

Queen Mab

Percy Bysshe Shelley



1821

Exported from Wikisource on May 3, 2021

Queen Mab.



BY

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY.



London:

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY W. CLARK,
201, STRAND.

1821.

Contents

(not listed in original)

1. [Canto I](#)
2. [Canto II](#)
3. [Canto III](#)
4. [Canto IV](#)
5. [Canto V](#)
6. [Canto VI](#)
7. [Canto VII](#)
8. [Canto VIII](#)
9. [Canto IX](#)

[Notes](#)

[Reply to the Anti-Matrimonial Hypothesis](#)

1. [Chapter I](#)
2. [Chapter II](#)

Queen Mab



I.



How wonderful is Death,
Death and his brother Sleep!
One, pale as yonder waning moon
With lips of lurid blue;
The other, rosy as the morn
When throned on ocean's wave
It blushes o'er the world:
Yet both so passing wonderful!

Hath then the gloomy Power
Whose reign is in the tainted sepulchres
 Seized on her sinless soul?
Must then that peerless form
Which love and admiration cannot view
Without a beating heart, those azure veins
Which steal like streams along a field of snow,
 That lovely outline, which is fair
 As breathing marble, perish?
 Must putrefaction's breath

Leave nothing of this heavenly sight
 But loathsomeness and ruin?
Spare nothing but a gloomy theme,
On which the lightest heart might moralize?
Or is it only a sweet slumber
 Stealing o'er sensation,
Which the breath of roseate morning
 Chaseth into darkness?
 Will Ianthe wake again,
And give that faithful bosom joy
Whose sleepless spirit waits to catch
Light, life, and rapture from her smile?

Yes! she will wake again,
Although her glowing limbs are motionless,
 And silent those sweet lips,
 Once breathing eloquence
That might have soothed a tyger's rage,

Or thawed the cold heart of a conqueror.

Her dewy eyes are closed,
And on their lids, whose texture fine
Scarce hides the dark blue orbs beneath,
The baby Sleep is pillowed:
Her golden tresses shade
The bosom's stainless pride,
Curling like tendrils of the parasite
Around a marble column.

Hark! whence that rushing sound?
'Tis like the wondrous strain
That round a lonely ruin swells,

Which, wandering on the echoing shore,
The enthusiast hears at evening:
'Tis softer than the west wind's sigh;
'Tis wilder than the unmeasured notes
Of that strange lyre whose strings
The genii of the breezes sweep:
Those lines of rainbow light
Are like the moonbeams when they fall
Through some cathedral window, but the tints
Are such as may not find
Comparison on earth.

Behold the chariot of the Fairy Queen!
Celestial coursers paw the unyielding air;
Their filmy pennons at her word they furl,

And stop obedient to the reins of light:
 These the Queen of Spells drew in,
 She spread a charm around the spot,
And leaning graceful from the ethereal car,
 Long did she gaze, and silently,
 Upon the slumbering maid.

Oh! not the visioned poet in his dreams,
When silvery clouds float through the wildered brain,
When every sight of lovely, wild, and grand,
 Astonishes, enraptures, elevates,
 When fancy, at a glance, combines
 The wondrous and the beautiful,—
So bright, so fair, so wild a shape
 Hath ever yet beheld,

As that which reined the coursers of the air,
And poured the magic of her gaze
 Upon the maiden's sleep.

 The broad and yellow moon
 Shone dimly through her form—
That form of faultless symmetry;
The pearly and pellucid car
 Moved not the moonlight's line:
 'Twas not an earthly pageant:
Those who had looked upon the sight,
 Passing all human glory,
 Saw not the yellow moon,

Saw not the mortal scene,
Heard not the night-wind's rush,
Heard not an earthly sound,
Saw but the fairy pageant,
Heard but the heavenly strains
That filled the lonely dwelling.

The Fairy's frame was slight, yon fibrous cloud,
That catches but the palest tinge of even,
And which the straining eye can hardly seize
When melting into eastern twilight's shadow,
Were scarce so thin, so slight; but the fair star
That gems the glittering coronet of morn,
Sheds not a light so mild, so powerful,
As that which, bursting from the Fairy's form,
Spread a purpureal halo round the scene,
Yet with an undulating motion,
Swayed to her outline gracefully.

From her celestial car
The Fairy Queen descended,
And thrice she waved her wand
Circed with wreaths of amaranth:
Her thin and misty form
Moved with the moving air,
And the clear silver tones,
As thus she spoke, were such
As are unheard by all but gifted ear.

FAIRY.

Stars! your balmiest influence shed!

Elements! your wrath suspend!

Sleep, Ocean, in the rocky bounds

That circle thy domain!

Let not a breath be seen to stir

Around yon grass-grown ruin's height,

Let even the restless gossamer

Sleep on the moveless air!

Soul of Ianthe! thou,

Judged alone worthy of the envied boon,

That waits the good and the sincere; that waits

Those who have struggled, and with resolute will

Vanquished earth's pride and meanness, bursts the chains,

The icy chains of custom, and have shone

The day-stars of their age;—Soul of Ianthe!

Awake! arise!

Sudden arose

Ianthe's Soul; it stood

All beautiful in naked purity,

The perfect semblance of its bodily frame.

Instinct with inexpressible beauty and grace,

Each stain of earthliness

Had passed away, it reassumed

Its native dignity, and stood
Immortal amid ruin.

Upon the couch the body lay
Wrapt in the depth of slumber:
Its features were fixed and meaningless,
Yet animal life was there,
And every organ yet performed
Its natural functions: 'twas a sight
Of wonder to behold the body and soul.
The self-same lineaments, the same
Marks of identity were there:
Yet, oh, how different! One aspires to Heaven,
Pants for its sempiternal heritage,
And ever-changing, ever-rising still,
Wantons in endless being.
The other, for a time the unwilling sport
Of circumstance and passion, struggles on;
Fleets through its sad duration rapidly:
Then like an useless and worn-out machine,
Rots, perishes, and passes.

FAIRY.

Spirit! who hast dived so deep;
Spirit! who hast soared so high;

Thou the fearless, thou the mild,
Accept the boon thy worth hath earned,
Ascend the car with me.

SPIRIT.

Do I dream? Is this new feeling
a visioned ghost of slumber?
If indeed I am a soul,
A free, a disembodied soul,
Speak again to me.

FAIRY.

I am the Fairy MAB: to me 'tis given
The wonders of the human world to keep:
The secrets of the immeasurable past,
In the unfailing consciences of men,
Those stern, unflattering chroniclers, I find:
The future, from the causes which arise
In each event, I gather: not the sting
Which retributive memory implants
In the hard bosom of the selfish man;
Nor that extatic and exulting throb
Which virtue's votary feels when he sums up
The thoughts and actions of a well-spent day,

Are unforeseen, unregistered by me:
And it is yet permitted me, to rend
The veil of mortal frailty, that the spirit
Clothed in its changeless purity, may know
How soonest to accomplish the great end

For which it hath its being, and may taste
That peace, which in the end all life will share.
This is the meed of virtue; happy Soul,
Ascend the car with me!

The chains of earth's immurement
Fell from Ianthe's spirit;
They shrank and break like bandages of straw
Beneath a wakened giant's strength.
She knew her glorious change,
And felt in apprehension uncontrolled
New raptures opening round:
Each day-dream of her mortal life,
Each frenzied vision of the slumbers
That closed each well-spent day,
Seemed now to meet reality.

The Fairy and the Soul proceeded;
The silver clouds departed;
And as the car of magic they ascended,
Again the speechless music swelled,
Again the coursers of the air
Unfurled their azure pennons, and the Queen

Shaking the beamy reins
Bade them pursue their way.

The magic car moved on.
The night was fair, and countless stars
Studded heaven's dark blue vault,—
Just o'er the eastern wave
Peeped the first faint smile of morn:—

The magic car moved on—
From the celestial hoofs
The atmosphere in flaming sparkles flew,
And where the burning wheels
Eddied above the mountain's loftiest peak,
Was traced a line of lightning.
Now it flew far above a rock,
The utmost verge of earth,
The rival of the Andes, whose dark brow
Lowered o'er the silver sea.

Far, far below the chariot's path,
Calm as a slumbering babe,
Tremendous Ocean lay.
The mirror of its stillness shewed
The pale and waning stars,
The chariot's fiery track,
And the grey light of morn
Tinging those fleecy clouds
That canopied the dawn.

Seemed it, that the chariot's way
Lay through the midst of an immense concave,
Radiant with million constellations, tinged
 With shades of infinite colour,
 And semicircled with a belt
 Flashing incessant meteors.

The magic car moved on.
As they approached their goal
The coursers seemed to gather speed;
The sea no longer was distinguished; earth

Appeared a vast and shadowy sphere;
 The sun's unclouded orb
 Rolled through the black concave;
 Its rays of rapid light
Parted around the chariot's swifter course,
And fell, like ocean's feathery spray
 Dashed from the boiling surge
 Before a vessel's prow.

The magic car moved on.
Earth's distant orb appeared
The smallest light that twinkles in the heaven;
 Whilst round the chariot's way
 Innumerable systems rolled,
 And countless spheres diffused
 An ever-varying glory.
It was a sight of wonder: some

Were horned like the crescent moon;
Some shed a mild and silver beam
Like Hesperus o'er the western sea;
Some dash'd athwart with trains of flame,
Like worlds to death and ruin driven;
Some shone like suns, and as the chariot passed,
Eclipsed all other light.

Spirit of Nature! here!
In this interminable wilderness
Of worlds, at whose immensity
Even soaring fancy staggers,
Here is thy fitting temple.
Yet not the lightest leaf

That quivers to the passing breeze
Is less instinct with thee:
Yet not the meanest worm
That lurks in graves and fattens on the dead
Less shares thy eternal breath.
Spirit of Nature! thou!
Imperishable as this scene,
Here is thy fitting temple.

II.



IF solitude hath ever led thy steps
To the wild ocean's echoing shore,
 And thou hast lingered there,
 Until the sun's broad orb
Seemed resting on the burnished wave,
 Thou must have marked the lines
Of purple gold, that motionless
 Hung o'er the sinking sphere:
Thou must have marked the billowy clouds
Edged with intolerable radiancy
 Towering like rocks of jet
 Crowned with a diamond wreath.
 And yet there is a moment,
 When the sun's highest point
Peeps like a star o'er ocean's western edge,
When those far clouds of feathery gold,
 Shaded with deepest purple, gleam
 Like islands on a dark blue sea;

Then has thy fancy soared above the earth,
And furled its wearied wing
Within the Fairy's fane.

Yet not the golden islands
Gleaming in yon flood of light,

Nor the feathery curtains
Stretching o'er the sun's bright couch,
Nor the burnished ocean waves
Paving that gorgeous dome,
So fair, so wonderful a sight
As Mab's ethereal palace could afford.
Yet likest evening's vault, that faery Hall!
As Heaven, low resting on the wave, it spread
Its floors of flashing light,
Its vast and azure dome,
Its fertile golden islands
Floating on a silver sea;
Whilst suns their mingling beamings darted
Through clouds of circumambient darkness,
And pearly battlements around
Looked o'er the immense of Heaven.
The magic car no longer moved.
The Fairy and the Spirit
Entered the Hall of Spells:
Those golden clouds
That rolled in glittering billows
Beneath the azure canopy

With the ethereal footsteps, trembled not:
 The light and crimson mists,
Floating to strains of thrilling melody
 Through that unearthly dwelling,
Yielded to every movement of the will.
Upon their passive swell the Spirit leaned,
And, for the varied bliss that pressed around,
 Used not the glorious privilege
 Of virtue and of wisdom.

 Spirit! the Fairy said,
And pointed to the gorgeous dome,
 This is a wondrous sight
 And mocks all human grandeur;
But, were it virtue's only meed, to dwell
In a celestial palace, all resigned
To pleasurable impulses, immured
Within the prison of itself, the will
Of changeless nature would be unfulfilled.
Learn to make others happy. Spirit, come!
This is thine high reward:—the past shall rise;
Thou shalt behold the present; I will teach
 The secrets of the future.

 The Fairy and the Spirit
Approached the overhanging battlement.—
 Below lay stretched the universe!
 There, far as the remotest line
 That bounds imagination's flight,

Countless and unending orbs
In mazy motion intermingled,
Yet still fulfilled immutably
Eternal nature's law.
Above, below, around
The circling systems formed
A wilderness of harmony;
Each with undeviating aim,
In eloquent silence, through the depths of space
Pursued its wondrous way.

There was a little light
That twinkled in the misty distance:
None but a spirit's eye
Might ken that rolling orb;
None but a spirit's eye,
And in no other place
But that celestial dwelling, might behold
Each action of this earth's inhabitants.

But matter, space, and time
In those aerial mansions cease to act;
And all-prevailing wisdom, when it reaps
The harvest of its excellence, o'erbonds
Those obstacles, of which an earthly soul
Fears to attempt the conquest.

The Fairy pointed to the earth.
The Spirit's intellectual eye
Its kindred beings recognized.

The thronging thousands, to a passing view,
Seemed like an anthill's citizens.

How wonderful! that even
The passions, prejudices, interests,
That sway the meanest being, the weak touch
That moves the finest nerve,
And in one human brain
Causes the faintest thought, becomes a link
In the great chain of nature.

Behold, the Fairy cried.
Palmyra's ruined palaces!—
Behold! where grandeur frowned;

Behold! where pleasure smiled;
What now remains?—the memory
Of senselessness and shame—
What is immortal there?
Nothing—it stands to tell
A melancholy tale, to give
An awful warning: soon
Oblivion will steal silently
The remnant of its fame.

Monarchs and conquerors there
Proud o'er prostrate millions trod—
The earthquakes of the human race;
Like them, forgotten when the ruin
That marks their shock is past.

Beside the eternal Nile,
The Pyramids have risen.
Nile shall pursue his changeless way:
Those pyramids shall fall;
Yea! not a stone shall stand to tell
The spot whereon they stood;
Their very scite shall be forgotten,
As is their builder's name!

Behold yon sterile spot;
Where now the wandering Arab's tent
Flaps in the desert blast.
There once old Salem's haughty fane
Reared high to heaven its thousand golden domes,
And in the blushing face of day
Exposed its shameful glory.

Oh! many a widow, many an orphan cursed
The building of that fane; and many a father,
Worn out with toil and slavery, implored
The poor man's God to sweep it from the earth,
And spare his children the detested task
Of piling stone on stone, and poisoning
The choicest days of life,
To soothe a dotard's vanity.
Their an inhuman and uncultured race
Howled hideous praises to their Demon-God;
They rushed to war, tore from the mother's womb
The unborn child,—old age and infancy

Promiscuous perished; their victorious arms
Left not a soul to breathe. Oh! they were fiends:
But what was he who taught them that the God
Of nature and benevolence had given
A special sanction to the trade of blood?
His name and theirs are fading, and the tales
Of this barbarian nation, which imposture
Recites till terror credits, are pursuing
Itself into forgetfulness.

Where Athens, Rome, and Sparta stood,
There is a moral desert now:
The mean and miserable huts,
The yet more wretched palaces,
Contrasted with those ancient fanes,
Now crumbling to oblivion;
The long and lonely colonnades,
Through which the ghost of Freedom stalks,
Seem like a well-known tune,

Which, in some dear scene we have loved to hear,
Remembered now in sadness.
But, oh! how much more changed,
How gloomier is the contrast
Of human nature there!

Where Socrates expired, a tyrant's slave,
A coward and a fool, spreads death around—
Then, shuddering, meets his own.
Where Cicero and Antoninus lived,

A cowed and hypocritical monk
Prays, curses, and deceives.

Spirit! ten thousand years
Have scarcely past away,
Since, in the waste where now the savage drinks
His enemy's blood, and aping Europe's sons,
Wakes the unholy song of war,
Arose a stately city,
Metropolis of the western continent:
There, now, the mossy column-stone,
Indented by time's unrelaxing grasp,
Which once appeared to brave
All, save its country's ruin;
There the wide forest scene,
Rude in the uncultivated loveliness
Of gardens long run wild,
Seems, to the unwilling sojourner, whose steps
Chance in that desert has delayed,
Thus to have stood since earth was what it is.
Yet once it was the busiest haunt,
Whither, as to a common centre, flocked
Strangers, and ships, and merchandize:
Once peace and freedom blest
The cultivated plain:
But wealth, that curse of man,
Blighted the bud of its prosperity:
Virtue and wisdom, truth and liberty,

Fled, to return not, until man shall know
That they alone can give the bliss
Worthy a soul that claims
Its kindred with eternity.

There's not one atom of yon earth
But once was living man;
Nor the minutest drop of rain,
That hangeth in its thinnest cloud,
But flowed in human veins:
And from the burning plains
Where Lybian monsters yell,
From the most gloomy glens
Of Greenland's sunless clime,
To where the golden fields
Of fertile England spread
Their harvest to the day,
Thou canst not find one spot
Whereon no city stood.

How strange is human pride!
I tell thee that those living things,
To whom the fragile blade of grass,
That springeth in the morn
And perisheth ere noon,

Is an unbounded world;
I tell thee that those viewless beings,
Whose mansion is the smallest particle

Of the impassive atmosphere,
Think, feel, and live like man;
That their affections and antipathies,
Like his, produce the laws
Ruling their moral state;
And the minutest throb
That through their frame diffuses
The slightest, faintest motion,
Is fixed and indispensable
As the majestic laws
That rule yon rolling orbs.

The Fairy paused. The Spirit,
In extacy of admiration, felt
All knowledge of the past revived; the events
Of old and wondrous times,
Which dim tradition interruptedly
Teaches the credulous vulgar, were unfolded
In just perspective to the view;
Yet dim from their infinitude.

The Spirit seemed to stand
High on an isolated pinnacle;
The flood of ages combating below,
The depth of the unbounded universe
Above, and all around
Nature's unchanging harmony.

III.



FAIRY! the Spirit said,
And on the Queen of Spells
Fixed her ethereal eyes,
I thank thee. Thou hast given
A boon which I will not resign, and taught
A lesson not to be unlearned. I know
The past, and thence I will essay to glean
A warning for the future, so that man
May profit by his errors, and derive
 Experience from his folly:
For, when the power of imparting joy
Is equal to the will, the human soul
 Requires no other heaven.

MAB.

Turn thee, surpassing Spirit!
Much yet remains unscanned.
Thou knowest how great is man,
Thou knowest his imbecility:
Yet learn thou what he is;
Yet learn the lofty destiny
Which restless time prepares
For every living soul.

Behold a gorgeous palace, that, amid
Yon populous city, rears its thousand towers
And seems itself a city. Gloomy troops
Of centinels, in stern and silent ranks,
Encompass it around: the dweller there
Cannot be free and happy; hearest thou not
The curses of the fatherless, the groans
Of those who have no friend? He passes on:
The King, the wearer of a gilded chain
That binds his soul to abjectness, the fool
Whom courtiers nickname monarch, whilst a slave
Even to the basest appetites—that man
Heeds not the shriek of penury; he smiles
At the deep curses which the destitute
Mutter in secret, and a sullen joy
Pervades his bloodless heart when thousands groan
But for those morsels which his wantonness
Wastes in unjoyous revelry, to save
All that they love from famine: when he hears
The tale of horror, to some ready-made face

Of hypocritical assent he turns,
Smothering the glow of shame, that, spite of him,
Flushes his bloated cheek.

Now to the meal

Of silence, grandeur, and excess, he drags
His palled unwilling appetite. If gold,
Gleaming around, and numerous viands culled
From every clime, could force the loathing sense
To overcome satiety,—if wealth
The spring it draws from poisons not,—or vice,

Unfeeling, stubborn vice, converteth not
Its food to deadliest venom; then that king
Is happy; and the peasant who fulfils
His unforced task, when he returns at even,
And by the blazing faggot meets again
Her welcome for whom all his toil is sped,
Tastes not a sweeter meal.

Behold him now

Stretched on the gorgeous couch; his fevered brain
Reels dizzily awhile: But, ah! too soon
The slumber of intemperance subsides,
And conscience, that undying serpent, calls
Her venomous brood to their nocturnal task.
Listen! he speaks! oh! mark that frenzied eye—
Oh! mark that deadly visage.

KING.

No cessation!

Oh! must this last for ever! Awful death,
I wish, yet fear to clasp thee!—Not one moment
Of dreamless sleep! O dear and blessed peace!
Why dost thou shroud thy vestal purity
In penury and dungeons? wherefore lurkest
With danger, death, and solitude; yet shunn'st
The palace I have built thee? Sacred peace!
Oh visit me but once, but pitying shed
One drop of balm upon my withered soul.

Vain man! that palace is the virtuous heart,
And peace defileth not her snowy robes

In such a shed as thine. Hark! yet he mutters;
His slumbers are but varied agonies,
They prey like scorpions on the springs of life.
There needeth not the hell that bigots frame
To punish those who err: earth in itself
Contains at once the evil and the cure;
And all-sufficing nature can chastise
Those who transgress her law,—she only knows

How justly to proportion to the fault
The punishment it merits.

Is it strange
That this poor wretch should pride him in his woe?
Take pleasure in his abjectness, and hug
The scorpion that consumes him? Is it strange
That, placed on a conspicuous throne of thorns,
Grasping an iron sceptre, and immured
Within a splendid prison, whose stern bounds
Shut him from all that's good or dear on earth,
His soul asserts not its humanity?
That man's mild nature rises not in war
Against a king's employ? No—'tis not strange.
He, like the vulgar, thinks, feels, acts and lives
Just as his father did; the unconquered powers
Of precedent and custom interpose
Between a *king* and virtue. Stranger yet,
To those who know not nature, nor deduce
The future from the present, it may seem,
That not one slave, who suffers from the crimes
Of this unnatural being; not one wretch,
Whose children famish, and whose nuptial bed

In earth's unpitying bosom, rears an arm
To dash him from his throne!

Those gilded flies
That, basking in the sunshine of a court,

Fatten on its corruption!—what are they?
—The drones of the community; they feed
On the mechanic's labour: the starved hind
For them compels the stubborn glebe to yield
Its unshared harvests; and yon squalid form,
Leaner than fleshless misery, that wastes
A sunless life in the unwholesome mine,
Drags out in labour a protracted death,
To glut their grandeur; many faint with toil,
That few may know the cares and woe of sloth.

Whence, thinkest thou, kings and parasites arose?
Whence that unnatural line of drones, who heap
Toil and unvanquishable penury
On those who build their palaces, and bring
Their daily bread?—From vice, black loathsome vice;
From rapine, madness, treachery, and wrong;
From all that genders misery, and makes
Of earth this thorny wilderness; from lust,
Revenge, and murder.....And when reason's voice,
Loud as the voice of nature, shall have waked
The nations; and mankind perceive that vice
Is discord, war, and misery; that virtue
Is peace, and happiness, and harmony;
When man's maturer nature shall disdain
The playthings of its childhood;—kingly glare

Will lose its power to dazzle; its authority
Will silently pass by; the gorgeous throne

Shall stand unnoticed in the regal hall,
Fast falling to decay; whilst falsehood's trade
Shall be as hateful and unprofitable
As that of truth is now.

Where is the fame
Which the vain-glorious mighty of the earth
Seek to eternize? Oh! the faintest sound
From time's light footfall, the minutest wave
That swells the flood of ages, whelms in nothing
The unsubstantial bubble. Aye! to-day
Stern is the tyrant's mandate, red the gaze
That flashes desolation, strong the arm
That scatters multitudes. To-morrow comes!
That mandate is a thunder-peal that died
In ages past; that gaze, a transient flash
On which the midnight closed, and on that arm
The worm has made his meal.

The virtuous man,
Who, great in his humility, as kings
Are little in their grandeur; he who leads
Invincibly a life of resolute good,
And stands amid the silent dungeon-depths
More free and fearless than the trembling judge,
Who, clothed in venal power, vainly strove
To bind the impassive spirit;—when he falls,
His mild eye beams benevolence no more:
Withered the hand outstretched but to relieve;

Sunk reason's simple eloquence that rolled
But to appal the guilty. Yes! the grave
Hath quenched that eye, and death's relentless frost
Withered that arm: but the unfading fame
Which virtue hangs upon its votary's tomb;
The deathless memory of that man, whom kings
Call to their mind and tremble; the remembrance
With which the happy spirit contemplates
Its well-spent pilgrimage on earth,
Shall never pass away.

Nature rejects the monarch, not the man;
The subject not the citizen: for kings
And subjects, mutual foes, for ever play
A losing game into each other's hands,
Whose stakes are vice and misery. The man
Of virtuous soul commands not, nor obeys.
Power, like a desolating pestilence,
Pollutes whate'er it touches; and obedience,
Bane of all genius, virtue, freedom, truth,
Makes slaves of men, and, of the human frame,
A mechanized automaton.

When Nero,
High over flaming Rome, with savage joy
Lowered like a fiend, drank with enraptured ear
The shrieks of agonizing death, beheld
The frightful desolation spread, and felt
A new created sense within his soul

Thrill to the sight, and vibrate to the sound;
Thinkest thou his grandeur had not overcome

The force of human kindness? and, when Rome,
With one stern blow, hurled not the tyrant down,
Crushed not the arm red with her dearest blood,
Had not submissive abjectness destroyed
Nature's suggestions?

Look on yonder earth:
The golden harvests spring; the unfailing sun
Sheds light and life; the fruits, the flowers, the trees,
Arise in due succession; all things speak
Peace, harmony, and love. The universe,
In nature's silent eloquence, declares
That all fulfil the works of love and joy,—
All but the outcast man. He fabricates
The sword which stabs his peace; he cherisheth
The snakes that gnaw his heart; he raiseth up
The tyrant, whose delight is in his woe,
Whose sport is in his agony. Yon sun,
Lights it the great alone? Yon silver beams,
Sleep they less sweetly on the cottage thatch,
Than on the dome of kings? Is mother earth
A step-dame to her numerous sons, who earn
Her unshared gifts with unremitting toil;
A mother only to those puling babes
Who, nursed in ease and luxury, make men
The playthings of their babyhood, and mar,

In self-important childishness, that peace
Which men alone appreciate?

Spirit of Nature! no.
The pure diffusion of thy essence throbs

Alike in every human heart.

Thou, aye, erectest there
Thy throne of power unappealable:
Thou art the judge beneath whose nod
Man's brief and frail authority
Is powerless as the wind
That passeth idly by.
Thine the tribunal which surpasseth
The shew of human justice,
As God surpasses man.

Spirit of Nature! thou
Life of interminable multitudes;
Soul of those mighty spheres
Whose changeless paths thro' Heaven's deep silence lie;
Soul of that smallest being,
The dwelling of whose life
Is one faint April sun-gleam;—
Man, like these passive things,
Thy will unconsciously fulfilleth:
Like theirs, his age of endless peace,
Which time is fast maturing,
Will swiftly, surely come;

And the unbounded frame, which thou pervadest,
Will be without a flaw
Marring its perfect symmetry.

IV.



How beautiful this night! the balmiest sigh,
Which vernal zephyrs breathe in evening's ear,
Were discord to the speaking quietude
That wraps this moveless scene. Heaven's ebon vault,
Studded with stars unutterably bright,
Through which the moon's unclouded grandeur rolls,
Seems like a canopy which love had spread
To curtain her sleeping world. Yon gentle hills,
Robed in a garment of untrodden snow;
Yon darksome rocks, whence icicles depend,
So stainless, that their white and glittering spires
Tinge not the moon's pure beam; yon castled steep,
Whose banner hangeth o'er the time-worn tower
So idly, that rapt fancy deemeth it
A metaphor of peace;—all form a scene
Where musing solitude might love to lift
Her soul above this sphere of earthliness;
Where silence undisturbed might watch alone,

So cold, so bright, so still.

The orb of day,
In southern climes, o'er ocean's waveless field
Sinks sweetly smiling: not the faintest breath
Steals o'er the unruffled deep; the clouds of eve

Reflect unmoved the lingering beam of day;
And vesper's image on the western main
Is beautifully still. To-morrow comes:
Cloud upon cloud, in dark and deepening mass,
Roll o'er the blackened waters; the deep roar
Of distant thunder mutters awfully;
Tempest unfolds its pinion o'er the gloom
That shrouds the boiling surge; the pityless fiend,
With all his winds and lightnings, tracks his prey;
The torn deep yawns,—the vessel finds a grave
Beneath its jagged gulf.

Ah! whence yon glare
That fires the arch of heaven?—that dark red smoke
Blotting the silver moon? The stars are quenched
In darkness, and the pure and spangling snow
Gleams faintly through the gloom that gathers round!
Hark to that roar, whose swift and deafening peals
In countless echoes through the mountains ring,
Startling pale midnight on her starry throne!
Now swells the intermingling din; the jar
Frequent and frightful of the bursting bomb;

The falling beam, the shriek, the groan, the shout,
The ceaseless clangour, and the rush of men
Inebriate with rage:—loud, and more loud
The discord grows; till pale death shuts the scene,
And o'er the conqueror and the conquered draws
His cold and bloody shroud.—Of all the men
Whom day's departing beam saw blooming there,
In proud and vigorous health; of all the hearts
That beat with anxious life at sun-set there;

How few survive, how few are beating now!
All is deep silence, like the fearful calm
That slumbers in the storms portentous pause;
Save when the frantic wail of widowed love
Comes shuddering on the blast, or the faint moan
With which some soul bursts from the frame of clay
Wrapt round its struggling powers.

The grey morn
Dawns on the mournful scene; the sulphurous smoke
Before the icy wind slow rolls away,
And the bright beams of frosty morning dance
Along the spangling snow. There tracks of blood
Even to the forest's depth, and scatter'd arms,
And lifeless warriors, whose hard lineaments
Death's self could change not, mark the dreadful path
Of the outsallying victors: far behind,
Black ashes note where their proud city stood.
Within yon forest is a gloomy glen—

Each tree which guards its darkness from the day,
Waves o'er a warrior's tomb.

I see thee shrink,
Surpassing Spirit!—wert thou human else?
I see a shade of doubt and horror fleet
Across thy stainless features: yet fear not;
This is no unconnected misery,
Nor stands uncaused, and irretrievable.
Man's evil nature, that apology
Which kings who rule, and cowards who crouch, set up
For their unnumbered crimes, sheds not the blood

Which desolates the discord-wasted land.
From kings, and priests, and statesmen, war arose,
Whose safety is man's deep unbettered woe,
Whose grandeur his debasement. Let the axe
Strike at the root, the poison-tree will fall;
And where its venom'd exhalations spread
Ruin, and death, and woe, where millions lay
Quenching the serpent's famine, and their bones
Bleaching unburied in the putrid blast,
A garden shall arise, in loveliness
Surpassing fabled Eden.

Hath Nature's soul,
That formed this world so beautiful, that spread
Earth's lap with plenty, and life's smallest chord
Strung to unchanging unison, that gave

The happy birds their dwelling in the grove,
That yielded to the wanderers of the deep
The lovely silence of the unfathomed main,
And filled the meanest worm that crawls in dust
With spirit, thought, and love; on Man alone,
Partial in causeless malice, wantonly
Heaped ruin, vice, and slavery; his soul
Blasted with withering curses; placed afar
The meteor-happiness, that shuns his grasp,
But serving on the frightful gulph to glare,
Rent wide beneath his footsteps?

Nature!—no!

Kings, priests, and statesmen, blast the human flower
Even in its tender bud; their influence darts

Like subtle poison through the bloodless veins
Of desolate society. The child,
Ere he can lisp his mother's sacred name,
Swells with the unnatural pride of crime, and lifts
His baby-sword even in a hero's mood.
This infant-arm becomes the bloodiest scourge
Of devastated earth; whilst specious names,
Learnt in soft childhood's unsuspecting hour,
Serve as the sophisms with which manhood dims
Bright reason's ray, and sanctifies the sword
Upraised to shed a brother's innocent blood.
Let priest-led slaves cease to proclaim that man
Inherits vice and misery, when force

And falsehood hang even o'er the cradled babe,
Stifling with rudest grasp all natural good.

Ah! to the stranger-soul, when first it peeps
From its new tenement, and looks abroad
For happiness and sympathy, how stern
And desolate a tract is this wide world!
How withered all the buds of natural good!
No shade, no shelter from the sweeping storms
Of pityless power! On its wretched frame,
Poisoned, perchance, by the disease and woe
Heaped on the wretched parent whence it sprung
By morals, law, and custom, the pure winds
Of heaven, that renovate the insect tribes,
May breathe not. The untainting light of day
May visit not its longings. It is bound
Ere it has life: yea, all the chains are forged
Long ere its being: all liberty and love

And peace is torn from its defencelessness;
Cursed from its birth, even from its cradle doomed
To abjectness and bondage!

Throughout this varied and eternal world
Soul is the only element, the block
That for uncounted ages has remained.
The moveless pillar of a mountain's weight
Is active, living spirit. Every grain
Is sentient both in unity and part,

And the minutest atom comprehends
A world of loves and hatreds; these beget;
Evil and good: hence truth, and falsehood spring;
Hence will, and thought, and action, all the germs
Of pain or pleasure, sympathy or hate,
That variegate the eternal universe.

Soul is not more polluted than the beams
Of heaven's pure orb, ere round their rapid lines
The taint of earth-born atmospheres arise.

Man is of soul and body, formed for deeds
Of high resolve, on fancy's boldest wing
To soar unwearied, fearlessly to turn
The keenest pangs to peacefulness, and taste
The joys which mingled sense and spirit yield.

Or he is formed for abjectness and woe,
To grovel on the dunghill of his fears,
To shrink at every sound, to quench the flame
Of natural love in sensualism, to know
That hour as blest when on his worthless days
The frozen hand of death shall set its seal,
Yet fear the cure, though hating the disease.

The one is man that shall hereafter be;
The other, man as vice has made him now.

War is the statesman's game, the priest's delight,
The lawyer's jest, the hired assassin's trade,
And, to those royal murderers, whose mean thrones
Are bought by crimes of treachery and gore,

The bread they eat, the staff on which they lean.
Guards, garbed in blood-red livery, surround
Their palaces, participate the crimes
That force defends, and from a nation's rage
Secures the crown, which all the curses reach
That famine, frenzy, woe, and penury breathe.
These are the hired bravos who defend
The tyrant's throne—the bullies of his fear:
These are the sinks and channels of worst vice,
The refuse of society, the dregs
Of all that is most vile: their cold hearts blend
Deceit with sternness, ignorance with pride,
All that is mean and villainous, with rage
Which hopelessness of good, and self-contempt,
Alone might kindle; they are decked in wealth,
Honour and power, then are sent abroad
To do their work. The pestilence that stalks
In gloomy triumph through some eastern land
Is less destroying. They cajole with gold,
And promises of fame, the thoughtless youth
Already crushed with servitude: he knows
His wretchedness too late, and cherishes
Repentance for his ruin, when his doom
Is sealed in gold and blood!

Those too the tyrant serve, who, skilled to snare
The feet of justice in the toils of law,
Stand, ready to oppress the weaker still;
And, right or wrong, will vindicate for gold,

Sneering at public virtue, which beneath
Their pityless tread lies torn and trampled, where
Honour sits smiling at the sale of truth.

