823 he contributed largely to the *Morning Chronicle*, and the *Traveller*, in company with Black and Fonblanque. In the following year Mill began his first great literary undertaking. Although still but a mere lad, he was chosen by Bentham to edit and illustrate with notes, his "Rationale of Judicial Evidence." Bentham was highly pleased with his performance of this important task, and when the book was published in 1827 insisted on his name appearing on the title page with the author's own. In 1825 Mill began learning German with some companions who formed themselves into a class; and out of this sprang a small society for the discussion of philosophical subjects. The meetings took place at Grote's house, in Threadneedle Street, on certain days from half-past eight till ten in the morning, at which hour, the members (all in official employment) had to repair to their respective avocations. The members were Grote, John

Stuart Mill, Roebuck, and five others; and the mentor of their studies was James Mill. The meetings were continued for three or four years. The readings embraced a small manual of logic by Du Trieu, Whately's "Logic," Hobbes' "Logic," "Hartley on Man," James Mill's "Political Economy," Ricardo's "Principles of Political Economy," and other works. The manner of proceeding was thorough. Each paragraph, on being read, was commented on by everyone in turn, discussed and rediscussed to the point of exhaustion. In 1828 the meetings ceased, but they were resumed in 1830, upon James Mill's "Analysis of the Mind," which was gone over in the same way. From these conversations Mill dates his real inauguration as an original and independent thinker. They strengthened his mental habit of dissatisfaction with half-solutions of difficulties, and prevented his ever thinking that he perfectly understood any part of a subject until he understood the whole. His "Logic" and "Essays on Some Unsettled Questions of Political Economy" were projected in consequence of these close and severe discussions.

In the London Debating Society, mainly established by Mill, he played a conspicuous part. All the members were his seniors, and there were amongst them such men as Macaulay, Thirlwall, Praed, Lord Howick, Samuel Wilberforce, Edward and Henry Lytton Bulwer, and Fonblanque; but Mill, although at first a bad and ungraceful speaker, was the intellectual master of them all. Mr. Christie relates that it used to be said of him that he "passed over his adversary like a ploughshare over a mouse."

But the penalty for this undue exercise of the logical faculty was about to be paid. Feeling, poetry, art, had been greatly excluded from his conception and realisation of life; and their responsive faculties being kept without natural function had partially withered, and were soon to afflict the whole body with their grievous distemper. As he confesses, he was little more than a mere reasoning machine during the first few years of his adolescence, when he should have exercised his muscles and sought generous aliment for his emotional nature as well. In the autumn of 1826 the Nemesis overtook him. The overstrained nerves refused response to customary appeals, life lost all charm, and the objects of previous pursuit no longer incited to exertion. For months the cloud grew thicker and thicker: the lines in Coleridge's "Dejection" exactly described his case:

A grief without a pang, void, dark, and drear,  
 A drowsy, stifled, unimpassioned grief,  
 Which finds no natural outlet or relief  
 In word, or sigh, or tear.

His father was not the person likely to understand or sympathise with his frame of mind, and he loved no one sufficiently to make confiding his griefs a necessity: alone he had to wrestle with the demon, like many another brave and suffering soul. At last a ray of light broke in upon his gloom. While accidentally reading Marmontel's "Memoires," he came to the passage which relates how on his father's death he, a mere boy, was visited by the sudden inspiration to be to his mother and the family all that his father had been; a vivid conception of the scene came over the reader, and he was moved to tears. From that hour his burden grew lighter. Life gradually resumed attractive hues as the cloud drew off, and although several relapses occurred they were overmastered by the sanative impulse. The experience of this distressful period led him to adopt a better theory of life. Happiness he still regarded as the end of life, and the test of all rules of conduct, but he perceived that those only are happy who have their minds fixed on some object other than their own happiness, on some art or pursuit followed not as a means but as an ideal end. Aiming thus at something else they find happiness by the way. Which really means that happiness is not in itself and never can be an end; being rather a condition than an independent thing, resulting from the harmonious performance of every function under some general outward stimulus. Pursue happiness, and it vanishes; scrutinise it, and it turns to bitterness. As Blake says:—

He who bends to himself a joy  
 Does the winged life destroy;  
 But he who kisses the joy as it flies  
 Lives in eternity's sunrise.

The drivel of the pious critics over this period of Mill's life, on the publication of his Autobiography, was as disgusting as it was idiotic. The state of mind it exhibits is sufficiently intelligible to any one of fair susceptibilities, and was the natural result of over-worked brains, unexercised body, and half-starved feelings; but the sapient panderers to Christian Bumbledom would assert it to be the consequence of an irreligious training, and parsons gravely warned their congregations against the terrible evils of philosophy

divorced from godly wisdom. The fact that Mill found purely natural remedies and consolations, without aid from supernatural sources, completely disposes of all such slaving folly.

Mill now entered into the business of life with fresh vigour, and sought the society of many young thinkers quite opposed to the Utilitarian school: with Maurice, whose rare power of subtle thought was afterwards so lamentably wasted; with gifted and loveable Sterling; and lastly with Carlyle, whose Titanic nature was maturing to render him the noblest transcendental teacher of his age. From all these, and from Coleridge and the German poets and metaphysicians, he derived great profit; he saw that they asserted important truths which he had missed, and displayed the reverse side of many truths which he had made his own. And these additions to his mental outfit were not allowed to rest apart from his previous supply. "I never," says Mill, "in the course of my transition, was content to remain, for ever so short a time, confused and unsettled. When I had taken in any new idea, I could not rest until I had adjusted its relations to my old opinions, and ascertained exactly how far its effect ought to extend in modifying or superseding them."

