

would be just the same morally and religiously. The destructive work of Freethought hence has its value hardly less marked than what it claims to perform on the constructive side. One thing it could not do if it would—it could not injure Truth. Let no one then be afraid, for to show fear in this is unphilosophic and absurd. Our friends, we hope, will understand from what we have already written that we suggest a wide latitude for the exercise of the analytic faculty. The iconoclast or image breaker has his use, and must be allowed to exercise his vocation within wide limits.

But has not Freethought a positive reason for its existence? Its distinctive teaching in ethics might we think be fairly summed up in the familiar aphorism—"virtue is its own reward." Obedience to conscience is the highest moral injunction, transcending all creeds. Religious dogma covers over and obscures this sublime lesson, and people wonder that formalised religious instruction does not make them better than they are. The wonder rather is that it does not make them worse. Need surprise be felt at the prevalence of larrikinism! We have only to go to those model religious institutions, the Universities, on public occasions, to see one of the results of religious teaching. The riotous, destructive, and utterly selfish conduct of the young gentlemen who have been so religiously cared for in all the "foundations," is a pretty commentary on the influences that are said to be so potent in moulding the disposition. Follow the majority of even the best of these men into Parliament, and judge of their fine feeling for the rights of individuals who may happen to oppose their prejudices. Nay, let us step up into a higher region, and measure the selfishness and class hatreds which fill the bosoms of the Bishops who have a voice in making the laws. Freethinkers can enter upon their positive duties with light hearts, knowing that the results of their teaching cannot be worse, and can easily be better, than the fruits produced by the supernatural tree. It will be our duty from time to time to illustrate the positive side of the Freethought system, founded as it is in moral principles illumined by knowledge and science.

The most effective method of diffusing Freethought principles is by means of association and organisation. Principally through the courage and energy of friends in Dunedin, the Freethought movement has spread or is spreading to every town of importance in the colony. The ice having been broken in the South, Freethinkers have been emboldened to unite and assert their opinions without fear of persecution. The movement is but in its infancy; it is destined to become a great power for good; though we cannot suppose that it will not have to face a long and determined war, carried on with bitterness on the part of the enemy, and not always according to the rules observed by civilised belligerents. What matter, so long as the cause is good. For ourselves we hope to be able to render material assistance in making the organisation more perfect, in establishing links of communication between Freethinkers, and above all in keeping before them those vital principles of action and conduct by which the movement must be governed. We shall have to ask the assistance of our friends everywhere in forwarding the work we have undertaken. THE FREETHOUGHT REVIEW, to be successful, must attract both pecuniary and literary support—the former in a wide circle of subscribers and advertisements, and the latter in articles and news from secretaries of societies, and from friends who have something to say to others on the questions that relate to our social life. And now we hopefully launch our barque on the tide, believing that it will receive its share of favouring breezes, and be able to weather the storms which must be expected.

THE FUTURE.

In America, the land of equality, they have "Bonanza Kings," Railway Kings, and millionaires of 'other persuasions,' who have become the aristocracy of the Republic. How do these men in a short lifetime acquire their enormous wealth? By their skill, or their industry, or powers of organisation, or the steady labor of masses of men drilled to obey with mathematical precision their commanders—or through all these forces

combined? Whatever the governing force, the laborers may with perfect truth exclaim: '*Sic vos non vobis*'—we labor not for ourselves! We have taken an illustration from America, but in every civilised country may be found the same conditions; similar illustrations of the few appropriators of the first fruits, the many condemned to be satisfied with the gleanings. Socialists—earnest philanthropists—observing the phenomena, hope for the remedy in an equal or equitable apportionment of what is created by labor. The drones would be exterminated, having no useful functions to perform. The working bees would have returned to them their stores of honey, according to their wants and interests. The social economy of the bee would be the social economy of the industrial human hive, minus the great army of drones. The theory is simple, apparently just, has a working analogy in the animal kingdom to recommend it, with its phases in the history of the human race. But is civilisation the building and filling of store houses and nothing more? Would men paint pictures at so much per square foot of canvas? Would the doctor receive the remuneration of the baker, and feel enthusiasm in the art of healing, having no hope of preferment? Such questions might be multiplied without limit. The enjoyment of life is the best part of life; but the industrial system which requires men to work to live and live to work, is not far removed from slavery.

Yet socialism has many forms, and may show a brighter side. A community moderately endowed by its industry with the means that express comfort, in which poverty shall have no place, and misfortune and sickness find adequate and immediate relief, has an air of rustic happiness in which Goldsmith would have found an elysium. To what are we all aspiring? It is not everyone who can play the harp, or sing hymns to Jahveh in some future sphere. Those who lack the musical talent must find the sum of their happiness on the earth, and the problem is to discover that political and social state which will at the same time place within the reach of all the means of enjoying life, and yet not deprive humanity of the services (with the stimulus leading to them) of its more gifted members. Bonanza Kings are not logically the alternative of socialism if a *tertium quid* can be imagined. But socialism has not been defined, or rather it has had so many definitions that it may be 'distributed' over the whole field. In practical politics socialism may be detected at every step in our legislation. What is it but socialism to collect money unequally by a property tax, and distribute it equally in the education of all? What restriction indeed is there on the spread of socialism when the temptation is so strong to make Government undertake everything which has not been undertaken by individuals?

But still socialism in its extreme form would be avoided so long as individual liberty were not abridged by denying the right to accumulate, enjoy, and bequeath freely, wealth or property. Not necessarily all kinds of property. There are certain things that may be excluded from the power of wealth to acquire, without advancing in consequence towards socialism in the absolute form we are contemplating. The Post Office is maintained by the whole community to carry the letters of the community. In the same way the Government, instead of alienating to individuals the right to draw rents from the soil, may draw the rents itself. The land having no value apart from the uses to which it may be devoted, individualism is not weakened so long as the tenants may reap where they have sown, and have the right of property in the profits. There is a somewhat marked distinction between killing individual enterprise, and framing an equitable system by which enterprise will be opened to a greater number. The future of the 'greatest number' may even now be faintly discerned. In one direction a modified State socialism may continue to make rapid advances. In another, individualism may be strengthened, and the right of individual property maintained. In each advancing at equal pace, will probably be found the complementary parts of the higher civilisation. But what profound considerations the subject begins to suggest when we think of how much has to be done before the relations between the duties of the State and the rights of the individual can be reconciled!