

been inclined to doubt the infallibility of the Bible. With the most intelligent the Old Testament has become a mere record of what man, not the Lord, said, while such doctrines as a material hell, preached in the New, have shocked the more rational of the clergy and laity, and are being rapidly abandoned. The work of Freethought has been to demonstrate the human character of the writings in the book from beginning to end; in a word to destroy the foundations from which the Protestant sects at least have raised their religious superstructures. The Romish Church will continue to flourish until education and liberalism have rescued her millions of votaries from the grips of that sacred alliance in which they are held—ignorance and superstition. When the Protestant sects have accepted the principles of Freethought, as they are certain to do within the next fifty years, Rome will see the necessity of abandoning the more repulsive and extravagant of her dogmas, and will be on the return march to the civilised paganism in which she had her origin. But will Freethought have done its work when the foundations of Christianity as a system have been undermined, with nothing left but a sentimental regard for the moral truths which are to be found in that as in all other religions? By no means. On the other hand, the real work will only have begun. We have seen Freethought as the guardian of freedom, and as the eternal foe of an enslaving theology; let us now contemplate it in the conservative and positive aspect of forming and following an ideal of its own.

However great may be the work of combating error and arraigning false principles, of infinitely more importance to society is the constructive energy which shall erect the temple of humanity. It is often charged against Freethought that its labors are iconoclastic and negative. The charge is founded on the grossest misconception of its aims and methods. Let it be supposed that Freethought forms to itself an ideal in which the moral elevation of the human race on earth is the vital principle, is there not a sphere wide enough for all the positive and active virtues, without adding to them the theological speculations about gods and spirits? The fundamental principle of Positivism is, *Live for Others*—a command of supreme authority, before which the maxim of Confucius, Hillel, and Jesus, *Do unto Others*, sinks into a subordinate place. Proceeding yet another step, we have the sacred motto:

"Love as the principle;
Order as the basis;
Progress as the end."

Applying the term religion in its derivative sense, and separated from the supernatural, we have the Religion of Humanity, the worship of an ideal in which the good of the human race has the highest place. The supernatural, whether associated with theological or metaphysical conceptions, has no shrine in the temples of humanity. The myths of theology have been relegated to their proper sphere, and no longer play a part in guiding the human conscience, which is left free to obey its own dictates, directed by the reciprocal action of duty between man and man. Whether we follow the method of Positivism or any other, the object remains the same. There will be a wide variety of opinions among Freethinkers as to the paths: there will be but one opinion about the goal. Although we have noticed by way of illustration the leading principles of the Positive Philosophy, the writer differs widely from many of the details of the system. It is sufficient we here show that Freethinkers have a creed—a creed containing a single article of belief, leaving those who accept it free to attain the consummation of their faith in their own way. It is this higher faith—the enthusiasm of humanity—which will give to the world a deeper morality and a loftier conception of duty. Theology can never supply the inspiration, as it cannot afford demonstration of the truth of its own dogmas, and, being based on rewards and punishments, it does not appeal to the highest sense of moral obligation. The Freethinker, in a word, possesses an ideal pure, lofty, and unselfish, attracting the best and appealing to all—devotion to the ever real and present cause of humanity.

B.

MATERIALISM.—(Continued.)

We have seen that the main objection to a monistic theory of the universe is based upon certain *a priori* fallacies, such as that matter cannot think, and that whatever can be thought of apart, or has a separate name, exists as a separate entity, and that the conditions of a phenomenon must necessarily resemble the phenomenon itself. How persistent and far reaching are notions of this class has been admirably shown by Mill in the fifth book of his "Logic," though as Professor Bain remarks in his own work on the same subject, many of them are extra-logical, and cannot be adduced as violating either deductive or inductive precepts, and owe their influence "to defective acquaintance with the subject matter of the reasonings and to a low order of intellectual cultivation generally, rather than to misapprehending logical method." This is conspicuous even in so profound a thinker as Bishop Butler, whose first chapter of the "Analogy," that "Of a Future Life," read by the light of modern science, seems almost puerile in its argument, though logically consistent in maintaining the natural immortality of brutes as well as of man. The truth is that in our day we have come to regard Nature from a different point of view than that taken by the majority of philosophic thinkers of the past, and especially of those whose philosophy and science were determined by their theology. By them the material universe was regarded as an inert mass, to which form and motion was imparted from without, by a being who was substantially an infinite man. To the modern thinker the universe seems almost alive. Not only do bodies of immense magnitude whirl through space in strict accordance with known mechanical conditions, but they convey to us their molecular pulsations, in the shape of light, heat, and electrical effects, with such perfect rhythm that through such instruments as the spectroscope they reveal to us much of their history as certainly and definitely as the telephone conveys the sound of the human voice. In our day science deals with aetherial undulations and atomic motions with as much ease as she deals with astronomical phenomena, subjecting both to the processes of the calculus, and having once established the primary equations by observation and experiment proceeding by purely mathematical reasoning, continually checked by verification, to unfold the secrets of Nature, and to predict what experience afterwards confirms. However convenient it may be for practical purposes to keep up the old distinction between inorganic and organic matter, as chemical writers especially were till very lately in the habit of doing, we must remember that from the philosophical point of view this distinction is arbitrary and conventional. No chemist and no biologist can say where matter ends and life begins. A spec of protoplasm is in some respects less organic than a crystal. The organic nature of the former is rather potential than actual, and it is hard to see why a crystal which repairs a broken facet or angle should not be credited with as much inner potency as the Hydrozoa or the Actinozoa which repair themselves in a similar manner. In short all Nature tends to become organic in the sense of differentiation of parts and specialization of function. An iceberg is almost as complicated a structure of the molecules of water arranged in definite crystalline forms, as is the whale that swims beside it a structure of other molecules arranged in what we call an organic form. In both there is a similar play of complex forces holding the atoms together beyond a certain sphere and repelling them within it. Both derive their being from different forms of the same energy, and of neither is it necessary to say that it was especially designed or created, except to gratify that common craving for an explanation which explains nothing, derived from an earlier stage of thought. Chemical elective affinity shows the atoms simulating a form of choice which is only carried a step further by the Amoeba and other forms of Proteus animalcule when they select their appropriate nourishment from the water in which they exist, and all vegetable and animal life essentially consists in the redistribution of external forces. It is only those who are ignorant of the latent powers of matter, who fail to