For many years after this Mill was a prolific contributor to the *Westminster Review*, the *Examiner*, and the *London Review*, begun by Sir William Molesworth, with Mill as editor, but amalgamated with the *Westminster* after an independent existence of one year, and to other liberal organs. Of these contributions the most valuable (such as "Corporation and Church Property," "Poetry and its Varieties," "Civilisation," "Armand Carrel," "Alfred de Vigny," "Bentham," and "Coleridge,") have been republished under the title of "Dissertations and Discussions." His first great work, the "System of Logic," appeared in 1843. In 1844 appeared the "Essays on Some Unsettled Questions of Political Economy," which were followed in 1848 by the "Principles of Political Economy." But besides the enormous labour involved in the composition of these works, itself additional to his official duties, Mill found time to take an active part in the political work of the day. His letters to Fonblanque forcibly exhibit the boldness and honesty of his political opinions. At that time he was favourable to the ballot and was assiduous in promoting its success; although in later years he altered his views on

that subject. His enmity to the aristocratic part of our Constitution was bitter and intense. He regarded it as doubly debasing : first, as elevating birth above ability, and secondly, as constituting riches, hereditary or acquired, the almost exclusive sources of political importance, and riches, or the signs of riches, the only objects of respect. But he was not one of those who are Radicals because they are not lords ; he belonged to that school of "Philosophical Radicals," which is fast dying out ; "those who in politics observe the common manner of philosophers—that is, who, when they are discussing means, begin by considering the end, and, when they desire to produce effects, think of causes."

Mill's acquaintance with the lady who subsequently became his wife, began in 1830, when he was twenty-five and she twenty-three. Mrs. Taylor was the wife of a London merchant, "married at an early age to a most upright, brave, and honourable man of liberal opinions and good education, but without the intellectual or artistic tastes which would have made him a companion for her, though a steady and affectionate friend, for whom she had true esteem and the strongest affection through life, and whom she most deeply lamented when dead." She was, says Mill, a beauty and a wit, with an air of natural distinction felt by all who approached her : and, if we are to accept his panegyric in the Autobiography, about the most extraordinary person, male or female, that ever lived. "She possessed in combination, the qualities which in all other persons whom I had known I had been only too happy to find singly. In her complete emancipation from every kind of superstition (including that which attributes a pretended perfection to the order of nature and the universe), and an earnest protest against many things which are still part of the established constitution of society, resulted not from *the hard intellect*, but from strength of noble and elevated *feeling*, and co-existed with a highly reverential nature. In general spiritual characteristics, as well as in temperament and organisation, I have often compared her, as she was at this time, to Shelley ; but in thought and intellect, Shelley, so far as his powers were developed in his short life, was but a child compared with what she ultimately became. Alike in the highest regions of speculations, and in the smaller practical concerns of daily life, her mind was the same perfect instrument, piercing to the very heart and marrow of the matter ;

always seizing the essential idea or principle.....She was greatly the superior of us both (Carlyle and himself)—more a poet than he, more a thinker than I—her mind and nature included his and infinitely more.” She might have been a consummate artist, or orator, or political ruler; and to her Mill owed all that was best in his writings. Her moral excellencies were not less than her mental endowments; she possessed the passion of justice, boundless generosity, inexhaustible lovingness, absolute simplicity and sincerity, lofty pride and genuine modesty.

Were it not that some ill-advised advocates of the equality of women with men have employed this eulogium as a decisive proof of their theory, we should be inclined to let it pass, trusting to the reader's discrimination to decide how far truth and unconscious exaggeration are mingled; but now a protest, however painful, must be made against it. If Harriet Mill's mind included Carlyle's, and infinitely more, and dwarfed Shelley's to child-like proportions, one naturally asks why she has left no monumental work behind her? Mill's reply is eminently unsatisfactory: she preferred to incite other minds, and to suggest truths for them to elaborate. But surely if her genius was creative—and unless it was the eulogium is necessarily overstrained—she could not have resisted its impulse, and its reflection in the minds of others would not have been sufficient. Besides, she could not have originated all that was best in Mill's writings, for the “Liberty” and the “Subjection of Women” written under her immediate influence, although splendid liberal essays, are scarcely destined to immortality, as he supposed they were, because of the conjunction in them of her mind with his; while the “Logic,” which “owed little to her except in minuter matters of composition,” and the “Examination of Hamilton” written after her death, are just the two great works by which his name will be handed down to posterity. It would seem that with the quickness of a clever woman she appropriated his conclusions, and transfused them with her own emotional fervour; in fact, adorned them after their origination in Mill's logical mind. And that he thought otherwise is nothing to the purpose.

A philosopher is as liable as another man to have his judgment warped by attachment to a woman; and is as likely to conceive an exalted notion of her mental endowments, if she have any at all, as any Strephon is to form a violently exaggerated estimate of the radiant beauties of his

Chloe. And as Mill's mother was apparently a commonplace woman, and as he mixed but little in general society, and probably met very few cultured clever women, it was quite natural that he should succumb to what a worldlier man would have appreciated more justly. Harriet Mill was undoubtedly a fine noble woman, with considerable mental powers, but it is absolutely impossible that she could have been all that her adoring husband represents her. In saying this, however, we have no desire to pre-judge the great question of the mental relations of sex.