Then grave and hoary-headed hypocrites,
Without a hope, a passion, or a love,
Who, through a life of luxury and lies,
Have crept by flattery to the seats of power,
Support the system whence their honours flow....
They have three words:—well tyrants know their use,
Well pay them for the loan, with usury
Torn from a bleeding world!—God, Hell, and Heaven.
A vengeful, pityless, and almighty fiend,
Whose mercy is a nick-name for the rage
Of tameless tygers hungering for blood.
Hell, a red gulf of everlasting fire,
Where poisonous and undying worms prolong
Eternal misery to those hapless slaves
Whose life has been a penance for its crimes.
And Heaven, a meed for those who dare belie
Their human nature, quake, believe, and cringe
Before the mockeries of earthly power.

These tools the tyrant tempers to his work,
Wields in his wrath, and as he wills destroys,
Omnipotent in wickedness: the while
Youth springs, age moulders, manhood tamely does

His bidding, bribed by short-lived joys to lend
Force to the weakness of his trembling arm.

They rise, they fall; one generation comes
Yielding its harvest to destruction's scythe.
It fades, another blossoms, yet behold!
Red glows the tyrant's stamp-mark on its bloom,
Withering and cankering deep its passive prime.
He has invented lying words and modes,
Empty and vain as his own coreless heart;
Evasive meanings, nothings of much sound,
To lure the heedless victim to the toils
Spread round the valley of its paradise.

Look to thyself, priest, conqueror, or prince!
Whether thy trade is falsehood, and thy lusts
Deep wallow in the earnings of the poor,
With whom thy master was:—or thou delightst
In numbering o'er the myriads of thy slain,
All misery weighing nothing in the scale
Against thy short-lived fame: or thou dost load
With cowardice and crime the groaning land,
A pomp-fed king. Look to thy wretched self!
Aye, art thou not the veriest slave that e'er
Crawled on the loathing earths? Are not thy days
Days of unsatisfying listlessness?
Dost thou not cry, ere night's long rack is o'er,
When will the morning come? Is not thy youth
A vain and feverish dream of sensualism?

Thy manhood blighted with unripe disease?
Are not thy views of unregretted death

Drear, comfortless, and horrible? Thy mind
Is it not morbid as thy nerveless frame,
Incapable of judgment, hope, or love?
And dost thou wish the errors to survive
That bar thee from all sympathies of good,
After the miserable interest
Thou holdst in their protraction? When the grave
Has swallowed up thy memory and thyself,
Dost thou desire the bane that poisons earth
To twine its roots around thy confined clay,
Spring from thy bones, and blossom on thy tomb,
That of its fruit thy babes may eat and die?

V.



THUS do the generations of the earth
Go to the grave, and issue from the womb,
Surviving still the imperishable change
That renovates the world; even as the leaves
Which the keen frost-wind of the waning year
Has scattered on the forest soil, and heaped
For many seasons there, though long they choke,
Loading with loathsome rottenness the land,
All germs of promise. Yet when the tall trees
From which they fell, shorn of their lovely shapes,
Lie level with the earth to moulder there,
They fertilize the land they long deformed,
Till from the breathing lawn a forest springs
Of youth, integrity, and loveliness,
Like that which gave it life, to spring and die.
Thus suicidal selfishness, that blights
The fairest feelings of the opening heart,
Is destined to decay, whilst from the soil

Shall spring all virtue, all delight, all love,
And judgment cease to wage unnatural war
With passion's unsubduable array.

Twin-sister of religion, selfishness!
Rival in crime and falsehood, aping all

The wanton horrors of her bloody play;
Yet frozen, unimpassioned, spiritless,
Shunning the light, and owning not its name,
Compelled, by its deformity, to screen
With flimsy veil of justice and of right,
Its unattractive lineaments, that scare
All, save the brood of ignorance: at once
The cause and the effect of tyranny;
Unblushing, hardened, sensual, and vile;
Dead to all love but of its abjectness,
With heart impassive by more noble powers
Than unshared pleasure, sordid gain, or fame;
Despising its own miserable being,
Which still it longs, yet fears to disentrall.

Hence commerce springs, the venal interchange
Of all that human art or nature yield;
Which wealth should purchase not, but want demand,
And natural kindness hasten to supply
From the full fountain of its boundless love,
For ever stifled, drained, and tainted now.
Commerce! beneath whose poison-breathing shade

No solitary virtue dares to spring,
But poverty and wealth with equal band
Scatter their withering curses, and unfold
The doors of premature and violent death,
To pining famine and full-fed disease,
To all that shares the lot of human life,
Which poisoned body and soul, scarce drags the chain,
That lengthens as it goes and clanks behind.

Commerce has set the mark of selfishness,
The signet of its all-enslaving power
Upon a shining ore, and called it gold:
Before whose image bow the vulgar great,
The vainly rich, the miserable proud,
The mob of peasants, nobles, priests, and kings,
And with blind feelings reverence the power
That grinds them to the dust of misery.
But in the temple of their hireling hearts
Gold is a living god, and rules in scorn
All earthly things but virtue.

Since tyrants, by the sale of human life,
Heap luxuries to their sensualism, and fame
To their wide-wasting and insatiate pride,
Success has sanctioned to a credulous world
The ruin, the disgrace, the woe of war.
His hosts of blind and unresisting dupes
The despot numbers; from his cabinet
These puppets of his schemes he moves at will,

Even as the slaves by force or famine driven,
Beneath a vulgar master, to perform
A task of cold and brutal drudgery;—
Hardened to hope, insensible to fear,
Scarce living pullies of a dead machine,
Mere wheels of work and articles of trade,
That grace the proud and noisy pomp of wealth!

The harmony and happiness of man
Yields to the wealth of nations; that which lifts

His nature to the heaven of its pride,
Is bartered for the poison of his soul;
The weight that drags to earth his towering hopes,
Blighting all prospect but of selfish gain,
Withering all passion but of slavish fear,
Extinguishing all free and generous love
Of enterprize and daring, even the pulse
That fancy kindles in the beating heart
To mingle with sensation, it destroys,—
Leaves nothing but the sordid lust of self,
The groveling hope of interest and gold,
Unqualified, unmingled, unredeemed
Even by hypocrisy.

And statesmen boast
Of wealth! The wordy eloquence that lives
After the ruin of their hearts, can gild
The bitter poison of a nation's woe,

Can turn the worship of the servile mob
To their corrupt and glaring idol fame,
From virtue, trampled by its iron tread,
Although its dazzling pedestal be raised
Amid the horrors of a limb-strewn field,
With desolated dwellings smoking round.
The man of ease, who, by his warm fire-side,
To deeds of charitable intercourse
And bare fulfilment of the common laws
Of decency and prejudice, confines
The struggling nature of his human heart,
Is duped by their cold sophistry; he sheds
A passing tear perchance upon the wreck

Of earthly peace, when near his dwelling's door
The frightful waves are driven,—when his son
Is murdered by the tyrant, or religion
Drives his wife raving mad. But the poor man,
Whose life is misery, and fear, and care;
Whom the morn wakens but to fruitless toil;
Who ever hears his famished offsprings scream,
Whom their pale mother's uncomplaining gaze
For ever meets, and the proud rich man's eye
Flashing command, and the heart-breaking scene
Of thousands like himself;—he little heeds
The rhetoric of tyranny; his hate
Is quenchless as his wrongs; he laughs to scorn
The vain and bitter mockery of words,
Feeling the horror of the tyrant's deeds,

And unrestrained, but by the arm of power,
That knows and dreads his enmity.

The iron rod of penury still compels
Her wretched slave to bow the knee to wealth,
And poison, with unprofitable toil,
A life too void of solace to confirm
The very chains that bind him to his doom.
Nature, impartial in munificence,
Has gifted man with all-subduing will.
Matter, with all its transitory shapes,
Lies subjected and plastic at his feet,
That, weak from bondage, tremble as they tread.
How many a rustic Milton has past by,
Stifling the speechless longings of his heart,
In unremitting drudgery and care!

How many a vulgar Cato has compelled
His energies, no longer tameless then,
To mould a pin, or fabricate a nail!
How many a Newton, to whose passive ken
Those mighty spheres that gem infinity
Were only specks of tinsel, fixed in heaven
To light the midnights of his native town!

Yet every heart contains perfection's germ:
The wisest of the sages of the earth,
That ever from the stores of reason drew
Science and truth, and virtue's dreadless tone,

Were but a weak and inexperienced boy,
Proud, sensual, unimpassioned, unimbued
With pure desire and universal love,
Compared to that high being, of cloudless brain,
Untainted passion, elevated will,
Which death (who even would linger long in awe
Within his noble presence, and beneath
His changeless eyebeam,) might alone subdue.
Him, every slave now dragging through the filth
Of some corrupted city his sad life,
Pining with famine, swoln with luxury,
Blunting the keenness of his spiritual sense
With narrow schemings and unworthy cares,
Or madly rushing through all violent crime,
To move the deep stagnation of his soul,—
Might imitate and equal.

But mean lust
Has bound its chains so tight around the earth,

That all within it but the virtuous man
Is venal: gold or fame will surely reach
The price prefixed by selfishness, to all
But him of resolute and unchanging will;
Whom, nor the plaudits of a servile crowd,
Nor the vile joys of tainting luxury,
Can bribe to yield his elevated soul
To tyranny or falsehood, though they wield
With blood-red hand the sceptre of the world.

All things are sold: the very light of heaven
Is venal; earth's unsparing gifts of love,
The smallest and most despicable things
That lurk in the abysses of the deep,
All objects of our life, even life itself,
And the poor pittance which the laws allow
Of liberty, the fellowship of man,
Those duties which his heart of human love
Should urge him to perform instinctively,
Are bought and sold as in a public mart
Of undisguising selfishness, that sets
On each its price, the stamp-mark of her reign.
Even love is sold; the solace of all woe
Is turned to deadliest agony, old age
Shivers in selfish beauty's loathing arms,
And youth's corrupted impulses prepare
A life of horror from the blighting bane
Of commerce; whilst the pestilence that springs
From unenjoying sensualism, has filled
All human life with hydra-headed woes.

Falsehood demands but gold to pay the pangs
Of outraged conscience; for the slavish priest
Sets no great value on his hireling faith:
A little passing pomp, some servile souls,
Whom cowardice itself might safely chain,
Or the spare mite of avarice could bribe
To deck the triumph of their languid zeal,

Can make him minister to tyranny.
More daring crime requires a loftier meed:
Without a shudder, the slave-soldier lends
His arm to murderous deeds, and steels his heart,
When the dread eloquence of dying men,
Low mingling on the lonely field of fame,
Assails that nature, whose applause he sells
For the gross blessings of a patriot mob,
For the vile gratitude of heartless kings,
And for a cold world's good word,—viler still!

There is a nobler glory, which survives
Until our being fades, and, solacing
All human care, accompanies its change;
Deserts not virtue in the dungeon's gloom,
And, in the precincts of the palace, guides
Its footsteps through that labyrinth of crime;
Imbues his lineaments with dauntlessness,
Even when, from power's avenging hand, he takes
Its sweetest, last, and noblest title—death;
—The consciousness of good, which neither gold,
Nor sordid fame, nor hope of heavenly bliss,
Can purchase; but a life of resolute good,

Unalterable will, quenchless desire
Of universal happiness, the heart
That beats with it in unison, the brain,
Whose ever wakeful wisdom toils to change
Reason's rich stores for its eternal weal.

This commerce of sincerest virtue needs
No mediative signs of selfishness,
No jealous intercourse of wretched gain,
No balancings of prudence, cold and long;
In just and equal measure all is weighed,
One scale contains the sum of human weal,
And one, the good man's heart.

How vainly seek

The selfish for that happiness denied
To aught but virtue! Blind and hardened, they,
Who hope for peace amid the storms of care,
Who covet power they know not how to use,
And sigh for pleasure they refuse to give,—
Madly they frustrate still their own designs;
And, where they hope that quiet to enjoy
Which virtue pictures, bitterness of soul,
Pining regrets, and vain repentances,
Disease, disgust, and lassitude, pervade
Their valueless and miserable lives.

But hoary-headed selfishness has felt
Its death-blow, and is tottering to the grave:
A brighter morn awaits the human day,
When every transfer of earth's natural gifts

Shall be a commerce of good words and works;
When poverty and wealth, the thirst of fame,

The fear of infamy, disease, and woe,
War with its million horrors, and fierce hell
Shall live but in the memory of time,
Who, like a penitent libertine, shall start,
Look back, and shudder at his younger years.

VI.



ALL touch, all eye, all ear,
The Spirit felt the Fairy's burning speech.
O'er the thin texture of its frame,
The varying periods painted changing glows,
As on a summer even,
When soul-enfolding music floats around,
The stainless mirror of the lake
Re-images the eastern gloom,
Mingling convulsively its purple hues
With sunset's burnished gold.

Then thus the Spirit spoke:
It is a wild and miserable world!
Thorny, and full of care,
Which every fiend can make his prey at will.
O Fairy! in the lapse of years,
Is there no hope in store?
Will yon vast suns roll on

Interminably, still illuming
The night of so many wretched souls,
And see no hope for them?
Will not the universal Spirit e'er
Revivify this withered limb of Heaven?

The Fairy calmly smiled
In comfort, and a kindling gleam of hope
Suffused the Spirits lineaments.
Oh! rest thee tranquil; chase those fearful doubts,
Which ne'er could rack an everlasting soul,
That sees the chains which bind it to its doom.
Yes! crime and misery are in yonder earth,
Falsehood, mistake, and lust;
But the eternal world
Contains at once the evil and the cure.
Some eminent in virtue shall start up,
Even in perversest time:
The truths of their pure lips, that never die,
Shall bind the scorpion falsehood with a wreath
Of ever-living flame,
Until the monster sting itself to death.
How sweet a scene will earth become!
Of purest spirits, a pure dwelling-place,
Symphonious with the planetary spheres,
When man, with changeless nature coalescing,
Will undertake regeneration's work,
When its ungenial poles no longer point
To the red and baleful sun

That faintly twinkles there.

Spirit! on yonder earth,
Falsehood now triumphs; deadly power
Has fixed its seal upon the lip of truth!
Madness and misery are there!
The happiest is most wretched! yet confide,
Until pure health-drops from the cup of joy,

Fall like a dew of balm upon the world.
Now, to the scene I shew, in silence turn,
And read the blood-stained charter of all woe,
Which nature soon, with recreating hand,
Will blot in mercy from the book of earth.
How bold the flight of passion's wandering wing,
How swift the step of reason's firmer tread,
How calm and sweet the victories of life,
How terrorless the triumph of the grave!
How powerless were the mightiest monarch's arm,
Vain his loud threat, and impotent his frown!
How ludicrous the priest's dogmatic roar!
The weight of his exterminating curse,
How light! and his affected charity,
To suit the pressure of the changing times,
What palpable deceit!—but for thy aid,
Religion! but for thee, prolific fiend,
Who peopled earth with demons, hell with men,
And heaven with slaves!

Thou taintest all thou lookest upon!—the stars,
Which on thy cradle beamed so brightly sweet,
Were gods to the distempered playfulness
Of thy untutored infancy: the trees,
The grass, the clouds, the mountains, and the sea,
All living things that walk, swim, creep, or fly,
Were gods: the sun had homage, and the moon
Her worshipper. Then thou becamest, a boy,
More daring in thy frenzies: every shape,
Monstrous or vast, or beautifully wild,
Which, from sensation's relics, fancy culls;

The spirits of the air, the shuddering ghost,
The genii of the elements, the powers
That give a shape to nature's varied works,
Had life and place in the corrupt belief
Of thy blind heart: yet still thy youthful hands
Were pure of human blood. Then manhood gave
Its strength and ardour to thy frenzied brain;
Thine eager gaze scanned the stupendous scene
Whose wonders mocked the knowledge of thy pride:
Their everlasting and unchanging laws
Reproached thine ignorance. Awhile thou stoodst
Baffled and gloomy; then thou didst sum up
The elements of all that thou didst know;
The changing seasons, winter's leafless reign,
The budding of the heaven-breathing trees,
The eternal orbs that beautify the night,
The sun-rise, and the setting of the moon,

Earthquakes and wars, and poisons and disease,
And all their causes, to an abstract point,
Converging, thou didst bend, and called it—God!
The self-sufficing, the omnipotent,
The merciful, and the avenging God!
Who, prototype of human misrule, sits
High in heaven's realm, upon a golden throne,
Even like an earthly king; and whose dread work,
Hell gapes for ever for the unhappy slaves
Of fate, whom he created, in his sport,
To triumph in their torments when they fell!
Earth heard the name; earth trembled, as the smoke
Of his revenge ascended up to heaven,
Blotting the constellations; and the cries

Of millions, butchered in sweet confidence
And unsuspecting peace, even when the bonds
Of safety were confirmed by wordy oaths
Sworn in his dreadful name, rung through the land;
Whilst innocent babes writhed on thy stubborn spear,
And thou didst laugh to hear the mother's shriek
Of maniac gladness, as the sacred steel
Felt cold in her torn entrails!

Religion! thou wert then in manhood's prime:
But age crept on: one God would not suffice
For senile puerility; thou framedst
A tale to suit thy dotage, and to glut
Thy misery-thirsting soul, that the mad fiend

Thy wickedness had pictured, might afford
A plea for sating the unnatural thirst
For murder, rapine, violence, and crime,
That still consumed thy being, even when
Thou heardest the step of fate;—that flames might ligh
Thy funeral scene, and the shrill horrent shrieks
Of parents dying on the pile that burned
To light their children to thy paths, the roar
Of the encircling flames, the exulting cries
Of thine apostles, loud commingling there,
 Might sate thine hungry ear
 Even on the bed of death!

But now contempt is mocking thy grey hairs;
Thou art descending to the darksome grave,
Unhonoured and unpitied, but by those
Whose pride is passing by like thine, and sheds,

Like thine, a glare that fades before the sun
Of truth, and shines but in the dreadful night
That long has lowered above the ruined world.

Throughout these infinite orbs of mingling light,
Of which yon earth is one, is wide diffused
A spirit of activity and life,
That knows no terra, cessation, or decay;
That fades not when the lamp of earthly life,
Extinguished in the dampness of the grave,
Awhile there slumbers, more than when the babe

In the dim newness of its being feels
The impulses of sublunary things,
And all is wonder to unpractised sense:
But, active, stedfast, and eternal, still
Guides the fierce whirlwind, in the tempest roars,
Cheers in the day, breathes in the balmy groves,
Strengthens in health, and poisons in disease;
And in the storm of change, that ceaselessly
Rolls round the eternal universe, and shakes
Its undecaying battlement, presides,
Apportioning with irresistible law
The place each spring of its machine shall fill;
So that when waves on waves tumultuous heap
Confusion to the clouds, and fiercely driven
Heaven's lightnings scorch the uprooted ocean-fords,
Whilst, to the eye of shipwrecked mariner,
Lone sitting on the bare and shuddering rock,
All seems unlinked contingency and chance:
No atom of this turbulence fulfils
A vague and unnecessitated task,

Or acts but as it must and ought to act.
Even the minutest molecule of light,
That in an April sun-beam's fleeting glow
Fulfills its destined, though invisible work,
The universal Spirit guides; nor less,
When merciless ambition, or mad zeal,
Has led two hosts of dupes to battle-field,
That, blind, they there may dig each other's graves,

And call the sad work—glory, does it rule
All passions: not a thought, a will, an act,
No working of the tyrant's moody mind,
Nor one misgiving of the slaves who boast
Their servitude, to hide the shame they feel,
Nor the events enchaining every will,
That from the depths of unrecorded time
Have drawn all-influencing virtue, pass
Unrecognized, or unforeseen by thee,
Soul of the Universe! eternal spring
Of life and death, of happiness and woe.
Of all that chequers the phantasmal scene
That floats before our eyes in wavering light,
Which gleams but on the darkness of our prison,
 Whose chains and massy walls
 We feel, but cannot see.

Spirit of Nature! all-sufficing Power,
Necessity! thou mother of the world!
Unlike the God of human error, thou
Requirest no prayers or praises; the caprice
Of man's weak will belongs no more to thee
Than do the changeful passions of his breast

To thy unvarying harmony: the slave,
Whose horrible lusts spread misery o'er the world,
And the good man, who lifts, with virtuous pride,
His being, in the sight of happiness,
That springs from his own works; the poison-tree,

Beneath whose shade all life is withered up,
And the fair oak, whose leafy dome affords
A temple where the vows of happy love
Are registered, are equal in thy sight:
No love, no hate thou cherishest; revenge
And favoritism, and worst desire of fame
Thou knowest not: all that the wide world contains
Are but thy passive instruments, and thou
Regardst them all with an impartial eye,
Whose joy or pain thy nature cannot feel,
 Because thou hast not human sense,
 Because thou art not human mind.

Yes! when the sweeping storm of time
Has sung its death-dirge o'er the ruined fanes
And broken altars of the almighty fiend,
Whose name usurps thy honours, and the blood
Through centuries clotted there, has floated down
The tainted flood of ages, shalt thou live
Unchangeable! A shrine is raised to thee,
 Which, nor the tempest-breath of time,
 Nor the interminable flood,
 Over earth's slight pageant rolling,
 Availeth to destroy,—
The sensitive extension of the world.

That wonderous and eternal fane,
Where pain and pleasure, good and evil join,
To do the will of strong necessity,

And life, in multitudinous shapes,
Still pressing forward where no term can be,
Like hungry and unresisting flame
Curls round the eternal columns of its strength.

VII.



SPIRIT.

I WAS an infant when my mother went
To see an atheist burned. She took me there:
The dark-robed priests were met around the pile;
The multitude was gazing silently;
And as the culprit passed with dauntless mien,
Tempered disdain in his unaltering eye,
Mixed with a quiet smile, shone calmly forth:
The thirsty fire crept round his manly limbs;
His resolute eyes were scorched to blindness soon;
His death-pang rent my heart! the insensate mob
Uttered a cry of triumph, and I wept.
Weep not, child! cried my mother, for that man
Has said, There is no God.

FAIRY.

There is no God!

Nature confirms the faith his death-groan sealed:
Let heaven and earth, let man's revolving race,
His ceaseless generations tell their tale;
Let every part depending on the chain
That links it to the whole, point to the hand
That grasps its term! let every seed that falls

In silent eloquence unfold its store
Of argument: infinity within,
Infinity without, belie creation;
The exterminable spirit it contains
Is nature's only God; but human pride
Is skilful to invent most serious names
To hide its ignorance.

The name of God
Has fenced about all crime with holiness,
Himself the creature of his worshippers,
Whose names, and attributes, and passions change,
Seeva, Buddh, Foh, Jehovah, God, or Lord,
Even with the human dupes who build his shrines,
Still serving o'er the war-polluted world
For desolation's watch-word; whether hosts
Stain his death-blushing chariot-wheels, as on
Triumphantly they roll, whilst Brahmins raise
A sacred hymn to mingle with the groans;
Or countless partners of his powers divide
His tyranny to weakness; or the smoke

Of burning towns, the cries of female helplessness,
Unarmed old age, and youth, and infancy,
Horribly massacred, ascend to heaven
In honour of his name; or, last and worst,
Earth groans beneath religion's iron age,
And priests dare babble of a God of peace,
Even whilst their hands are red with guiltless blood,
Murdering the while, uprooting every germ
Of truth, exterminating, spoiling all,
Making the earth a slaughter-house!

O Spirit! through the sense
By which thy inner nature was appraised
Of outward shews, vague dreams have rolled,
And varied reminiscences have waked
Tablets that never fade;
All things have been imprinted there,
The stars, the sea, the earth, the sky,
Even the unshapeliest lineaments
Of wild and fleeting visions
Have left a record there
To testify of earth.

These are my empire, for to me is given
The wonders of the human world to keep,
And fancy's thin creations to endow
With manner, being, and reality;
Therefore a wondrous phantom, from the dreams
Of human errors dense and purblind faith,

I will evoke, to meet thy questioning.
Ahasuerus, rise!

A strange and woe-worn wight
Arose beside the battlement,
And stood unmoving there.
His inessential figure cast no shade
Upon the golden floor;
His port and mien bore mark of many years,
And chronicles of untold ancientness
Were legible within his beamless eye:
Yet his cheek bore the mark of youth;
Freshness and vigour knit his manly frame;
The wisdom of old age was mingled there
With youth's primæval dauntlessness;
And inexpressible woe,
Chastened by fearless resignation, gave
An awful grace to his all-speaking brow.

SPIRIT.

Is there a God?

AHASUERUS.

Is there a God?—aye, an almighty God,
And vengeful as almighty! Once his voice
Was heard on earth: earth shuddered at the sound;
The fiery-visaged firmament expressed
Abhorrence, and the grave of nature yawned
To swallow all the dauntless and the good
That dared to hurl defiance at his throne,
Girt as it was with power. None but slaves
Survived,—cold-blooded slaves, who did the work
Of tyrannous omnipotence; whose souls
No honest indignation ever urged
To elevated daring, to one deed
Which gross and sensual self did not pollute.
These slaves built temples for the omnipotent,
Gorgeous and vast: the costly altars smoked
With human blood, and hideous pæans rung
Through all the long-drawn aisles. A murderer heard
His voice in Egypt, one whose gifts and arts
Had raised him to his eminence in power,

Accomplice of omnipotence in crime,
And confidant of the all-knowing one.

These were Jehovah's words.

From an eternity of idleness
I, God, awoke; in seven days' toil made earth
From nothing; rested, and created man:
I placed him in a paradise, and there
Planted the tree of evil, so that he

Might eat and perish, and my soul procure
Wherewith to sate its malice, and to turn,
Even like a heartless conqueror of the earth,
All misery to my fame. The race of men
Chosen to my honour, with impunity
May sate the lusts I planted in their heart.
Here I command thee hence to lead them on,
Until, with hardened feet, their conquering troops
Wade on the promised soil through woman's blood,
And make my name be dreaded through the land.
Yet ever burning flame and ceaseless woe
Shall be the doom of their eternal souls,
With every soul on this ungrateful earth,
Virtuous or vicious, weak or strong,—even all
Shall perish, to fulfil the blind revenge
(Which you, to men, call justice) of their God.

The murderer's brow
Quivered with horror.

God omnipotent,
Is there no mercy? must our punishment
Be endless? will long ages roll away,
And see no term? Oh! wherefore hast thou made
In mockery and wrath this evil earth?
Mercy becomes the powerful—be but just:
O God! repent and save.

One way remains:

I will beget a son, and he shall bear
The sins of all the world; he shall arise
In an unnoticed corner of the earth,
And there shall die upon a cross, and purge
The universal crime; so that the few
On whom my grace descends, those who are marked
As vessels to the honour of their God,
May credit this strange sacrifice, and save
Their souls alive: millions shall live and die,
Who ne'er shall call upon their Saviour's name,
But, unredeemed, go to the gaping grave.
Thousands shall deem it an old woman's tale,
Such as the nurses frighten babes withal:
These, in a gulph of anguish and of flame,
Shall curse their reprobation endlessly,
Yet tenfold pangs shall force them to avow,
Even on their beds of torment, where they howl,
My honour, and the justice of their doom.
What then avail their virtuous deeds, their thoughts
Of purity, with radiant genius bright,
Or lit with human reason's earthly ray?
Many are called, but few will I elect.
Do thou my bidding, Moses!

Even the murderer's cheek
Was blanched with horror, and his quivering lips
Scarce faintly uttered—O almighty one,

I tremble and obey!

O Spirit! centuries have set their seal
On this heart of many wounds, and loaded brain,
Since the Incarnate came: humbly he came,
Veiling his horrible Godhead in the shape
Of man, scorned by the world, his name unheard,
Save by the rabble of his native town,
Even as a parish demagogue. He led
The crowd; he taught them justice, truth, and peace,
In semblance; but he lit within their souls
The quenchless flames of zeal, and blest the sword
He brought on earth to satiate with the blood
Of truth and freedom his malignant soul.
At length his mortal frame was led to death.
I stood beside him: on the torturing cross
No pain assailed his unterrestrial sense;
And yet he groaned. Indignantly, I summed
The massacres and miseries which his name
Had sanctioned in my country, and I cried,
Go! go! in mockery.
A smile of godlike malice re-illuminated
His fading lineaments.—I go, he cried,
But thou shalt wander o'er the unquiet earth
Eternally.—————The dampness of the grave
Bathed my imperishable front. I fell,
And long lay tranced upon the charmed soil.

When I awoke hell burned within my brain,
Which staggered on its seat; for all around
The mouldering relics of my kindred lay,
Even as the Almighty's ire arrested them,
And in their various attitudes of death
My murdered children's mute and eyeless skulls
Glared ghastly upon me.

But my soul,
From sight and sense of the polluting woe
Of tyranny, had long learned to prefer
Hell's freedom to the servitude of heaven.
Therefore I rose, and dauntlessly began
My lonely and unending pilgrimage,
Resolved to wage unweariable war
With my almighty tyrant, and to hurl
Defiance at his impotence to harm
Beyond the curse I bore. The very hand
That barred my passage to the peaceful grave
Has crushed the earth to misery, and given
Its empire to the chosen of his slaves.
These have I seen, even from the earliest dawn
Of weak, unstable, and precarious power;
Then preaching peace, as now they practise war,
So, when they turned but from the massacre
Of unoffending infidels, to quench
Their thirst for ruin in the very blood
That flowed in their own veins, and pitiless zeal

Froze every human feeling, as the wife
Sheathed in her husband's heart the sacred steel,

Even whilst its hopes were dreaming of her love;
And friends to friends, brothers to brothers stood
Opposed in bloodiest battle-field, and war,
Scarce satiable by fate's last death-draught waged,
Drunk from the wine-press of the Almighty's wrath;
Whilst the red cross in mockery of peace,
Pointed to victory! When the fray was done,
No remnant of the exterminated faith
Survived to tell its ruin, but the flesh,
With putrid smoke poisoning the atmosphere,
That rotted on the half-extinguished pile.

Yes! I have seen God's worshippers unsheathe
The sword of his revenge, when grace descended,
Confirming all unnatural impulses,
To sanctify their desolating deeds;
And frantic priests waved the ill-omened cross
O'er the unhappy earth: then shone the Sun
On showers of gore from the upflashing steel
Of safe assassination, and all crime
Made stingless by the spirits of the Lord,
And blood-red rainbows canopied the land.
Spirit! no year of my eventful being
Has passed unstained by crime and misery,
Which flows from God's own faith. I've marked his slaves
With tongues whose lies are venomous, beguile

The insensate mob, and whilst one hand was red
With murder, feign to stretch the other out
For brotherhood and peace; and that they now

Babble of love and mercy, whilst their deeds
Are marked with all the narrowness and crime
That freedom's young arm dare not yet chastise;
Reason may claim our gratitude, who now
Establishing the imperishable throne
Of truth, and stubborn virtue, maketh vain
The unprevailing malice of my foe,
Whose bootless rage heaps torments for the brave,
Adds impotent eternities to pain,
Whilst keenest disappointment racks his breast
To see the smiles of peace around them play,
To frustrate, or to sanctify their doom.

Thus have I stood,—through a wild waste of years
Struggling with whirlwinds of mad agony,
Yet peaceful, and serene, and self-enshrined,
Mocking my powerless tyrant's horrible curse
With stubborn and unalterable will,
Even as a giant oak, which heaven's fierce flame
Had scathed in the wilderness, to stand
A monument of fadeless ruin there;
Yet peacefully and movelessly it braves
The midnight conflict of the wintry storm,
As in the sun-light's calm it spreads
Its worn and withered arms on high

To meet the quiet of a summer's noon.

The Fairy waved her wand:

Ahasuerus fled

Fast as the shapes of mingled shade and mist,

That lurk in the glens of a twilight grove,

Flee from the morning beam:

The matter of which dreams are made

Not more endowed with actual life

Than this phantasmal portraiture

Of wandering human thought.

VIII.



THE present and the past thou hast beheld:
It was a desolate sight. Now, Spirit, learn
 The secrets of the future.—Time!
Unfold the brooding pinion of thy gloom,
Render thou up thy half-devoured babes,
And from the cradles of eternity,
Where millions lie lulled to their portioned sleep
By the deep murmuring stream of passing things,
Tear thou that gloomy shroud.—Spirit, behold
 Thy glorious destiny!

 Joy to the Spirit came.
Through the wide rent in Time's eternal veil,
Hope was seen beaming through the mists of fear:
 Earth was no longer hell;
 Love, freedom, health, had given
Their ripeness to the manhood of its prime,
 And all its pulses beat

Symphonious to the planetary spheres:

Then dulcet music swelled
Concordant with the life-strings of the soul;
It throbbed in sweet and languid beatings there,
Catching new life from transitory death,—
Like the vague sighings of a wind at even,

That wakes the wavelets of the slumbering sea
And dies on the creation of its breath,
And sinks and rises, fails and swells by fits:

Was the pure stream of feeling
That sprung from these sweet notes,
And o'er the Spirit's human sympathies
With mild and gentle motion calmly flowed.

Joy to the Spirit came,—
Such joy as when a lover sees
The chosen of his soul in happiness,
And witnesses her peace
Whose woe to him were bitterer than death,
Sees her unfaded cheek
Glow mantling in first luxury of health,
Thrills with her lovely eyes,
Which like two stars amid the heaving main
Sparkle through liquid bliss.

Then in her triumph spoke the Fairy Queen:
I will not call the ghost of ages gone
To unfold the frightful secrets of its lore;

The present now is past,
And those events that desolate the earth
Have faded from the memory of Time,
Who dares not give reality to that
Whose being I annul. To me is given
The wonders of the human world to keep,
Space, matter, time, and mind. Futurity
Exposes now its treasure; let the sight
Renew and strengthen all thy failing hope.

O human Spirit! spur thee to the goal
Where virtue fixes universal peace,
And midst the ebb and flow of human things,
Shew somewhat stable, somewhat certain still,
A lighthouse o'er the wild of dreary waves.

The habitable earth is full of bliss;
Those wastes of frozen billows that were hurled
By everlasting snow-storms round the poles,
Where matter dared not vegetate or live,
But ceaseless frost round the vast solitude
Bound its broad zone of stillness, are unloosed;
And fragrant zephyrs there from spicy isles
Ruffle the placid ocean-deep that rolls
Its broad, bright surges to the sloping sand,
Whose roar is wakened into echoings sweet
To murmur through the heaven-breathing groves
And melodize with man's blest nature there.

Those deserts of immeasurable sand,
Whose age-collected fervours scarce allowed
A bird to live, a blade of grass to spring,
Where the shrill chirp of the green lizard's love
Broke on the sultry silentness alone,
Now teem with countless rills and shady woods,
Corn-fields, and pastures, and white cottages;
And where the startled wilderness beheld
A savage conqueror stained in kindred blood,
A tygress satiating with the flesh of lambs,
The unnatural famine of her toothless cubs,
Whilst shouts and howlings through the desert rang,

Sloping and smooth the daisy-spangled lawn,
Offering sweet incense to the sun-rise, smiles
To see a babe before his mother's door,
 Sharing his morning's meal
 With the green and golden basilisk
 That comes to lick his feet.

