

See Post

GOD AND IMMORTALITY,

VIEWED IN THE LIGHT OF

MODERN SPIRITUALISM:

A DISCOURSE,

DELIVERED IN THE CITY HALL SALOON, GLASGOW, ON SUNDAY EVENING,
23RD FEBRUARY, 1873,

BY

GEORGE SEXTON, M.A., LL.D.,

*Honorary Member of L'Accademia Dei Quiritti, at Rome,
&c., &c.*

"As other men have creeds, so I have mine;
I keep the holy faith in God, in man,
And in the angels ministrant between."—TILTON.

LONDON:

JAMES BURNS, 15 SOUTHAMPTON ROW, HOLBORN, W.C.

1878.

GOD AND IMMORTALITY,

VIEWS IN THE LIGHT OF

MODERN SPIRITUALISM :

A DISCOURSE.

BUFFON very wisely remarks, that "the ancients, whose genius was less limited, and whose philosophy was more extended, wondered less than we do at facts which they could not explain. They had a better view of nature such as she is; a sympathy, a singular correspondence was to them only a phenomenon, whilst to us it is a paradox, when we cannot refer it to our pretended laws of motion." The cold, cheerless, materialistic philosophy of modern times has aimed at crushing out the great heart of humanity. Fortunately it is not likely to succeed, but still it has done much mischief in that direction. Soul is ignored, conscience sneered at, and immortality—the most glorious hope of humanity—treated as an old wife's fable, by large numbers of men in this nineteenth century. Science is appealed to as a kind of defender of atheism, and philosophy called in to lend her aid in upholding dogmas which shut out all the light of heaven from man, and make his life on earth one long continuous despair, and an eternal sleep his final fate. Spiritualism came upon the scene when it was most needed, and has for its object the giving back to mankind the cheering hope of immortality, and showing him that a brighter and better land lies beyond the tomb, and that land the heritage of all our race. Atheism demanded the evidence of sense, declared it would be satisfied with nothing less, and as God and Immortality were said to be problems, that no sense-knowledge could solve, it denied the one and ridiculed the other, treating those who believed in either as credulous and weak minded fools. But just at the moment when this cold theory of negations was fancying its triumph complete, and was preparing to raise its head in bold defiance of all comers, a series of phenomena made their appearance, of a most marvellous character—phenomena which were calculated to crush materialism for ever, and strangle atheism with its own weapons. These were the spiritual

manifestations of which you have recently heard so much. *Cui bono* has been repeatedly asked when Spiritualism has been talked of. What is the use of it; what good end will it answer; to what purpose is it; what is likely to be its effect upon society, are questions that are repeatedly put to us. Surely the trivial and frivolous phenomena which consist in tilting tables, kicking over chairs, rapping on furniture, throwing tambourines about the room, pulling the medium's hair—sometimes blackening his face—and playing up other childish ranks of this kind, cannot be calculated to answer any very sublime end. Wait and see. Mind, the spiritual manifestations are by no means confined to this kind of phenomena, these belong to a very low class; there are others of awful sublimity and grandeur, to which those of us who are already convinced of the truth of Spiritualism pay most heed, but even those low forms of manifestation are not to be despised, seeing that their object is to open up to the human mind conclusive evidence of the existence of God and the immortality of man. These phenomena, trivial and unimportant as they may seem, furnish us with a refutation of atheism which it is utterly impossible to gainsay, and strike a death blow at the cold materialistic philosophy of the age.

“ Man walks in fear, and sleeps in mystery—
 All that our senses feed on only seems
 Stretched o'er the door-sill of eternity,
 Our dreams are wakening, and our wakening dreams;
 The sad experience of our riper age,
 A shadow lengthening as the sun goes down,
 Nature herself for every open page,
 Some leaf forbidden folds with mystic frown.”*