Mr. Taylor dying in 1849, Mill married the widow in April, 1851. Some pious and pharisaic reviewers of the *Autobiography* pretended to sniff the taint of moral leprosy in this long intimacy and subsequent union. Nice men with nasty ideas, to use Swift's bitter phrase, are for ever on the alert to detect the odour of congenial carrion, and are naturally sceptical as to the possibility of a pure friendship between man and woman: for the prurience of their own minds makes them regard every woman but as a potential bed-fellow. But Mill himself, whom we deem above deliberate lying, says that both Mrs. Taylor and himself would rather have foregone for ever the privilege of complete union than have owed it to the premature death of one for whom he had the sincerest respect and she the strongest affection. After seven years and a half of perfect happiness, the hand of Death severed these two. Mrs. Mill died at Avignon on November 3rd, 1858, and over her grave was placed by the bereaved husband one of the noblest and most pathetic epitaphs ever penned: "Her great and loving heart, her noble soul, her clear, powerful, original, and comprehensive intellect, made her the guide and support, the instructor in wisdom, and the example in goodness, as she was the sole earthly delight, of those who had the happiness to belong to her. As earnest for all public good as she was generous and devoted to all who surrounded her, her influence has been felt in many of the greatest improvements of the age, and will be in those still to come. Were there even a few hearts and intellects like hers, this earth would already become the hoped-for heaven." But although bereaved of his supreme joy, John Stuart Mill did not foolishly repine, or indulge in hysterical expostulations with destiny, but endeavoured to make the best of his remaining life and to work for her purposes with such diminished strength as

could be "derived from thoughts of her and communion with her memory." "Her memory," he wrote, "is to me a religion, and her approbation the standard by which, summing up as it does all worthiness, I endeavour to regulate my life." Much of his after life was spent at Avignon, in a cottage which he bought there; and daily he visited the grave of his dead wife, to seek spiritual consolation and strength from communion with her memory. And assuredly all generous minds will sympathise with his grief and admire the sincerity and depth of his love; but none the less will they regret that this emotional experience should have been permitted to bias his intellect and make him throw the whole weight of desire and aspiration in the scale of philosophic judgment, in favour of the shadowy and illusive doctrine of immortal life. Not, indeed, as we shall hereafter see, that Mill declined himself in favour of immortality; but he pronounced the hope of it to be not unphilosophical, while perceiving that no single fact could be adduced which indicated even its bare possibility.

(To be continued.)

# HEROES AND MARTYRS

OF

## FREETHOUGHT.

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### 3.—JOHN STUART MILL (*Concluded*).

**J**AMES MILL died on the 23rd of June, 1836. Pulmonary consumption had reduced him to the last stage of debility ; but until the last few days of his life there was no apparent abatement of intellectual vigour, nor did the approach of death cause the smallest wavering in his convictions on the subject of religion. He died without supernatural expectations, and without regret, except at being deprived of the possibility of effecting further good in the world. Hitherto John Stuart Mill had been dominated by his father's intellectual power and force of character ; but henceforth he was free to express more fully his dissent from many of his father's views. The result was that he became wider-minded, more receptive, and more catholic, as attentive readers of his writings may easily perceive.

Until the commencement of his brief Parliamentary career Mill's life was uneventful ; but he was ceaselessly occupied with some good work. In 1851 appeared the celebrated essay, "On Liberty," which has been termed the Radical's Bible ; in 1853 the "Utilitarianism," that most luminous, although scarcely complete, exposition of Utilitarian ethics ; and in 1865 "Auguste Comte and Positivism," which was the first important introduction of Comte to English students ; and the "Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy," which, after the "Logic," is Mill's greatest work. In 1867 appeared the "Inaugural Address" delivered before the students at the University of St. Andrew's on the occasion of his installation as Lord Rector. Most of his time was spent at Avignon after the decease of his

wife in 1858, and there he composed the chief part of these works. His taste for natural scenery and pedestrian travels was, however, not deprived of gratification. Excursions were made into many parts of Europe, of which the longest and most eventful was taken in 1862 to Greece. In December of the same year he returned to London, and spent Christmas week with Grote.

At that time England was intensely excited by the great contest in America between North and South; the aristocracy and their friends sympathising warmly with the slaveholding Southern States, and strongly desirous to intervene on their behalf, while the democracy sided with the Northern States, because they saw that secession meant an indefinite continuance of slavery, and union its speedy abolition. Mill naturally threw his whole heart and mind into the cause of the North. "He is in good health and spirits," wrote Grote to Sir G. C. Lewis after the visit just mentioned, "violent against the South in this American struggle; embracing heartily the extreme Abolitionist views, and thinking about little else in regard to the general question." His essay in *Fraser's Magazine* on "The Contest in America" powerfully promoted just views of that tremendous conflict, and assisted to prevent any intervention by our rulers on behalf of the pretended right of the Southern States to secede from the Union. Mill looked straight at the momentous question ultimately at issue—whether eight millions of human beings were to exist under freedom or slavery. He clearly saw that the success of the seceding States "would be a victory for the powers of evil, which would give courage to the enemies of progress, and damp the spirits of its friends all over the civilised world; while it would create a formidable military power, grounded on the worst and most anti-social form of the tyranny of men over men, and, by destroying for a long time the prestige of the great Democratic Republic, would give to all the privileged classes of Europe a false confidence, probably only to be extinguished in blood."

Early in 1865 some electors of Westminster proposed to Mill that he should become a candidate for the representation of their borough in parliament. This proposal at once excited the hopes of the philosophical radicals throughout the country, and an election committee was forthwith formed, such as never before or since sat for such a purpose. It included such men as Professors Masson, Goldwin Smith, Huxley, Fawcett, Beesly, Cairnes, and De Morgan; J. A.