Those trackless deeps, where many a weary sail
Has seen above the illimitable plain,
Morning on night, and night on morning rise,
Whilst still no land to greet the wanderer spread
Its shadowy mountains on the sun-bright sea,
Where the loud roarings of the tempest-waves
So long have mingled with the gusty wind
In melancholy loneliness, and swept
The desert of those ocean solitudes,

But vocal to the sea-bird's harrowing shriek,
The bellowing monster, and the rushing storm,
Now to the sweet and many mingling sounds
Of kindest human impulses respond.
Those lonely realms bright garden-isles begem,
With lightsome clouds and shining seas between,
And fertile vallies resonant with bliss,
Whilst green woods overcanopy the wave,
Which like a toil-worn labourer leaps to shore,
To meet the kisses of the flowrets there.

All things are recreated, and the flame
Of consentaneous love inspires all life:
The fertile bosom of the earth gives suck
To myriads, who still grow beneath her care,

Rewarding her with their pure perfectness:
The balmy breathings of the wind inhale
Her virtues, and diffuse them all abroad:
Health floats amid the gentle atmosphere,
Glowes in the fruits, and mantles on the stream:
No storm deforms the beaming brow of heaven,
Nor scatters in the freshness of its pride
The foliage of the ever-verdant trees;
But fruits are ever ripe, flowers ever fair,
And autumn proudly bears her matron grace,
Kindling a flush on the fair cheek of spring,
Whose virgin bloom beneath the ruddy fruit
Reflects its tint and blushes into love.

The lion now forgets to thirst for blood:
There might you see him sporting in the sun
Beside the dreadless kid; his claws are sheathed,
His teeth are harmless, custom's force has made
His nature as the nature of a lamb.
Like passion's fruit, the nightshade's tempting bane
Poisons no more the pleasure it bestows:
All bitterness is past; the cup of joy
Unmingled mantles to the goblet's brim,
And courts the thirsty lips it fled before.

But chief, ambiguous man, he that can know
More misery, and dream more joy than all;
Whose keen sensations thrill within his breast
To mingle with a loftier instinct there,
Lending their power to pleasure and to pain,
Yet raising, sharpening, and refining each;

Who stands amid the ever-varying world,
The burthen or the glory of the earth;
He chief perceives the change, his being notes
The gradual renovation, and defines
Each movement of its progress on his mind.

Man, where the gloom of the long polar night
Lowers o'er the snow-clad rocks and frozen soil,
Where scarce the hardiest herb that braves the frost
Basks in the moonlight's ineffectual glow,

Shrank with the plants, and darkened with the night;
His chilled and narrow energies, his heart,
Insensible to courage, truth, or love,
His stunted stature and imbecile frame,
Marked him for some abortion of the earth,
Fit compeer of the bears that roamed around,
Whose habits and enjoyments were his own:
His life a feverish dream of stagnant woe,
Whose meagre wants but scantily fulfilled,
Apprised him ever of the joyless length
Which his short being's wretchedness had reached;
His death a pang, which famine, cold, and toil
Long on the mind, whilst yet the vital spark
Clung to the body stubbornly, had brought:
All was inflicted here that earth's revenge
Could wreak on the infringers of her law;
One curse alone was spared—the name of God.

Nor where the tropics bound the realms of day
With a broad belt of mingling cloud and flame,
Where blue mists through the unmoving atmosphere

Scattered the seeds of pestilence, and fed
Unnatural vegetation, where the land
Teemed with all earthquake, tempest, and disease,
Was man a nobler being; slavery
Had crushed him to his country's blood-stained dust;
Or he was bartered for the fame of power,
Which all internal impulses destroying,

Makes human will an article of trade;
Or he was changed with Christians for their gold,
And dragged to distant isles, where to the sound
Of the flesh-mangling scourge, he does the work
Of all-polluting luxury and wealth,
Which doubly visits on the tyrants' heads
The long-protracted fulness of their woe;
Or he was led to legal butchery,
To turn to worms beneath that burning sun,
Where kings first leagued against the rights of men,
And priests first traded with the name of God.

Even where the milder zone afforded man
A seeming shelter, yet contagion there,
Blighting his being with unnumbered ills,
Spread like a quenchless fire; nor truth till late
Availed to arrest its progress, or create
That peace which first in bloodless victory waved
Her snowy standard o'er this favoured clime:
There man was long the train-bearer of slaves,
The mimic of surrounding misery,
The jackall of ambition's lion-rage,
The bloodhound of religion's hungry zeal.

Here now the human being stands adorning
This loveliest earth, with taintless body and mind;
Blest from his birth with all bland impulses,
Which gently in his noble bosom wake
All kindly passions and all pure desires.

Him, still from hope to hope the bliss pursuing,
Which from the exhaustless lore of human weal
Draws on the virtuous mind, the thoughts that rise
In time-destroying infiniteness, gift
With self-enshrined eternity, that mocks
The unprevailing hoariness of age,
And man, once fleeting o'er the transient scene
Swift as an unremembered vision, stands
Immortal upon earth: no longer now
He slays the lamb that looks him in the face,
And horribly devours his mangled flesh,
Which still avenging nature's broken law,
Kindled all putrid humours in his frame,
All evil passions, and all vain belief,
Hatred, despair, and loathing in his mind,
The germs of misery, death, disease, and crime.
No longer now the winged habitants,
That in the woods their sweet lives sing away,
Flee from the form of man; but gather round,
And prune their sunny feathers on the hands
Which little children stretch in friendly sport
Towards these dreadless partners of their play.
All things are void of terror: man has lost
His terrible prerogative, and stands
An equal amidst equals: happiness
And science dawn though late upon the earth;

Peace cheers the mind, health renovates the frame;
Disease and pleasure cease to mingle here,

Reason and passion cease to combat there;
Whilst each unfettered o'er the earth extend
Their all-subduing energies, and wield
The sceptre of a vast dominion there;
Whilst every shape and mode of matter lends
Its force to the omnipotence of mind,
Which from its dark mine drags the gem of truth
To decorate its paradise of peace.

IX.



O HAPPY Earth! reality of Heaven!
To which those restless souls that ceaselessly
Throng through the human universe, aspire;
Thou consummation of all mortal hope!
Thou glorious prize of blindly-working will!
Whose rays diffused throughout all space and time,
Verge to one point and blend for ever there:
Of purest spirits thou pure dwelling place!
Where care and sorrow, impotence and crime,
Languor, disease, and ignorance, dare not come:
O happy Earth, reality of Heaven!

Genius has seen thee in her passionate dreams,
And dim forebodings of thy loveliness
Haunting the human heart, have there entwined
Those rooted hopes of some sweet place of bliss
Where friends and lovers meet to part no more.
Thou art the end of all desire and will,

The product of all action: and the souls
That by the paths of an aspiring change
Have reached thy haven of perpetual peace,
There rest from the eternity of toil
That framed the fabric of thy perfectness.

Even Time, the conqueror, fled thee in his fear;
That hoary giant, who, in lonely pride,
So long had ruled the world, that nations fell
Beneath his silent footstep. Pyramids,
That for millenniums had withstood the tide
Of human things, his storm-breath drove in sand
Across that desert where their stones survived
The name of him whose pride had heaped them there.
Yon monarch, in his solitary pomp,
Was but the mushroom of a summer day,
That his light-winged footstep pressed to dust:
Time was the king of earth: all things gave way
Before him, but the fixed and virtuous will,
The sacred sympathies of soul and sense,
That mocked his fury and prepared his fall.
Yet slow and gradual dawned the morn of love;
Long lay the clouds of darkness o'er the scene,
Till from its native heaven they rolled away:
First, crime, triumphant o'er all hope, careered
Unblushing, undisguising, bold, and strong;
Whilst falsehood, tricked in virtue's attributes,
Long sanctified all deeds of vice and woe,
Till done by her own venomous sting to death,

She left the moral world without a law,
No longer fettering passion's fearless wing,
Nor searing reason with the brand of God.
Then steadily the happy ferment worked;
Reason was free; and wild though passion went
Through tangled glens and wood-embosomed meads,
Gathering a garland of the strangest flowers,

Yet like the bee returning to her queen,
She bound the sweetest on her sister's brow,
Who, meek and sober, kissed the sportive child,
No longer trembling at the broken rod.

Mild was the slow necessity of death:
The tranquil Spirit failed beneath its grasp,
Without a groan, almost without a fear,
Calm as a voyager to some distant land,
And full of wonder, full of hope as he.
The deadly germs of languor and disease
Died in the human frame, and purity
Blest with all gifts her earthly worshippers.
How vigorous then the athletic form of age!
How clear its open and unwrinkled brow!
Where neither avarice, cunning, pride, nor care,
Had stamped the seal of grey deformity
On all the mingling lineaments of time.
How lovely the intrepid front of youth!
Which meek-eyed courage decked with freshest grace;
Courage of soul, that dreaded not a name,

And elevated will, that journeyed on
Through life's phantasmal scene in fearlessness,
With virtue, love, and pleasure, hand in hand.

Then, that sweet bondage which is freedom's self,
And rivets with sensation's softest tie
The kindred sympathies of human souls,
Needed no fetters of tyrannic law:
Those delicate and timid impulses

In nature's primal modesty arose,
And with undoubting confidence disclosed
The growing longings of its dawning love,
Unchecked by dull and selfish chastity,
That virtue of the cheaply virtuous,
Who pride themselves in senselessness and frost.
No longer prostitution's venom'd bane
Poisoned the springs of happiness and life;
Woman and man, in confidence and love,
Equal, and free, and pure, together trod
The mountain-paths of virtue, which no more
Were stained with blood from many a pilgrim's feet.

Then, where, through distant ages, long in pride
The palace of the monarch-slave had mocked
Famine's faint groan, and penury's silent tear,
A heap of crumbling ruins stood, and threw
Year after year their stones upon the field,
Wakening a lonely echo; and the leaves

Of the old thorn, that on the topmost tower
Usurped the royal ensign's grandeur, shook
In the stern storm that swayed the topmost tower
And whispered strange tales in the whirlwind's ear.

Low through the lone cathedral's roofless aisles
The melancholy winds a death-dirge sung:
It were a sight of awfulness to see
The works of faith and slavery, so vast,
So sumptuous, yet so perishing withal!
Even as the corpse that rests beneath its wall.

A thousand mourners deck the pomp of death
To-day, the breathing marble glows above
To decorate its memory, and tongues
Are busy of its life: to-morrow worms
In silence and in darkness seize their prey.

Within the massy prison's mouldering courts,
Fearless and free the ruddy children played,
Weaving gay chaplets for their innocent brows
With the green ivy and the red wall-flower,
That mock the dungeon's unavailing gloom;
The ponderous chains, and gratings of strong iron,
There rusted amid heaps of broken stone
That mingled slowly with their native earth:
There the broad beam of day, which feebly once
Lighted the cheek of lean captivity
With a pale and sickly glare, then freely shone

On the pure smiles of infant playfulness:
No more the shuddering voice of hoarse despair
Pealed through the echoing vaults, but soothing notes
Of ivy-fingered winds and gladsome birds
And merriment were resonant around.

These ruins soon left not a wreck behind:
Their elements, wide scattered o'er the globe,
To happier shapes were moulded, and became
Ministrant to all blissful impulses:
Thus human things were perfected, and earth,
Even as a child beneath its mother's love,
Was strengthened in all excellence, and grew
Fairer and nobler with each passing year.

Now Time his dusky pennons o'er the scene
Closes in stedfast darkness, and the past
Fades from our charmed sight. My task is done:
Thy lore is learned. Earth's wonders are thine own,
With all the fear and all the hope they bring.
My spells are past: the present now recurs.
Ah me! a pathless wilderness remains
Yet unsubdued by man's reclaiming hand.

Yet, human Spirit, bravely hold thy course,
Let virtue teach thee firmly to pursue
The gradual paths of an aspiring change:
For birth, and life, and death, and that strange state
Before the naked soul has found its home,

All tend to perfect happiness, and urge
The restless wheels of being on their way,
Whose flashing spokes, instinct with infinite life,
Bicker and burn to gain their destined goal:
For birth but wakes the spirit to the sense
Of outward shews, whose unexperienced shape
New modes of passion to its frame may lend;
Life is its state of action, and the store
Of all events is aggregated there
That variegate the eternal universe;
Death is a gate of dreariness and gloom,
That leads to azure isles and beaming skies
And happy regions of eternal hope.
Therefore, O Spirit! fearlessly bear on:
Though storms may break the primrose on its stalk,
Though frosts may blight the freshness of its bloom,
Yet spring's awakening breath will woo the earth,

To feed with kindest dews its favourite flower,
That blooms in mossy banks and darksome glens,
Lighting the greenwood with its sunny smile.

Fear not then, Spirit, death's disrobing hand,
So welcome when the tyrant is awake,
So welcome when the bigot's hell-torch burns;
'Tis but the voyage of a darksome hour,
The transient gulph-dream of a startling sleep.
Death is no foe to virtue: Earth has seen
Love's brightest roses on the scaffold bloom,

Mingling with freedom's fadeless laurels there,
And presaging the truth of visioned bliss.
Are there not hopes within thee, which this scene
Of linked and gradual being has confirmed?
Whose stings bade thy heart look further still,
When to the moonlight walk by Henry led,
Sweetly and sadly thou didst talk of death?
And wilt thou rudely tear them from thy breast,
Listening supinely to a bigot's creed,
Or tamely crouching to the tyrant's rod,
Whose iron thongs are red with human gore?
Never: but bravely bearing on, thy will,
Is destined an eternal war to wage
With tyranny and falsehood, and uproot
The germs of misery from the human heart.
Thine is the hand whose piety would soothe
The thorny pillow of unhappy crime,
Whose impotence an easy pardon gains,
Watching its wanderings as a friend's disease:
Thine is the brow whose mildness would defy

Its fiercest rage, and brave its sternest will,
When fenced by power and master of the world.
Thou art sincere and good; of resolute mind,
Free from heart-withering custom's cold controul,
Of passion lofty, pure and unsubdued.
Earth's pride and meanness could not vanquish thee,
And therefore art thou worthy of the boon
Which thou hast now received: virtue shall keep

Thy footsteps in the path that thou hast trod,
And many days of beaming hope shall bless
Thy spotless life of sweet and sacred love.
Go, happy one, and give that bosom joy
Whose sleepless spirit waits to catch
Light, life, and rapture from thy smile.

The Fairy waves her wand of charm.
Speechless with bliss the Spirit mounts the car,
That rolled beside the battlement,
Bending her beamy eyes in thankfulness.
Again the enchanted steeds were yoked,
Again the burning wheels inflame
The steep descent of heaven's untrodden way.
Fast and far the chariot flew:
The vast and fiery globes that rolled
Around the Fairy's palace-gate
Lessened by slow degrees, and soon appeared
Such tiny twinklers as the planet orbs
That there attendant on the solar power
With borrowed light pursued their narrower way.
Earth floated then below:
The chariot paused a moment there;

The Spirit then descended:
The restless coursers pawed the ungenial soil,
Snuffed the gross air, and then, their errand done,
Unfurled their pinions to the winds of heaven.

The Body and the Soul united then,
A gentle start convulsed Ianthe's frame:
Her veiny eyelids quietly unclosed;
Moveless awhile the dark blue orbs remained:
She looked around in wonder and beheld
Henry, who kneeled in silence by her couch,
Watching her sleep with looks of speechless love,
 And the bright beaming stars
 That through the casement shone.

NOTES.

NOTES.

It will be seen by the author of *QUEEN MAB*, and those few gentlemen who have a copy of the former edition, that I have been studious in adhering to the original copy. The notes in French, Latin, and Greek are printed verbatim, as the classical scholar would prefer them in the language they were originally written in, and the general reader in translation.

W. CLARK.

NOTES.



I. PAGE 12.

The sun's unclouded orb
Rolled through the black concave.

BEYOND our atmosphere the sun would appear a rayless orb of fire in the midst of a black concave. The equal diffusion of its light on earth is owing to the refraction of the rays by the atmosphere, and their reflection from other bodies. Light consists either of vibrations propagated through a subtle medium, or of numerous minute particles repelled in all directions from the luminous body. Its velocity greatly exceeds that of any substance with which we are acquainted: observations on the eclipses of Jupiter's satellites have demonstrated that light takes up no more than 8' 7" in passing from the sun to the earth, a distance of 95,000,000 miles. Some idea may be gained of the immense distance of the fixed stars, when it is computed that many years would elapse before light could reach this earth from the nearest of them; yet in one year light travels 5,422,400,000,000 miles, which is a distance 5,707,600 times greater than that of the sun from the earth.

I. PAGE 12.

Whilst round the chariot's way
Innumerable systems rolled.

The plurality of worlds, the indefinite immensity of the universe is a most awful subject of contemplation. He who rightly feels its mystery and grandeur, is in no danger of seduction from the falsehoods of religious systems, or of deifying the principle of the universe. It is impossible to believe that the Spirit that pervades this infinite machine, begat a son upon the body of a Jewish woman; or is angered at the consequences of that necessity, which is a synonyme of itself. All that miserable tale of the Devil, and Eve, and an Intercessor, with the childish mummeries of the God of the Jews, is irreconcilable with the knowledge of the stars. The works of his fingers have borne witness against him.

The nearest of the fixed stars is inconceivably distant from the earth, and they are probably proportionably distant from each other. By a calculation of the velocity of light, Sirius is supposed to be at least 54,224,000,000,000 miles from the earth^[1]. That which appears only like a thin and silvery cloud streaking the heaven, is in effect composed of innumerable clusters of suns, each shining with its own light, and illuminating numbers of planets that revolve around them. Millions and millions of suns are ranged around us, all attended by innumerable worlds, yet calm, regular, and harmonious, all keeping the paths of immutable necessity.

IV. PAGE 38.

These are the hired bravoës who defend
The tyrant's throne.

To employ murder as a means of justice, is an idea which a man of an enlightened mind will not dwell upon with pleasure. To march forth in rank and file, with all the pomp of streamers and trumpets, for the purpose of shooting at our fellow-men as a mark; to inflict upon them all the variety of wound and anguish; to leave them weltering in their blood; to wander over the field of desolation, and count the number of the dying and the dead,—are employments which in thesis we may maintain to be necessary, but which no good man will contemplate with gratulation and delight. A battle we suppose is won:—thus truth is established;—thus the cause of justice is confirmed! It surely requires no common sagacity to discern the connection between this immense heap of calamities, and the assertion of truth, or the maintenance of justice.

Kings, and ministers of state, the real authors of the calamity, sit unmolested in their cabinet, while those against whom the fury of the storm is directed, are, for the most part, persons who have been trepanned into the service, or who are dragged unwillingly from their peaceful homes into

the field of battle. A soldier is a man whose business it is to kill those who never offended him, who are the innocent martyrs of other men's iniquities. Whatever may become of the abstract question of the justifiableness of war, it seems impossible that the soldier should not be a depraved and unnatural being.

To these more serious and momentous considerations it may be proper to add a recollection of the ridiculousness of the military character. Its first constituent is obedience: a soldier is, of all descriptions of men, the most completely a machine; yet his profession inevitably teaches him something of dogmatism, swaggering, and self-consequence: he is like the puppet of a showman, who, at the very time he is made to strut and swell and display the most farcical airs, we perfectly know cannot assume the most insignificant gesture, advance either to the right or the left, but as he is moved by his exhibitor.—*Godwin's Enquirer, Essay V.*

I will here subjoin a little poem, so strongly expressive of my abhorrence of despotism and falsehood, that I fear lest it never again may be depicted so vividly. This opportunity is perhaps the only one that ever will occur of rescuing it from oblivion.

FALSEHOOD AND VICE.

A DIALOGUE.

Whilst monarchs laughed upon their thrones
To hear a famished nations groans,
And hugged the wealth wrung from the woe
That makes its eyes and veins o'erflow,

Those thrones, high built upon the heaps
Of bones where frenzied famine sleeps.
Where slavery wields her scourge of iron,
Red with mankind's unheeded gore,
And war's mad fiends the scene environ,
Mingling with shrieks a drunken roar,
There Vice and Falsehood took their stand,
High raised above the unhappy land.

FALSEHOOD.

Brother! arise from the dainty fare,
Which thousands have toiled and bled to bestow;
A finer feast for thine hungry ear
Is the news that I bring of human woe.

VICE.

And, secret one, what hast thou done,
To compare, in thy tumid pride, with me?
I, whose career, through the blasted year,
Has been tracked by despair and agony.

FALSEHOOD.

What have I done!—I have torn the robe
From baby truth's unsheltered form,
And round the desolated globe
Borne safely the bewildering charm:
My tyrant-slaves to a dungeon-floor
Have bound the fearless innocent,

And streams of fertilizing gore
Flow from her bosom's hideous rent,
Which this unfailing dagger gave.....
I dread that blood!—no more—this day
Is ours, though her eternal ray
 Must shine upon our grave.
Yet know, proud Vice, had I not given
To thee the robe I stole from heaven,
Thy shape of ugliness and fear
Had never gained admission here.

VICE.

And know, that had I disdained to toil,
But sate in my loathsome cave the while,
And ne'er to these hateful sons of heaven,
GOLD, MONARCHY, and MURDER given:
Hadst thou with all thine art essayed
One of thy games then to have played,
With all thine overweening boast,
Falsehood! I tell thee thou hadst lost!—
Yet wherefore this dispute?—we tend,
Fraternal, to one common end;
In this cold grave beneath my feet,
Will our hopes, our fears, and our labours meet.

FALSEHOOD.

I brought my daughter, RELIGION, on earth:
She smothered Reason's babes in their birth;
But dreaded their mother's eye severe,—
So the crocodile slunk off sily in fear,

And loosed her bloodhounds from the den.....
They started from dreams of slaughtered men,

And, by the light of her poison eye,
Did her work o'er the wide earth frightfully:
The dreadful stench of her torches flare,
Fed with human fat, polluted the air:
The curses, the shrieks, the ceaseless cries
Of the many-mingling miseries,
As on she trod, ascended high
And trumpeted my victory!—
Brother, tell what thou hast done.

VICE.

I have extinguished the noon-day sun,
In the carnage-smoke of battles won:
Famine, murder, hell, and power,
Were glutted in that glorious hour
Which searchless fate had stamped for me
With the seal of her security.....
For the bloated wretch on yonder throne
Commanded the bloody fray to rise:
Like me he joyed at the stifled moan
Wrung from a nation's miseries;
While the snakes, whose slime even him *defiled*,
In ecstasies of malice smiled:
They thought 'twas theirs,—but mine the deed!

Theirs is the toil, but mine the meed—
Ten thousand victims madly bleed.
They dream that tyrants goad them there
With poisonous war to taint the air:

These tyrants, on their beds of thorn,

Swell with the thoughts of murderous fame, And with their
gains to lift my name. Restless they plan from night to
morn: I—I do all; without my aid Thy daughter, that
relentless maid, Could never o'er a death-bed urge The fury
of her venom'd scourge.

</poem>

FALSEHOOD.

<poem>

Brother, well:—the world is ours; And whether thou or I
have won, The pestilence expectant lowers On all beneath
yon blasted sun. Our joys, our toils, our honours meet In the
milk-white and wormy winding-sheet: A short-lived hope,
unceasing care, Some heartless scraps of godly prayer, A
moody curse, and a frenzied sleep Ere gapes the graves
unclosing deep, A tyrant's dream, a coward's start, The ice
that clings to a priestly heart, A judge's frown, a courtier's
smile, Make the great whole for which we toil; And,

brother, whether thou or I Have done the work of misery, It little boots: thy toil and pain, Without my aid were more than vain; And but for thee I ne'er had sate

The guardian of heaven's palace gate.

V. PAGE 42.

Thus do the generations of the earth
Go to the grave, and issue from the womb.

One generation passeth away and another generation cometh, but the earth abideth for ever. The sun also ariseth and the sun goeth down, and hasteth to his place where he arose. The wind goeth toward the south and turneth about unto the north, it whirlleth about continually, and the wind returneth again, according to his circuits. All the rivers run into the sea, yet the sea is not full; unto the place whence the rivers come, thither shall they return again.

Ecclesiastes, chap. i.

V. PAGE 42.

Even as the leaves
Which the keen frost-wind of the waning year
Has scattered on the forest soil.

Οἴη περ φύλλων γενεῆ, τοιήδῃ καὶ ἀνδρῶν.
Φύλλα τὰ μὲν τ' ἄνεμος χαμάδις χέει, ἄλλα δέ
θ' ὕλη
Τηλεθόωσα φύει, ἕαρος δ' ἐπιγίγνεται ὥρη·
ᾠς ἀνδρῶν γενεῆ, ἣ μὲν φύει ἦδ' ἀπολήγει.^[2]

ΙΛΙΑΔ. Ζ'. l. 146.

V. PAGE 44.

The mob of peasants, nobles, priests, and kings.

Suave mari magno turbantibus æquora ventis
E terrâ magnum atterius spectare laborem;
Non quia vexari quemquam 'st jucunda voluptas,
Sed quibus ipse malis careas quia cernere suave 'st.
Suave etiam belli certamina magna tueri,
Per campos instructa, tua sine parte pericli;
Sed nil dulcius est bene quam munita tenere
Edita doctrina sapientum templa serena;
Despicere unde queas alios, passim que videre
Errare atque viam palanteis quærere vitæ;
Certare ingenio; contendere nobilitate;
Nocteisque dies niti præstante labore

Ad summas emergere opes, rerum que potiri.
O miseras hominum menteis! O pectora cæca^[3]!

Luc. lib. ii.

V. PAGE 45.

And statesmen boast
Of wealth!


There is no real wealth but the labour of man. Were the mountains of gold, and the vallies of silver, the world would not be one grain of corn the richer; no one comfort would be added to the human race. In consequence of our consideration for the precious metals, one man is enabled to heap to himself luxuries at the expence of the necessaries of his neighbour; a system admirably fitted to produce all the varieties of disease and crime, which never fail to characterise the two extremes of opulence and penury. A speculator takes pride to himself as the promoter of his country's prosperity, who employs a number of hands in the manufacture of articles avowedly destitute of use, or subservient only to the unhallowed cravings of luxury and ostentation. The nobleman, who employs the peasants of his neighbourhood in building his palaces, until "*jam pauca*

aratro jugera, regiæ moles relinquunt^[4]," flatters himself that he has gained the title of a patriot by yielding to the impulses of vanity. The shew and pomp of courts adduces the same apology for its continuance; and many a fête has been given, many a woman has eclipsed her beauty by her dress, to benefit the labouring poor and to encourage trade. Who does not see that this is a remedy which aggravates, whilst it palliates the countless diseases of society? The poor are set to labour,—for what? Not the food for which they famish: not the blankets for want of which their babes are frozen by the cold of their miserable hovels: not those comfors of civilization without which civilized man is far more miserable than the meanest savage; oppressed as he is by all its insidious evils, within the daily and taunting prospect of its innumerable benefits assiduously exhibited before him:—no; for the pride of power, for the miserable isolation of pride, for the false pleasures of the hundredth part of society. No greater evidence is afforded of the wide extended and radical mistakes of civilized man than this fact: those arts which are essential to his very being are held in the greatest contempt; employments are lucrative in an inverse ratio to their usefulness^[5]: the jeweller, the toyman, the actor gains fame and wealth by the exercise of his useless and ridiculous art; whilst the cultivator of the earth, he without whom society must cease to subsist, struggles through contempt and penury, and perishes by that famine which, but for his unceasing exertions, would annihilate the rest of mankind.

I will not insult common sense by insisting on the doctrine of the natural equality of man. The question is not concerning its desirableness, but its practicability: so far as it is practicable, it is desirable. That state of human society which approaches nearer to an equal partition of its benefits and evils should, *cæteris paribus*^[6], be preferred: but so long as we conceive that a wanton expenditure of human labour, not for the necessities, not even for the luxuries of the mass of society, but for the egotism and ostentation of a few of its members, is defensible on the ground of public justice, so long we neglect to approximate to the redemption of the human race.

Labour is required for physical, and leisure for moral improvement: from the former of these advantages the rich, and from the latter the poor, by the inevitable condition of their respective situations, are precluded. A state which should combine the advantages of both, would be subjected to the evils of neither. He that is deficient in firm health, or vigorous intellect, is but half a man: hence it follows, that, to subject the labouring classes to unnecessary labour, is wantonly depriving them of any opportunities of intellectual improvement; and that the rich are heaping up for their own mischief the disease, lassitude and *ennui* by which their existence is rendered an intolerable burthen.

English reformers exclaim against sinecures,—but the true pension-list is the rent-roll of the landed proprietors: wealth is a power usurped by the few, to compel the many to

labour for their benefit. The laws which support this system derive their force from the ignorance and credulity of its victims: they are the result of a conspiracy of the few against the many, who are themselves obliged to purchase this pre-eminence by the loss of all real comfort. 

The commodities that substantially contribute to the subsistence of the human species form a very short catalogue: they demand from us but a slender portion of industry. If these only were produced, and sufficiently produced, the species of man would be continued. If the labour necessarily required to produce them were equitably divided among the poor, and, still more, if it were equitably divided among all, each man's share of labour would be light, and his portion of leisure would be ample. There was a time when this leisure would have been of small comparative value: it is to be hoped that the time will come, when it will be applied to the most important purposes. Those hours which are not required for the production of the necessaries of life, may be devoted to the cultivation of the understanding, the enlarging our stock of knowledge, the refining our taste, and thus opening to us new and more exquisite sources of enjoyment.

* * * * *

It was perhaps necessary that a period of monopoly and oppression should subsist, before a period of cultivated equality could subsist. Savages perhaps would never have

been excited to the discovery of truth and the invention of art, but by the narrow motives which such a period affords. But, surely, after the savage state has ceased, and men have set out in the glorious career of discovery and invention, monopoly and oppression cannot be necessary to prevent them from returning to a state of barbarism.—*Godwin's Enquirer, Essay II. See also Pol. Jus., Book VIII. chap. 11.*

It is a calculation of this admirable author, that all the conveniences of civilized life might be produced, if society would divide the labour equally among its members, by each individual being employed in labour two hours during the day.

V. PAGE 46.

Or religion

Drives his wife raving mad.

I am acquainted with a lady of considerable accomplishments, and the mother of a numerous family, whom the Christian religion has goaded to incurable insanity. A parallel case is, I believe, within the experience of every physician.

Nam jam sæpe homines patriam, carosque parentes

Prodiderunt, vitare Acherusia templa petentes^[7].

Lucretius.

V. PAGE 48.

Even love is sold.

Not even the intercourse of the sexes is exempt from the despotism of positive institution. Law pretends even to govern the indisciplinable wanderings of passion, to put fetters on the clearest deductions of reason, and, by appeals to the will, to subdue the involuntary affections of our nature. Love is inevitably consequent upon the perception of loveliness. Love withers under constraint: its very essence is liberty: it is compatible neither with obedience, jealousy, nor fear: it is there most pure, perfect, and unlimited, where its votaries live in confidence, equality, and unreserve.

How long then ought the sexual connection to last? what law ought to specify the extent of the grievances which should limit its duration? A husband and wife ought to continue so long united as they love each other: any law which should bind them to cohabitation for one moment after the decay of their affection, would be a most intolerable tyranny, and the most unworthy of toleration. How odious an usurpation of the right of private judgment

should that law be considered, which should make the ties of friendship indissoluble, in spite of the caprices, the inconstancy, the fallibility, and capacity for improvement of the human mind. And by so much would the fetters of love be heavier and more unendurable than those of friendship, as love is more vehement and capricious, more dependent on those delicate peculiarities of imagination, and less capable of reduction to the ostensible merits of the object.

The state of society in which we exist is a mixture of feudal savageness and imperfect civilization. The narrow and unenlightened morality of the Christian religion is an aggravation of these evils. It is not even until lately that mankind have admitted that happiness is the sole end of the science of ethics, as of all other sciences; and that the fanatical idea of mortifying the flesh for the love of God has been discarded. I have heard, indeed, an ignorant collegian adduce, in favour of Christianity, its hostility to every worldly feeling^[8]!

But if happiness be the object of morality, of all human unions and disunions; if the worthiness of every action is to be estimated by the quantity of pleasurable sensation it is calculated to produce, then the connection of the sexes is so long sacred as it contributes to the comfort of the parties, and is naturally dissolved when its evils are greater than its benefits. There is nothing immoral in this separation. Constancy has nothing virtuous in itself, independently of the pleasure it confers, and partakes of the temporizing

spirit of vice in proportion as it endures tamely moral defects of magnitude in the object of its indiscreet choice. Love is free: to promise for ever to love the same woman, is not less absurd than to promise to believe the same creed: such a vow, in both cases, excludes us from all enquiry. The language of the votarist is this: The woman I now love may be infinitely inferior to many others; the creed I now profess may be a mass of errors and absurdities; but I exclude myself from all future information as to the amiability of the one, and the truth of the other, resolving blindly, and in spite of conviction, to adhere to them.—Is this the language of delicacy and reason? Is the love of such a frigid heart of more worth than its belief?

The present system of constraint does no more, in the majority of instances, than make hypocrites or open enemies. Persons of delicacy and virtue, unhappily united to one whom they find it impossible to love, spend the loveliest season of their life in unproductive efforts to appear otherwise than they are, for the sake of the feelings of their partner or the welfare of their mutual offspring: those of less generosity and refinement openly avow their disappointment, and linger out the remnant of that union, which only death can dissolve, in a state of incurable bickering and hostility. The early education of their children takes its colour from the squabbles of the parents; they are nursed in a systematic school of ill-humour, violence, and falsehood. Had they been suffered to part at the moment when indifference rendered their union irksome, they would

have been spared many years of misery: they would have connected themselves more suitably, and would have found that happiness in the society of more congenial partners which is for ever denied them by the despotism of marriage. They would have been separately useful and happy members of society, who, whilst united, were miserable, and rendered misanthropical by misery. The conviction that wedlock is indissoluble holds out the strongest of all temptations to the perverse: they indulge without restraint in acrimony, and all the little tyrannies of domestic life, when they know that their victim is without appeal. If this connection were put on a rational basis, each would be assured that habitual ill temper would terminate in separation, and would check this vicious and dangerous propensity.