There is a class of men in the present day who, refusing to be called atheists, yet decline to admit the existence of God, or the life of man after death. They say that these are problems which cannot be solved, that they relate to matters that lie outside the experience of mankind, and therefore that we have no means of arriving at a satisfactory conclusion on the subject; and, moreover, that it is very unimportant to mankind whether such doctrines are true or not. If there be a God, it is clear, say they, that he has not made his existence known to the human race, and that therefore he looks upon it as unimportant whether men recognise his being or not; and if there be a life beyond the tomb, it is impossible for us to learn of it, until we are landed on its shores, seeing that, as Shakespeare said, “it is a bourne from whence no traveller returns,” and consequently we do wisely to attend to the things of this life, of which we know something, rather than to waste our time in idle speculations as to our fate hereafter. There is an-

* A. B. Richards.

other class—a small one perhaps—who look upon these views as a sort of milk and water teaching, and the persons who hold them as lacking either precision of thought, or boldness of character and moral courage, because they do not say out plainly, there is no God, and annihilation is the end of human life. These are of course atheists with a vengeance. With them the whole question is settled—there is no God; there cannot be a God. The profound depths of infinity are filled with matter, leaving no room for spirit. Nature is all, and there can be nothing beside her, and she is the cause of everything that exists. The beautiful harmony to be seen around everywhere in the great scheme of Nature has resulted from accident, and Chance is the lord of the universe.

“ From floating elements in chaos hurled,
 Self formed of atoms sprang our infant world ;
 No great First Cause inspired the happy plot,
 But all was Matter—and no matter what.”

'Tis true these men deny that they believe in chance, seeing that all is regulated by law. But a moment's reflection will show you that still it must be by chance or accident that things have fallen into some particular shape in preference to any other if there be no directing mind behind. What is law? To speak of it as a cause is to completely misunderstand the meaning of the word. The atheist talks of laws of nature as though they were entities that could act upon and govern matter, whereas they are simply the modes in which the phenomena occur, having nothing whatever to do with the cause that lies behind. An able modern writer has put this admirably: “There is a class of philosophers who think that when they say a thing takes place ‘according to law’ they have explained the whole matter. Now, ‘according to law’ means only the definite and unvarying order in which phenomena occur. The Laws of Nature are not the powers of nature. Nothing is accomplished by them; they merely indicate the regulated way in which nature works. Law tells us nothing of either cause—except as immediate antecedent—or direction, or purpose.”* After all, therefore, if no directing mind exists, by whose volition all things are governed, it is by chance, and chance alone—however much you may attempt to explain away the ugly meaning of the word—that things are as they are—that suns have been formed and worlds peopled with living creatures, the perfection of whose organisation far exceeds our most finished mechanical productions. This theory reminds one of the parody on Lucretius, by James and Horace Smith, in reference to Drury Lane Theatre:—

* A Manual of Anthropology. By Charles Bray.

“ I sing how casual bricks in airy climb
 Encounter'd casual horsehair, casual lime
 How rafters, borne through wandering clouds elate,
 Kiss'd in their slope blue elemental slate ;
 Clasp'd solid beams in chance directed fury,
 And gave to birth our renovated Drury.”

The Atheism of this school is repulsive and dogmatic to such a degree that few—very few—are found to embrace it. If you charge the modern Secularists with Atheism they will generally deny the charge, but will shelter themselves behind the former know-nothing scheme. This theory is, perhaps, after all equally atheistic with the other, but not equally dogmatic. The man who says, “There is no God,” and I will prove there is not,” arrogates to himself something like infinite knowledge; the man who says, “I am sure I don't know whether there is or not,” confesses himself unpardonably ignorant. There is a wide difference, therefore, between the two classes. Neither can, however, take any very large hold on humanity, because both are opposed to the highest instincts of human nature. Both attempt to crush out the emotional and religious sentiments of man, and to make him a mere intellectual and physical machine. In all ages and in all countries men have experienced a want which these cold negations fail to satisfy, and hence a belief in God and in a future world belong to the faith of universal humanity. 'Tis true there have been said to be a few races of men that formed an exception to this rule, but even if the statement be true it is of little worth, since the exceptional instances are to be found amongst the lowest savages in some obscure districts in Africa, and other uncivilised countries. The atheists are welcome, therefore, to any argument that can be based upon this fact, if fact it be. It is quite probable, however, that a better acquaintance with these men would show that they had, after all, some vague and shadowy glimpses of the great truths of the existence of God and the immortality of man. Be that as it may, the belief has been well nigh universal, and for a reason that any thinking man can explain, because it meets the wants of the heart and the desires of the soul, whilst at the same time it is capable of the very strongest proof that the intellect can grapple with. Atheism, is as absurd logically as it is false spiritually and injurious morally. The strictest precision of thought brings to man the belief in God; and the instincts of human nature point unmistakably to a life beyond the tomb, where virtue meets its due reward and vice receives its just punishment. All nature proclaims an Infinite Mind that governs the universe; and the profoundest desires of humanity, springing from its great heart, testify not only to the existence of God, but to a close relationship between him and his creatures, and

to a responsibility based thereon. One of the most brilliant of modern poets has written :—