Roebuck, Sir J. Trelawny, Rev. C. Kingsley, Peter Taylor, J. Stansfeld, Edwin Chadwick, Dr. Lankester, Herbert Spencer, Charles Buxton, Sir David Brewster, George Grote, Lord Amberley, Dean Stanley, Rev. F. D. Maurice, W. E. Gladstone, W. E. Forster, Sir John Bowring, Grant Duff, Sir John Lubbock, Sir Charles Lyell, John Ruskin, George Macdonald, Edward Miall, Serjeant Parry, Dr. Drysdale, Dr. Brewer, and Charles Westerton. Mill consented to become a candidate for the representation of Westminster, on condition that not a single penny of the election expenses should be borne by himself. He justly regarded a seat in parliament as purchased, if secured only by a large personal outlay of money. Fortunately subscriptions poured in with desired rapidity. At first Mill objected to deliver any addresses, but after a while his objection was surmounted by the representations of his committee, and it was arranged that he should address a meeting of his chief supporters at St. James' Hall. The platform was thronged with representative men from every school of philosophy, and the first great triumph was achieved. In his practical ignorance of public meetings, Mill wandered through the building on to the platform, without his committee, and sat alone, looking upon the scene, until a zealous friend withdrew him to the room in which his committee were assembled. Dr. Lancaster presided, and introduced the world-renowned philosopher in a brief but eloquent speech. Unused to a public appearance, a slight nervousness was apparent in him, but his manner was calm and appreciative; the delivery quick; the words terse, incisive; the matter condensed philosophy. By no blandishment did he court popularity; he rather repelled it by a chastened reserve, the boldness with which popular errors were antagonised, and the solid ground that he was sought and did not seek. Other meetings were held and attended by representatives of the United States, and of almost every country in Europe. Mill frankly replied to any questions that were put to him, except on one subject only, that of his religious opinions, on which he determined to remain absolutely silent. The result was that he was elected as member for Westminster, and took his seat in parliament, to the intense satisfaction of every true Liberal in the country. That seat he retained until the general election of 1868, when the electors of Westminster turned out the bookwriter and chose instead the bookseller; one W. H. Smith.

In the House, Mill spoke only on important questions. His speeches were such as its members were unaccustomed to. "No man in it," says Mr. G. J. Holyoake, "not a minister, or an orator like Mr. Bright, was better listened to than he was; and often, when he spoke, old stationary Tories strained their ears beyond their usual length to catch the words he spoke." It was Mill who bestowed upon the Tories the *soubriquet* of "the stupid party." When taunted with having by implication affirmed that "all Tories were stupid, Mill replied, "No, I never said that all Tories were stupid: what I said was, that if a man were stupid, he was sure to be a Tory." It is not surprising that the Tory organs after this declared Mill "a failure in parliament." His great speech on Mr. Gladstone's Reform Bill was by far the best delivered on that subject. He was the first to introduce the subject of Women's Suffrage, and thereby to elevate it to the dignity of a political question. He spoke against the prolonged suspension of Habeas Corpus in Ireland, and denounced the English mode of governing that unfortunate country with so much vigour and impetuosity that the House thenceforth almost hated him as a Fenian. He resisted the infamous proposal to indemnify the farmers, and through them the landlords, for losses sustained from the ravages of the Cattle Plague; and insisted on the duty of paying off the National Debt before our coal supplies are exhausted. Outside parliament he attended several meetings of the Reform League, and at a critical moment prevented the effusion of blood by undertaking to dissuade the working men of London from their determination to hold a demonstration in Hyde Park, despite the resolve of the government to call out the military to prevent it. But when some time after the Tory government brought in a bill to prevent public meetings in the parks, Mill formed one of a number of advanced Liberals who succeeded in defeating the Bill by talking it out at the end of the session. When the Fenian insurgent, General Burke, was condemned to death, Mill was one of the foremost in the deputation which prevailed on Lord Derby to spare his life. He was also chairman of the committee which undertook to prosecute Mr. Eyre, the governor of Jamaica, who had made a disturbance in that island, provoked in the first instance by injustice, the excuse for taking hundreds of innocent lives by military violence, and inflicting horrible atrocities upon the black population in general. The com-

mittee did not succeed in procuring the conviction of that brutal tyrant ; but, says Mill, " we had redeemed, as far as in us lay, the character of our country, by showing that there was at any rate a body of persons determined to use all the means which the law afforded to obtain justice for the injured.....and we had given an emphatic warning to those who might be tempted to similar guilt hereafter, that, though they might escape the actual sentence of a criminal tribunal, they were not safe against being put to some trouble and expense in order to avoid it." As a matter of curiosity, Mill kept some specimens of the abusive letters, almost all of them anonymous, received while these proceedings were going on. They graduated from coarse jokes, verbal and pictorial, up to threats of assassination, but were little likely to turn from his purpose one so inflexibly just and intrepid.