Prostitution is the legitimate offspring of marriage and its accompanying errors. Women, for no other crime than having followed the dictates of a natural appetite, are driven with fury from the comforts and sympathies of society. It is less venial than murder; and the punishment which is inflicted on her who destroys her child to escape reproach, is lighter than the life of agony and disease to which the prostitute is irrecoverably doomed. Has a woman obeyed the impulse of unerring nature;—society declares war against her, pityless and eternal war: she must be the tame slave, she must make no reprisals; theirs is the right of persecution, hers the duty of endurance. She lives a life of infamy: the loud and bitter laugh of scorn scares her from

all return. She dies of long and lingering disease: yet *she* is in fault, *she* is the criminal, *she* the froward and untameable child,—and society, forsooth, the pure and virtuous matron, who casts her as an abortion from her undefiled bosom! Society avenges herself on the criminals of her own creation; she is employed in anathematizing the vice to-day, which yesterday she was the most zealous to teach. Thus is formed one-tenth of the population of London, meanwhile the evil is twofold. Young men, excluded by the fanatical idea of chastity from the society of modest and accomplished women, associate with these vicious and miserable beings, destroying thereby all those exquisite and delicate sensibilities whose existence cold-hearted worldlings have denied; annihilating all genuine passion, and debasing that to a selfish feeling which is the excess of generosity and devotedness. Their body and mind alike crumble into a hideous wreck of humanity; idiotcy and disease become perpetuated in their miserable offspring, and distant generations suffer for the bigotted morality of their forefathers. Chastity is a monkish and evangelical superstition, a greater foe to natural temperance even than unintellectual sensuality; it strikes at the root of all domestic happiness, and consigns more than half of the human race to misery, that some few may monopolize according to law. A system could not well have been devised more studiously hostile to human happiness than marriage.

I conceive that, from the abolition of marriage, the fit and natural arrangement of sexual connection would result. I by no means assert that the intercourse would be promiscuous: on the contrary; it appears, from the relation of parent to child, that this union is generally of long duration, and marked above all others with generosity and self-devotion. But this is a subject which it is perhaps premature to discuss. That which will result from the abolition of marriage, will be natural and right, because choice and change will be exempted from restraint.

In fact, religion and morality, as they now stand, compose a practical code of misery and servitude: the genius of human happiness must tear every leaf from the accursed book of God, ere man can read the inscription on his heart. How would morality, dressed up in stiff stays and finery, start from her own disgusting image, should she look in the mirror of nature!



I. PAGE 53.

To the red and baleful sun
That faintly twinkles there.

The north polar star, to which the axis of the earth, in its present state of obliquity, points. It is exceedingly probable, from many considerations, that this obliquity will gradually diminish, until the equator coincides with the ecliptic: the nights and days will then become equal on the earth throughout the year, and probably the seasons also. There is no great extravagance in presuming that the progress of the perpendicularity of the poles may be as rapid as the progress of intellect; or that there should be a perfect identity between the moral and physical improvement of the human species. It is certain that wisdom is not compatible with disease, and that, in the present state of the climates of the earth, health, in the true and comprehensive sense of the word, is out of the reach of civilized man. Astronomy teaches us that the earth is now in its progress, and that the poles are every year becoming more and more perpendicular to the ecliptic. The strong evidence afforded by the history of mythology, and geological researches, that some event of this nature has taken place already, affords a strong presumption that this progress is not merely an oscillation, as has been surmised by some late astronomers^[9]. Bones of animals peculiar to the torrid zone have been found in the north of Siberia, and on the banks of the river Ohio. Plants have been found in the fossil state in the interior of Germany, which demand the present climate of Hindostan for their production^[10]. The researches of M. Bailly^[11] establish the existence of a people who inhabit a tract of land in Tartary, 49° north latitude, of greater

antiquity than either the Indians, the Chinese, or the Chaldeans, from whom these nations derived their sciences and theology. We find, from the testimony of ancient writers, that Britain, Germany, and France, were much colder than at present, and that their great rivers were annually frozen over. Astronomy teaches us also, that since this period the obliquity of the earth's position has been considerably diminished.



VI. PAGE 57.

No atom of this turbulence fulfils
A vague and unnecessitated task,
Or acts but as it must and ought to act.

Deux exemples serviront à nous rendre plus sensible le principe qui vient d'être posé; nous emprunterons l'une du physique et l'autre du moral. Dans un tourbillon de poussière qu'éleve un vent impetueux, quelque confus qu'il paroisse à nos yeux; dans la plus affreuse tempête excité par des vents opposés qui soulèvent les flots, il n'y a pas une seule molècule de poussière ou d'eau qui soit placé au *hazard*, qui n'ait sa cause suffisante pour occuper le lieu où elle se trouve, et qui n'agisse rigoureusement de la manière dont elle doit agir. Une géomètre qui connoîtroit exactement les différentes forces qui agissent dans ces deux

cas, et les propriétés des molécules qui sont mues, démontreroit que d'après des causes donnés, chaque molécule agit précisément comme elle doit agir, et ne peut agir autrement qu'elle ne fait.

Dans les convulsions terribles qui agitent quelquefois les sociétés politiques, et qui produisent souvent le renversement d'un empire, il n'y a pas une seule action, une seule parole, une seule pensée, une seule volonté, une seule passion dans les agens qui concourent à la révolution comme destructeurs ou comme victimes, qui ne soit nécessaire, qui n'agisse comme elle doit agir, qui n'opère infalliblement les effets qu'elle doit opérer, suivant la place qu'occupent ces agens dans ce tourbillon moral. Cela paroîtroit évident pour une intelligence qui sera en état de saisir et d'apprécier toutes les actions et re-actions des esprits et des corps de ceux qui contribuent à cette révolution^[12].

Systeme de la Nature, vol. i. p. 44.

VI. PAGE 58.

Necessity! thou mother of the world!

He who asserts the doctrine of Necessity, means that, contemplating the events which compose the moral and

material universe, he beholds only an immense and uninterrupted chain of causes and effects, no one of which could occupy any other place than it does occupy, or act in any other place than it does act. The idea of necessity is obtained by our experience of the connection between objects, the uniformity of the operations of nature, the constant conjunction of similar events, and the consequent inference of one from the other. Mankind are therefore agreed in the admission of necessity, if they admit that these two circumstances take place in voluntary action. Motive is, to voluntary action in the human mind, what cause is to effect in the material universe. The word liberty, as applied to mind, is analogous to the word chance, as applied to matter: they spring from an ignorance of the certainty of the conjunction of antecedents and consequents.

Every human being is irresistibly impelled to act precisely as he does act: in the eternity which preceded his birth, a chain of causes was generated, which, operating under the name of motives, make it impossible that any thought of his mind, or any action of his life, should be otherwise than it is. Were the doctrine of Necessity false, the human mind would no longer be a legitimate object of science; from like causes it would be in vain that we should expect like effects; the strongest motive would no longer be paramount over the conduct; all knowledge would be vague and undeterminate; we could not predict with any certainty, that we might not meet as an enemy to-morrow, him with whom we have parted in friendship to-night; the most probable

inducements and the clearest reasonings would lose the invariable influence they possess. The contrary of this is demonstrably the fact. Similar circumstances produce the same unvariable effects. The precise character and motives of any man on any occasion being given, the moral philosopher could predict his actions with as much certainty as the natural philosopher could predict the effects of the mixture of any particular chemical substances. Why is the aged husbandman more experienced than the young beginner? Because there is an uniform, undeniable necessity in the operations of the material universe. Why is the old statesman more skilful than the raw politician? Because, relying on the necessary conjunction of motive and action, he proceeds to produce moral effects, by the application of those moral causes which experience has shewn to be effectual. Some actions may be found to which we can attach no motives, but these are the effects of causes with which we are unacquainted. Hence the relation which motive bears to voluntary action is that of cause to effect; nor, placed in this point of view, is it, or ever has it been the subject of popular or philosophical dispute. None but the few fanatics who are engaged in the Herculean task of reconciling the justice of their God with the misery of man, will longer outrage common sense by the supposition of an event without a cause, a voluntary action without a motive. History, politics, morals, criticism, all grounds of reasoning, all principles of science, alike assume the truth of the doctrine of Necessity. No farmer carrying his corn to market doubts the sale of it at the market price. The master

of a manufactory no more doubts that he can purchase the human labour necessary for his purposes, than that his machinery will act as they have been accustomed to act.

But, whilst none have scrupled to admit necessity as influencing matter, many have disputed its dominion over mind. Independently of its militating with the received ideas of the justice of God, it is by no means obvious to a superficial enquiry. When the mind observes its own operations, it feels no connection of motive and action: but as we know "nothing more of causation than the constant conjunction of objects and the consequent inference of one from the other, as we find that these two circumstances are universally allowed to have place in voluntary action, we may be easily led to own that they are subjected to the necessity common to all causes." The actions of the will have a regular conjunction with circumstances and characters; motive is, to voluntary action, what cause is to effect. But the only idea we can form of causation is a constant conjunction of similar objects, and the consequent inference of one from the other: wherever this is the case necessity is clearly established.

The idea of liberty, applied metaphorically to the will, has sprung from a misconception of the meaning of the word power. What is power?—*id quod potest*^[13], that which can produce any given effect. To deny power, is to say that nothing can or has the power to be or act. In the only true sense of the word power, it applies with equal force to the

loadstone as to the human will. Do you think these motives, which I shall present, are powerful enough to rouse him? is a question just as common as, Do you think this lever has the power of raising this weight? The advocates of free-will assert that the will has the power of refusing to be determined by the strongest motive: but the strongest motive is that which, overcoming all others, ultimately prevails; this assertion therefore amounts to a denial of the will being ultimately determined by that motive which does determine it, which is absurd. But it is equally certain that a man cannot resist the strongest motive, as that he cannot overcome a physical impossibility.

The doctrine of Necessity tends to introduce a great change into the established notions of morality, and utterly to destroy religion. Reward and punishment must be considered, by the Necessarian, merely as motives which he would employ in order to procure the adoption or abandonment of any given line of conduct. Desert, in the present sense of the word, would no longer have any meaning; and he, who should inflict pain upon another for no better reason than that he deserved it, would only gratify his revenge under pretence of satisfying justice. It is not enough, says the advocate of free-will, that a criminal should be prevented from a repetition of his crime: he should feel pain, and his torments, when justly inflicted, ought precisely to be proportioned to his fault. But utility is morality; that which is incapable of producing happiness is useless; and though the crime of Damians must be

condemned, yet the frightful torments which revenge, under the name of justice, inflicted on this unhappy man, cannot be supposed to have augmented, even at the long run, the stock of pleasurable sensation in the world. At the same time the doctrine of Necessity does not in the least diminish our disapprobation of vice. The conviction which all feel, that a viper is a poisonous animal, and that a tyger is constrained, by the inevitable condition of his existence, to devour men, does not induce us to avoid them less sedulously, or, even more, to hesitate in destroying them: but he would surely be of a hard heart, who, meeting with a serpent on a desart island, or in a situation where it was incapable of injury, should wantonly deprive it of existence. A Necessarian is inconsequent to his own principles, if he indulges in hatred or contempt; the compassion which he feels for the criminal is unmixed with a desire of injuring him: he looks with an elevated and dreadless composure upon the links of the universal chain as they pass before his eyes; whilst cowardice, curiosity and inconsistency only assail him in proportion to the feebleness and indistinctness with which he has perceived and rejected the delusions of free-will.

Religion is the perception of the relation in which we stand to the principle of the universe. But if the principle of the universe be not an organic being, the model and prototype of man, the relation between it and human beings is absolutely none. Without some insight into its will respecting our actions, religion is nugatory and vain. But

will is only a mode of animal mind; moral qualities also are such as only a human being can possess; to attribute them to the principle of the universe, is to annex to it properties incompatible with any possible definition of its nature. It is probable that the word God was originally only an expression denoting the unknown cause of the known events which men perceived in the universe. By the vulgar mistake of a metaphor for a real being, of a word for a thing, it became a man, endowed with human qualities and governing the universe as an earthly monarch governs his kingdom. Their addresses to this imaginary being, indeed, are much in the same style as those of subjects to a king. They acknowledge his benevolence, deprecate his anger, and supplicate his favour.

But the doctrine of Necessity teaches us, that in no case could any event have happened otherwise than it did happen, and that, if God is the author of good, he is also the author of evil; that, if he is entitled to our gratitude for the one, he is entitled to our hatred for the other; that, admitting the existence of this hypothetic being, he is also subjected to the dominion of an immutable necessity. It is plain that the same arguments which prove that God is the author of food, light, and life, prove him also to be the author of poison, darkness, and death. The wide-wasting earthquake, the storm, the battle, and the tyranny, are attributable to this hypothetic being in the same degree as the fairest forms of nature, sunshine, liberty, and peace.

But we are taught, by the doctrine of Necessity, that there is neither good nor evil in the universe, otherwise than as the events to which we apply these epithets have relation to our own peculiar mode of being. Still less than with the hypothesis of a God, will the doctrine of Necessity accord with the belief of a future state of punishment. God made man such as he is, and then damned him for being so: for to say that God was the author of all good, and man the author of all evil, is to say that one man made a straight line and a crooked one, and another man made the incongruity.



A Mahometan story, much to the present purpose, is recorded, wherein Adam and Moses are introduced disputing before God in the following manner. Thou, says Moses, art Adam, whom God created, and animated with the breath of life, and caused to be worshipped by the angels, and placed in Paradise, from whence mankind have been expelled for thy fault. Whereto Adam answered, Thou art Moses, whom God chose for his apostle, and entrusted with his word, by giving thee the tables of the law, and whom he vouchsafed to admit to discourse with himself. How many years dost thou find the law was written before I was created? Says Moses, Forty. And dost thou not find, replied Adam, these words therein, And Adam rebelled against his Lord and transgressed? Which Moses confessing, Dost thou therefore blame me, continued he, for doing that which God wrote of me that I should do, forty

years before I was created, nay, for what was decreed concerning me fifty thousand years before the creation of heaven and earth?

Sale's Prelim. Disc. to the Koran, p. 164.

VII. PAGE 61.

There is no God!

This negation must be understood solely to affect a creative Deity. The hypothesis of a pervading Spirit coeternal with the universe, remains unshaken.

A close examination of the validity of the proofs adduced to support any proposition, is the only secure way of attaining truth, on the advantages of which it is unnecessary to descant: our knowledge of the existence of a Deity is a subject of such importance, that it cannot be too minutely investigated; in consequence of this conviction we proceed briefly and impartially to examine the proofs which have been adduced. It is necessary first to consider the nature of belief.

When a proposition is offered to the mind, it perceives the agreement or disagreement of the ideas of which it is composed. A perception of their agreement is termed *belief*. Many obstacles frequently prevent this perception from being immediate; these the mind attempts to remove, in

order that the perception may be distinct. The mind is active in the investigation, in order to perfect the state of perception of the relation which the component ideas of the proposition bear to each, which is passive: the investigation being confused with the perception, has induced many falsely to imagine that the mind is active in belief,—that belief is an act of volition,—in consequence of which it may be regulated by the mind. Pursuing, continuing this mistake, they have attached a degree of criminality to disbelief; of which, in its nature, it is incapable: it is equally incapable of merit.

Belief, then, is a passion, the strength of which, like every other passion, is in precise proportion to the degrees of excitement.

The degrees of excitement are three.

The senses are the sources of all knowledge to the mind; consequently their evidence claims the strongest assent.

The decision of the mind, founded upon our own experience, derived from these sources, claims the next degree.

The experience of others, which addresses itself to the former one, occupies the lowest degree.

(A graduated scale, on which should be marked the capabilities of propositions to approach to the test of the

senses, would be a just barometer of the belief which ought to be attached to them.)

Consequently no testimony can be admitted which is contrary to reason; reason is founded on the evidence of our senses.

Every proof may be referred to one of these three divisions: it is to be considered what arguments we receive from each of them, which should convince us of the existence of a Deity.

1st. The evidence of the senses. If the Deity should appear to us, if he should convince our senses, of his existence, this revelation would necessarily command belief. Those to whom the Deity has thus appeared have the strongest possible conviction of his existence. But the God of Theologians is incapable of local visibility.

2d. Reason. It is urged that man knows that whatever is, must either have had a beginning, or have existed from all eternity: he also knows, that whatever is not eternal must have had a cause. When this reasoning is applied to the universe, it is necessary to prove that it was created: until that is clearly demonstrated, we may reasonably suppose that it has endured from all eternity. We must prove design before we can infer a designer. The only idea which we can form of causation is derivable from the constant conjunction of objects, and the consequent inference of one

from the other. In a case where two propositions are diametrically opposite, the mind believes that which is least incomprehensible;—it is easier to suppose that the universe has existed from all eternity, than to conceive a being beyond its limits capable of creating it: if the mind sinks beneath the weight of one, is it an alleviation to increase the intolerability of the burthen?

The other argument, which is founded on a man's knowledge of his own existence, stands thus. A man knows not only that he now is, but that once he was not; consequently there must have been a cause. But our idea of causation is alone derivable from the constant conjunction of objects and the consequen tinference of one from the other; and, reasoning experimentally, we can only infer from effects, causes exactly adequate to those effects. But there certainly is a generative power which is effected by certain instruments: we cannot prove that it is inherent in these instruments; nor is the contrary hypothesis capable of demonstration: we admit that the generative power is incomprehensible; but to suppose that the same effect is produced by an eternal, omniscient, omnipotent being, leaves the cause in the same obscurity, but renders it more incomprehensible.

3d. Testimony. It is required that testimony should not be contrary to reason. The testimony that the Deity convinces the senses of men of his existence, can only be admitted by us, if our mind considers it less probable that these men

should have been deceived, than that the Deity should have appeared to them. Our reason can never admit the testimony of men, who not only declare that they were eye-witnesses of miracles, but that the Deity was irrational; for he commanded that he should be believed, he proposed the highest rewards for faith, eternal punishments for disbelief. We can only command voluntary actions; belief is not an act of volition; the mind is even passive, or involuntarily active: from this it is evident that we have no sufficient testimony, or rather that testimony is insufficient to prove the being of a God. It has been before shewn that it cannot be deduced from reason. They alone, then, who have been convinced by the evidence of the senses, can believe it.

Hence it is evident that, having no proofs from either of the three sources of conviction, the mind *cannot* believe the existence of a creative God: it is also evident, that, as belief is a passion of the mind, no degree of criminality is attachable to disbelief; and that they only are reprehensible who neglect to remove the false medium through which their mind views any subject of discussion. Every reflecting mind must acknowledge that there is no proof of the existence of a Deity.

God is an hypothesis, and, as such, stands in need of proof: the *onus probandi*^[14] rests on the theist. Sir Isaac Newton says: *Hypotheses non fingo, quicquid enim ex phænomenis non deducitur, hypothesis vocanda est, et hypothesis vel metaphysicæ, vel physicæ, vel qualitatum occultarum, seu*

mechanicæ, in philosophiâ locum non habent^[15]. To all proofs of the existence of a creative God apply this valuable rule. We see a variety of bodies possessing a variety of powers: we merely know their effects; we are in a state of ignorance with respect to their essences and causes. These Newton calls the phenomena of things; but the pride of philosophy is unwilling to admit its ignorance of their causes. From the phenomena, which are the objects of our senses, we attempt to infer a cause, which we call God, and gratuitously endow it with all negative and contradictory qualities. From this hypothesis we invent this general name, to conceal our ignorance of causes and essences. The being called God by no means answers with the conditions prescribed by Newton; it bears every mark of a veil woven by philosophical conceit, to hide the ignorance of philosophers even from themselves. They borrow the threads of its texture from the anthropomorphism of the vulgar. Words have been used by sophists for the same purposes, from the occult qualities of the peripatetics to the *effluvium* of Boyle and the *crinities* or *nebulæ* of Herschel. God is represented as infinite, eternal, incomprehensible; he is contained under every prædicate in non that the logic of ignorance could fabricate. Even his worshippers allow that it is impossible to form any idea of him: they exclaim with the French poet,

Pour dire ce qu'il est, il faut être lui-même.^[16]



Lord Bacon says, that "Atheism leaves a man to sense, to philosophy, to natural piety, to laws, to reputation: all which may be guides to an outward moral virtue, though religion were not; but superstition dismounts all these, and erecteth an absolute monarchy in the minds of men: therefore atheism did never perturb states; for it makes men wary of themselves, as looking no farther, and we see the times inclined to atheism (as the time of Augustus Cæsar) were civil times: but superstition hath been the confusion of many states, and bringeth in a new *primum mobile*, that ravisheth all the spheres of government.

Bacon's Moral Essay on Superstition.

[17] La première théologie de l'homme lui fit d'abord craindre et adorer les élémens même, des objets matériels et grossiers; il rendit ensuite ses hommages à des agens présidens aux élémens, à des génies inférieurs, à des hères, ou á des hommes douès de grands qualités. À force de réfléchir il crut simplifier les choses en soumettant la nature entière à un seul agent, à un esprit, à une âme universelle, qui mettoit cette nature et ses parties en mouvement. En remontant des causes en causes, les mortels ont fini par ne rien voir; et c'est dans cette obscurité qu'ils ont placé leur Dieu; c'est dans cette abîme ténébreux que leur imagination inquiète travaille toujours à se fabriquer des chimères, que les affligeront jusqu'à ce que la connoissance de la nature

less détrompe des phantômes qu'ils ont toujours si vainement adorés.

Si nous voulons nous rendre compte de nos idées sur la Divinité, nous serons obligés de convenir que, par le mot *Dieu*, les hommes n'ont jamais pu désigner que la cause la plus cachée, la plus éloignée, la plus inconnue des effets qu'ils voyoient: ils ne font usage de ce mot, que lorsque le jeu des causes naturelles et connues cesse d'être visible pour eux; dès qu'ils perdent le fil de ces causes, ou dès que leur esprit ne peut plus en suivre la chaîne, ils tranchent leur difficulté, et terminent leur recherches en appellent Dieu la dernière des causes, c'est-à-dire celle qui est au-delà de toutes les causes qu'ils connoissent; ainsi ils ne font qu'assigner une dénomination vague à une cause ignorée, à laquelle leur paresse ou les bornes de leurs connoissances les forcent de s'arrêter. Toutes les fois qu'on nous dit que Dieu est l'auteur de quelque phénomène, cela signifie qu'on ignore comment un tel phénomène a pu s'opérer par le secours des forces ou des causes que nous connoissons dans la nature. C'est ainsi que le commun des hommes, dont l'ignorance est la partage, attribue à la Divinité non seulement les effets inusités que les frappent, mais encore les événemens les plus simples, dont les causes sont les plus faciles à connoître pour quiconque a pu les méditer. En un mot, l'homme a toujours respecté les causes inconnues des effets surprenans, que son ignorance l'empêchoit de démêler. Ce fut sur les débris de la nature que les hommes élevèrent le colosse imaginaire de la Divinité.

Si l'ignorance de la nature donna la naissance aux dieux, la connoissance de la nature est faite pour les détruire. À mesure que l'homme s'instruit, ses forces et ses ressources augmentent avec ses lumières; les sciences, les arts conservateurs, l'industrie, lui fournissent des secours; l'expérience le rassûre, ou lui procure des moyens de résister aux efforts de bien des causes qui

cessent de l'alarmer dès qu'il les a connues. En un mot, ses terreurs se dissipent dans la même proportion que son esprit s'éclaire. L'homme instruit cesse d'être superstitieux.

Ce n'est jamais que sur parole que des peuples entiers adorent le Dieu de leurs pères et de leurs prêtres: l'autorité, la confiance, la soumission, et l'habitude, leur tiennent lieu de conviction et de preuves; ils se prosternent et prient, parce que leurs pères leur ont appris à se prosterner et prier: mais pourquoi ceux-ci se sont-ils mis à genoux? C'est que dans les temps éloignés leurs législateurs et leurs guides leur en ont fait un devoir. "Adorez et croyez," ont-ils dit, "des dieux que vous ne pouvez comprendre; rapportez-vous en à notre sagesse profonde; nous en savons plus que vous sur la Divinité." "Mais pourquoi m'en rapporterois-je à vous?" "C'est que Dieu le veut ainsi, c'est que Dieu vous punira si vous osez résister." "Mais ce Dieu n'est-il donc pas la chose en question?" Cependant les

hommes se sont toujours payés de ce cercle vicieux; la paresse de leur esprit leur fit trouver plus court de s'en

rapporter au jugement des autres. Toutes les notions religieuses sont fondées uniquement sur l'autorité; toutes les religions du monde défendent l'examen et ne veulent pas que l'on raisonne; c'est l'autorité que veut qu'on crut en Dieu; ce Dieu n'est lui-même fondé que sur l'autorité de quelques hommes qui prétendent le connoître, et venir de sa part pour l'annoncer a la terre. Un Dieu fait par les hommes, a sans doute besoin des hommes pour se faire connoître aux hommes.

Ne seroit-ce donc que pour des prêtres des inspirés, des metaphysiciens que seroit reservée la conviction de l'existence d'un Dieu, que l'on dit neanmoins si necessaire à tout le genre-humain? Mais trouvons-nous de l'harmonie entre les opinions théologiques des differens inspirés, ou des penseurs répandus sur la terre? Ceux même que font profession d'adorer le même Dieu, sont-ils d'accord sur son compte? Sont-ils contents

des preuves que leurs collègues apportent de son existence? Souscrivent-ils unanimement aux idées qu'ils presentent sur sa nature, sur sa conduite, sur la façon d'entendre ses prétendus oracles? Est-il une contrée sur la terre, où la science de Dieu se soit réellement perfectionné? A-t-elle pris quelque part la consistance et l'uniformité que nous voyons prendre aux connoissances humaines, aux arts les plus futiles, aus métiers les plus meprisés? des mots *d'esprits, d'immatérialité, de création, de prédestination, de grace*; cette foule de distinctions subtiles dont la théologie

s'est partout remplie dans quelques pays, ces inventions si ingénieuses, imaginées par des penseurs que se sont succédés depuis tant de siècles, n'ont fait, hélas! qu'embrouilles les choses, et jamais le science le plus nécessaire aux hommes n'a jusqu'ici pu acquérir la moindre fixité. Depuis des milliers d'années, ces rêveurs oisifs se sont perpétuellement relayés pour méditer la Divinité, pour deviner ses voies cachées, pour inventer des hypothèses

propres à développer cette énigme importante. Leur peu de succès n'a point découragé la vanité théologique; toujours on a parlé de Dieu: on s'est égorgé pour lui, et cet être sublime demeure toujours le plus ignoré et le plus discuté.

Les hommes auroient été trop heureux, si, se bornant aux objets visibles qui les intéressent, ils eussent employé à perfectionner leurs sciences réelles, leurs loix, leur morale, leur éducation, la moitié des efforts qu'ils ont mis dans leurs recherches sur la Divinité. Ils auroient été bien plus sages encore, et plus fortunés s'ils eussent pu consentir à laisser leurs guides désœuvrés se quereller entre eux, et sonder des profondeurs capables de les étourdir, sans se mêler de leurs disputes insensées. Mais il est de l'essence de l'ignorance d'attacher de l'importance à ce qu'elle ne comprend pas. La vanité humaine fait que l'esprit se roidit contre les difficultés. Plus un objet se dérobe à nos yeux, plus nous faisons d'efforts pour le saisir, parce que dès-lors

il aiguillonne notre orgueil, il excite notre curiosité, il nous paroît intéressant. En combattant pour son Dieu, chacun ne combattit en effet que pour les intérêts de sa propre vanité, qui de toutes les passions produits par la mal organization de la société, est la plus prompte à s'allarmer, et la plus propre à produire des tres grands folies.

Si écartant pour un moment les idées facheuses que la théologie nous donne d'un Dieu capricieux, dont les décrets parteaux et despotiques décident du sort des humains, nous ne voulons fixer nos yeux que sur la bonté prétendue, que tous les hommes, même en tremblant devant ce Dieu, s'accordant à lui donner; si nous lui supposons le projet qu'on lui prête, de n'avoir travaillé que pour sa propre gloire, d'exiger les hommages des êtres intelligens; de ne chercher dans ses œuvres que le bien-être du genre humain; comment concilier ses vues et ses dispositions avec l'ignorance vraiment invincible dans laquelle ce Dieu, si glorieux et si bon,

laisse la plupart des hommes sur son compte? Si Dieu veut être connu, chéri, remercié, que ne se montre-t-il sous des traits favorables à tous ces êtres intelligens dont il veut être aimé et adoré? Pourquoi ne point se manifester à toute la terre d'une façon non équivoque, bien plus capable de nous convaincre, que ces révélations particuliers qui semblent accuser la Divinité d'une partialité facheuse pour quelqu'uns de ses créatures? Le tout-puissant n'auroit-il donc pas des moyens plus convinquans de se montrer aux hommes que

ces métamorphoses ridicules, ces incarnations prétendues, qui nous sont attestées par des écrivains si peu d'accord entre eux dans les récits qu'ils en font? Au lieu de tant de miracles, inventés pour prouver la mission divine de tant de législateurs, révéérés par les différens peuples du monde, le souverain des esprits ne pouvoit-il pas convaincre tout d'un coup l'esprit humain des choses qu'il a voulu lui faire connoître? Au lieu de suspendre un soleil dans la voûte du firmament; au lieu de repandre sans ordre les étoiles, et les constellations qui

remplissent l'espace, n'eut-il pas été plus conforme aux vues d'un Dieu si jaloux de sa gloire et si bien intentionné pour l'homme; d'ecrire d'une façon non sujette à dispute, son nom, ses attributs, ses volontés permanentes, en caractères ineffaçables, et lisibles également pour tous les habitants de la terre? Personne alors n'auroit pu douter de l'existence d'un Dieu, de ses volontés claires, de ses intentions visibles. Sous les yeux de ce Dieu si terrible, personne n'auroit eu l'audace de violer ses ordonnances; nul mortel n'eût osé se mettre dans le cas d'attirer sa colère: enfin nul homme n'eût eu le front d'en imposer en son nom, ou d'interpréter ses volontés suivant ses propres phantasies.

En effet, quand même on admetteroit l'existence du Dieu théologique, et la réalité des attributs si discordans qu'on lui donne, l'on ne peut en rien conclure, pour autoriser la conduite ou les cultes qu'on prescrit de lui rendre. La

théologie est vraiment *le tonneau des Danaïdes*. À force de qualities contradictoires et

d'assertions hasardées, elle a, pour ainsi dire, tellement garoté son Dieu qu'elle a mis dans l'impossibilité d'agir. S'il est infiniment bon quelle raison aurions-nous de le craindre? S'il est infiniment sage, de quoi nous inquieter sur notre sort? S'il sait tout, pourquoi l'avertir de nos besoins, et le fatiguer de nos prières? S'il est partout, pourquoi lui élever des temples? S'il est maître de tout, pourquoi lui faire des sacrifices et des offrandes? S'il est juste, comment croire qu'il punisse des créatures qu'il a rempli des foiblesses? Si la grace fait tout en elles, quelle raison auroit-il de les récompenser? S'il est tout-puissant, comment l'offenser, comment lui résister? S'il est raisonnable, comment se mettroit-il en colère contre des aveugles, à qui il a laissé la liberté de déraisonner? S'il est immuable, de quel droit prétendrions-nous faire changer ses decrets? S'il est inconcevable, pourquoi nous en occuper? S'IL A PARLÉ, POURQUOI L'UNIVERS N'EST-IL PAS CONVAINCU? Si la connoissance d'un Dieu est la plus nécessaire, pourquoi n'est-elle pas la plus évidente, et la plus claire.

Système de la Nature, London, 1781.

The enlightened and benevolent Pliny thus publicly professes himself an atheist:—Quapropter effigiem Dei, formamque quærere, irabecillitatis humanæ reor. Quisquis

est Deus (si modo est alius) et quacunq̄ue in parte, totus est
sensus, totus est visus, totus auditus, totus animæ, totus
animi, totus sui. * * * * *

Imperfectæ vero in homine naturæ præcipua solatia ne
deum quidem posse omnia. Namque nee sibi potest mortem
consciscere, si velit, quod homini dedit optimum in tantis
vitæ pœnis: nee mortales æternitate donare, aut revocare
defunctos; nec facere ut qui vixit non vixerit, qui honores
gessit non gesserit, nullumque habere in præteritum jus,
præterquam oblivionis, atque (ut facietis quoque argumentis
societas hæc cum deo copuletur) at bis dena viginta non
sint, et multa similiter efficere non posse.—Per quæ,
declaratur haud dubie, naturæ potentiam id quoque esse,
quod Deum vocamus^[18].—*Plin. Nat. His. cap. de Deo.*

The consistent Newtonian is necessarily an atheist. See *Sir W. Drummond's Academical Questions*, chap. iii.—Sir W. seems to consider the atheism to which it leads, as a sufficient presumption of the falsehood of the system of gravitation: but surely it is more consistent with the good faith of philosophy to admit a deduction from facts, than an hypothesis incapable of proof, although it might militate with the obstinate preconceptions of the mob. Had this author, instead of inveighing against the guilt and absurdity of atheism, demonstrated its falsehood, his conduct would have been more suited to the modesty of the sceptic, and the toleration of the philosopher.



Omnia enim per Dei potentiam facta sunt: imo, quia natura potentia nulla est nisi ipsa Dei potentia, autem est nos eatenus Dei potentiam non intelligere, quatenus causas naturales ignoramus; adeoque stulte ad eandem Dei potentiam recurritur, quando rei alicujus, causam naturalem, sive est, ipsam Dei potentiam ignoramus.

Spinoza, Tract. Theologico-Pol. chap. i. p. 14. [\[19\]](#)

VII. PAGE 63.

Ahasuerus, rise!

Ahasuerus the Jew crept forth from the dark cave of Mount Carmel. Near two thousand years have elapsed since he was first goaded by never-ending restlessness, to rove the globe from pole to pole. When our Lord was wearied with the burthen of his ponderous cross, and wanted to rest before the door of Ahasuerus, the unfeeling wretch drove him away with brutality. The Saviour of mankind staggered, sinking under the heavy load, but uttered no complaint. An angel of death appeared before Ahasuerus, and exclaimed indignantly, "Barbarian! thou hast denied rest to the Son of Man: be it denied thee also, until he comes to judge the world."

A black demon, let loose from hell upon Ahasuerus, goads him now from country to country; he is denied the

consolation which death affords, and precluded from the rest of the peaceful grave.

Ahasuerus crept forth from the dark cave of Mount Carmel—he shook the dust from his beard—and taking up one of the skulls heaped there, hurled it down the eminence: it rebounded from the earth in shivered atoms. This was my father! roared Ahasuerus. Seven more skulls rolled down from rock to rock; while the infuriate Jew, following them with ghastly looks exclaimed—And these were my wives! He still continued to hurl down scull after scull, roaring in dreadful accents—And these, and these, and these were my children! They *could die*; but, I! reprobate wretch, alas! I cannot die! Dreadful beyond conception is the judgment that hangs over me. Jerusalem fell—I crushed the sucking babe, and precipitated myself into the destructive flames. I cursed the Romans—but, alas! alas! the restless curse held me by the hair,—and I could not die!

Rome the giantess fell—I placed myself before the falling statue—she fell, and did not crush me. Nations sprung up and disappeared before me;—but I remained and did not die. From cloud-encircled cliffs did I precipitate myself into the ocean; but the foaming billows cast me upon the shore, and the burning arrow of existence pierced my cold heart again. I leaped into Etna's flaming abyss, and roared with the giants for ten long months, polluting with my groans the Mount's sulphureous mouth—ah! ten long months. The volcano fermented, and in a fiery stream of lava cast me up.