“ O cheerless Atheism !
 Serpent who mak'st thy den in human minds ;
 Tiger who mak'st thy lair in human hearts ;
 Pale genius, blind, who bat-like through the dark
 Flie'st, and for thy nest
 Choos'st the catacomb,
 Thy touch benumbs the soul ;
 Beneath thy icy smile all flowers lie dead ;
 What primal Nothingness
 Conceived thee in its womb,
 And gave to its own vacancy a form ?
 Dead superstition bred thee as a corse
 Breeds pestilence, to slay the living world.
 There is a God ! He lives,
 And we because of Him.
 There is a God who thinks
 And loves and operates,
 And we because of Him.
 He is the great Necessity, for minds
 Tremble toward Him as magnets to the pole.
 He is the great Necessity, for life
 Flowing through bird, through animal, through man,
 Is not resultant from organic form,
 But flows through all, and fashions them ; and they
 Are coins, deep printed with the Eternal name.
 Who fashioned matter ? Tendency reveals
 The Fashioner. That matter floweth towards man
 And ultimately taketh human form,
 Inspiring in the form essential mind,
 Thinking through all its organs, is a proof
 That Nature flows in one perpetual stream
 From the volitions of a Deity.”*

These are not the wild ravings of a poet's distempered brain, but sober and solemn truths, based upon the most extensive knowledge of nature, and arrived at by the strictest principles of ratiocination. Mind is not caused by matter ; on the contrary, matter results from mind. Spirit is the great primal cause of all existence. The ideal, as it is termed, is higher than the real. Men talk glibly of how much they know of matter and how little of spirit, whereas the reverse is the fact ; they know much of spirit and nothing of matter. This statement may seem at variance with general experience, but a moment's reflection will show you that it is correct. What is matter, and what do we know of it ? Let a Materialist attempt an answer to this question, and he will soon discover how difficult a task he has to accomplish. Matter is only known by its attributes—the substratum that underlies phenomena cannot be cognised. Yet this very substratum it is that is meant when matter is spoken of.

* A Lyric of the Golden Age, by Thomas L. Harris.

The properties of matter, such as extension, resistance, &c., are not matter, and yet we know of nothing else in connection with matter. Abstract all the properties of matter mentally, one by one—this done, you have not removed a single atom of a material character. Now inquire what is left behind. Will it be a substratum without properties, or nothing at all? The former is an impossibility, the latter a nonentity. That which is called matter is just the one thing of which you know nothing, can know nothing. If, however, it be said that matter is only the name given to a collection of attributes, and that these, being all bound in one by a strong bond of some kind, constitute the thing, this is to get rid of matter altogether, for no one of these properties is an entity, and the addition of a dozen nothings cannot make a something. Is there, then, a material world at all? Most certainly, but only existing as a shadow of the great spiritual sphere which underlies it, and from which it originally sprung. If spirit were not, matter could not exist for a moment.

Moreover, even the attributes of matter are not known except as ideas, which, I suppose, it will be admitted are immaterial. If I look at an object, what is it that I see? Not the object itself, for that is clearly an impossibility. The eye receives the rays of light passing from the body in question, these, after penetrating the various coats and humours of the organ of vision, form a picture on the retina of the eye of the object to be seen. Now, even this picture—which you will bear in mind is not the thing itself—cannot enter the mind, but has to result in a perception before it can be taken cognisance of by the spirit, or what the Materialist calls the mental part of man. It must be clear to the meanest capacity that the consciousness of our own existence, and the capability of receiving knowledge, must precede all knowledge that is received, and must at any stage of our existence be better known to us than anything in the external material world. Hence, in ourselves the knowledge of spirit is more perfect than that of matter. The material body is but the clothing of the soul adapted to this material state, but useless in those spiritual spheres to which we are all tending. Day by day it changes, and is ultimately thrown off and its elements scattered over the earth, dispersed and decomposed; but that which moulded its shape, lent it vitality, preserved it intact, and by whose power it was moved, dies not, but lives on for ever. The soul survives the decay of all material things. A spirit recently wrote, what every one of us may say of our spiritual part—that is, of ourselves, for the spiritual is the real man—