At the general election of 1868 Mill was rejected at Westminster in favour of Mr. W. H. Smith, the colossal bookseller. The philosopher had alienated a good many equivocal friends by his parliamentary conduct : friends who seemed to imagine that his duty was to contemplate political struggles with philosophical serenity instead of zealously joining in the fray. His persistent advocacy of such extreme opinions as that of Female Suffrage, and his energetic protest against the brutalities of Governor Eyre, had also injured his popularity. But what most damaged his reputation with the public, was his sending subscriptions to all the working class candidates, and among others to Mr. Charles Bradlaugh, a notorious Atheist, then the radical candidate for Northampton. The vilest use of this circumstance was made by unprincipled persons at Westminster ; Christian Bumbledom was aroused and incensed against this patron of Atheists ; and the consequence was that Mill withdrew from the contest defeated, but not disgraced. Grave and dignified was his farewell address to the electors, who, probably, heaved a deep sigh of satisfaction when his retreating figure announced the renewed reign of commonplace.

After his retirement from political life, Mill devoted himself again to literary work. In 1869 appeared his magnificent essay " On the Subjection of Women," the finest ever written in favour of the emancipation of half the human race. He established the " Land Tenure Reform Association," and delivered an address, as its president, in St. James' Hall, London, on the 18th of March, 1873, scarcely

two months before his death. He commenced writing for the *Examiner*, and would probably have sent frequent contributions to that journal had not death prevented him.

On the 18th of April, 1873, Mill left London for a three months' stay in Avignon. On the 5th of May he was attacked by a virulent form of erysipelas, from which, on the 8th, he died. On the 10th he was buried beside the wife whom he so fondly loved, and by whose grave he had kept the vigil of fifteen years. The marble slab placed over him bore the simple inscription, "John Stuart Mill." The nightingales amongst the umbrageous trees beneath which he walked and wrote still fill the night with music, but the ear of the master is deaf to their melodious singing. He sleeps in the dreamless grave, where the silence is unbroken evermore, and the night without morn.

#### PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS.

In person Mill was about the medium height, slender, and even frail-looking; but his constitution was naturally robust, and a wise temperance had preserved it almost unimpaired to a ripe age. His greatness and nobility could be read in the cast of his head and the lines of his face. The brow was wide, but its rare loftiness lessened the appearance of breadth. Thought had written legibly upon it and upon the whole features. Benevolence and earnestness spoke from the eyes and mouth. The whole physiognomy gave one the impression of deep wisdom and infinite patience, allied with intense seriousness. Yet tenderness hovered perceptibly over all, and made gracious the strength.

Amongst high and low, rich and poor, Mill was always the same. He was not one of those who are democrats to all above them, aristocrats to all below them. Rather his excess, if any, was of an opposite nature: a workman gained easier access to him than a princess. He always practised the social equality which he taught, and heeded no distinctions except those conferred by intellectual greatness or moral worth. The shining beauty of his character was fed by a profound moral earnestness, which repelled everything mean or base, and brought all actions affecting others to a definite ethical standard. But he was no moral prig exacting impossible goodness from those around him: no moralist was ever more tolerant of human weakness than he. He incessantly warred against evil, and spoke hard words of the oppressors of mankind, but he always allowed

for the strength of impelling circumstances. Nor was he one of those pedagogues of morality who insist on afflicting the child's mind with moral analysis and self-questioning at a time when it should live a purely outward life. He denounced the unromantic and vulgarly practical education of our day, and protested against the supposition that any catechism of moral duties could be a worthy substitute for these old tales of romance and faëry, which filled the youthful imagination with pictures of heroic men and women, whose noble example provoked emulation.

Of Mill's public spirit sufficient examples have already been given: but it remains to give a few instances of his private generosity and goodness of heart. Mr. Thornton relates that he was always surprising his friends by some fresh proof of considerate kindness. Sometimes he displayed astonishing generosity, not ostentatiously, but quietly as a matter of course. Once when Mr. Thornton was prostrated by a nervous disorder which for nearly a year incapacitated him for mental labour, Mill spared him the necessity of retiring from the service of the India House, by quietly taking the whole of Mr. Thornton's duties upon himself, in addition to his own, during the whole of that time. Many a man would peril life or limb for a friend under sudden stimulus, but the generosity of very few would last out for 12 months in the performance of mere drudgery. On another occasion he volunteered to guarantee Mr. Herbert Spencer against all loss from the publication of his great system of philosophy; not because he entirely agreed with Mr. Spencer, for there were fundamental differences between them, but because he knew that Mr. Spencer was bringing an exceptionally powerful mind to bear upon problems of the gravest importance. Difference of opinion he reckoned a slight matter while they both earnestly pursued the truth.

Mill was a Freethinker in the completest sense of the word; not a loose thinker, as Kingsley styled some pretended Freethinkers—but, to use his own words, one who “by a free communion with the thoughts and deeds of the great minds which preceded him, was inspired at once with the courage to dare all which truth and conscience require, and the modesty to weigh well the grounds of what others thought, before adopting contrary opinions of his own.” His splendid essay “On Liberty” will long continue to be a highly useful vindication of freedom of thought and discussion. Not because it contains new truths; almost every one of