I lay torn by the torture-snakes of hell amid the glowing cinders, and yet continued to exist. A forest was on fire: I darted on wings of fury and despair into the crackling wood. Fire dropped upon me from the trees, but the flames only singed my limbs; alas! it could not consume them.—I now mixed with the butchers of mankind, and plunged in the tempest of the raging battle. I roared defiance to the infuriate Gaul, defiance to the victorious German; but arrows and spears rebounded in shivers from my body. The Saracen's flaming sword broke upon my scull: balls in vain hissed upon me: the lightnings of battle glared harmless around my loins: in vain did the elephant trample on me, in vain the iron hoof of the wrathful steed! The mine, big with destructive power, burst upon me, and hurled me high in the air—I fell on heaps of smoking limbs, but was only singed. The giant's steel club rebounded from my body; the executioner's hand could not strangle me; the tyger's tooth could not pierce me, nor would the hungry lion in the circus devour me. I cohabited with poisonous snakes, and pinched the red crest of the dragon. The serpent stung, but could not destroy me;—the dragon tormented, but dared not to devour me. I now provoked the fury of tyrants: I said to Nero, Thou art a bloodhound! I said to Christiern, Thou art a bloodhound! I said to Muley Ismail, Thou art a bloodhound!—The tyrants invented cruel torments, but did not kill me.—————Ha! not to be able to die—not to be able to die—not to be permitted to rest after the toils of life—to be doomed to be imprisoned for ever in the clay-formed dungeon—to be for ever clogged with this

worthless body, its load of diseases and infirmities—to be condemned to hold for millenniums that yawning monster Sameness and Time, that hungry hyena, ever bearing children, and ever devouring again her offspring!—Ha! not to be permitted to die! Awful avenger in heaven, hast thou in thine armoury of wrath a punishment more dreadful? then let it thunder upon me, command a hurricane to sweep me down to the foot of Carmel, that I there may lie extended; may pant, and writhe, and die!

This fragment is the translation of part of some German work, whose title I have vainly endeavoured to discover. I picked it up, dirty and torn, some years ago, in Lincoln's-Inn Fields.

VII. PAGE 66.

I will beget a Son, and he shall bear
The sins of all the world.

A book is put into our hands when children, called the Bible, the purport of whose history is briefly this: That God made the earth in six days, and there planted a delightful garden, in which he placed the first pair of human beings. In the midst of the garden he planted a tree, whose fruit, although within their reach, they were forbidden to touch. That the Devil, in the shape of a snake, persuaded them to eat of this fruit; in consequence of which God condemned both them and their posterity yet unborn to satisfy his

justice by their eternal misery. That, four thousand years after these events, (the human race in the mean while having gone unredeemed to perdition,) God engendered with the betrothed wife of a carpenter in Judea (whose virginity was nevertheless uninjured), and begat a Son, whose name was Jesus Christ; and who was crucified and died, in order that no more men might be devoted to hell-fire, he bearing the burthen of his Father's displeasure by proxy. The book states, in addition, that the soul of whoever disbelieves this sacrifice will be burned with everlasting fire.

During many ages of misery and darkness this story gained implicit belief; but at length men arose who suspected that it was a fable and imposture, and that Jesus Christ, so far from being a God, was only a man like themselves. But a numerous set of men, who derived and still derive immense emoluments from this opinion, in the shape of a popular belief, told the vulgar, that, if they did not believe in the Bible, they would be damned to all eternity; and burned, imprisoned, and poisoned all the unbiassed and unconnected enquirers who occasionally arose. They still oppress them, so far as the people, now become more enlightened, will allow.

The belief in all that the Bible contains, is called Christianity. A Roman Governor of Judea, at the instance of a priest-led mob, crucified a man called Jesus eighteen centuries ago. He was a man of pure life, who desired to

rescue his countrymen from the tyranny of their barbarous and degrading superstitions. The common fate of all who desire to benefit mankind awaited him. The rabble, at the instigation of the priests, demanded his death, although his very judge made public acknowledgment of his innocence. Jesus was sacrificed to the honour of that God with whom he was afterwards confounded. It is of importance, therefore to distinguish between the pretended character of this being, as the Son of God and the Saviour of the world, and his real character as a man, who, for a vain attempt to reform the world, paid the forfeit of his life to that overbearing tyranny which has since so long desolated the universe in his name. Whilst the one is a hypocritical demon, who announces himself as the God of compassion and peace, even whilst he stretches forth his blood-red hand with the sword of discord to waste the earth, having confessedly devised this scheme of desolation from eternity; the other stands in the foremost list of those true heroes, who have died in the glorious martyrdom of liberty, and have braved torture, contempt, and poverty, in the cause of suffering humanity^[20].

The vulgar, ever in extremes, became persuaded that the crucifixion of Jesus was a supernatural event. Testimonies of miracles, so frequent in unenlightened ages, were not wanting to prove that he was something divine. This belief, rolling through the lapse of ages, met with the reveries of Plato and the reasonings of Aristotle, and acquired force

and extent, until the divinity of Jesus became a dogma, which to dispute was death, which to doubt was infamy.

Christianity is now the established religion: he who attempts to impugn it, must be contented to behold murderers and traitors take precedence of him in public opinion; though, if his genius be equal to his courage, and assisted by a peculiar coalition of circumstances, future ages may exalt him to a divinity, and persecute others in his name, as he was persecuted in the name of his predecessor in the homage of the world.

The same means that have supported every other popular belief, have supported Christianity. War, imprisonment, assassination, and falsehood; deeds of unexampled and incomparable atrocity have made it what it is. The blood shed by the votaries of the God of mercy and peace, since the establishment of his religion, would probably suffice to drown all other sectaries now on the habitable globe. We derive from our ancestors a faith thus fostered and supported: we quarrel, persecute, and hate for its maintenance. Even under a government which, whilst it infringes the very right of thought and speech, boasts of permitting the liberty of the press, a man is pilloried and imprisoned because he is a Deist, and no one raises his voice in the indignation of outraged humanity. But it is ever a proof that the falsehood of a proposition is felt by those who use coercion, not reasoning, to procure its admission; and a dispassionate observer would feel himself more

powerfully interested in favour of a man, who, depending on the truth of his opinions, simply stated his reasons for entertaining them, than in that of his aggressor, who, daringly avowing his unwillingness or incapacity to answer them by argument, proceeded to repress the energies and break the spirit of their promulgator by that torture and imprisonment whose infliction he could command.

Analogy seems to favour the opinion, that as, like other systems, Christianity has arisen and augmented, so like them it will decay and perish; that, as violence, darkness, and deceit, not reasoning and persuasion, have procured its admission among mankind, so, when enthusiasm has subsided, and time, that infallible, controverter of false opinions, has involved its pretended evidences in the darkness of antiquity, it will become obsolete; that Milton's poem alone will give permanency to the remembrance of its absurdities; and that men will laugh as heartily at grace, faith, redemption, and original sin, as they now do at the metamorphoses of Jupiter, the miracles of Romish saints, the efficacy of witchcraft, and the appearance of departed spirits.

Had the Christian religion commenced and continued by the mere force of reasoning and persuasion, the preceding analogy would be inadmissible. We should never speculate on the future obsolescence of a system perfectly conformable to nature and reason: it would endure so long as they endured; it would be a truth as indisputable as the

light of the sun, the criminality of murder, and other facts, whose evidence, depending on our organization and relative situations, must remain acknowledged as satisfactory, so long as man is man. It is an incontrovertible fact, the consideration of which ought to repress the hasty conclusions of credulity, or moderate its obstinacy in maintaining them, that, had the Jews not been a fanatical race of men, had even the resolution of Pontius Pilate been equal to his candour, the Christian religion never could have prevailed, it could not even have existed: on so feeble a thread hangs the most cherished opinion of a sixth of the human race! When will the vulgar learn humility? When will the pride of ignorance blush at having believed before it could comprehend?

Either the Christian religion is true, or it is false: if true, it comes from God, and its authenticity can admit of doubt and dispute no further than its omnipotent author is willing to allow. Either the power or the goodness of God is called in question, if he leaves those doctrines most essential to the well being of man in doubt and dispute; the only ones which, since their promulgation have been the subject of unceasing cavil, the cause of irreconcilable hatred. *If God has spoken, why is the universe not convinced?*

There is this passage in the Christian Scriptures: "Those who obey not God, and believe not the Gospel of his Son, shall be punished with everlasting destruction." This is the pivot upon which all religions turn: they all assume that it is

in our power to believe or not to believe; whereas the mind can only believe that which it thinks true. A human being can only be supposed accountable for those actions which are influenced by his will. But belief is utterly distinct from and unconnected with volition: it is the apprehension of the agreement or disagreement of the ideas that compose any proposition. Belief is a passion, or involuntary operation of the mind, and, like other passions, its intensity is precisely proportionate to the degrees of excitement. Volition is essential to merit or demerit. But the Christian religion attaches the highest possible degrees of merit and demerit to that which is worthy of neither, and which is totally unconnected with the peculiar faculty of the mind, whose presence is essential to their being.

Christianity was intended to reform the world: had an all-wise Being planned it, nothing is more improbable than that it should have failed: omniscience would infallibly have foreseen the inutility of a scheme which experience demonstrates, to this age, to have been utterly unsuccessful.

Christianity inculcates the necessity of supplicating the Deity. Prayer may be considered under two points of view; as an endeavour to change the intentions of God, or as a formal testimony of our obedience. But the former case supposes that the caprices of a limited intelligence can occasionally instruct the Creator of the world how to regulate the universe; and the latter, a certain degree of servility analogous to the loyalty demanded by earthly

tyrants. Obedience indeed is only the pitiful and cowardly egotism of him who thinks that he can do something better than reason.

Christianity, like all other religions, rests upon miracles, prophecies, and martyrdoms. No religion ever existed, which had not its prophets, its attested miracles, and, above all, crowds of devotees who would bear patiently the most horrible tortures to prove its authenticity. It should appear that in no case can a discriminating mind subscribe to the genuineness of a miracle. A miracle is an infraction of nature's law, by a supernatural cause; by a cause acting beyond that eternal circle within which all things are included. God breaks through the law of nature, that he may convince mankind of the truth of that revelation which, in spite of his precautions, has been, since its introduction, the subject of unceasing schism and cavil.

Miracles resolve themselves into the following question:^[21]
—Whether it is more probable the laws of nature, hitherto so immutably harmonious, should have undergone violation, or that a man should have told a lie? Whether it is more probable that we are ignorant of the natural cause of an event, or that we know the supernatural one? That, in old times, when the powers of nature were less known than at present, a certain set of men were themselves deceived, or had some hidden motive for deceiving others; or that God begat a son, who, in his legislation, measuring merit by belief, evidenced himself to be totally ignorant of the

powers of the human mind—of what is voluntary, and what is the contrary?

We have many instances of men telling lies;—none of an infraction of nature's laws, those laws of whose government alone we have any knowledge or experience. The records of all nations afford innumerable instances of men deceiving others either from vanity or interest, or themselves being deceived by the limitedness of their views and their ignorance of natural causes: but where is the accredited case of God having come upon earth, to give the lie to his own creations? There would be something truly wonderful in the appearance of a ghost; but the assertion of a child that he saw one as he passed through the church-yard, is universally admitted to be less miraculous.

But even supposing that a man should raise a dead body to life before our eyes, and on this fact rest his claim to being considered the son of God;—the Humane Society restores drowned persons, and because it makes no mystery of the method it employs, its members are not mistaken for the sons of God. All that we have a right to infer from our ignorance of the cause of any event is that we do not know it: had the Mexicans attended to this simple rule when they heard the cannon of the Spaniards, they would not have considered them as gods: the experiments of modern chemistry would have defied the wisest philosophers of ancient Greece and Rome to have accounted for them on natural principles. An author of strong common sense has

observed, that "a miracle is no miracle at second-hand;" he might have added, that a miracle is no miracle in any case; for until we are acquainted with all natural causes, we have no reason to imagine others.

There remains to be considered another proof of Christianity—Prophecy. A book is written before a certain event, in which this event is foretold; how could the prophet have foreknown it without inspiration? how could he have been inspired without God? The greatest stress is laid on the prophecies of Moses and Hosea on the dispersion of the Jews, and that of Isaiah concerning the coming of the Messiah. The prophecy of Moses is a collection of every possible cursing and blessing; and it is so far from being marvellous that the one of dispersion should have been fulfilled, that it would have been more surprising if, out of all these, none should have taken effect. In Deuteronomy, chap. xxviii. ver. 64, where Moses explicitly foretells the dispersion, he states that they shall there serve gods of wood and stone: "And the Lord shall scatter thee among all people, from the one end of the earth even to the other, *and there thou shalt serve other gods, which neither thou nor thy fathers have known, even gods of wood and stone.*" The Jews are at this day remarkably tenacious of their religion. Moses also declares that they shall be subjected to these causes for disobedience to his ritual: "And it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe to do all the commandments and statutes which I command you this day, that all these curses shall

come upon thee and overtake thee." Is this the real reason? The third, fourth and fifth chapters of Hosea are a piece of immodest confession. The indelicate type might apply in a hundred senses to a hundred things. The fifty-third chapter of Isaiah is more explicit, yet it does not exceed in clearness the oracles of Delphos. The historical proof, that Moses, Isaiah and Hosea did write when they are said to have written, is far from being clear and circumstantial.

But prophecy requires proof in its character as a miracle; we have no right to suppose that a man foreknew future events from God, until it is demonstrated that he neither could know them by his own exertions, nor that the writings which contain the prediction could possibly have been fabricated after the event pretended to be foretold. It is more probable that writings, pretending to divine inspiration, should have been fabricated after the fulfilment of their pretended prediction, than that they should have really been divinely inspired; when we consider that the latter supposition makes God at once the creator of the human mind and ignorant of its primary powers, particularly as we have numberless instances of false religions, and forged prophecies of things long past, and no accredited case of God having conversed with men directly or indirectly. It is also possible that the description of an event might have foregone its occurrence; but this is far from being a legitimate proof of a divine revelation, as many men, not pretending to the character of a prophet, have nevertheless, in this sense, prophesied.

Lord Chesterfield was never yet taken for a prophet, even by a bishop, yet he uttered this remarkable prediction: "The despotic government of France is screwed up to the highest pitch; a revolution is fast approaching; that revolution, I am convinced, will be radical and sanguinary." This appeared in the letters of the prophet long before the accomplishment of this wonderful prediction. Now, have these particulars come to pass, or have they not? If they have, how could the Earl have foreknown them without inspiration? If we admit the truth of the Christian religion on testimony such as this, we must admit, on the same strength of evidence, that God has affixed the highest rewards to belief, and the eternal tortures of the never-dying worm to disbelief; both of which have been demonstrated to be involuntary.

The last proof of the Christian religion depends on the influence of the Holy Ghost. Theologians divide the influence of the Holy Ghost into its ordinary and extraordinary modes of operation. The latter is supposed to be that which inspired the Prophets and Apostles; and the former to be the grace of God, which summarily makes known the truth of his revelation, to those whose mind is fitted for its reception by a submissive perusal of his word. Persons convinced in this manner, can do any thing but account for their conviction, describe the time at which it happened, or the manner in which it came upon them. It is supposed to enter the mind by other channels than those of the senses, and therefore professes to be superior to reason founded on their experience.

Admitting, however, the usefulness or possibility of a divine revelation, unless we demolish the foundations of all human knowledge, it is requisite that our reason should previously demonstrate its genuineness; for, before we extinguish the steady ray of reason and common sense, it is fit that we should discover whether we cannot do without their assistance, whether or no there be any other which may suffice to guide us through the labyrinth of life^[22]: for, if a man is to be inspired upon all occasions, if he is to be sure of a thing because he is sure, if the ordinary operations of the spirit are not to be considered very extraordinary modes of demonstration, if enthusiasm is to usurp the place of proof, and madness that of sanity, all reasoning is superfluous. The Mahometan dies fighting for his prophet, the Indian immolates himself at the chariot-wheels of Brahma, the Hottentot worships an insect, the Negro a bunch of feathers, the Mexican sacrifices human victims! Their degree of conviction must certainly be very strong: it cannot arise from conviction, it must from feelings, the reward of their prayers. If each of these should affirm, in opposition to the strongest possible arguments, that inspiration carried internal evidence, I fear their inspired brethren, the orthodox Missionaries, would be so uncharitable as to pronounce them obstinate.

Miracles cannot be received as testimonies of a disputed fact, because all human testimony has ever been insufficient to establish the possibility of miracles. That which is incapable of proof itself, is no proof of any thing else.

Prophecy has also been rejected by the test of reason. Those, then, who have been actually inspired, are the only true believers in the Christian religion.

Mox numine viso
Virginei tumuere sinus, innuptaque mater
Arcano stupuit compleri viscera partu
Auctorum paritura suum. Mortalia corda
Artificem texere poli, latuitque sub uno
Pec to re, qui totura late complectitur orbem.

Claudian, Carmen Paschale. [\[23\]](#)

Does not so monstrous and disgusting an absurdity carry its own infamy and refutation with itself?



VIII. PAGE 79.

Him, (still from hope to hope the bliss pursuing,
Which, from the exhaustless lore of human weal
Dawns on the virtuous mind,) the thoughts that rise
In time-destroying infiniteness, gift
With self-enshrined eternity, &c.

Time is our consciousness of the succession of ideas in our mind. Vivid sensation, of either pain or pleasure, makes the time seem long, as the common phrase is, because it renders us more acutely conscious of our ideas. If a mind be conscious of an hundred ideas during one minute, by the clock, and of two hundred during another, the latter of these spaces would actually occupy so much greater extent in the mind as two exceed one in quantity. If, therefore, the human mind, by any future improvement of its sensibility, should become conscious of an infinite number of ideas in a minute, that minute would be eternity. I do not hence infer that the actual space between the birth and death of a man will ever be prolonged; but that his sensibility is perfectible, and that the number of ideas which his mind is capable of receiving is indefinite. One man is stretched on the rack during twelve hours; another sleeps soundly in his bed: the difference of time perceived by these two persons is immense; one hardly will believe that half an hour has elapsed, the other could credit that centuries had flown during his agony. Thus, the life of a man of virtue and talent, who should die in his thirtieth year, is, with regard to his own feelings, longer than that of a miserable priest-ridden slave, who dreams out a century of dulness. The one has perpetually cultivated his mental faculties, has rendered himself master of his thoughts, can abstract and generalize amid the lethargy of every-day business;—the other can slumber over the brightest moments of his being, and is unable to remember the happiest hour of his life. Perhaps

the perishing ephemeron enjoys a longer life than the tortoise.

Dark flood of time!
Roll as it listeth thee—I measure not
By months or moments thy ambiguous course.
Another may stand by me on the brink
And watch the bubble whirled beyond his ken
That pauses at my feet. The sense of love,
The thirst for action, and the impassioned thought
Prolong my being: if I wake no more,
My life more actual living will contain
Than some grey veterans' of the world's cold school
Whose listless hours unprofitably roll,
By one enthusiast feeling unredeemed.

*See Godwin's Pol. Jus. vol. i. page 411;—and
Condorcet, Esquisse d'un Tableau Historique des
Progrès de l'Esprit Humain, Epoque ix.*

VIII. Page 79.

No longer now
He slays the lamb that looks him in the face.

I hold that the depravity of the physical and moral nature of man originated in his unnatural habits of life. The origin of man, like that of the universe of which he is a part, is

enveloped in impenetrable mystery. His generations either had a beginning, or they had not. The weight of evidence in favour of each of these suppositions seems tolerably equal; and it is perfectly unimportant to the present argument which is assumed. The language spoken, however, by the mythology of nearly all religions seems to prove, that at some distant period man forsook the path of nature, and sacrificed the purity and happiness of his being to unnatural appetites. The date of this event seems to have also been that of some great change in the climates of the earth, with which it has an obvious correspondence. The allegory of Adam and Eve eating of the tree of evil, and entailing upon their posterity the wrath of God, and the loss of everlasting life admits of no other explanation than the disease and crime that have flowed from unnatural diet. Milton was so well aware of this, that he makes Raphael thus exhibit to Adam the consequence of his disobedience.

Immediately a place

Before his eyes appeared: sad, noisome, dark:

A lazar-house it seem'd; wherein were laid

Numbers of all diseased: all maladies
Of ghastly spasm, or racking torture, qualms
Of heart-sick agony, all feverous kinds,
Convulsions, epilepsies, fierce catarrhs,
Intestine stone and ulcer, cholic pangs,
Dæmoniac frenzy, moping melancholy,
And moon-struck madness, pining atrophy,

Marasmus, and wide-wasting pestilence,
Dropsies, and asthmas, and joint-racking rheums.

And how many thousands more might not be added to this
frightful catalogue!

The story of Prometheus is one likewise which, although universally admitted to be allegorical, has never been satisfactorily explained. Prometheus stole fire from heaven, and was chained for this crime to mount Caucasus, where a vulture continually devoured his liver, that grew to meet its hunger. Hesiod says, that, before the time of Prometheus, mankind were exempt from suffering; that they enjoyed a vigorous youth, and that death, when at length it came, approached like sleep, and gently closed their eyes. Again, so general was this opinion, that Horace, a poet of the Augustan age, writes—

Audax omnia perpeti,
Gens humana ruit per vetitum nefas;
Audax Iapeti genus
Ignem fraude mala gentibus intulit:
Post ignem ætheriâ domo

Subductum, macieset nova febrium

Terris incubuit cohors,

Semotique prius tarda necessitas

Lethi corripuit gradum<ref><poem>

Thus, from

the sun's ethereal beam

When bold Prometheus stole th' enlivening flame,

Of fevers dire a ghastly brood,

Till then unknown, th' unhappy fraud pursu'd;

On earth their horrors baleful spread,

And the pale monarch of the dead,

Till then slow-moving to his prey,

Precipitately rapid swept his way.

Francis's Horace, Book i. Ode 3.

.
.

How plain a language is spoken by all this. Prometheus (who represents the human race) effected some great change in the condition of his nature, and applied fire to culinary purposes; thus inventing an expedient for screening from his disgust the horrors of the shambles. From this moment his vitals were devoured by the vulture of disease. It consumed his being in every shape of its loathsome and infinite variety, inducing the soul-quelling sinkings of premature and violent death. All vice arose from the ruin of healthful innocence. Tyranny, superstition, commerce, and inequality, were then first known, when reason vainly attempted to guide the wanderings of exacerbated passion. I conclude this part of the subject with an extract from Mr. Newton's Defence of Vegetable Regimen, from whom I have borrowed this interpretation of the fable of Prometheus.

"Making allowance for such transposition of the events of the allegory as time might produce after the important truths were forgotten, which this portion of the ancient mythology was intended to transmit, the drift of the fable seems to be this:—Man at his creation was endowed with the gift of perpetual youth; that is, he was not formed to be a sickly suffering creature as we now see him, but to enjoy health, and to sink by slow degrees into the bosom of his parent earth without disease or pain. Prometheus first taught the use of animal food (*primus bovem occidit Prometheus*^[24]) and of fire, with which to render it more digestible and pleasing to the taste. Jupiter, and the rest of the gods, foreseeing the consequences of these inventions, were amused or irritated at the short-sighted devices of the newly-formed creature, and left him to experience the sad effects of them. Thirst, the necessary concomitant of a flesh diet," (perhaps of all diet vitiated by culinary preparation,) ensued; water was resorted to, and man forfeited the inestimable gift of health which he had received from heaven: he became diseased, the partaker of a precarious existence, and no longer descended slowly to his grave^[25]."

But just disease to luxury succeeds,
And every death its own avenger breeds;
The fury passions from that blood began,
And turned on man a fiercer savage—man.

Man, and the animals whom he has infected with his society, or depraved by his dominion, are alone diseased. The wild hog, the mouflon, the bison, and the wolf, are perfectly exempt from malady, and invariably die either from external violence, or natural old age. But the domestic hog, the sheep, the cow, and the dog are, subject to an incredible variety of distempers; and, like the corrupters of their nature, have physicians who thrive upon their miseries. The supereminence of man is like Satan's, a supereminence of pain; and the majority of his species, doomed to penury, disease and crime, have reason to curse the untoward event, that by enabling him to communicate his sensations, raised him above the level of his fellow animals. But the steps that have been taken are irrevocable. The whole of human science is comprised in one question:—How can the advantages of intellect and civilization be reconciled with the liberty and pure pleasures of natural life? How can we take the benefits, and reject the evils of the system, which is now interwoven with all the fibres of our being?—I believe that abstinence from animal food and spirituous liquors would in a great measure capacitate us for the solution of this important question.

It is true, that mental and bodily derangement is attributable in part to other deviations from rectitude and nature than those which concern diet. The mistakes cherished by society respecting the connection of the sexes, whence the misery and diseases of unsatisfied celibacy, unenjoying prostitution, and the premature arrival of puberty

necessarily spring; the putrid atmosphere of crowded cities; the exhalations of chemical processes; the muffling of our bodies in superfluous apparel; the absurd treatment of infants:—all these, and innumerable other causes, contribute their mite to the mass of human evil.

Comparative anatomy teaches us that man resembles frugivorous animals in every thing, and carnivorous in nothing; he has neither claws wherewith to seize his prey, nor distinct and pointed teeth to tear the living fibre. A Mandarin of the first class, with nails two inches long, would probably find them alone, inefficient to hold even a hare. After every subterfuge of gluttony, the bull must be degraded into the ox, and the ram into the wether, by an unnatural and inhuman operation, that the flaccid fibre may offer a fainter resistance to rebellious nature. It is only by softening and disguising dead flesh by culinary preparation, that it is rendered susceptible of mastication or digestion; and that the sight of its bloody juices and raw horror does not excite intolerable loathing and disgust. Let the advocate of animal food force himself to a decisive experiment on its fitness, and, as Plutarch recommends, tear a living lamb with his teeth, and plunging his head into its vitals, slake his thirst with the steaming blood; when fresh from the deed of horror, let him revert to the irresistible instincts of nature that would rise in judgment against it, and say, Nature formed me for such work as this. Then, and then only, would he be consistent.

Man resembles no carnivorous animal. There is no exception, unless man be one, to the rule of herbivorous animals having cellulated colons.

The orang-outang perfectly resembles man both in the order and number of his teeth. The orang-outang is the most anthropomorphous of the ape tribe, all of which are strictly frugivorous. There is no other species of animals, which live on different food, in which this analogy exists^[26]. In many frugivorous animals, the canine teeth are more pointed and distinct than those of man. The resemblance also of the human stomach to that of the orang-outang, is greater than to that of any other animal.

The intestines are also identical with those of herbivorous animals, which present a larger surface for absorption and have ample and cellulated colons. The cœcum also, though short, is larger than that of carnivorous animals; and even here the orang-outang retains its accustomed similarity.

The structure of the human frame then is that of one fitted to a pure vegetable diet, in every essential particular. It is true, that the reluctance to abstain from animal food, in those who have been long accustomed to its stimulus, is so great in some persons of weak minds, as to be scarcely overcome; but this is far from bringing any argument in its favour. A lamb, which was fed for some time on flesh by a ship's crew, refused its natural diet at the end of the voyage. There are numerous instances of horses, sheep, oxen, and

even wood-pigeons, having been taught to live upon flesh, until they have loathed their natural aliment. Young children evidently prefer pastry, oranges, apples, and other fruit, to the flesh of animals, until, by the gradual depravation of the digestive organs, the free use of vegetables has for a time produced serious inconveniences; *for a time*, I say, since there never was an instance wherein a change from spirituous liquors and animal food to vegetables and pure water, has failed ultimately to invigorate the body, by rendering its juices bland and consentaneous, and to restore to the mind that cheerfulness and elasticity, which not one in fifty possesses on the present system. A love of strong liquors is also with difficulty taught to infants. Almost every one remembers the wry faces which the first glass of port produced. Unsophisticated instinct is invariably unerring; but to decide on the fitness of animal food, from the perverted appetites which its constrained adoption produces, is to make the criminal a judge in his own cause: it is even worse, it is appealing to the infatuated drunkard in a question of the salubrity of brandy.

What is the cause of morbid action in the animal system? Not the air we breathe, for our fellow denizens of nature breathe the same uninjured; not the water we drink, (if remote from the pollutions of man and his inventions^[27],) for the animals drink it too; not the earth we tread upon; not the unobscured sight of glorious nature, in the wood, the field, or the expanse of sky and ocean; nothing that we are

or do in common with the undiseased inhabitants of the forest. Something then wherein we differ from them: our habit of altering our food by fire, so that our appetite is no longer a just criterion for the fitness of its gratification. Except in children there remain no traces of that instinct which determines, in all other animals, what aliment is natural or otherwise; and so perfectly obliterated are they in the reasoning adults of our species, that it has become necessary to urge considerations drawn from comparative anatomy, to prove that we are naturally frugivorous.

Crime is madness. Madness is disease. Whenever the cause of disease shall be discovered, the root, from which all vice and misery have so long overshadowed the globe, will lie bare to the axe. All the exertions of man, from that moment, may be considered as tending to the clear profit of his species. No sane mind in a sane body resolves upon a real crime. It is a man of violent passions, blood-shot eyes, and swollen veins, that alone can grasp the knife of murder. The system of a simple diet promises no Utopian advantages. It is no mere reform of legislation, whilst the furious passions and evil propensities of the human heart, in which it had its origin, are still unassuaged. It strikes at the root of all evil, and is an experiment which may be tried with success, not alone by nations, but by small societies, families, and even individuals. In no cases has a return to vegetable diet produced the slightest injury; in most it has been attended with changes undeniably beneficial. Should ever a physician be born with the genius of Locke, I am persuaded

that he might trace all bodily and mental derangements to our unnatural habits, as clearly as that philosopher has traced all knowledge to sensation. What prolific sources of disease are not those mineral and vegetable poisons that have been introduced for its extirpation! How many thousands have become murderers and robbers, bigots and domestic tyrants, dissolute and abandoned adventurers, from the use of fermented liquors; who had they slaked their thirst only with pure water, would have lived but to diffuse the happiness of their own unperverted feelings. How many groundless opinions and absurd institutions have not received a general sanction from the sottishness and intemperance of individuals! Who will assert that, had the populace of Paris satisfied their hunger at the ever-furnished table of vegetable nature, they would have lent their brutal suffrage to the proscription-list of Robespierre? Could a set of men, whose passions were not perverted by unnatural stimuli, look with coolness on an *auto da fè*? Is it to be believed that a being of gentle feelings, rising from his meal of roots, would take delight in sports of blood? Was Nero a man of temperate life? Could you read calm health in his cheek, flushed with ungovernable propensities of hatred for the human race? Did Muley Ismael's pulse beat evenly, was his skin transparent, did his eyes beam with healthfulness, and its invariable concomitants, cheerfulness and benignity? Though history has decided none of these questions, a child could not hesitate to answer in the negative. Surely the bile-suffused cheek of Buonaparte, his wrinkled brow, and yellow eye, the ceaseless inquietude of

his nervous system, speak no less plainly the character of his unresting ambition than his murders and his victories. It is impossible, had Buonaparte descended from a race of vegetable feeders, that he could have had either the inclination or the power to ascend the throne of the Bourbons. The desire of tyranny could scarcely be excited in the individual, the power to tyrannize would certainly not be delegated by a society neither frenzied by inebriation, nor rendered impotent and irrational by disease. Pregnant indeed with inexhaustible calamity is the renunciation of instinct, as it concerns our physical nature; arithmetic cannot enumerate, nor reason perhaps suspect, the multitudinous sources of disease in civilized life. Even common water, that apparently innocuous *pabulum*, when corrupted by the filth of populous cities, is a deadly and insidious destroyer^[28]. Who can wonder that all the inducements held out by God himself in the Bible to virtue should have been vainer than a nurse's tale; and that those dogmas, by which he has there excited and justified the most ferocious propensities, should have alone been deemed essential; whilst Christians are in the daily practice of all those habits which have infected with disease and crime, not only the reprobate sons, but these favoured children of the common Father's love. Omnipotence itself could not save them from the consequences of this original and universal sin.

There is no disease, bodily or mental, which adoption of vegetable diet and pure water has not infallibly mitigated,

wherever the experiment has been fairly tried. Debility is gradually converted into strength, disease into healthfulness; madness, in all its hideous variety, from the ravings of the fettered maniac, to the unaccountable irrationalities of ill temper, that make a hell of domestic life, into a calm and considerate evenness of temper, that alone might offer a certain pledge of the future moral reformation of society. On a natural system of diet, old age would be our last and our only malady; the term of our existence would be protracted; we should enjoy life, and no longer preclude others from the enjoyment of it; all sensational delights would be infinitely more exquisite and perfect; the very sense of being would then be a continued pleasure, such as we now feel it in some few and favoured moments of our youth. By all that is sacred in our hopes for the human race, I conjure those who love happiness and truth, to give a fair trial to the vegetable system. Reasoning is surely superfluous on a subject whose merits an experience of six months would set for ever at rest. But it is only among the enlightened and benevolent that so great a sacrifice of appetite and prejudice can be expected, even though its ultimate excellence should not admit of dispute. It is found easier, by the short-sighted victims of disease, to palliate their torments by medicine, than to prevent them by regimen. The vulgar of all ranks are invariably sensual and indocile; yet I cannot but feel myself persuaded, that when the benefits of vegetable diet are mathematically proved; when it is as clear, that those who live naturally are exempt from premature death, as that nine is not one, the most

sottish of mankind will feel a preference towards a long and tranquil, contrasted with a short and painful life. On the average, out of sixty persons, four die in three years, Hopes are entertained that in April 1814, a statement will be given that sixty persons, all having lived more than three years on vegetables and pure water, are then *in perfect health*. More than two years have now elapsed; *not one of them has died*; no such example will be found in any sixty persons taken at random. Seventeen persons of all ages (the families of Dr. Lambe and Mr. Newton) have lived for seven years on this diet without a death, and almost without the slightest illness. Surely, when we consider that some of these were infants, and one a martyr to asthma now nearly subdued, we may challenge any seventeen persons taken at random in this city to exhibit a parallel case. Those who may have been excited to question the rectitude of established habits of diet, by these loose remarks, should consult Mr. Newton's luminous and eloquent essay^[29].