“When Alps dissolve and worlds shall fade away,
 When suns go out and stars no longer blaze,
 I scarcely shall have reached my primal day.

I—only I—can claim to be the real—
I am the type of Nature—her ideal."

Mr. John Stuart Mill remarks with great truth, "All we know of objects is the sensation which they give us, and the order of the occurrence of these sensations." The whole range of human knowledge extends to modes of action, no further. It is only by motion that things can be cognised at all. We see in consequence of the motion of light in falling on the eye, hear through a movement of the atmosphere, taste only when a sapid body becomes dissolved—that is, undergoes molecular change—smell when odoriferous particles are escaping into the atmosphere, and are thus brought into contact with the Schneiderian membrane of the nose; and touch, when resistance is offered—that is, motion interrupted.

Force and substance—"kraft und stoff"—comprise, according to Dr. Louis Büchner, everything of which we have any knowledge; but, in truth, substance—*i. e.*, underneath thing—I have already said, cannot be cognised, and does not fall within the range of human cognition at all; consequently, all knowledge is limited to motion, which must be regarded as a particular manifestation of force.

One of the most important facts which modern science has demonstrated is, that force can never be destroyed. It runs on in a never-ending cycle, passing through various changes, but never for a moment ceasing to exist. The most insignificant motion taking place to-day upon the earth may produce effects throughout eternity in far distant worlds. Nature knows no rest; with her there is perpetual action. Motion cannot pass into nothingness; it changes its forms often, but runs on for ever. It becomes frequently what is called latent—that is, lost to human observation; but destroyed it never is, having merely passed into other states, from which it will in the end emerge. It changes its modes, but in doing this it sustains no diminution of its power. To use an illustration of Mr. Grove,* if a weight be raised from the earth, and suspended at the point to which it has been elevated, the centre of the earth's gravity, and consequently the relationship that the earth sustains to the sun, planets, and, in point of fact, to the entire universe, has been changed. Now let the weight fall down again; will this place matters in the same position that they were before? By no means, since in the interval that transpired between the raising and falling of the weight, the earth has been moved, and changes of a hundred different kinds have taken place, rendering it perfectly impossible for things to return to their original status. Nay, even if two weights exactly equal had been raised at the

* The Correlation of Physical Forces.

same time on the opposite sides of the earth, so as to avoid changing the centre of gravity, still they would have increased the earth's diameter, and thereby have caused perturbations, whose effects may go on for ever. Every word spoken puts into motion the atmosphere and other surroundings of the person who speaks, and these motions in some form or other must be perpetuated through eternity. Respiration, circulation, nutrition, secretion, excretion, and the other functions which go to make up organic life, are but so many modifications of the force that pervades all nature—a force which is ever changing, yet always the same. Heat is produced in the human body in precisely the same way that it is originated in the furnace of the steam-engine—that is, by combustion. A union of oxygen with hydrocarbon takes place, and the result is the evolution of caloric, in the one case as in the other. The heat thus evolved moves the machinery of the steam-engine, and gives rise to results no less important in the life of the organism. In both cases the amount of force to be obtained will depend on the quantity of fuel employed, and can therefore be measured with tolerable accuracy before it is expended. Experiment has demonstrated that the amount of heat given out from the body of an animal will be the same as that which would arise from its food were it submitted to combustion in oxygen. The heat obtained from combustion becomes changed into other forms of force under various circumstances, and in all probability ere long comes back to heat again, thus running on in an everlasting cycle, but never ceasing to operate in some state or other. "The existing quantity of force," says an anonymous German author, "is invariably the same. We may at pleasure change its effects, but only as regards quality; the quantity can neither be diminished nor increased." At present we are probably in ignorance of very many of the forms of force operating in nature, but the number of these modes will not alter in the slightest degree the totality of the whole.