**BERNARDINO TELESIO.**

**A**MONG the great Italian heretics who in the 16th century represented the growing revolt against the infallibility of Aristotle, probably none exercised a wider or deeper influence than Bernardino Telesio, born at Cosenza, in Calabria, South Italy, in the year 1509. This distinguished man received his first education under his uncle at Milan, where he acquired great proficiency in the Greek and Latin languages. He was present at the Sack of Rome in 1527, and was for some reason imprisoned for two months, besides losing all he possessed. After his liberation he went to Padua, where he assiduously studied mathematics and philosophy, having refused, it is said, the office of tutor to the Infante Philip of Spain, and also the offer of an archbishopric made to him by Pius IV. In 1535 he was received as Doctor of Philosophy in Rome, where he passed some years in the society of the learned, and where he published his two chief works on "Nature," which met with unexpected applause. Induced by the importunity of his numerous friends and admirers, he opened a school of philosophy in Naples, which soon became famous, both for the number of its pupils and for a bold, uncompromising hostility to Plato and to Aristotle as authorities on scientific questions. Telesio and his assistant professors were highly esteemed by those who were desirous of studying nature rather than dialectics, and he was patronised by several great men, particularly by Ferdinand, Duke of Nucerì. But his popularity brought upon him the envy of the "long-necked geese of the world, who are ever hissing dispraise, because their natures are little;" and his pronounced independence of mind provoked violent opposition from the orthodox teachers, especially from the monks, who loaded him and his school with calumny. His latter days were much embittered by the rancorous malignity of his opponents, and in 1588 he expired from a bilious disorder, the severity of which was increased by great domestic affliction, the old man having lost his wife and two children, one of whom was stabbed. After his death, in 1596, his works were placed on the *Index Expurgatorius* by Pope Clement VIII., notwithstanding the friendship of his predecessor for the departed philosopher.

Telesio, in language almost as clear and emphatic as Lord Bacon's, reprobated as chimerical the old method of studying nature; and he is singularly enough honourably mentioned by our great English philosopher, who exempts him from the sweeping condemnation passed on previous students of nature. In his work on the "Nature of Things," published in Latin in the year 1565, he asserts "that the construction of the world,

he urges, is the result of experience, personal and general. The law of universal causation is itself an induction, and one to which only the most advanced minds, trained in the study of physical science, have yet reached; and its warrant is the universal experience of mankind in all ages and in every clime. Every realised scientific prediction based upon it, is an additional proof of its certitude. And thus it follows that all knowledge, all reasoning, is originally inductive; seeing that the basic principle thereof is itself derived from experience.

But this law of universal causation includes no element of compulsion or necessity; Mill like Hume repudiated the notion of an occult nexus between cause and effect. We know that phenomena do occur in a particular, definite order, and our experience of the past warrants us in inferring that they will observe the same order in the future; but we are not entitled to say that they *must* do so, we know nothing of necessity or compulsion. This theory Mill applied to human volitions as well as to external nature, and triumphantly demolished the really unintelligible doctrine of Free-Will. He showed that human volitions follow regular sequences like all other phenomena, and are no exceptions to the universal order of things. This theory he employed with tremendous force against Sir William Hamilton, who rashly argued that "the only valid arguments for the existence of God, and for the immortality of the soul, rest on the ground of man's moral nature," which in turn depends, he thought, on free-will. When asked how on this principle he justifies the punishment of criminals by society, Mill replies by asking how it can be sanctioned by any other theory. Men's actions are determined by motives, amongst which the fear of punishment is one. If men can act *against* motives, punishment is disappointed of its object, and deprived of its justification; and if they cannot, the doctrine of Free-Will is necessarily false.

2. "Principles of Political Economy." This work does not, like the "Logic," include a great deal of original speculation. Adam Smith and Ricardo had propounded most of the great truths of politico-economical science before Mill's treatise was projected; but it remained for him to systematise those truths, to exhibit their relations and connections, and to apply them with matchless clearness and affluence of illustration to the concrete facts of industry. Political Economy being comparatively of recent growth, in

of course a progressive science, and before Mill's death much light was thrown on some intricate industrial problems which were only half-solved ; but that is no detraction from the merit of his achievement. There was no other man living at the time who could have written the "Principles of Political Economy" as Mill wrote it. And no one was ever readier than he to embrace any new or supplementary truths, from whatever quarter they might come, or to correct any errors discovered in his conception or exposition of the science. Mill's great advantage over all rivals consisted in this, that he was not merely a political economist, but a social philosopher and a psychologist, and therefore aware that the old political economy was but of temporary value, seeing that a new social order would necessarily overthrow the premisses which it assumes, and on which it is based. As Professor Cairnes justly observes, "Mill was not the first to treat political economy as a science, but he was the first, if not to perceive, at least to enforce, the lesson, that, just because it is a science, its conclusions carried with them no obligatory force with reference to human conduct." Mill expounded the Principles of Political Economy as understood in his time, but he repudiated their finality, and in his chapter on "The Future of the Labouring Classes" suggested far-reaching possibilities of social improvement, such as mere political economists scarcely dreamed of.

3. "Considerations on Representative Government." A philosophical apology for representative government as the noblest and most beneficial form of political organisation. It is *the* treatise, *par excellence*, on this subject. Although no great original truths are propounded, as indeed was hardly possible on such a well-worn theme, there in an abundance of unobvious and important minor truths suggestively treated. Mill strenuously supports the full representation of minorities as a counteractant to the dangerous tyranny of majorities.

4. "Utilitarianism": a reprint of some articles which originally appeared in *Fraser's Magazine*, and therefore not a systematic treatise. It, however, exhibits Utilitarianism in a manner which had never before been attempted, and still continues by far the best extant book on that subject. The chapter on "The Connection Between Justice and Utility," is one of the finest specimens of Mill's searching analysis and trenchant logic. Utilitarianism is broadly defined as "the creed which accepts as the foundation of morals, Utility, or the Greatest Happiness Principle, holds

that actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness, wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness. By happiness is intended pleasure, and the absence of pain; by unhappiness, pain, and the privation of pleasure."