When these proofs come fairly before the world, and are clearly seen by all who understand arithmetic, it is scarcely possible that abstinence from aliments demonstrably pernicious should not become universal. In proportion to the number of proselytes, so will be the weight of evidence; and when a thousand persons can be produced, living on vegetables and distilled water, who have to dread no disease but old age, the world will be compelled to regard animal flesh and fermented liquors as slow but certain poisons. The change which would be produced by simpler habits on

political economy, is sufficiently remarkable. The monopolizing eater of animal flesh would no longer destroy his constitution by devouring an acre at a meal, and many loaves of bread would cease to contribute to gout, madness, and apoplexy, in the shape of a pint of porter, or a dram of gin, when appeasing the long-protracted famine of the hard-working peasant's hungry babes. The quantity of nutritious vegetable matter, consumed in fattening the carcase of an ox, would afford ten times the sustenance, undepraving indeed, and incapable of generating disease, if gathered immediately from the bosom of the earth. The most fertile districts of the habitable globe are now actually cultivated by men for animals, at a delay and waste of aliment absolutely incapable of calculation. It is only the wealthy that can, to any great degree, even now, indulge the unnatural craving for dead flesh, and they pay for the greater licence of the privilege, by subjection to supernumerary diseases. Again, the spirit of the nation that should take the lead in this great reform, would insensibly become agricultural; commerce, with all its vice, selfishness, and corruption, would gradually decline; more natural habits would produce gentler manners, and the excessive complication of political relations would be so far simplified, that every individual might feel and understand why he loved his country, and took a personal interest in its welfare. How would England, for example, depend on the caprices of foreign rulers, if she contained within herself all the necessaries, and despised whatever they possessed of the luxuries of life? How could they starve her into

compliance with their views? Of what consequence would it be that they refused to take her woollen manufactures, when large and fertile tracts of the island ceased to be allotted to the waste of pasturage? On a natural system of diet, we should require no spices from India; no wines from Portugal, Spain, France, or Madeira; none of those multitudinous articles of luxury, for which every corner of the globe is rifled, and which are the causes of so much individual rivalship, such calamitous and sanguinary national disputes. In the history of modern times, the avarice of commercial monopoly, no less than the ambition of weak and wicked chiefs, seems to have fomented the universal discord, to have added stubbornness to the mistakes of cabinets, and indocility to the infatuation of the people. Let it ever be remembered, that it is the direct influence of commerce to make the interval between the richest and the poorest man, wider and more unconquerable. Let it be remembered, that it is a foe to every thing of real worth and excellence in the human character. The odious and disgusting aristocracy of wealth, is built upon the ruins of all that is good in chivalry or republicanism; and luxury is the forerunner of a barbarism scarce capable of cure. Is it impossible to realize a state of society, where all the energies of man shall be directed to the production of his solid happiness? Certainly, if this advantage (the object of all political speculation) be in any degree attainable, it is attainable only by a community, which holds out no factitious incentives to the avarice and ambition of the few, and which is internally organized for

the liberty, security, and comfort of the many. None must be entrusted with power (and money is the completest species of power) who do not stand pledged to use it exclusively for the general benefit. But the use of animal flesh and fermented liquors, directly militates with this equality of the rights of man. The peasant cannot gratify these fashionable cravings without leaving his family to starve. Without disease and war, those sweeping curtailers of population, pasturage would include a waste too great to be afforded. The labour requisite to support a family is far lighter^[30] than is usually supposed. The peasantry work, not only for themselves, but for the aristocracy, the army, and the manufacturers.

The advantage of a reform in diet is obviously greater than that of any other. It strikes at the root of the evil. To remedy the abuses of legislation, before we annihilate the propensities by which they are produced, is to suppose, that by taking away the effect, the cause will cease to operate. But the efficacy of this system depends entirely on the proselytism of individuals, and grounds its merits, as a benefit to the community, upon the total change of the dietetic habits in its members. It proceeds securely from a number of particular cases to one that is universal, and has this advantage over the contrary mode, that one error does not invalidate all that has gone before.

Let not too much, however, be expected from this system. The healthiest among us is not exempt from hereditary

disease. The most symmetrical, athletic, and long-lived, is a being inexpressibly inferior to what he would have been, had not the unnatural habits of his ancestors accumulated for him a certain portion of malady and deformity. In the most perfect specimen of civilized man, something is still found wanting by the physiological critic. Can a return to nature, then, instantaneously eradicate predispositions that have been slowly taking root in the silence of innumerable ages?—Indubitably not. All that I contend for is, that from the moment of the relinquishing all unnatural habits, no new disease is generated; and that the predisposition to hereditary maladies gradually perishes, for want of its accustomed supply. In cases of consumption, cancer, gout, asthma, and scrofula, such is the invariable tendency of a diet of vegetables and pure water.

Those who may be induced by these remarks to give the vegetable system a fair trial, should in the first place, date the commencement of their practice, from the moment of their conviction. All depends upon breaking through a pernicious habit resolutely, and at once. Dr. Trotter^[31] asserts, that no drunkard was ever reformed by gradually relinquishing his dram. Animal flesh, in its effects on the human stomach, is analogous to a dram. It is similar to the kind, though differing in the degree, of its operation. The proselyte to a pure diet must be warned to expect a temporary diminution of muscular strength. The subtraction of a powerful stimulus will suffice to account for this event. But it is only temporary, and is succeeded by an equable

capability for exertion, far surpassing his former various and fluctuating strength. Above all, he will acquire an easiness of breathing, by which such exertion is performed, with a remarkable exemption from that painful and difficult panting now felt by almost every one, after hastily climbing an ordinary mountain. He will be equally capable of bodily exertion, or mental application, after as before his simple meal. He will feel none of the narcotic effects of ordinary diet. Irritability, the direct consequence of exhausting stimuli, would yield to the power of natural and tranquil impulses. He will no longer pine under the lethargy of *ennui*, that unconquerable weariness of life, more to be dreaded than death itself. He will escape the epidemic madness, which broods over its own injurious notions of the Deity, and "realizes the hell that priests and beldams feign." Every man forms as it were his god from his own character; to the divinity of one of simple habits, no offering would be more acceptable than the happiness of his creatures. He would be incapable of hating or persecuting others for the love of God. He will find, moreover, a system of simple diet to be a system of perfect epicurism. He will no longer be incessantly occupied in blunting and destroying those organs from which he expects his gratification. The pleasures of taste to be derived from a dinner of potatoes, beans, peas, turnips, lettuces, with a dessert of apples, gooseberries, strawberries, currants, raspberries, and, in winter, oranges, apples, and pears, is far greater than is supposed. Those who wait until they can eat this plain fare with the sauce of appetite will scarcely join with the

hypocritical sensualist at a lord-mayor's feast, who declaims against the pleasures of the table. Solomon kept a thousand concubines, and owned in despair that all was vanity. The man whose happiness is constituted by the society of one amiable woman, would find some difficulty in sympathizing with the disappointment of this venerable debauchee.

I address myself not only to the young enthusiast, the ardent devotee of truth and virtue, the pure and passionate moralist, yet unvitiated by the contagion of the world. He will embrace a pure system, from its abstract truth, its beauty, its simplicity, and its promise of wide-extended benefit; unless custom has turned poison into food, he will hate the brutal pleasures of the chase by instinct; it will be a contemplation full of horror and disappointment to his mind, that beings capable of the gentlest and most admirable sympathies, should take delight in the death-pangs and last convulsions of dying animals. The elderly man, whose youth has been poisoned by intemperance, or who has lived with apparent moderation, and is afflicted with a variety of painful maladies, would find his account in a beneficial change, produced without the risk of poisonous medicines. The mother, to whom the perpetual restlessness of disease, and unaccountable deaths incident to her children, are the causes of incurable unhappiness, would on this diet experience the satisfaction of beholding their perpetual health and natural playfulness^[32].

The most valuable lives are daily destroyed by diseases, that it is dangerous to palliate and impossible to cure by medicine. How much longer will man continue to pimp for the gluttony of death, his most insidious, implacable, and eternal foe?

Ἀλλὰ δράκοντας ἀγρίου καλεῖτε καὶ παρδάλεις καὶ λέοντας, αὐτοὶ δὲ μαιφονεῖτε εἰς ὤμότητα καταλιπόντες ἐκείνοις οὐδέν. Ἐκείνοις μὲν γὰρ ο φόνος τροφή, ὑμῖν δὲ ὄψιον ἐστίν.

* * * * *

Ὅτι γὰρ οὐκ ἔστιν ἀνθρώπῳ κατὰ φύσιν τὸ σαρκοφαγεῖν, πρῶτον μὲν ἀπὸ τῶν σωμάτων δηλοῦται τῆς κατασκευῆς. Οὐδενὶ γὰρ ἔοικε τὸ ἀνθρώπου σῶμα των ἐπὶ σαρκοφαγίᾳ γεγονότων, οὐ γρυπότης χεῖλους, οὐκ ὀξύτης ὄνυχος, οὐ τραχύτης ὀδόντων πρόσεστιν, οὐ κοιλίας εὐτονία, καὶ πνεύματος θερμότης, τρέψαι καὶ κατεργάζασθαι δυνατὴ τὸ βαρὺ καὶ κρεῶδες. Ἄλλ' αὐτόθεν ἢ φύσις τῆ λειότητι τῶν ὀδόντων, καὶ τῆ σμικρότητι τοῦ στόματος, καὶ τῆ μαλακότητι τῆς γλώσσης, καὶ τῆ πρὸς πέψιν ἀμβλύτητι τοῦ πνεύματος, ἐξόμνυται τὴν σαρκοφαγίαν. Ἐἰ δὲ λέγεις πεφυκέναι σεαυτὸν ἐπὶ τοιαύτην ἐδωδὴν, ὃ Βούλει φαγεῖν, πρῶτον αὐτός ἀπόκτεινον· ἄλλ' αὐτός, διὰ σεαυτοῦ, μὴ χρησάμενος κοπίδῃ, μηδὲ τυσανῶ μηδὲ πελέκει, ἀλλὰ ὡς λύκοι, καὶ ἄρκτοι, καὶ λέονες αὐτοὶ ὡς ἐσθίουσι φονεύουσιν, ἄνελε δὴγματι βοῦν, ἢ σῶματι σῦν, ἢ ἄρνα ἢ λαγῶν διαρῶρηξον, καὶ φάγε προσπεσῶν ἔτι ζῶντος ὡς ἐκεῖνα.

* * * * *

Ἡμεῖς δὲ οὕτως ἐν τῷ μαιφόνῳ τρυφῶμεν, ὥστε ὄψιον τὸ κρέας προσαγορεύομεν, εἶτα ὄψιον πρὸς αὐτὸ τὸ κρέας δεόμεθα, ἀναμιγνύν τεσ ἔλαιον, οἶνον, μέλι, γάρον, ὄξωσ, ἠδύσμασι Συριακοῖς, Ἀρράβικοῖς, ὡσπερ ὄντος νεκρὸν ἐνταφιάζοντες. Καὶ γὰρ ὅτως αὐτῶν διαλυθέντων καὶ

μαλαχθέντων καὶ τρόπον τίνα κρεοσαπέντων ἔργον ἔστι τὴν πέψιν κρατῆσαι· καὶ διακρατηθείσης δὲ δεινᾶς Βαρύτητας και νοσῶδεις ἀπεψίας.

Οὕτω τὸ πρῶτον ἄγριόν τι ζῶον ἐβρώθη καὶ κακοῦργον, εἶτα ὄρνις τις ἢ ἰχθύς εἴλκυστο· καὶ γευσμενον οὕτω καὶ προμελετῆσαν ἐν ἐκείνοις τὸ νικόν, ἐπὶ βοῦν ἐργάτην ἦλθε, καὶ τὸ κόσμιον πρόβατον, καὶ τὸν οἰκουρὸν ἀλεκτρυόνα· καὶ κατὰ μικρὸν οὕτω τὴν ἀπληστίαν τονώσαντες, ἐπὶ σφαγᾶς ἀνθρώπων, καὶ φονους καὶ πολέμους προῆλθον^[33].

Πλουτ. περὶ τῆς σαρκοφαγίας.

THE END.

1. [↑](#) See Nicholson's Encyclopædia, art. Light.
2. [↑](#)

Like leaves on trees the race of man is found,
Now green in youth, now withering on the ground;
Another race the following spring supplies;
They fall successive, and successive rise;
So generations in their course decay;
So flourish these, when those are past away.

Pope's Homer.

3. [↑](#)

When the wide ocean maddening whirlwinds sweep,
And heave the billows of the boiling deep,
Pleased we from land the reeling bark survey,
And rolling mountains of the watery way.
Not that we joy another's woes to see,
But to reflect that we ourselves are free.
So, the dread battle ranged in distant fields,
Ourselves secure, a secret pleasure yields.
But what more charming than to gain the height
Of true philosophy? What pure delight
From Wisdom's citadel to view below,
Deluded mortals, as they wandering go
In quest of happiness! ah, blindly weak!

For fame, for vain nobility they seek;

Labour for heapy treasures, night and day,
And pant for power and magisterial sway.

Oh, wretched mortals! souls devoid of light,
Lost in the shades of intellectual night!

Dr. Busby's Lucretius.

4. ↑ These piles of royal structure, will soon leave but few acres for the plough.
5. ↑ See Rousseau, "De l'Inégalité parmi les Hommes," note 7.
6. ↑ Making allowances on both sides.
7. ↑

For some, the approach of Death and Hell to stay,
Their parents, friends, and country, will betray.

Dr. Busby's Lucretius.

8. ↑ The first Christian emperor made a law by which seduction was punished with death; if the female pleaded her own consent, she also was punished with death; if the parents endeavoured to screen the criminals, they were banished, and their estates were confiscated; the slaves who might be accessory were burned alive, or forced to swallow melted lead. The very offspring of an illegal love were involved in the consequences of the sentence.—*Gibbon's Decline and Fall*, &c. vol. ii. page 210. See also, for the hatred of the primitive Christians to love, and even marriage, page 269.
9. ↑ Laplace, *Système du Monde*.
10. ↑ Cabanis, *Rapports du Physique et du Mora de l'Homme*, vol. ii. p 406.
11. ↑ *Lettres sur les Sciences*, a Voltaire. Bailly.
12. ↑ Two instances will serve to render more sensible to us the principle here laid down; we will borrow one from natural the other from moral philosophy. In a whirlwind of dust raised by an impetuous wind, however confused it may appear to our eyes; in the most dreadful tempest excited by opposing winds, which convulse the waves, there is not a single particle of dust or of water that is placed by *chance* that has not

its sufficient cause for occupying the situation in which it is, and which does not rigorously act in the mode it should act. A geometrician who knew equally the different powers which operate in both cases, and the properties of the particles which are propelled, would shew that according to the given causes, each particle acts precisely as it should act, and cannot act otherwise than it does.

In those terrible convulsions which sometimes agitate political societies, and which frequently bring on the overthrow of an empire, there is not a single action, a single word, a single thought, a single volition, a single passion in the agents, which concur in the revolution as destroyers, or as victims, which is not necessary, which does not act as it should act, which does not infallibly produce the effects which it should produce, according to the place occupied by these agents in the moral whirlwind.

This would appear evident to an intelligence which would be in a state to seize and appreciate all the actions and re-actions of the minds and bodies of those who contribute to this revolution.

System of Nature, vol. i.

13. [↑](#) That which can do any thing.
14. [↑](#) The burthen of proof.

15. ↑ I do not invent hypothesis; for whatever is not deduced from phœnomena, is to be called an hypothesis; and hypotheses, either metaphysical or physical, or grounded on occult qualities, should not be allowed any room in philosophy.

16. ↑ To tell what he is, you must be himself.

17. ↑ The primary theology of man made him first fear and worship even the elements gross and material objects, he then paid his adorations to the presiding agents of the elements, to inferior genii, to heroes, or to men endowed with great qualities. By continuing to reflect he thought to simplify things, by submitting all nature to a single agent, to a spirit, to an universal soul, which put this nature, and its parts into motion. In ascending from cause, to cause, mankind have ended, by seeing nothing, and it is in the midst of this obscurity, that they have placed their God; it is in this dark abyss, that their restless imagination is always labouring to form chimeras, which will afflict them, until a knowledge of nature shall dissipate the phantoms which they have always so vainly adored.

If we wish to render an account to ourselves, of our ideas respecting the Deity, we shall be obliged to confess that by the word *God*, men have never been able to designate any thing else but the most hidden, the most remote, the most unknown cause of the effects which they perceive; they only make use of this word, when the springs of natural and known causes cease to be visible to them; the instant they lose the

thread, or their understanding can no longer follow the chain of these causes, they cut the knot of their difficulty and terminate their researches by calling God the last of these causes, that is to say, that which is beyond all the causes with which they are acquainted. Thus they merely assign a vague denomination to an unknown cause, at which their indolence or the limits of their information compels them to stop. Whenever we are told, that God is the author of any phenomenon, that signifies that we are ignorant how such a phenomenon can be produced, with the assistance only of the natural powers or causes with which we are acquainted. It is thus that the generality of mankind, whose lot is ignorance, attribute to the Deity, not only the uncommon effects which strike them, but even the most simple events, whose causes are the most easily discoverable, to all who have had the opportunity of reflecting on them. In a word man has always respected the unknown causes of those surprising effects, which his ignorance prevented him from unravelling. It was upon the ruins of nature that men first raised the imaginary colossus of a Deity.

If the ignorance of nature gave birth to gods, a knowledge of nature is calculated to destroy them.

In proportion as man becomes informed, his powers and resources increase with his knowledge, the sciences, the conservative arts, and industry furnish

him with assistance, experience inspires him with confidence, or procures him the means of resisting the efforts of many causes, which cease to alarm him, as soon as he becomes acquainted with them. In a word, his terrors are dissipated in the same proportion as his mind is enlightened. A well informed man ceases to be superstitious.

It is never but on trust, that whole nations worship the God of their fathers, and their priests; authority, confidence, submission, and custom, to them supply the place of proofs and conviction; they prostrate themselves and pray, because their fathers have taught them to prostrate themselves and pray, but wherefore did the latter kneel? Because in remote periods, their guides and regulators, taught them it was a duty. "Worship and believe," said they "gods which you cannot comprehend, rely on our profound wisdom, we know more than you concerning the Deity." "But why should I rely on you?" "Because it is the will of God, because he will punish you if you dare to resist." "But is not this God the thing in question?" Thus men have always been satisfied with this vicious circle, the indolence of their minds led them to believe the shorter mode was to rely upon the opinions of others. All religious notions, are founded upon authority alone, all the religions of the world forbid investigation, and will not permit reasoning; it is authority which requires us to believe in God, this God himself is only founded

upon the authority of some men, who pretend to know him, and to be sent by him to announce him to the world. A God made by men has doubtless need of men to make him known to men.

Is it then only, for the priests of the inspired, for metaphysicians, that a conviction of the existence of a God is reserved, and which is nevertheless said to be necessary to all mankind. But do we find a harmony of theological opinion among the inspired, or the reflective, in the different parts of the world? Are those even who profess to worship the same God agreed respecting him? Are they satisfied with the proofs of his existence which their colleagues bring forward? Do they unanimously subscribe to the ideas which they adduce respecting his nature, his conduct, and the mode of understanding his pretended oracles? Is there a country, throughout the earth in which the knowledge of God is really perfected. Has it assumed in any quarter the consistency, and uniformity, which we perceive human knowledge to have assumed, in the most trifling arts, in trades the most despised. The words *spirit*, *immateriality*, *creation*, *predestination*, *grace*, this croud of subtile distinctions with which theology, in some countries, is universally filled, these ingenious inventions, imagined by the successive reasoners of ages, have, alas! only embroiled the question, and never has the science, the most important to mankind, been able to acquire the least stability. For

thousands of years, have these idle dreamers transmitted to each other, the task of meditating on the Deity, of discovering his secret paths, of inventing hypotheses calculated to solve this important enigma. The little success they have met with, has not discouraged theological vanity. God has always been talked of, mankind have cut each others throats for him, and this great being still continues, to be the most unknown, and the most sought after.

Fortunate would it have been for mankind if confining themselves to the visible objects in which they are interested, they had employed in perfecting true science, laws, morals, and education, half the exertions they have made in their researches after a Deity. They would have been still wiser and more fortunate, could they have resolved to leave their blind guides to quarrel among themselves and to sound the depths calculated only to turn their brains without meddling with their senseless disputes. But it is the very essence of ignorance to attach importance to what it does not understand. Human vanity is such that the mind became irritated by difficulty. In proportion as an object fades from our sight do we exert ourselves to seize it, because it then stimulates our pride, it excites our curiosity and becomes interesting. In contending for his God every one in fact is only contending for the interests of his own vanity, which of all the passions, produced by the mal-organization of society, is the

most prompt to take alarm, and the most calculated to give birth, to great absurdities.

If laying aside for a moment the gloomy ideas which theology gives us of a capricious God, whose partial and despotic decrees decide the fates of men, we fix our eyes upon the pretended goodness which all men, even whilst trembling before this God, agree in giving to him, if we suppose him to be actuated by the project which is attributed to him, of having only laboured for his own glory, of exacting the adoration of intelligent beings, of seeking only in his works, the welfare of the human race; how can we reconcile his views and dispositions with the truly invincible ignorance in which this God so good and glorious leaves the greater part of mankind respecting himself? If God wishes to be known, beloved, and praised, why does he not reveal himself under some favourable features, to all those intelligent beings by whom he wishes to be loved and worshipped! Why does he not manifest to all the earth in an unequivocal manner, much more calculated to convince us, than by these particular revelations which seem to accuse the Deity of an unjust partiality for some of his creatures. Would not the Omnipotent possess more convincing means of revealing himself to mankind than these ridiculous metamorphoses, these pretended incarnations, which are attested to us by writers who so little agree among themselves in the recitals they give of them? Instead of so many miracles

invented to prove the divine mission of so many legislators revered by the different nations of the world, could not the Supreme Being convince in an instant the human mind of the things which he chose to make known to it? Instead of suspending the sun in the vault of the firmament, instead of dispersing the stars and the constellations, which occupy space without order, would it not have been more conformable to the views of a God so jealous of his glory, and so well disposed to man, to write in a mode not liable to be disputed, his name, his attributes, and his unchangeable will, in everlasting characters, equally legible to all the inhabitants of the earth? No one could then have doubted the existence of a God, his manifest will, his visible intentions. Under the eye of this terrible Deity, no one would have had the audacity to violate his ordinances, no mortal would have dared to place himself in the situation of drawing down his wrath; and, lastly, no man would have had the effrontery to impose on his fellow creatures, in the name of the Deity, or to interpret his will according to his own fancy.

In fact, even should the existence of the theological God be admitted, and the reality of the discordant attributes which are given to him, nothing could be inferred from it, to authorise the conduct or the modes of worship, which we are told to observe towards him. Theology is truly the *tub of the Danaides*. By dint of

contradictory qualities and rash assertions, it has so trammelled, as it were, its God, that it has made it impossible for him to act. If he is infinitely good, what reason have we to fear him? If he is infinitely wise, why should we be uneasy for our future state? If he knows all, why inform him of our wants, and tease him with our prayers? If he is omnipresent, why raise temples to him? If he is master of all, why sacrifice and make offerings to him? If he is just, how can we believe that he punishes creatures whom he has afflicted with weaknesses? If grace does all in them, for what reason should he reward them? If he is omnipotent how can we offend, how resist him? If he is reasonable, how could he be incensed against his blind creatures, to whom he has only left the liberty of falling into error? If he is immutable, by what right do we pretend to make him change his decrees? If he is incomprehensible, why do we busy ourselves in endeavouring to understand him? If HE HAS SPOKEN, WHY IS NOT THE UNIVERSE CONVINCED? If the knowledge of a God is the most necessary, why is not the clearest and most evident?—*System of Nature, London, 1781.*

18. ↑ For which reason, I consider that the inquiry after the form and figure of the Deity, must be attributed to human weakness. Whatever God may be (if indeed there be one) and wherever he may exist, he must be all sense, all sight, all hearing, all life, all mind, self-

existent. * * * *

But it is a great consolation to man with all his infirmities to reflect that God himself cannot do all things: for he cannot inflict on himself death, even if he should wish to die, that best of gifts to man amidst the cares and sufferings of life; neither can he make men eternal, nor raise the dead, nor prevent those who have lived from living, nor those who have borne honours from wearing them; he has no power over the past, except that of oblivion, and (to relax our gravity awhile and indulge in a joke) he cannot prevent twice ten from being twenty, and many other things of a similar nature. From these observations it is clearly apparent that the powers of nature are what we call God.

Plin. Nat. Hist.

19. [↑](#) All things are made by the power of God, yet, doubtless, because the power of nature is the power of God: besides we are unable to understand the power of God, so far as we are ignorant of natural causes; therefore we foolishly recur to the power of God whenever we are unacquainted with the natural cause of any thing, or in other words, with the power of God. —*Spinoza, Tract. Theologici. Pol.* chap. i. p. 14.
20. [↑](#) Since writing this note I have seen reason to suspect, that Jesus was an ambitious man, who aspired to the throne of Judea.

21. ↑ See Hume's Essay, vol. ii. page 121.
22. ↑ See Locke's Essay on the Human Understanding, book iv. chap, xix., on Enthusiasm.
23. ↑ Upon seeing the Divinity, the Virgin's womb soon swelled, and the unmarried mother was amazed to find herself filled with a mysterious progeny, and that she was to bring forth to the world her own Creator. A mortal frame veiled the Framers of the Heavens, and he who embraces the wide surrounding circle of the world, lay himself concealed in the recesses of the womb.
24. ↑ Prometheus first killed an ox. Plin. Nat. Hist. lib. vii. sect. 57.
25. ↑ Return to nature. Cadell, 1811.
26. ↑ Cuvier, Leçons d'Anat. Comp. tom. iii. pages 169, 373, 448, 465, 480. Rees's Cyclopædia, article Man.
27. ↑ The necessity of resorting to some means of purifying water, and the disease which arises from its adulteration in civilized countries, is sufficiently apparent.—See Dr. Lambe's Reports on Cancer. I do not assert that the use of water is in itself unnatural, but that the unperverted palate would swallow no liquid capable of occasioning disease.
28. ↑ Lambe's Reports on Cancer.
29. ↑ Return to Nature, or Defence of Vegetable Regimen. Cadell, 1811.
30. ↑ It has come under the author's experience, that some of the workmen on an embankment in North Wales, who, in consequence of the inability of the proprietor

to pay them, seldom received their wages, have supported large families by cultivating small spots of sterile ground by moonlight. In the notes to Pratt's Poem, "Bread, or the Poor," is an account of an industrious labourer, who, by working in a small garden, before and after his day's task, attained to an enviable state of independence.

31. ↑ See Trotter on the Nervous Temperament.
32. ↑ See Mr. Newton's book. His children are the most beautiful and healthy creatures it is possible to conceive; the girls are perfect models for a sculptor; their dispositions are also the most gentle and conciliating; the judicious treatment which they experience in other points, may be a correlative cause of this. In the first five years of their life, of 18,000 children that are born, 7,500 die of various diseases; and how many more of those that survive are rendered miserable by maladies not immediately mortal? The quality and quantity of a woman's milk are materially injured by the use of dead flesh. In an island, near Iceland, where no vegetables are to be got, the children invariably die of tetanus, before they are three weeks old, and the population is supplied from the main land. —*Sir G. Mackenzie's Hist. of Iceland*. See also *Emile*, chap. i. p. 53, 54, 56.
33. ↑ You apply the term wild to lions, panthers, and serpents, yet in your own savage slaughters, you far surpass them in ferocity, for the blood shed by them is

a matter of necessity, and requisite for their subsistence.

* * * * *

That man is not by nature destined to devour animal food, is evident from the construction of the human frame, which bears no resemblance to wild beasts, or birds of prey. Man is not provided with claws or talons, with sharpness of fang, or tusk, so well adapted to tear and lacerate; nor is his stomach so well braced and muscular, nor his animal spirits so warm as to enable him to digest this solid mass of animal flesh. On the contrary, nature has made his teeth smooth, his mouth narrow, and his tongue soft; and has contrived, by the slowness of his digestion, to divert him from devouring a species of food so ill adapted to his frame and constitution. But if you still maintain, that such is your natural mode of subsistence, then follow nature in your mode of killing your prey, and employ neither knife, hammer, or hatchet, but like wolves, bears, and lions, seize an ox with your teeth, grasp a boar round the body, or tear asunder a lamb or a hare, and like the savage tribe, devour them still panting in the agonies of death.

* * * * *

We carry our luxury still farther, by the variety of sauces and seasonings which we add to our beastly banquets, mixing together oil, wine, honey, pickles, vinegar, and Syrian and Arabian ointments and perfumes, as if we intended to bury and embalm the

carcasses on which we feed. The difficulty of digesting such a mass of matter reduced in our stomachs to a state of liquefaction and putrefaction, is the source of endless disorders in the human frame. First of all, the wild mischievous animals were selected for food, and then the birds and fishes were dragged to slaughter; next the human appetite directed itself against the laborious ox, the useful and fleece-bearing sheep, and the cock, the guardian of the house. At last, by this preparatory discipline, man became matured for human massacres, slaughters, and wars.

REPLY

TO THE

ANTI-MATRIMONIAL HYPOTHESIS

AND

SUPPOSED ATHEISM

OF

PERCY BYSSCHE SHELLEY,

AS LAID DOWN

IN

QUEEN MAB.

"Those to whom Heaven has been in wit profuse,
Want as much more, to turn it to its use."—POPE.

LONDON:

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED, BY W. CLARKE, 396,
STRAND.

1821.

TO THE

PUBLISHER OF QUEEN MAB.

You have probably thought yourself conferring a benefit on the literary world, by the re-publication of Queen Mab. I say the literary world; for the splendid edition you have published, plainly indicates you did not intend to circulate it among those whom a certain portion of the press would call the "rabble readers. I do not dispute your motives; and I can readily agree that the glittering, though frequently illusive, beauties of the poem deserve preservation. As far as he wages war against positive errors of religion, and government, it is not my purpose to endeavour to confute his principles; but since he attacks an institution which I conceive to be the bond of the social union, I cannot allow

the opportunity to pass without entering a decided protest against his anti-matrimonial hypothesis. He will have other, and abler opponents, on other topics; and perhaps on this;—but lest no one should accept his challenge of defiance to matrimony, I appeal to your impartiality, for the publication of the following pages.

I have also wandered into some analysis of what I think erroneously called his Atheistical tenets. I am aware Bacon says that "Atheism leaves a man to sense, to philosophy, to Natural piety, to laws, to reputation:"—but I am not inclined to think that these principles leave a man to Atheism. However I am bold to say that Mr. Shelley is not an Atheist:—and were he to persist in an avowal of such a creed, I would say with Shakspeare:—

*"I would not hear your enemies say so;
Nor shall you do mine ear that violence,
To make it truster of your own report,
Against yourself."*

THE AUTHOR.

REPLY, &c.

CHAP I.

Anti-matrimonial Thesis of Queen Mab.

It is as common for great powers of imagination to lead writers into error, as for great natural powers to exhaust themselves, in useless feats, or ridiculous exploits. Nor does this detract from the value of such powers. The vigour necessary to give effect to the exertions of either body or mind, can as readily be ill as well employed. It may be confined to the beaten road, where it will the more readily reach its goal; or it may climb the precipice, or descend into the abyss, and destroy its energy without accomplishing any desirable object. Some without wings, it is true, will attempt to fly; but the consequences are not so lamentable, as where those who have the strongest pinions attract the public gaze, by soaring into unknown regions, and find their powers fail at so perilous a height.

Queen Mab is a glittering, rather than a splendid oddity. Much of what it would merit as a poem, is lost in the want of originality. The Fairy is the spirit of Volney's Ruins, trimly dressed for a new character. The execution of the design will bear no comparison with that of the work from

which it is evidently copied; though it cannot be denied that the varying illustrations are given in an exalted strain of poetry. The scorn of slavery, and the contempt of slaves:—the hatred of hypocrisy, and the eager pursuit of truth and happiness, even where they are not to be found:—the indignation which tyranny excites; and the forcible contrast of its own wretchedness, whilst it makes others wretched:—even the enthusiastic dream of unattainable perfection, with which the poem closes:—all interest us strongly in favor of the writer's *wishes* for the happiness of the human species; but this only encreases our regret that he should have directed them to a path, in which it would be ever sought in vain.

I am one of those who do not expect, nor even wish, that man should be completely changed in his nature, which would be a necessary prelude to this anticipated perfection. While he supposes himself about to confer upon humanity an ideal superiority over its present existence, he proposes in fact to create a *new world*, and to people it with a *new race!* It will be seen that he carries this idea, not merely to the extermination of all the aberrations of passion, but to the improvement of the face of nature. The "wastes of frozen billows," "hurled by *everlasting* snow storms "round the poles," are to be "unloosed;" and "fragrant zephyrs," from "spicy isles," are to "melodize with man's blest nature there." The deserts of Arabia, are to

"——teem with countless rills and shady woods,
Corn-fields, and pastures, and white cottages."

The wonders of Pope's Messiah, from which much of this matter, and all the ideas seem gathered, as those of the Messiah from Virgil and the prophets, are to be realized in this *new world*:—for

"——where the startled wilderness beheld
A savage conqueror stained in kindred blood;
A tygress sating with the flesh of lambs,
The unnatural famine of her toothless cubs,
Whilst shouts and howlings through the desert rang,
Sloping and smooth the daisy-spangled lawn,
Offering sweet incense to the sun rise, smiles
To see a babe before his mother's door,
 Sharing his morning's meal
With the green and golden basilisk,
 That comes to lick his feet!"

Every ocean is "to teem" with islands, at such convenient distances, that the sailor may not see as now:—

"Morning on night, and night on morning rise,
Whilst still no land to greet the wanderer spreads
Its shadowy mountains on the sun-bright sea."

These agreeable resting places will of course supercede the necessity of ships, and destroy all the dangers of navigation. The Venetian gondola, to harmonious music, over the ever-

placid wave, and with ever-favouring breezes, will serve all the purposes of marine intercourse; and remove the necessity of those perilous adventures in which our enterprising sailors are now embarked in the frozen regions of the north. Nay, he boldly tells us "all things ARE to be *re-created*." No storms are to deface the beauties of nature, and no excess of evil passion is to disturb the happiness of man!

What influence on this re-creation, by any possibility, can have the *conduct of man*? The *apparent* object of the poem, is to point out the baneful effects of superstition, vice, tyranny, and falsehood; to attribute the countless ills that curse humanity, to the bad passions, the mistaken self-interests, and the ignorance of men:—to call them, by the precepts of reason and virtue, to a proper sense of their own dignity; and to a consideration of the means of happiness which they have neglected. What has this to do with the *material world*?—with a reversal, or total change of the laws of nature; with studding the Atlantic with islands, or transferring the perfumes of Arabia to replace the dissolved ice-bergs of the pole? Could a universe of Shelleys, with all the sensibility, and virtue, which he recommends, effect the slightest change, in the laws that govern the material world?—Could they transform a shower of snow into a halo of sunbeams—or bid the chilling breezes of the north blow as mildly as Italian zephyrs? out of respect to the "naked beauties" of Ianthe!

Virtue may overcome the severity of nature—and bloom as freshly and as vigorously beneath the frigid, or the burning, as the temperate zone. It is with reason Gray indignantly asks:—

"Need we the influence of the northern star,
To still our souls, or string our nerves to war?
And where the face of nature laughs around,
Must sickening virtue fly the tainted ground?
Unmanly thought! No seasons can controul,
No fancied zone can circumscribe the soul;
Who conscious of the source from whence she springs,
By reason's light, on resolution's wings,
Spite of her frail companion, dauntless goes,
Through Lybia's deserts, and through Zembla's snows!
All little wants, all low desires refine,
And raise the mortal to a height divine?"