Dr. Büchner says there are "eight different forces—gravitation, mechanical force, heat, light, electricity, magnetism, affinity, cohesion, which, inseparably united to substance, form and give shape to the world." There are probably fifty others with which, at the present time, we are perfectly unacquainted, and certainly some that are known that are not included in this catalogue of eight. These forces are mutually convertible, and therefore simply different names for one and the same thing. The heat evolved during combustion is converted into mechanical power in the steam-engine, and this force again into heat, as is seen in the friction of the wheels, the heat in the latter case not being in the slightest degree utilised at the present time. Some day it will probably be employed in the case of railways for warming the

carriages in winter-time, or used for some other practical purpose. A good illustration of the conversion of mechanical force into heat may be observed in bringing two leaden balls into violent collision—a fact noticed by Büchner. When this happens, the balls are suddenly stopped, and the result is, they have become heated by the concussion; the mechanical force, being abruptly arrested, is instantly converted into heat. Had two elastic balls—billiard balls, for example—been used, the same result would not have occurred, since, on striking each other, they would have rebounded, and consequently the mechanical force would not have been suddenly arrested, and little or no heat would have been produced. Heat may be converted into light, and also into electricity, and chemical forces may be made to result in all three with the greatest ease.

Many years ago, Oersted, of Copenhagen, demonstrated that magnetism could be produced by electricity—two forces which, up to that time, had been believed to be perfectly distinct; indeed, they had always been looked upon, not as separate forces merely, but as two fluids having each an independent existence. It was now, however, discovered that electricity would produce a magnetic current, running at right angles to the electric current, and not in straight lines, as do almost all other forces. The magnetism in this case was shown clearly to depend for its manifestation upon the electricity excited, since the interruption of the latter invariably produced a cessation of the former. An intimate relationship between the two was consequently established. This was called electro-magnetism. Oersted's discovery led a number of scientific men to the conclusion that, as magnetism could be produced from electricity, the converse should also be true, and electricity ought also to be obtainable from a magnet. Various experiments were made for this purpose—always, however, with a stationary magnet. Now, it will be at once seen that if an electric current could be obtained from a permanent magnet, the dream of perpetual motion would be realised, dynamics would spring spontaneously from statics, and a force be obtained without expenditure. This was impossible, for a reason that will hereafter appear—and having a most intimate relation to the question of the existence of God—and the experiments consequently resulted in failure. At length Professor Faraday detected the fallacy of this method of procedure, and repeated the experiment, with the difference that he superadded motion to the magnetism, and the result was a success. A revolving magnet was found to be capable of producing a continuous current of electricity—a circumstance which is now probably known to every person in this assembly, since small magneto-electric machines have become exceedingly common. Here was the discovery of magneto-electricity, the only fact

necessary to complete the demonstration, that electricity and magnetism are one and the same—modifications of one force.

The motion of the arm acting in obedience to human volition—and volition here is everything—turns the handle of a revolving magnet, the revolution of the magnet evolves electricity from magnetism. This electricity can be used for the decomposition of various substances, in which case it is converted into chemical forces for the production of heat, light, or locomotive power. All the forces in the material universe, as far as we know them, are convertible, either directly or indirectly, one into the other; and there is therefore, in truth, but one great force manifesting itself in various ways in the myriad forms of existence by which we are surrounded.

“The power with which all objects teem
Invests each atom with a force supreme;
Directs the caverned crystal in its birth,
And frames the mightiest mountains of the earth;
Each leaf and power by its strong law restrains,
And binds the monarch, man, within its mystic chains.”