5. "On Liberty." A splendid essay in defence of liberty of thought and discussion, and of individuality as the chief element of human progress; a defence supremely necessary in these latter days when the tyranny of majorities is substituted for the tyranny of a few, and when individuality is deemed eccentricity, and daring to think for oneself, and to hold definite opinions contrary to those of the majority, is thought to be flying in face of the common sense of one's fellow creatures. Those who claim to suppress or retard the propagation of any principle, arrogate to themselves infallibility; for unless they be infallible they may be wrong in their decisions. Infallibility, says Mill, "is not the feeling sure of a doctrine, but the undertaking to decide that question *for others*, without allowing them to hear what can be said on the contrary side. And I denounce and reprobate this pretension not the less, if put forth on the side of my most solemn convictions." Against the wretched injustice of our legal courts, which refused to accept as veracious the unsworn testimony of an Atheist, no one ever spoke more strongly than Mill; and no one ever exposed with such clearness the contemptible absurdity which this refusal involved. "The rule is suicidal, and cuts away its own foundations. Under pretence that Atheists must be liars, it admits the testimony of all Atheists who are willing to lie, and rejects only those who brave the obloquy of publicly confessing a detested creed rather than affirm a falsehood. A rule thus self-convicted of absurdity, so far as regards its professed purpose, can be kept in force only as a badge of hatred, a relic of persecution; a persecution, too, having the peculiarity, that the qualification for undergoing it, is the being clearly proved not to deserve it."

6. "The Subjection of Women." A noble essay, full of fine thought and exalted feeling, in defence of the rights of one half the human race; written to prove "that the principle which regulates the existing social relations between the sexes—the legal subordination of one sex to the other—is wrong in itself, and now one of the chief hindrances to human improvement; and that it ought to be replaced by a principle of perfect equality, admitting no power or

privilege on the one side, nor disability on the other." This position is supported by an overwhelming and irrefutable array of argument. When Mill died the women of England lost their mightiest champion. No survivor can wield his bow.

7. "An Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy." A work partly constructive, but mainly polemical, and directed against the foremost champion of British intuitional metaphysics. Being a thorough-going experientialist, Mill had the opportunity of vindicating the metaphysics of his school against Hamilton's attacks, and of exposing the self-contradictions, misconceptions, and false reasonings, which abounded in the Scotch philosopher's exposition of his own philosophy of mind; and he performed his task with a bold completeness, which has won the highest admiration of all competent judges. Hamilton's reputation as a thinker has considerably declined since Mill's tremendous onslaught.

It was in this work that Mill wrote that startling passage which scared all the timid metaphysicians and theologians in England. Mr. Mansell, a disciple of Hamilton, and himself a powerful thinker and keen dialectician, adopted his master's doctrine of the relativity of human knowledge, and its logical consequence, that the moral attributes of God are unknowable by us; but declared, notwithstanding, that it is our duty to bow down in worship before this Being, and to call him good. Against this profoundly immoral doctrine Mill made the following emphatic protest: "If, instead of the 'glad tidings' that there exists a Being in whom all the excellences which the highest human mind can conceive, exist in a degree inconceivable to us, I am informed that the world is ruled by a Being whose attributes are infinite; but what they are we cannot learn, nor what are the principles of his government, except that 'the highest human morality which we are capable of conceiving' does not sanction them; convince me of it, and I will bear my fate as I may. But when I am told that I must believe this, and at the same time call this Being by the names which express and affirm the highest human morality, I say in plain terms that I will not. Whatever power such a Being may have over me, there is one thing which he shall not do: he shall not compel me to worship him. I will call no being good who is not what I mean when I apply that epithet to my fellow-creatures; and if such a Being can

sentence me to hell for not so calling him, to hell I will go."

8. "Auguste Comte and Positivism." This work was the first important introduction of Comte to English students of philosophy. Mill does full justice to the French philosopher's speculations, and pronounces his own belief in the possibility of the Religion of Humanity which Comte conceived; but rejects his later aberrations as worthless. Many English Positivists have spoken disrespectfully of Mill's performance. With the blind zeal of implicit discipleship, they denounce his refusal to accompany their master in all the vagaries in which he indulged after the temporary madness which shook his noble mind. Just because they value Comte for his least valuable utterances, there was none amongst them who could have given so luminous an exposition of his great speculations as that which Mill put forth.

9. "Dissertations and Discussions." The three volumes published under this title contain articles on a great variety of subjects, reprinted from the *Edinburgh, Westminster*, and other *Reviews*, too numerous for citation. All of them deserve careful study; they exhibit the many-sidedness of Mill's mind better than his severer treatises, and contain a great number of suggestive thoughts upon almost every topic dealt with.

10. "Three Essays on Religion: on Nature, the Utility of Religion, and Theism." This work is posthumous. The two first essays were prepared for publication, and are marked by all the author's boldness of treatment and vigour and clearness of expression; but the last essay on Theism is not fully elaborated, is faulty in construction, sometimes self-contradictory, and most imperfect in expression; in fact, little more than rude jottings, such as he would never have published himself. It is almost questionable whether his executrix would not have exercised a wiser prudence in reserving this essay from publication, notwithstanding the possible discontent which such a course might have provoked. It was written ten years after Mrs. Mill's death, and probably was born of sorrow. That long vigil at the tomb of his wife had somewhat dimmed the old perspicacious vision, and diminished the ancient strength.

11. "Autobiography." From which much of the present sketch has been extracted; invaluable as an accurate delineation of its author's mental history. In addition to this work, we have derived some facts from the notices which appeared in the *Examiner* after Mill's death.