This is placing things in a true light. The end of virtue is to despise those obstacles, which it cannot remove—to make that conducive to its splendour, which it is necessary to conquer:—not to change the face of nature, which is impossible; but to render nature, *as it is*, subservient, and conducive, to the happiness of humanity.

My principal object is to show that Mr. Shelley's scheme of sexual intercourse is not adapted either to the well-being, or the existence of Society, in a world like this; and I have deemed it just to show, that while he recommends it, as a great improvement, he does not take into consideration, any

such world as ours; but a world purely *ideal*, which has scarcely any foundation in his own imagination. I say scarcely any foundation;—for if he had possessed decided and clear ideas upon the subject, he would not have confounded the contradictory ideas of a *new world*, and a reformation of the *manners of the old*! When his new world was *created*, it would have been ample time to lay down such a thesis of intercourse; if the creator of such new world had not spared Mr. Shelley the necessity of devising means for the supreme felicity of his creatures!

I believe every rational being will agree with Pope, that—

"In the *scale* of reasoning life 'tis plain,
There must be *somewhere* such a rank as man;
And all the question, wrangle e'er so long,
Is only this, if God has placed him wrong?"

The theory of Mr. Shelley is, that God has created knaves, and fools, instead of men: and he would have us believe that to get rid of the folly and knavery, would be to introduce a species *superior* to man; and a new modification of the external and material world, to suit his new order! The object of other philosophers, (admitting Mr. Shelley to be one) is to realize the philosophical idea of what man ought to be in the development of his reason;—Mr. Shelley is not satisfied with this; but would entrench upon the ideal world for a species of fabulous angels, of

"faultless monsters, which the world ne'er saw," to people his new regions.

All this, as a mere theory may amuse the volatile, and those who seek only amusement; and though useless, I will not call it dangerous. It is a common principle with man, to seek abroad for felicity, while it lies within his reach. Overlooking it at home, and not finding it elsewhere, he flies to the clouds, and is content to *fancy*, what, but for a most unfortunate sensibility, would court his actual enjoyment, without labour or research.

But when Mr. Shelley addresses himself directly to society, and deliberately proposes to loosen the key-stone of its arch, he ceases to be "madly wild," and becomes actually dangerous. His proposal to realize Mahomet's paradise on earth, is not merely an error. However disinterested the author of such a proposal might be, avails nothing. A child, with the most innocent intention in the world, might carry a torch amongst combustibles, and produce the most dreadful conflagration. He who should succeed in persuading society to cut the gordian knot of marriage, would do more towards the demoralization of his species, and the extinction of science, than all the tyrants, and all the hypocrites who ever lived. It is with these impressions, I propose to analyze his scheme of sexual intercourse.

In the poem itself, his ideas are not fully developed: though his conclusions are sufficiently palpable. The first passage

to which it is necessary to refer, is in page forty-eight, of your edition, when speaking of the mischievous venality which the spirit of commerce, and the love of riches, has produced, he says:—

*"Even love is sold;—the solace of all woe,
Is turned to deadliest agony; old age
Shivers in selfish beauty's loathing arms,
And youth's corrupted impulses prepare
A life of horror from the blighting bane
Of commerce."*

To the first four words of this quotation, is appended a note of some length, in which he enters more in detail into the subject of our difference. Before I proceed to this, let me remark, that the expression "even love is sold," in the text of his dissertation, is *a fallacy*:—and he himself demonstrates it to be such, when he adds that "old age shivers in selfish *beauty's* loathing arms!" In the instance he has offered, it is *not* love that is the object of sale, but "selfish beauty;" which whether sold, or given, affords no reason for his hypothesis. A better reasoner than Mr. Shelley has said—

*"Judges and senates may be bought for gold;
Esteem, and love, were never to be sold!"*

It is hardly to be presumed, if the institution of marriage were abolished, that mercenary beauty would not dispose of

itself to the best advantage, and to hazard the proposition that a yearly, a monthly, or a diurnal sale, of such selfish charms, would better the condition of society, would be to hazard the probability of universal ridicule. Extinguish the *mercenary motive*, and good would be effected. "Were not beauty venal, it would not prostitute itself to what it abhorred, either for a long, or a short period; but where the venality exists, it would be unnecessary to contend that it is wisely limited in its power of setting itself up for sale.

Mr. Shelley says "Law pretends even to govern the indisciplinable wanderings of passion, to put fetters on the clearest deductions of reason, and, by appeals to the will, to subdue the involuntary affections of our nature." In the instance selected for the illustration of this description of the law, it does no such thing. In too many instances, I confess, laws have put fetters on the deductions of reason; but in the institution of marriage, I can perceive no such manacling;—nor do they pretend to *govern* the passions; because it is quite evident they cannot govern them. I do not understand how "appeals to the will," are to subdue "our involuntary affections." Laws *appeal* to nothing; still less would they appeal to the *will*—and least of all would they appeal to *our wills*, against our *involuntary affections*. General laws are meant to regulate our conduct to each other, within certain rules; that the confidence necessary for the social union may be maintained. A principle laid down by the law, is promulgated as a general rule; and in the confidence that this rule will be respected by all; or that if

violated, society will punish the violator, it is recognised as a general principle of action. Law speaks only to the judgment. The laws relative to the institution of marriage have probably less effect than any other species of laws;—on account of those passions which they cannot control, and which they fear to punish. On *man* they are seldom considered binding. His caprice, or his passion, is continually despising, and overleaping them:—but though they are not so binding upon man, as their nature should require, they are still in some measure the protection of *WOMAN*; and, in any state of society, form almost the only protection she can receive from the social law. The rights of men are to a certain extent secured, because man fears man; and dreads to do wrong, lest the wrong should be amply revenged. But man does not fear woman; and it is only in his sense of *honour*, that she has any security, beyond the respect which is ensured her by the name of wife! The marriage law secures her rank in society; renders that protection an obligatory duty where it would not be voluntarily performed; and, in the absence of affection, compels man in some measure to be just!

What protection against distress, misery, infancy, and old age, would the scheme of Mr. Shelley confer on woman? "Love," says he, "is inevitably consequent on the perception of loveliness." This is not true, in the sense in which love is here employed. Every man does not love every woman in whom he perceives loveliness. It could not even be a consequence of inculcating the idea, that man like the

butterfly should pass from flower to flower, and revel in the sweets of every beauty; for nature would mock his powers of enjoyment, by the endless renewals of loveliness and beauty, with which she would deride his sated appetite. But to inculcate this idea would be to sacrifice every sensation, which

"Fills the languid pause with finer joy!"

It would be to brutalize man, and to degrade woman—to fill the earth with such worthless beings as seek all pleasure in mere sensual gratifications; and such females as minister to the pleasure of man without any participation in his gross delights.

The old tale that "love withers under constraint; that its very essence is liberty; that it is compatible neither with obedience, jealousy, nor fear:"—is as ridiculous as untrue. Whilst love exists, it *feels* no restraint. It is perfectly immaterial whether it be enclosed with flowery hedges, or massy walls. With no wish to stray from its bower, it cares not whether the boundary be near or distant. It cannot become impatient of restraint; and when that impatience is felt, love has already vanished. Love has no preference for liberty, for it chooses its bondage. It delights to serve; finds service perfect freedom; and its essence, so far from being liberty, is the most decided slavery:—

"The sweetest bondage it is true,

That ever human slavery knew,
But it is bondage still!"

Obedience is too tame an epithet, for its anxiety to serve. Its jealousy, lest any one should presume to share its service, is so notorious as to be proverbial; and its fear is as excessive as its fondness. Really, Mr. Shelley, from his practice, ought to have known the divinity better. It may be allowed this writer, that love is "*most pure, most perfect, and most unlimited, where its votaries live in confidence, equality, and unrestraint.*" But there are a thousand intermediate degrees before we reach this superlative definition:—and at each of them a man might do well to pause, and ask himself whether by changing the shrine, his devotion would be more acceptable to the deity, or better calculated to ensure happiness to himself.

"How long then ought the sexual connection to last?" asks Mr. S. The laws of society say, that without *moral*, or physical cause, be shewn against it, it ought to last during the lives of the parties! They endeavour to prevent individuals from choosing companions, until they are *capable* of forming a correct judgment of themselves, and the partners they are about to choose. They declare that one female alone can be recognized as the wedded wife of one man. They declare that he who selects a woman is bound to maintain and to protect her; and if he neglect his duty, the laws endeavour to enforce it. The laws have nothing to do with love, or affection. Where they exist, the civil laws are

mere formalities; and the bonds are neither felt nor heeded. Where they do not exist, or where they have existed, and exist no longer, the laws step in to protect the female, as far as their authority can interfere; and to secure her rights as a member of society. No law binds, or could bind, parties to a cohabitation which they abhorred. No law professes to do this. Marriages are virtually dissolved, and the individuals separate, when the yoke becomes unbearable to either party; and the laws only provide, as far as they can, that society shall not suffer wrong, nor the weaker party endure more than the evils of separation, by the caprice, the inconstancy, or the guilt of man!

By *love* our author seems only to mean, the ungovernable emotion, which beauty first awakens in the bosom of maturing manhood. This furious impulse is of the most evanescent description. Satiety succeeds to enjoyment; and for the *same person*, the same maddening sensation can seldom, if ever, be again awakened. While that individual continued to be an object of the affections, the sensation could be awakened for no other; but is this furor *alone* worthy of the name of love? Is it to be constantly excited for some *new object*, that it may be continually in existence? and are fresh victims to be periodically sacrificed to this inordinate avarice of beauty? which would then become a greater curse than the avarice of gold! Suppose all men acting in this mode, they would cut each other's throats, as fast as they destroyed the happiness of the female portion of society. Murder and debauchery would be

the "twin fiends of desolation;" and the imagined paradise of Queen Mab, would become in verity the worst of hells.

Woman can never be raised upon the stage of this bustling world, into an equality with man. Her very virtues, her beauties, her excellencies, forbid it. Beauty is the universal object of desire; and what men desire, they will obtain, by any means in their power. Women have no intuitive knowledge to discover the truth of affection, from its dissembled counterfeit. Prone to believe "what seems but fair," how are they to detect the guile that lurks beneath the specious promise of the flatterer's tongue! What security have they for the reality of an affection? or if real, that it might last the passing of a single moon? It is proposed to hold out to every man, the idea of obtaining as many women as he could deceive; and of abandoning with impunity those whom he has betrayed into affection for so dishonourable a wretch. The author of Queen Mab complains of the state of society! It may be bad enough; but this method of mending it, would be to replace the noisy puppies that infest our streets, by tigers and hyenas.

We now arrive at some of the most senseless and absurd jargon, that ever affected sensibility reduced to language—if that may be called language, which inverts its purpose, and *confounds*, instead of *assisting*, the understanding. I must quote the words, or I should be considered as creating shadows, for the purpose of dispelling them. He says—"if happiness be the object of morality, of all human unions and

disunions; if the worthiness of every action is to be estimated by the quantity of pleasurable sensation it is calculated to produce, then the connection of the sexes is so long sacred, as it contributes to the comfort of the parties, and is naturally dissolved, when its evils are greater than its benefits. There is nothing *immoral* in this separation. *Constancy has nothing virtuous in itself*, independently of the pleasure which it confers, and partakes of the *temporizing spirit of vice*, in proportion as it endures tamely moral defects of magnitude in the object of its indiscreet choice. Love is free: To promise for ever to love the same woman, is not less absurd than to promise to believe the same creed: such a vow, in both cases, excludes us from all enquiry. The language of the votarist is this.—The woman I now love may be infinitely inferior to many others; the creed I now profess may be a mass of errors and absurdities; but I exclude myself from all future information as to the amiability of the one, and the truth of the other, resolving blindly, and in spite of conviction, to adhere to them.—Is this the language of *delicacy*, and *reason*?—Is the love of such a frigid heart of more worth than its belief?"

It is said Mr. Shelley was *very young* when he wrote this; and it would require the apology of a nonage when the pen and the hand had as little intercourse, as these rhapsodies have connection with the head, or the heart. That happiness, in the sense here implied, is the object of *morality*, is preposterous. Morality points out the strict line of duty. The leading object is *justice*:—and it does not leave man at

liberty, to seek his own happiness at the expence of the well being, or the peace of others. Man sighs for the possession of woman:—he engages her affections: fixes all her hopes and chance of happiness upon his constancy:—but he has already enjoyed her—his palled appetite wanders after more tempting, because more novel, charms;—and in this new code of morals, he may say—"I am no longer happy in your society,—happiness was my object in the union. I must now seek it in disunion, and fresh engagements. I am extremely sorry:—my comfort requires a separation. Adieu!" What must he be, who could hold this language to an affectionate, astonished, deceived, and brokenhearted woman? Men may be often false;—may often forget the vows sworn at the altar, and venture to taste "forbidden fruits:" but to make falsehood a creed, villainy a profession, and injustice a moral duty, is a measure of guilt, for which language has no adequate expression.

An affection cannot be supposed to expire at the *same moment*, between individuals of opposite sexes. We have a thousand instances, in which the love of woman has survived coldness, treachery, desertion, insult, and privation—where it still clung to the father of the children, when it could no longer be felt for the husband of the wife:—and suppose the fondness of woman undiminished, at the moment when man finds it a "moral duty" to abandon her, in search of "happiness," and "comfort." Is there, *then*, nothing *immoral*, nothing *criminal*, in devoting the deserted object of this injustice, to a life of wretchedness—the more

acute, as it admits of no alleviation; and which is heightened by the convenient "morality," which permits the object of her solicitude to seek his own "happiness," by reducing all who will trust his falsehood to the same desperate condition. "When the evils of the connection of the sexes, ARE greater than its benefits," separation necessarily ensues; but so attractive, so necessary, is woman; such are the endearing and lasting ties which the relations of husband and wife, father, mother, and children, weave around the heart, that it is not in the power of many evils to overbalance the advantages of that connection. While "passions are the elements of life," the discordance of temper, and the strife of opposing wills, amid the varied incidents of life, will agitate the mental and moral atmosphere, as nature is agitated by the winds; but as destructive convulsions are of rare occurrence; so is it almost as rarely that the evils of the matrimonial state are felt to surpass its advantages. Fathers and mothers are often dissatisfied with their children; and frequently with cause; yet it is seldom we hear any wish they were childless; and when the wish is expressed by the tongue, the heart is not always ready to concur. Bachelors laugh at marriage, and then marry:—husbands rail at matrimony; and wish they were again single:—that, should fate listen to them, they may marry again! Even Mr. Shelley has been married *twice*, [1] after having had an opportunity, at least, of trying the preponderating blessings of his novel scheme. Whatever authority his own example might have given to his precepts, is entirely lost. Perhaps it would not be assuming too much,

to say that his experience has made him a convert to matrimony. Should this be the case, he owes society the duty of recording his conversion.

If *justice* be *virtue*, constancy is virtue. Even supposing that a man should sacrifice his happiness, by his constancy, has he not *sworn* that he will be constant? Will he adopt the paltry subterfuge, that he did not know what he was about to promise? Will he plead his folly, to excuse his caprice? I am not speaking of the matrimonial law—but, suppose it entirely abrogated, such an oath, or a promise which ought not to be considered less binding than an oath, must be the preliminary means of obtaining woman. The marriage would not be less real, in the eye of reason, if the priest were absent, and the law annulled. The union would still have all the force of a solemn contract. No woman would surrender herself to the pleasures of a libertine, avowedly on the tenure of his good liking. Even Mr. Shelley does not assert the abolition of formal marriages "would lead to promiscuous intercourse." Then the contract must be made between the parties; and does he mean to say, that either would, or ought to reserve the right of separation, when caprice should suggest the convenience of change? Would it be less dishonorable to break such an engagement, than any other? At any rate, should not *both* concur in such separation, before it could be deemed just? This brings us back to the present condition of affairs. Where both agree to separate, the law is useless. It cannot compel cohabitation; and if it impose any privations upon parties, their mistaken

judgment is the cause. Society must protect itself:—and the squabbles of a few individuals cannot be considered. The lesser evil must be endured to prevent the greater. In our author's new world, these things may be managed better;—but we must wait for its re-creation; and in the mean time be as comfortable as we can.

"Constancy has nothing virtuous in itself, independently of the pleasure it confers!" Indeed, Mr. Shelley! Such language would only be in character with a selfish boy, who would engross the honey-pot to himself, until it made him sick. Is there nothing virtuous in a constancy, which would sacrifice its own pleasure, to *avoid giving pain* to a woman, who had placed all her hopes of happiness in that constancy? Is *self* to be the everlasting, and only thought? Is man never to remember there are other creatures in existence, whose well-being ought to be consulted, as well as his pleasure? The nonsense about "moral defects of magnitude," is puerile in the extreme. Both law, and reason, allow of separation for just cause;—the object of Mr. Shelley's theory is to shew that separation for *any* cause, or *any* caprice, is justifiable! This is the point at issue between him and the world.

"To promise for ever to love the *same woman*, is not less absurd, than to promise to believe the same creed!" Good, now! Mr. Shelley, your reason? Were this pressed hard upon you, you would probably with Falstaff exclaim, "If reasons were as plenty as blackberries, I would not give you one

upon compulsion!" A *woman* resemble a religious creed! When I promise to believe a creed, I promise only that I will believe it, until its falsehood is pointed out. The veriest fanatic has this conditional reservation. It is the nature of such promises; and they cannot be otherwise made, or construed. It may be difficult, or impossible, to convince a fanatic; but he does not tell you he would maintain his creed, *if it were* proved false. He holds it, because he is satisfied it cannot be proved false. He does *not* admit "the creed he professes *may* be a mass of errors and absurdities;" so far from it, he would go to the stake for the contrary opinion, that it was impossible it should contain either error, or absurdity. Nor does any votary of love admit, "the woman he then loves *may* be infinitely inferior to many others." In the points of preference which determine his choice, he must, on the contrary, contend she is *superior* to all others:—and if he be *competent to judge*, while those excellencies remain, his reasons for preference will continue. He selects that woman who most promises to realize his ideas of happiness!—Surely woman has the same reason to urge in her behalf, on which Othello reposes his confidence in Desdemona—"she had her eyes and chose him!" To plead for an allowance, on the part of want of judgment, is well enough in a boy, who may wish to change his plaything; but it is unworthy of a man, who ought to be better acquainted with his feelings, and his reason. Could man replace woman in the advantageous situation, in which he found her:—could he restore her charms untasted, her bloom unchanged, her affections uninjured;—even then her

consent would be necessary to give any colouring of justice to a separation; but in the impossibility of this,—with certain loss, and absolute injury to her;—after having rendered her less desirable to others, to throw her from himself, in search of other charms to ruin and betray, on the pretence of promoting his own "comfort," is a proposition that has more of the devil in it, than of the man.

Where marriages are unhappy, he says they make *hypocrites*, or *open enemies*. There may be tempers with whom perfect happiness, or even comparative comfort, is not to be expected. But here, perhaps the institution of marriage has its advantages. Such spirits would be unquiet every where, and in any species of intercourse. In some cases the passionate excess of love subsides into rational esteem, and calm affection. In others, affection nearly evaporates, and esteem alone remains. In others, the union is cemented by a respect for the ordinary decorums of life, and an anxiety for the welfare of an offspring. In some few, the temper breaks out into open violence against all forms, and principles; and all duties are neglected. But it is for Mr. Shelley to shew that in the state of unbridled *liberty*, on the part of man, for this must be the effect of his theory, *greater hypocrisy* would not be resorted to, for the purpose of *betraying* the individuals than is now employed to deceive the world—that *greater enmity* would not arise from the *desertions* of those who were betrayed, than arises now from the impossibility of dissolving the marriage tie! What brother, what father, would suffer a daughter, or a sister, to

be abandoned, at the caprice of a two-legged ape of manhood, who thought he saw a brilliant butterfly at a distance, which his "morality" taught him he might have some pleasure in running down? It would be an absolute duty for every one interested in the honor, and happiness of woman, to wear swords, not "for fashion's sake," but to teach those who approached them, they were not to be injured with impunity.

Mr. S. says the children of unfortunate marriages are "nursed in a systematic school of ill humour, violence, and falsehood." Allow this to be the case, though the whole are rarely combined, would it mend the matter, to nurse them in the school of their mother's injuries; to be brought up to consider one of the authors of their existence, as the destroyer of the other's peace? Or to nurse them in the school of hatred towards a step-father, whose harshness and injustice might implant the bitterest principles of revenge? Or, if taken from the mother, at the period of the separation, to be nursed in the school of contemptuous neglect, by a step-mother? Or, not to be nursed in any school, but left to gather what weeds they might chance to select, on the wild common of abandoned nature?

It is strange that in condemning hypocrisy, as a fruit of unhappy marriages, he should propose hypocrisy as a means of perpetuating his *ad libitum* connexions. Yet so it is; for he says, "if this connexion were put upon a *rational* basis, each would be assured that habitual ill temper would

terminate in separation; and would check (*disguise*) this vicious and dangerous propensity!" This is little more than saying, that a harlot would be extremely civil, lest she should not be sufficiently rewarded. It is somewhat curious too, that even in his "recreated world," the scene of "absolute perfection," when every natural evil should have vanished; he does not expect to *get rid* even of "*habitual* ill temper;"—his only hope is to *disguise* it lest it should be punished! The fancies of this brilliant dreamer are not made of more substantial stuff, than the dreams of less favoured mortals.

As he proceeds, he gets bolder:—and he has reason for it. Being so deeply entangled in the web of sophistry, his only hope of effect, is to wrap fold on fold, in the desperate chance of entangling his readers. He tells us, that "*prostitution is the legitimate offspring of marriage, and its accompanying errors!*" One would have thought, from his hypothesis, that prostitution should be hailed as the *natural means* by which the *political evils* of marriage were to be remedied. Instead of speaking of prostitution as *an evil*, he should have contended for it as a *comparative good*, as far as it extends;—and lamented that it was not a universal practice, instead of a partial one. What is prostitution, but a *promiscuous* intercourse; and what but promiscuous intercourse of the sexes does Mr. Shelley recommend? Man is to seek whatever is lovely—to remain no longer attached to one object than while he finds it convenient; and to change as often as his judgment or his caprice sets before

him a "lovelier object." His theory is, that enjoyment alone should be aimed at; and that every *man* is at perfect liberty to pursue every variety of enjoyment. He says, indeed, towards the close of his note, "I by no means *assert* that the intercourse would be promiscuous;" but it is quite evident, whatever Mr. Shelley may choose to assert, that to this "it must come at last." The reasons against promiscuous intercourse he is able to perceive. The "relation of parent to child," which should render the sexual union of "long duration, and marked above all others with generosity and self-devotion," is the justification of the marriage laws; for the history of *man* sufficiently proves that, without an obligation, the great majority of fathers might abandon their children, as readily as they cast from their bosoms the deluded, trusting females, who have been the instruments of their pleasures. Look at the world! Does any *gentleman* think himself at all obliged to notice either the objects, or the fruits of his illicit intercourse? In all cases of *seduction*, we may see what would be the *effects* of the abolition of marriage. There it is, in effect, *abolished* inasmuch as it is *disregarded*; and there is no law to compel any observance of it. The love, in many instances, is probably *mutual*. Rank may forget its authority, and wealth its influence, for the moment. Man sighs, vows, and betrays:—woman believes, confides, and is undone. The treasure is rifled; and the robber hastes on the high-road of pleasure to make other victims. The institution of marriage *checks*, though it does not eradicate this evil. It takes care, at least, that part of the female sex shall be, in some degree, protected from the

caprice of the *lords* of the creation. It takes care that some portion of the rising generation shall be properly provided for. It lessens the evils of prostitution, and seduction; though it cannot annihilate them, while interest and inclination are encouraged at the expence of justice. There is now a multitude of women, whom licentiousness *dare* not approach with its contaminating lust. The protection afforded to women by fathers, brothers, and friends, is some compensation for the evident partiality of the laws to man. Still too many females fall a sacrifice to infamy, without being guilty of any crime, but that of trusting to the honor of some villain:—and yet it is gravely proposed to subject every woman to dependance on that honor, as a remedy for the evil! Infatuation never put forth a more gross absurdity. Impudence never advanced a more daring violation of reason.

How is prostitution to be diminished by reducing the world into a general brothel? Suppose, by some singular chance, a male and female Shelley happened to meet each other, entangled by a variety of other engagements—the male Shelley with a wife and children—the female Shelley with a husband and family. Of course, they would recognise each other immediately as the "loveliest specimens" of "creation." That "love is inevitably consequent upon loveliness," is an article of the new code. Of course, the female Shelley must love the male Shelley; and the male the female! The female must at once abandon all previous love and regard for her first husband, and transfer them to

the "lovelier object." The memory of all past endearments must pass away, to make room for new sensations. Her children must be abandoned, as well as her duty forgotten. The new impulse will awaken new desires, and to satisfy them she must break through all engagements. Her husband may not have exchanged his affections. He may not have seen a "lovelier object;"—and may be left broken-hearted and despairing, at the wreck of his happiness. Nevertheless, the male Shelley, heedless of the happiness he destroys, has a right to consult his own. His own wife he is tired of, and seeing a "lovelier object," his soul expands, and his arms are outstretched to receive her. His wife is left to wait also "for a lovelier object," and to hopeless misery, if her affections remain undiminished. To be sure the *lovely* beings who thus desert all duties, may leave their families behind them, for the consolation of those who are deserted; as they may have a fresh offspring to provide for, from their newer loves! And thus *double adultery* would be the *remedy* for *prostitution!* It is easy to perceive that such a picture might be much heightened. Instead of the two *loveliest* objects of the species meeting, while entangled with single engagements, it might be after a series of transfers from lovely, to lovelier, and lovelier, and lovelier still; until the embraces of a moderately decorous courtesan of the present age, would be comparative purity, to the numerous debaucheries through which the loveliest of the species had wallowed, in their progress to each other's arms. Modern sensibility may not be shocked at this; but I

am certain old fashioned morality would startle at the mere proposal of such a system.

It is singular that Mr. Shelley should pretend to any respect for the happiness and well-being of woman, while laying down a code that would tear from her all the security she has of being treated as a rational creature. He affects to lament, that "Women, for no other crime than having followed the dictates of a natural appetite, are driven from society." Does he not perceive that it is not the law, but the *individual man*, (on whom Mr. Shelley would confer still more power to treat woman thus barbarously) who drives her from society? It is not the law which compels a man to support the woman he has married, that shuts prostitutes out of the pale of society. It is the *want of laws* to compel every man to support, as respectably as his means allow, those whom he has seduced. Seduction with *impunity*, which Mr. Shelley would *render universal*, is the *evil* that ought to be cured. Society does not "declare war against the prostitute;"—she is first *seduced*, and then *driven*, to declare war against society. She who has yielded herself to one man, becomes less desirable to others. Is it this feeling that Mr. Shelley would eradicate? Would he contend that delicacy on this point is entirely misplaced—that

"beauty should be kind to all who love?"

If this be his object, the sensibility of which he boasts is not very acute. But this opinion it is the less necessary to

impugn; as the feelings of the great majority of the world will ever be arrayed against it; and there is no fear of such notions becoming current. Whatever gratification the most profligate father in existence might feel in endless debauchery, he would shrink from the propagation of its tenets in his own family. There is something so beautiful in decency and virtue, that the vilest wretches are anxious their children should be, what they cannot hope to be themselves.

The evils of prostitution are extreme:—and are the more to be regretted, as they certainly spring, in a great measure, from the want of laws, which *man* has neglected to frame, lest his gratifications should be limited;—and from certain principles, not embodied into laws, but which are inculcated in such a manner as to render them more operative than laws. Thus, it is considered *disgraceful* for a *gentleman* to degrade himself by a marriage with a poor, fond, deluded woman, whose all of happiness and hope has been sacrificed for his amusement—whose life has been rendered miserable and infamous by his treachery and falsehood—whose reputation, tainted by him, is held cheaply by all besides. The father of an illegitimate child feels no shame at the knowledge that his offspring is abandoned to all the evils of poverty, or the temptations of guilt. A small sum paid to the parish compensates for the crime, and annihilates the necessity of feeling. It is ONLY an illegitimate child; and whether a miserable existence be terminated by the hangman, or by disease engendered by

distress, is immaterial to the *gentleman* father! What becomes of the mother, is a matter of still less consideration with the seducer. She is old enough to work. The parish does not insist upon a maintenance for her; and the fine feelings of our *gentlemen* are not in the slightest degree affected by the knowledge, that premature old age has wasted that beauty to the grave, which was once an object of the highest desire. Is it to such a race as this, that the honor, and happiness, of the whole female race, should be trusted without some better security, than the chance of being beloved while no fairer object of loveliness should tempt the licensed senses to fresh enjoyment! With the volume of unspeakable misery before us, which the vagrant disposition of man occasions to that part of the female world with which he can sport at pleasure, would it be wise, or prudent, or just, to subject the *whole* to his unbridled passions?—to break down all the fences which morality and reason have established, to enable man to enjoy a few additional moments of rapture, purchased at the price of so much agony to woman?^[2]

Upon this question, Mr. Shelley takes not into the account any consideration of the happiness or advantage of the female. She is the mere instrument of male gratification—the passive and unconsulted medium of his transports. If this were not evident from the fact that such unlimited licence would only be available to man, it would be found in his simile between *love*, and *belief*. A woman, he says, may be rejected, when another more lovely appears;—as a

creed may be dismissed, when it is shewn to be inferior to another. The argument, of course, supposes the *lady* as *insensible* and indifferent as the *creed*! No mischief is done to the creed, by the desertion:—*ergo*, says Mr. Shelley, no mischief could be done to the lady, by an abandonment. The creed cannot feel slighted;—*ergo*, the lady ought not to feel herself insulted. The creed is not rendered the less eligible to other admirers;—*ergo*, the lady is in the same situation, and remains as desirable to others, as before! The creed is only a series of sentences, well or ill put together—*ergo*, the lady is only a beautiful human form, with no mind, no affections, no feelings, no rights! The creed is a mere combination of the letters of the alphabet, which combination may be changed at the pleasure of the party;—*ergo*, the lady is only an ornament, which may be changed, on the slightest variation of taste on the part of the lover! Is it necessary to waste any time, in the refutation of such contemptible, but yet such dangerous opinions! The least degree of reflection would fortify the weakest mind against their adoption; but, unfortunately they are addressed to the senses upon a subject on which they never reflect. The passions hurry us along, and in their fury leave us no time for thought. The pleasure tempts too strongly. Every natural impulse swells the tide of passion:—and men rarely awaken to remorse, until the power of doing wrong is exhausted, or the evil is irreparable. This is the weak point, "where most our reason fails us:" and it is therefore the paramount duty of every author to encrease, and not to diminish the defences. With writers who propose to change existing

institutions, this precaution, and this duty, are the most imperious. Who would attempt to stop the current of a rapid stream, without providing a safe channel for the reception of its diverted waters?

A man, whose reason is collected, and whose passions have had time to cool, may read the reveries of Queen Mab, upon this head, without any danger; but to the juvenile mind of either sex, the possible evils are so extensive, and so palpable, as naturally to alarm all who are anxious for the happiness of woman, or the peace of man! What is meant by the expression, that "*Chastity* is a *monkish* and *evangelical superstition*:—a greater foe to *natural temperance*, even than unintellectual sensuality; it strikes at the root of all domestic happiness, and consigns more than half of the human race to misery, that some few may monopolize according to law!" Is the author of such sentiments anxious to qualify himself for Bedlam? Does he envy the felicitous ravings of incurable lunatics? I have heard that *celibacy* is a monkish superstition: and I can believe it injurious to the interests of society; but chastity and celibacy have no necessary connection with each other! On such a topic, it is hardly possible to enlarge. One can only shudder at the insult offered to decency, morality, and justice. He himself seems to shrink from his proposition, when he denies supposing that *promiscuous intercourse* would follow the abolition of marriage; but he must have contemplated a promiscuous intercourse, when he pronounced this outrageous anathema against chastity:—

and again when he says—"Young men, excluded by the *fanatical idea of chastity*, from the society of *modest* and accomplished women, associate with vicious and miserable beings, &c." How can *modesty* be separated from the idea of *chastity*? How could it escape the grossest rhapsodist, that the *vicious* and *miserable* beings to whom he alludes, have become so from the loss of that *chastity*, of which he would deprive modest and accomplished women? Would he have his modest and accomplished women visited for the same purposes, and treated in the same manner, as the vicious and miserable outcasts of society? If Mr. Shelley dare answer *yes*—what door would be ever opened to receive him, which a father, a husband, or a brother, could shut in his face?

That such opinions are not now maintained by him, I would earnestly hope; but they remain uncontradicted; and he cannot be ignorant that they are in circulation as his opinions. That the work has not been on public sale, for some years, has probably rather added to its circulation; for it is certain that a work which cannot be obtained without difficulty, is not only more extensively read, from the impulse which curiosity affords; but it is read with more eagerness, and attention, than it would otherwise be. Young men, in particular, almost *devour* the contents of such works. They fear no other opportunity may be afforded for the perusal:—copies are made of detached passages:—they are talked of with rapture, as hidden novelties, and circulated from hand to hand, with inconceivable rapidity.

What is trifling in itself is thus elevated into importance. The faults of a performance are overlooked, and its merits over-rated. To suppress any work, in the present state of society, I am convinced is utterly impossible; and any attempt to do so, only encreases what mischief there may be.—A work openly sold, is open to reply; and the antidote may be circulated with the poison. But where suppression is attempted, the poison circulates alone, with as much rapidity, and with tenfold effect. I scarcely ever met with a young reader who had not carefully studied Paine's Rights of Man, and Age of Reason, during the period of their nominal suppression. Since they have been comparatively easy to be procured, I know many who have bought, but never read them. I therefore think you have rendered the doctrines less pernicious by an open publication, than they have been in their silent, though not less extensive, wanderings through private circles; with all the additional importance that mystery and curiosity could confer upon them.—The good sense of the public mind can determine for itself. The collision of opinion produced by discussion is favorable to correct decisions: and that which is subjected to an open test, is less likely to influence weak or inexperienced minds improperly, than what is addressed to them in secret, and comes recommended by prohibition.

1. [↑](#) I forbear indulging in any commentary upon the conduct of Mr. Shelley, as contrasted with his written principles; because rumour has adopted slanders, and exaggerated facts.

2. ↑ It would be here out of place to enter into any examination of the defence usually set up by wealth, and cunning for the seduction of ignorance, and poverty. But I cannot refrain from remarking, that the ignorance, low birth, and want of affluence, which pride insists are sufficient reasons for declining to form matrimonial connections;—ought to be still stronger reasons for the punishment of seduction in the severest manner; for surely it is most criminally despicable, to endeavour to render these disqualifications the means of triumph over female virtue, which already are of sufficient disadvantage to the parties, without the addition of infamy superadded, by those who urge them as objections against their elevation to respectability.

CHAP. II.

On the Supposed Atheism of Queen Mab.