## MILL'S OPINIONS ON RELIGION.

That Mill was no Christian is of course patent to every observer. The *Daily Telegraph*, and other papers which reviewed the "Essays on Religion," affirmed that he would have reached that pitch of perfection if his life had been long enough spared ; but, as a matter of fact, his premature decease at the tender age of sixty-seven rendered that assertion incapable of proof. For the character of Christ he had a most profound admiration ; he held the Prophet of Nazareth to be "in the very first rank of the men of sublime genius of whom our species can boast ;" but Christian morality he considered as in great part a protest against Paganism ; its ideal being negative rather than positive, passive rather than active, Abstinence from Evil rather than energetic Pursuit of Good ; and as falling far below the best of the ancients in holding out the hope of heaven, and the threat of hell, as the appointed and appropriate motives to a virtuous life. "What little recognition," he wrote in the essay on Liberty, "the idea of obligation to the public obtains in modern morality, is derived from Greek and Roman sources, not from Christian ; as, even in the morality of private life, whatever exists of magnanimity, high-mindedness, personal dignity, even the sense of honour, is derived from the purely human, not the religious, part of our education, and never could have grown out of a standard of ethics in which the only worth, professedly recognised, is that of obedience."

On the subject of the existence of a God, Mill never held any positive opinion ; practically he was without God in life, a utilitarian Secularist. Nevertheless, the emotional tension after his wife's death did produce in him a shadowy supernatural hope. He imagined that he saw some relevancy in the Design Argument, although he admits that at the best it affords but a probability in favour of creation by intelligence. Afterwards he further admits that this probability would be greatly attenuated by the admission of the Darwinian theory of Natural Selection. So that this God is but the shadow of a shade. How different is all this from the contemptuous reference to "specious but inconclusive analogies derived from human agency and design," in the fine essay on the Utility of Religion, composed when the author was in his vigorous prime !

But, although his excited imagination lent wings and feet

to this lame argument, Mill spurned those specious subtleties by which theologians endeavour to prove God at once good and omnipotent. He saw that Nature is hard and cruel, gazing with the same relentless eyes upon fruitful fields and desert wastes; that she takes the pain of the whole world to quicken the lust of cruelty in her veins; that her teeming loins for ever travail with new life that may wrestle with the old and clear a slaughterous way; and that "not even on the most distorted and contracted theory of good which ever was framed by religious or philosophical fanaticism, can the government of Nature be made to resemble the work of a being at once good and omnipotent." Revelation he rejected absolutely, because it must be supported by miracles, in which, the more the modern mind advances, the more it refuses to believe.

The doctrine of immortality he deemed incapable of proof or disproof, but the expectation of it to be not altogether unphilosophical; which is surely a most surprising conclusion. It must be irrational and demoralising to found expectations upon the complete absence of evidential facts. Let us hope that Mill's promised Correspondence will throw additional light on the state of his mind in reference to this subject. He would never have reasoned thus in his days of maturity. Indeed he reasons quite differently in concluding the essay on the Utility of Religion, where he affirms his belief that a future life is held as consolatory because the lives of men and women on this earth are made so full of pain and barren of pleasure, and that, in a happier condition of human life, not annihilation but immortality might be the burdensome idea. How true is it, as Feuerbach says, that supernatural longings beget and maintain supernatural hopes, which without them would perish. If Mrs. Mill had outlived her husband, the passionate yearning for communion with her spirit would not have wrought so terribly upon his mind, and so warped his judgment.

Mill's only religion, after all, was the Religion of Humanity. In the review of Comte's philosophy he had affirmed the possibility of such a religion; in the essay on the Utility of Religion he went further. "The essence of religion," he there wrote, "is the strong and earnest direction of the emotions and desires towards an ideal object, recognised as of the highest excellence, and as rightfully paramount over all selfish objects of desire. This condition is fulfilled by the Religion of Humanity in as eminent a

degree, and in as high a sense, as by the supernatural religions even in their best manifestations, and far more so than in any of their others.....The sense of unity with mankind, and a deep feeling for the general good, may be cultivated into a sentiment and a principle capable of fulfilling every important function of religion, and itself justly entitled to that name. I will now further maintain, that it is not only capable of fulfilling those functions, but would fulfil them better than any form whatever of supernaturalism."

This Religion of Humanity, Mill argues, possesses three immeasurable advantages over all forms of supernatural religion. First, it is disinterested; its ideal object being not one's own individual salvation but the highest welfare of our common species; and thus is calculated to strengthen the unselfish and weaken the purely selfish feelings of our nature. Secondly, it does not necessitate mental torpidity or positive intellectual twist; a defect inherent in every other religion the world has yet seen. Thirdly, it will enforce a sense of the tremendous importance of righteousness, not by appealing to one's posthumous interests, but by vividly showing how every single unrighteous act inevitably bears evil fruit through all subsequent time, never to be recalled by any contrition or remorse. And when the influences of authority, education, and public opinion, which now give strength to theological sanctions, are employed to support this purely natural religion, it will take a hold upon the feelings unequalled even by the most powerful religion that has ever yet borne sway. Life will always be girt round with mystery; a small island in an infinite sea of space and time. But if the individual life is brief, that of the race is practically immortal. "Its indefinite duration is practically equivalent to endlessness; and being combined with indefinite capability of improvement, it offers to the imagination and sympathies a large enough object to satisfy any reasonable demand for grandeur of aspiration. If such an object appears small to a mind accustomed to dream of infinite and eternal beatitudes, it will expand into far other dimensions when those baseless fancies shall have receded into the past."