I shall now trouble you with a few comments, on what is called the Atheism of Mr. Shelley.—When reduced to its real nature, and stripped of the mystic veil, in which he endeavours to shroud it, it will be found as harmless, as it appears monstrous. His muse has the effect of a magic lanthorn. It is only the light, situation, and medium, through which we view his paradoxes, that render them so alarming. The very terrible creations of the lanthorn are deceptions produced from the most ordinary, and least formidable materials; and attract our attention from what they seem to be, not what they are:—so the illusions of Mr. Shelley startle us, because their real nature is disguised in the exaggeration of description. To dispel these shadows, however, is of comparatively little importance. What concerns our practice, comes home to the bosoms and business of us all; but our opinions may be indulged in more excursive flights;—and if the world of realities be not disturbed by the fictions of our dreamers, we may pardon them for building their castles in the air; and either giving, or denying,

"——to airy nothing
A local habitation and a name!"

Of the fairies of his own creation, Mr. Shelley may dispose as he pleases:—either by gift, by lottery, or by sale:—but while he cannot make the present race of human beings better, it is not to be endured that he should make them worse, by recommending the *extension* of an acknowledged evil, as a means of securing the general good! This he has done by recommending the abolition of the marriage ceremony; but when he recommends atheism, he offers a chalice to the lips of which the wise and the good will refuse to drink, while the vicious and the ignorant will fear to taste.

An ordinary reader of the first cantos would believe him a profound theist. His first allusion to this subject, is an appeal to the *Spirit of Nature*, in p. 12, at the close of the first canto, in which he has borrowed the same idea of divinity which Pope adopts:—as of a spirit that—

"Lives through all life, extends through all extent."

After describing the scene to which the Fairy conducts the soul of Ianthe, he declares it to be the fitting temple for the Spirit of Nature; while nevertheless the lightest leaf, the meanest worm, are equally instinct with the eternal breath. In p. 16, we have the epithets of "changeless nature," and "eternal nature's law," as regulating the eloquent harmony of the "circling systems." At p. 19, we have an appeal to "the poor man's God," to sweep from the face of the earth something which displeases Mr. Shelley. Then we are

asked, what must have been the nature of the being who taught that

"———the God
Of Nature and benevolence had given
A special sanction to the trade of blood?"

The close of the second Canto gives us some peculiar reasoning, and singular opinions—such as that every atom of the earth was once living man—that every drop of rain had circulated in human veins—that cities had, at one or other period, covered the surface of the globe—and that insects think, feel, and live like man:—but no glimpse of atheism. In pages 30, and 31, we have the following stanza, in which a bold and just comparison is made with that Being, whose existence he afterwards denies:—

"Spirit of nature, no!
The pure diffusion of thy essence throbs
Alike in every human heart:
Thou aye erectest there
Thy throne of power unappealable:
Thou art the judge beneath whose nod,
Man's brief and frail authority
Is powerless as the wind,
That passeth idly by.
Thine the tribunal which surpasseth
The shew of human justice,
As GOD surpasseth man!

Who would have imagined, from such language, he could ever arrive at the startling proposition, "*there is no God!*" In the following stanza, p. 31, we have man unconsciously fulfilling the will of the Spirit of Nature! In p. 35, we are asked—

"———Hath Nature's soul,
That *formed this world* so beautiful; that *spread*
Earth's lap with plenty, and life's smallest chord
Strung to unchanging unison; that gave
The happy birds their dwelling in the grove;
That yielded to the wanderers of the deep
The *lovely silence* of the unfathom'd main;
And fill'd the meanest worm that crawls in dust
With spirit, thought, and love:—on man alone,
Partial in causeless malice, wantonly
Heaped ruin, vice, and slavery; *his soul*
Blasted with withering curses; placed afar
The meteor happiness, that shuns his grasp,
But serving on the frightful gulph to glare,

Rent wide beneath his footsteps?
Nature! No?"

Who would not suppose that this was intended to "vindicate the ways of God to man?" rather than to afford any reason for supposing the author was about to deny the existence of a God? Setting aside the Pythagorean notion, that every worm has "spirit, *thought*, and love," this stanza might have been written by Bishop Porteus. So far from denying the

existence of spirit, and adopting the doctrine of annihilation, which atheism proclaims, he contends that *all is spirit!*

"Throughout this varied and eternal world,
Soul is the only element. The *block*,
That for uncounted ages has remained
The moveless pillar of a mountain's weight,
Is *active, living spirit!* Every *grain*
Is *sentient*, both *in unity* and *part*,
And the *minutest atom* comprehends
A world of loves and hatreds!"

We may smile at this; but *want of faith* cannot be attributed to the man who could form such a thesis. If there be no mistake in this matter, we should really treat the cuttings of our toes, and the parings of our finger nails, with more ceremony than to throw them behind the fire, since they comprehend many "worlds of loves and hatreds!" To be sure, when they are reduced to ashes, they remain atoms still, and the loves and hatreds may be only *purified* by the ordeal. The process by which the *sentient* principle was infused into them, after they were clipped, or filed off, would be a curious matter for Queen Mab to explain, when she next visits the earth:—or perhaps they are quite *independent* atoms; and while growing on the toe or finger nails, have each their separate "loves and hatreds" to themselves!

After this adoption and extension of the doctrine of Pythagoras, we are distinctly told that "*man is of SOUL and BODY;*" which conveys some little contradiction to the doctrine that every *atom* is *sentient*, and that the block basis of a mountain is a living and entire spirit;—but poets must not be measured by too strict rules. In either case, we have arrived at nothing like atheism yet.

At the commencement of the sixth Canto, we find it questioned, whether "the *universal* spirit" will not "re-vivify" this "wild and miserable world," which is most emphatically called in the peculiar style of Calvinistic energy a "*withered limb of heaven!*" And answering the question in the affirmative, he seems to prophecy of the Millenium, for he says:—

"How sweet a scene will earth become!
Of *purest spirits* a pure *dwelling-place*
Symphonious with the planetary spheres,
When man with *changeless* nature coalescing
Will undertake *regeneration's* work,
When its ungenial poles *no longer point*
To the red, and baneful sun,
That faintly twinkles there!"

How "*changeless nature*" is to *change*, until the poles change their direction, by a little of man's assistance in removing them, it was not worth Mr. Shelley's while to *stoop* from his flight to inform us; but, setting the absurdity

aside, there is in these lines a full recognition of that *superior power* to which the name of God is peculiarly assigned. He employs the same figurative language, and ascribes to this power those attributes which are ascribed to him by the most devout writers. Mr. S. may exceed them in the fervour of his enthusiasm; but he has adopted the basis of all their ideas of divinity. That this Power should have been insulted, by being painted as the "prototype of human misrule," affords no reason for the climax at which Mr. S. afterwards arrives; not by any rational gradation, but by a sudden leap, which is made with such frantic energy as very far to over-shoot its mark.

At p. 57, we have another close imitation of the divinity of Pope:—so close, indeed, as to be a servile copy of the ideas of that poet. And this ushers in the first indication of the peculiar doctrines of our author. This "Spirit of Nature," this "all-sufficing power," is not meant to apply to the ordinary Deity of mankind; but to "*Necessity*," the "*Mother of the world!*" Mr. S. is simply a *Necessarian!* Every thing is, because it must be; and every thing has been, because it must have been. Those conjurers are perfectly safe, who wait until an event occurs, and then say none other could have happened! This is a species of witch-craft within anybody's reach. But is it worth any thing? Does it explain any thing? Does it help us a jot on our way to truth, or is it available in the pursuit of happiness? I think it is both useless and ridiculous. It seems to me a species of *metaphysical Calvinism!*—and to be as dangerous to

morality, as predestination to the interests of religion. We perceive we are in existence—and the Necessarian tells us, very wisely, that we are here of *necessity!* We perceive the varied creation around us replete with life, and plenished with the means of enjoyment, and the Necessarian wisely tells us, all comes from *necessity!* What an encrease to our wisdom, is this information! The world is taken from the back of the elephant, who stands upon the tortoise, and put upon the shoulders of *Dame Necessity*, its august and venerable *mother*, if Mr. Shelley is sufficient authority for this portion of the parentage! The grand secret is merely an exchange of nomenclature. We are not to call the vivifying and superintending principle of creation by the name of God, because impostors have belied his character, and villains have abused his attributes; but we are to get rid of all difficulty and doubt, by hailing "Necessity" as the "*Mother of the world!*" Will it be thought too indecorous by the partizans of Mr. Shelley, if we proceed to make a little enquiry as to the origin of this *prolific necessity?* A necessity is generally defined to be *an effect*, arising out of *a cause!* What cause gave birth to this *Necessity?* What made Necessity the mother of the world? In what manner did Necessity conceive this glorious harmony of "changeless nature?" Whence did Necessity herself arise;—and whence the materials out of which this organization arose? Does the tame, passive, inert word *necessity*, convey any adequate idea of the stupendous creation and its origin? To say that it was necessary, because it exists; and that it

owes its existence to necessity, is ringing a childish play on words.

The truth is, that on the question of the nature of the Deity we are utterly at a loss, and there is no means afforded to our reason by which we can arrive at any conception of his being. We are at as great a loss on this subject, as we should be upon the subject of sounds, if we were born deaf; or of colours, if we had no eyes. We are compelled to admit what to our limited senses appears an absurdity; and though we are compelled to admit this, it does not help us in the slightest degree in our researches. We cannot conceive how any thing should be made, without a maker. Nor can we imagine how any maker could make himself. To our reason, an effect must be preceded by an adequate cause. When we talk of a "first cause," we state in fact that our reason cannot begin at any earlier point. The nature of our first cause remains unexplained; for while we are obliged to admit the existence of a power competent to produce the wonders which we see around us, because we do see them, we are equally compelled to confess that we do not know how they could be produced. If we do not know how creation could have been introduced into existence, how can we conceive the nature of the power which has called it into existence? The thing is an utter impossibility. We want a basis for our enquiries which is not afforded us. We only know that there exists a power superior, infinitely superior, to any thing that we see around us, and we call this power GOD! What advantage is obtained by changing the name! This is the

Spirit of Nature! before which in all ages the human mind has bent; sometimes in rational worship; sometimes in idle ceremony; sometimes in cruel mockery of devotion.

Revelations, whether real or pretended, afford no light upon the subject of the *nature* of the Divinity. They only describe his attributes, and promulgate the laws by which he governs. And all the fanciful speculators that ever wrote, have not advanced our ideas an iota, as to an *uncaused cause!*—No torch has ever penetrated the thick darkness which surrounds this question; and it still remains as great an enigma as ever, how either the Creator of all should have created himself, or the materials with which he has organized the world. Milton tells us all originated from *Chaos*, and *Old Night*. But whence came *Chaos*? What produced *Old Night*? We laugh at the fable of the World being supported by an elephant, and the elephant by a tortoise, while the tortoise stands upon nothing;—but we forget that in pursuing a similar enquiry, our metaphysicians pursue a similar course of illustration. Of all the lame substitutes devised for creation, that of *necessity* seems the most childish, though universally useful in its application, if it were of any import. So, if we ask Mr. S. how he could imagine himself removing a difficulty, by introducing an absurdity, he will tell us it was of *necessity!* If we enquire how he comes to contradict himself, he will say it is of *necessity!* Or how he comes to lay down dangerous, and inexplicable doctrines,—it is all of *necessity*, sheer *necessity!* But unluckily this *necessity*, which has been aptly

described as the plea of tyrants, and the creed of slaves, is equally applicable to vice, as to folly. The Inquisition may say, with equal truth, it roasts its victims out of absolute necessity! The despot may plead he lights up the conflagration of empires, and encreases the miseries of human nature to the most horrible climax of anguish, by the command of this necessity. The priest may deceive, the lawyer defraud, and the physician poison, by the same impulse of necessity. Pickpockets may steal, and ruffians murder, with the same excuse; and all the evils and horrors of which he complains, are as much matters of *necessity*, as his condemnation of them. Nor do I see ought of distinction between necessity and predestination; save that one is applied to a sectarian definition of the Christian faith, and the other is the general principle applied to the whole phenomena of nature. I understand the passage in which Necessity is asserted to be the mother of the world, is one of those which have been selected for persecution. Yet the continuation of the stanza breathes doctrines which would be considered as devout, were not the opinions of society shocked by the rudeness of substituting *a new* epithet, for that usually employed when speaking upon such matters. Allow Mr. Shelley to designate his ruling power by the term Necessity, and his theology remains as sound as that of other men. He is not an atheist, even where he fancies himself one. Speaking of the *ruling power*, he says, in this very stanza,

—————"the caprice

Of man's weak will belongs no more to thee;
Than do the changeful passions of his breast
To thy unvarying harmony!"

Pope himself did not more distinctly draw the line between *theism*, and *atheism*, when he said—

"The *workman* from the *work* distinct was known."

It is true these lines contradict the idea of an ever-ruling necessity, to which would be of course attributed *the caprice*, and the *changeful passions* of humanity, as much as the actions which are declared to be absolutely controlled by this fatal necessity; for he very gravely observes afterwards—

"——all that the wide world contains
Are but thy passive instruments."

I am, however, at some loss to guess why these lines are included in the indictment. Absurd as they are, I perceive *no* atheism in them. There is a change of epithets, but little more. He exclaims—

"Spirit of Nature! all sufficing power!"

This refers to that principle which regulates the movements of the creation; which he calls—

"Necessity, thou mother of the world!"

It is an odd phrase, and excites some odd ideas. Had he called Jove the father of the world, no objection would have been taken to the epithet. It is a deviation from the ordinary mode of expression, perhaps without cause, but which might be made without guilt. And when he adds—

"Unlike the God of human error, thou
Requirest no prayers, or praises!"

he adopts the Epicurean idea, that the gods look with indifference upon the conduct of men, having placed their happiness in their virtue, and leaving their misery to correct their vices. Christians say that God *needs* no prayers, or praises. If he need them not, he *requires* them not;—for he cannot require what he does not need, Nor would they be of any value were they the result of any sense of duty. Where praise is not spontaneously offered, it is better repressed. Unless the heart beat in unison with the tongue, the prayer ought to be disregarded, and the praise is hypocrisy. Besides it would be a strange assumption to single out the Christian deity, as *the* god of human error, when the earth abounds both with false gods, and with false ideas of the divinity. The catholic, who deems the protestants entertain erroneous notions of the Supreme Being, must think the protestant deity a deity of human error. The enmity of Mr. Shelley to the Christian Faith is evident enough; but it is not from this

passage I should have expected it to be gathered. In allusion to some god of human error, he says, Necessity (his favourite impulse and origin of all) shall live unchangeable, when the broken altars of this deity shall have bent to the storm of time. What this means, if it mean not that the God of Nature shall triumph over the false opinions of erring humanity, I know not. Mr. S. is so little in agreement with himself, that the charge of this being deism, while he is an atheist, will not be thought of much value. Besides Mr. S. does not profess himself an atheist. He has endeavoured to assimilate his deity to his own imagination, as all enthusiasts do; but though he denies the deities of others, he does not refuse to admit there is one. Nay, more, he attempts to define what the divinity is; and though I cannot but smile at his definition, I am not authorised to dispute his sincerity. All I am disposed to contend for, is that he has made distinctions without difference; and has made people believe him a monster, who would have idolized him, had he been content to express his ideas in ordinary terms.

I now arrive at that appalling declaration, which it was natural to believe would be prosecuted, as throwing down the gauntlet which summons all the feelings of the age to mortal combat. The burning of atheists, (a terrible method of purifying their sentiments) with the natural horror he must have entertained at the idea of such tortures being inflicted upon men for holding opinions which he deemed similar to his own, seems to have taken deep hold upon his fancy. His introduction to the startling declaration, is

perhaps the most genuine poetry in the volume. It is simple, affecting, and animated, in a superlative degree. He makes the spirit of Ianthe say—

"I was an infant when my mother went
To see an atheist burned. She took me there!
The dark-robed priests were met around the pile,
The multitude was gazing silently;
And as the culprit passed with dauntless mien,
Tempered disdain in his unaltered eye,
Mixed with a quiet smile, shone calmly forth:
The thirsty fire crept round his manly limbs!
His resolute eyes were scorched to blindness soon;
His death-pang rent my heart! The insensate mob
Uttered a cry of triumph, and I wept.
Weep not, child? cried my mother, for that man
Has said, *There is no God!*"

Upon this, Mr. Shelley rushes to the avowal of his faith:—and, because no God could have commanded the sacrifice of a human being, for an error of judgment;—mistaking most unwarrantably the conduct of the murderers for the sanction of the Deity whom they insulted, while they pretended to worship,—he madly exclaims

"———There is no God?
Nature confirms the faith his death-groan sealed."

And then, sinking most miserably from his poetical beauty, in the same proportion as he abandons his reason, he has the following weak and incomprehensible explanation of this unfounded assertion.

"Let heaven and earth, let man's revolving race,
His ceaseless generations tell their tale;
Let every part, depending on the chain
That links it to the whole, point to the hand
That grasps its term! Let every seed that falls,
In silent eloquence unfold its store
Of argument. Infinity within,
Infinity without, belie creation!
The *inexterminable spirit* it contains,
Is nature's ONLY GOD! but human pride
Is skilful to invent most serious names
To hide its ignorance. The name of God
Has fenc'd about all crime with holiness,
Himself the creature of his worshippers,
Whose names, and attributes, an passions change,
Seeva, Budh, Foh, Jehovah, Jove, or Lord!"

Much of this rhapsody cannot be met in the way of reason, for it is irrational. The declaration, that there is *no God*, is contradictory to the idea of the *inexterminable spirit*, being *Nature's only God!* But is it not grossly foolish, to shock in this manner the nerves of his ordinary readers—to lead them to imagine he is denying the *existence* of a God, when he is only denying the *mode* of his existence. Had it not been wiser to have said, the idea of a Deity that would order

such an act of barbarity, as the burning one of his misjudging creatures, must be erroneous—than thus to start from the real point at issue, and deny the Godhead, because those who affect to serve him, degrade his character! The incident imagined is unfortunate, because though we have had executions for alledged atheism, it is questionable whether ever an atheist existed. It was usual for the fanatics to apply this term of reproach to all who differed from them; and from the fact that Vanini, though condemned and executed as an atheist, on his defence took up *a straw*, and said that was sufficient to convince him of the existence of a God, it is evident with what caution the reported profession of atheism should be received. And, while we ought to be cautious in taking atheism upon the credit of fanatics, Mr. S. affords a striking instance that a man is not to be always believed when he professes the creed himself. The wonders of existence that surround us may not sanction the idea of a Deity in human form, or with human passions; but they do point to a power as their origin, separate and distinct from themselves—a power in which they do not participate, and of which they are the creatures, and agents:—and whether this power be called the First Cause, or God, or Necessity, matters not to the fact. In his own words, the hand that grasps the term of animate and inanimate existence—that formed the circle of life and death, is "Nature's God!"—no matter what name affectation, caprice, or accident, may have chosen to use as its designation. It is not the seed that is the divinity. The power that called the seed into existence, that implanted its principle of

fructification—that bade it through endless ages, reproduce its like—this is the power of the Divinity. Otherwise, Mr. Shelley must applaud the savages who worship stocks and stones;—or if he contend that themselves partaking of the divine power, worship can be due to no other part of it, how will he reconcile the idea of blending the lusts, the ignorance, the caprice, the brutality of man, with that of any portion of the "Spirit of Nature!" Every thing appears to tell us we are not partakers of divinity, not partners in the Divine power, but the creatures of its hands. Infinity is a term as incomprehensible as that of Deity. We cannot conceive what infinity is. Our senses sink in the contemplation of such matters, and our reason cannot help us. We can rationally have no conception of a time when there was no time—yet everything according to our reason must have had a beginning, and an original cause. We can readily conceive how the phenomena of the world can proceed to eternity. They are in motion; and the same cause may as easily be credited to produce the same effect a million of years forward, as at the present period. But it is not so easy with respect to the past. We want a new sense to comprehend the means by which existence began. One grain of wheat may produce another, because we perceive it has been produced from a former grain. But how came the first grain of wheat into existence? It is no answer to say that it has existed from *infinity*;—or rather this is saying we know nothing about it, which is the truth. But why deny creation because it cannot be comprehended? and substitute another name equally incomprehensible. Does not Mr.

Shelley here fall under his own censure, as one of those followers of "human pride," which

"Is skilful to invent most serious names
To hide its ignorance."

In the total impossibility of deciding correctly, why affect to decide at all? Where is the necessity for a decision? We can reject whatever is unworthy of the Eternal Mind, without denying the existence of a spirit and intelligence which we cannot comprehend. We may refuse our credence to the vulgar errors of attributing the human form or the human passions to the Deity, without denying the existence of a God! And even this denial is only made in words. Mr. Shelley feels there is a power beyond the comprehension of all other men; and to seem wiser than his fellows, he denies their discovery of what cannot be discovered; and talks mysteriously to disguise his own failure, and his close resemblance to themselves. In this dilemma, I think it much the wiser, and the better mode, to take the advice of Pope:

"Hope humbly then, on trembling pinions soar,
Wait the great teacher death, and God adore."

Mr. S. may adore Necessity, if he will have necessity to be his Deity. The spirit and author of Nature is the real object of adoration: and it matters little by what epithet he is

designated. The errors and absurdities of human creeds can only be charged upon human folly. The Deity is not injured, because his creatures know not what he is, and hit upon ridiculous modes of service. It is true, and it is to be lamented, that

"—————the name of God
Has fenc'd about all crime with holiness:"

and that madmen, in their ignorance, their interests, and their vices, have made him

"The creature of his worshippers!"

The most horrible crimes have been committed in the name of the God of benevolence and love! Murder and bloodshed, and pillage, have been blasphemously sanctioned by his pretended authority. The professing servants of Jehovah have been as barbarous as the followers of Mahomet, and the disciples of the Pagan deities! And had the *same parties* worshipped Necessity, or had no idea of any deity, they would not have wanted other excuses to perform the same acts. It was not the God that led them, but the evil passions that were paramount to the express commands of the God in whose name they spread desolation, and slaughter. This idea is by no means peculiar to Mr. Shelley. One of Shakspeare's heroes could "seem a

saint, while most he played the "devil." In another place, the dramatist asks—

"———In religion,
What damned error, but some holy cheat,
Can gloss it over!"

Pope to the same effect, tracing the progress of superstition, says—

"Fear made their devils, and weak hope their Gods;
Gods *partial, changeful, passionate, unjust,*
Whose attributes were *rage, revenge, or lust!*
Zeal then, not charity, became the guide,
And hell was built in spite, and heaven in pride."

Some French writer observes that—

"Priests are all for vengeance, force, and fire,
And only in his thunders act their God!"

Thus human passions have contaminated the shrines which human reason should have raised to heaven—and thus, as Mr. Shelley justly remarks,

"———Priests babble of a God of peace,
E'en while their hands are red with guiltless blood!"

Thus once the Christian crusaders made a slaughter-house of Turkey, for the conquest of Jerusalem in the name of Christ; and a few weeks since Constantinople has seen the Greek Christians, with their patriarch at their head, murdered to the honor and glory of the god of Mahomet. But is the Great Author of All, the Eternal Immutable Spirit, to be denied, because some beings,

"———drest in a little brief authority,

Play such fantastic tricks before high heaven,
As make e'en angels weep!"

All this folly and barbarity very clearly prove that their authors have neither knowledge, nor fear, of the Deity, before whom they bend in solemn mockery. Did they fear him, they would respect his laws, and imitate his conduct;—did they know him, they would not attribute actions to him of which they are ashamed themselves, and yet perpetrate in the abuse of his authority. But all this does not disprove the existence of a Superior Ruling Power—of that Being with respect to whom the Athenians candidly confessed their ignorance, when they erected an altar to the UNKNOWN GOD! Neither infinity, nor eternity, nor creation, nor necessity, explain the difficulty. He has chosen to shroud himself in mystery, as to his origin, and nature:—but enough of his power and benevolence are known, to induce us to adoration—not because he needs it, but because we

cannot possess our reason, and not adore the author of a system which produces so much happiness. That atheism is not capable of removing the obscurity in which the system of nature is involved—or that Mr. S. is not an atheist;—must be admitted even by his admirers.

In a note upon the line,

"Necessity, thou mother of the world!"

he enters into a prose dissertation on this new-found deity, which is to depose all the ancient and the modern divinities. In this it is attempted to assimilate the human mind to that part of the creation, in which from given causes, are produced certain effects. The folly of this reasoning consists in the want of analogy between the things compared. The material and the moral world are essentially different. There are certain fixed laws to which the material world is subject, which enable us to speak with certainty of effects as following causes:—but in the moral world, we have no such assurance. The disposition of matter depends upon the laws which regulate matter, which are definite:—but the mind is not governed by any such determinate principles; nor can we argue that the same causes shall produce the same effects on the minds of different individuals. If it be said, if they were exactly in the same circumstances, the same effect would follow the same cause the reasoning would still fail, for it would be impossible to find this agreement of circumstances. We can readily admit the necessity that a

grain of wheat shall produce its likeness, when subjected to the process of vegetation:—or that an acorn should produce an oak. In these operations, "*nature is uniform*," and "the constant conjunction of similar events," leads to the "consequent inference of one from another." But where this evident uniformity ceases, there also ceases the doctrine of Necessity. Unless you can tell me what I am about to do, as distinctly as you can predict the expansion of an oak from an acorn, you cannot apply the same doctrine to the one as to the other. An *inference* from a certainty, is not an equal certainty; and a supposition from a fact is entitled to little credit. "Liberty applied to mind," is *not*, as Mr. Shelley says, "analogous to chance, as applied to matter." There is no greater analogy between them, than there is between mind, and a dead corpse; or between the head and the hair which grows upon it; and it is equally wide of conclusive reasoning to remark, that "the *precise character and motives* of any man, on any occasion, being given, the moral philosopher could predict his actions with as much certainty, as the natural philosopher could predict the effects of the mixture of any particular chemical substances." The "precise character," and the "motives" can *never* be obtained; and the boast is as idle as that of Archemides, that *if he had* a place whereon to place his lever, he could raise the earth. It is a mere sophistical evasion to demand conditions which cannot be fulfilled, as the data of conclusions which are to be expected. If the conditions were attainable, the matter would be *then to be proved*. As it stands, no proof is possible; and the supposition does not

warrant the inference. We know we have never yet approached the knowledge of mind, if such doctrines are correct. The "*indisciplinable wanderings of passion*," of which Mr. Shelley speaks in his note upon marriage, seem to deride all motive, and to laugh at all rational deductions. The "aged husbandman," is not "more experienced than the young beginner," as Mr. Shelley supposes, "because there is a uniform, undeniable necessity in the operations of nature;" but because he has *seen more* of these operations. Now the more we see of the operations of the human mind, the less we are able to comprehend its nature. We are perpetually startled by endless contradictions:—

"The rogue, and fool, by fits, is fair and wise!
And e'en the best, by fits, what they despise."

Instead of that immutable certainty, which characterises the laws of nature in the material world, we find nothing but uncertainty. "An old statesman" is not always "more skilful than a raw politician." Polonius knows no more of Hamlet's madness than Rosencrantz or Guildenstern. What Mr. Shelley attempts to illustrate by saying, "No farmer carrying his corn to market, doubts the sale of it at market price," I am at a loss to guess. It is of a piece, however, with many other of his illustrations, and can illustrate nothing, because it is a fallacy. If he can sell it in the market at all, he knows he will sell it at the market price! And yet he may have doubts, whether he can effect a sale; and these doubts

have often been converted into realities. Such illustrations suit very well with such reasoners as talk about "voluntary actions," and yet tell us "every human being is irresistibly impelled to act precisely as he does act, by a chain of causes generated in the eternity which preceded his birth." An illustration to a similar purpose, states "the master of a manufactory no more doubts that he can purchase the human labour necessary for his purpose, than that his machinery will act as it has been accustomed to act." It is not necessary to have been a manufacturer, to see that this is sometimes a falsehood and must always be a fallacy.

"In the only true sense of the word power," says Mr. Shelley, "it applies with equal force to the *loadstone*, as to the *human will*! Do you think these motives, which I shall present, are powerful enough to rouse him? is a question as common as, Do you think this lever has the power of raising this weight?" This is true; but the answers are not so certain of being similar. We can tell when the lever is powerful enough to raise the weight; but we may in vain endeavour to ascertain the motives that are strong enough to rouse the mind. The difference is, that the weight is passive to the power, and is necessitated to obey its influence. It is the active and determining principle; but the mind bears no similitude to the weight. It may refuse to be acted upon by any motive—the motives we imagine sufficiently powerful to rouse it, may be disregarded; and the motives have not the power of the lever, to enforce the necessity of action. The reason is plain. The mind thinks for itself—the weight

obeys the superior impulse of the lever. There is no analogy between them:—and the argument fails from the want of a just degree of comparison.

In this note, however, I find a valuable admission, which sets the supposed atheism of Mr. Shelley entirely at rest. He says, "It is probable that the word God was originally only an expression denoting the UNKNOWN CAUSE of the KNOWN EVENTS which men perceived in the universe." This is clear—and the word which Mr. Shelley chooses to employ instead of the word God, to denote the cause of these unknown events, is the word "*Necessity!*" This brings us to the point from which we set out—to the—

"Father of all, in every age
In every clime ador'd;
By saint, by savage, and by sage,
Jehovah, Jove, or Lord."

Mr. Shelley's alteration of the text to "Mother," instead of Father, may strike us as very useless, but we can hardly deem it so wicked, as to deserve, "death here, and hell hereafter." Though Lord Bacon prefers atheism to superstition, and says the former may leave a man to the domestic virtues and to science, while the latter makes a wild beast of him; yet a poetical atheist would have been a most ungracious animal—a sort of traitor to his profession, and a heretic to his creed:—and I am happy to have

discovered, that Mr. Shelley is a true worshipper of the divinity, though he refuses to kneel at the ordinary altars, and has endeavoured to frame a liturgy for himself.

I do not give much credit to the motives of the prosecutors of Queen Mab, because it attacks the received notions of a divinity; or because it disputes the authenticity of the Jewish and Christian revelations. The Lord Chief Justice Abbott declares it is *not illegal* to doubt the truth of Christianity, provided such doubts be not expressed in a reviling manner:—but if it be not illegal to doubt, *no mode* of expressing doubt CAN be illegal. It were wiser to leave reviling to neglect. The decision of twelve Christians is no better proof of the truth of Christianity, than the verdict of twelve Mahometans of the truth of the divine mission of Mahomet.

Mr. Shelley, in his Vision of Ahasuerus, the wandering Jew, certainly treats with very little ceremony the Jewish and the Christian revelations:—but *his* objections admit of a most easy reply—one which he himself furnishes. His deity, "Necessity," is to the full as answerable for all the deeds of horror committed in the name of any other deity, as the peculiar being whose pretended worship authorized the barbarities. Mr. Shelley declares—

"No atom ... fulfils
A vague and unnecessitated act,
Or acts but as it *must* and *ought* to act."

If this be the case, his charges that "slaves built temples for the Omnipotent,"—that "costly altars smoked with human blood,"—that, "hideous pæans rung through long-drawn aisles,"—are idle, as occurring out of *inevitable necessity*; and it matters little to the barbarities, or the errors, if they are admitted to be so, in what name they were committed, or perpetrated. There is in the language attributed to Ahasuerus, much of what might be called reviling; but the peculiar situation of the party represented will account for much. The dramatist is not answerable for the sentiments of his characters;—he has only to represent them in their proper light. Otherwise the Bible itself might be prosecuted as an atheistical work, because there is in it a declaration that "there is no God." An Attorney-General would have only to omit the context, "the fool hath said in his heart," to make the prophet answerable for the language of the fool.

It may be here remarked, that if the destruction of human life lead Mr. Shelley to reject revelations which attribute such commands to the deity, he ought in like manner to renounce his praises of *Necessity*, from the misery and wreck of human happiness occasioned by such calamities as the overflowings of Etna and Vesuvius—the overwhelming of Pompeii and Herculaneum—the swallowing up of Lisbon—the devastation of tempests—the agony of acute diseases—and the murders committed in the mask of war! These are as much opposed to the benevolence of "Necessity, the mother of the world," as to the wisdom and

goodness of any other deity. It matters not to the sufferer, whether the earthquake devour him, the burning lava overwhelm him, or the dagger hasten him to a premature grave.

Mr. Shelley says the present evil is requisite to bring about ulterior good. Of this there is no proof. I cannot tell whether the climate of the poles will ever be so far assimilated to that of the torrid zone, as to make pine apples as plentiful at Nova Zembla, as now in the West Indies. Astronomers may decide that the earth is in its progress to a better state; but I perceive no prospect from *this* of any alteration in the condition of man. His happiness does not depend upon climates or seasons. When the "equator coincides with the ecliptic," and "the nights and days are equal on the earth throughout the year," which Mr. Shelley thinks "exceedingly probable," there will in the same probability be as much error, venality, prejudice, and ignorance, as at present. The happiest climates, instead of producing the happiest and wisest men, afford specimens of the reverse. If it were possible to give into these dreams of worlds of endless bliss, which are destined to arise out of the maturity of the universe, what are they to us, who are not destined to approach within centuries upon centuries of their existence?

All these visions are but other views of the millenium, and of those heavens, into which human nature is perpetually endeavouring to pry for that happiness which it cannot find in the present state of things. These idle expectations are the

common solace of indolence, the common food of discontent. Mr. Shelley has served up the same dish, varied in the cooking, and with a more savory sauce;—but equally visionary, unsatisfactory, and unsubstantial:—Those who set down to the banquet will find only a feast of air.

FINIS.

About this digital edition

This e-book comes from the online library [Wikisource](#)^[1]. This multilingual digital library, built by volunteers, is committed to developing a free accessible collection of publications of every kind: novels, poems, magazines, letters...

We distribute our books for free, starting from works not copyrighted or published under a free license. You are free to use our e-books for any purpose (including commercial exploitation), under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported](#)^[2] license or, at your choice, those of the [GNU FDL](#)^[3].

Wikisource is constantly looking for new members. During the transcription and proofreading of this book, it's possible that we made some errors. You can report them at [this page](#)^[4].

The following users contributed to this book:

- Nonexyst
- Michael Barera
- BD2412
- Prtksxna
- M-le-mot-dit
- Rochefoucauld

- Hrishikes
- Keith Edkins
- Bradype
- Slowking4
- FALVES
- Billinghamurst
- William Maury Morris II
- Rehua
- Mudbringer
- Legofan94
- DutchTreat
- EncycloPetey
- Samwilson
- Pathore
- Kathleen.wright5
- Zhaladshar
- Aphillipsmusique
- Jimregan
- AuFCL
- Highlandpark1
- Erasmo Barresi
- Inductiveload
- ShakespeareFan00
- GreyHead
- Xaviersc

1. [↑ https://en.wikisource.org](https://en.wikisource.org)

2. [↑ https://www.creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0](https://www.creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0)

3. [↑ https://www.gnu.org/copyleft/fdl.html](https://www.gnu.org/copyleft/fdl.html)

4. [↑ https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Wikisource:Scriptorium](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Wikisource:Scriptorium)