In reference to the new facts which modern science has demonstrated beyond the shadow of a doubt, and which tend to strike a death-blow at materialism, the Duke of Argyle very wisely remarks, “The old speculations of philosophy which cut the ground from materialism, by showing how little we know of matter, are now being daily reinforced by the subtle analysis of the physiologist, the chemist, and the electrician. Under that analysis, matter dissolves and disappears, surviving only as the phenomena of force; which again is seen converging along all its lines to some common centre, sloping through darkness up to God.”* As I have already said, no knowledge can be obtained of anything except motion, and that motion is the result of force. Supposing matter to exist in the sense held by the materialist, if it were stationary for an instant, it would be perfectly impossible to cognise it, since the senses have only the power of perceiving motion. “We never touch matter even if it exist,” says an able modern author, “and that we never see it, is admitted alike by physiologist and metaphysician; for vision is merely a mental affection, called up by an impulse on the optic nerve, made by the movement of the luminous ether, which not the chair or table, but the force existing, and acting external to the chair or table, or other object, radiates off.”† The boast of the materialist, that he only knows of the existence of matter, and disclaims that of spirit because he cannot cognise it, is the result of a want of reflection as to the meaning of the terms that

* The Reign of Law.

† On the World as a Dynamical and Immaterial World. By R. S. Wyld.

he employs. That motion is not an entity, but simply the transference of something from one place to another, and that therefore it implies the existence of the thing moved, will not be disputed, since it in no way affects the question, because all that is contended for is, that of such existence nothing can be known. Moreover, it is not with motion that we have to do here, but with the cause of motion—force. That these are clearly distinct from each other will be obvious, on a moment's reflection, to the most untutored mind. Motion, says the materialist, is a condition of matter. But this in no way gets out of the difficulty. What we want to know is, how it became so conditioned, and what conditioned it. Take an illustration: A ball lying at rest upon the ground is set in motion. Now, what has happened? Motion has been imparted to that which was before at rest. It is the same ball in an altered condition. Nothing has been added to the ball by the movement, and nothing taken away. The motion simply implies, that the ball has changed its place. But something must have operated to cause the motion, or the rest had never been interrupted, and that something we call force. What, then, is force? "Force," says Charles Bray, "is everything. It is known to us only as the ability or power to produce certain changes; but by force I mean the entity to which this ability or power belongs, from which it is no more separable than motion from the thing moving. It is not motion, but the cause of motion; it is not the action, but the agent. Deceived by appearance, we erroneously suppose force to result from the action of matter; whereas the action of matter in all cases is the result of force. We think the power is in the motion; but motion is merely the sign of the presence of the force. . . . To say that the force results from the action of matter is a delusion of the senses—a vulgar error.—It is altogether illogical; it is confounding the entity with its mode of action, the cause with the effect, the phenomenon with the noumenon, the motion with the thing moving."* Force, then, is not a condition of matter, but that by which matter is conditioned. It is the cause of material phenomena, and therefore not itself one of these phenomena. Matter is passive; force is active. One of the properties of matter is inertia, now termed mobility—that is, the utter incapability of moving itself from one place to another. Force must be exterior to matter, and therefore perfectly independent of it, and capable of moulding it according to the direction taken.

Now, what do we know of the origin and direction of force, as far as they fall within the range of human experience? This, for certain, that they always spring from volition. The intermediate agents between the will and the last thing observed to

move may be numerous, but this in no case alters the fact, that tracing the links of the chain upwards to its origin, you come in the end upon volition. The magnet will not generate electricity until it is made to revolve. This revolution is effected by a human arm, behind the movements of which lie a human will. And here we discover the real origin of the force. The ball, to which attention has already been drawn, would remain at rest for ever did not some power move it, and the simplest and easiest means of accomplishing that result is, by picking it up and throwing it elsewhere—that is, bringing volition to bear upon it, with only one intermediate agent, the human arm. In all our experience we know of but one originator of force, and that is will. A dozen or two pieces of machinery may stand between the volition and the sought-for result, each of which will be a means of transmitting force, but the origin remains the same. Hence, reasoning from what we know as falling within the range of human experience, to that which occurs in the great universe around, there is but one conclusion to which we can logically come, which is, that a Divine Volition governs the whole, and that without this Primal Power nothing had ever existed. “In the universe all is motion or phenomenal,” observes a modern author before referred to, “which motion is not chaotic, but acts in accordance with unvarying laws, which laws are everywhere combined to produce particular objects or results. Add intelligence to force, and you arrive at conscious force. What else is this but will? What right have you to deny, that wherever you find force, there also is intelligence?”* In truth, an origination of force without intelligence and volition is simply an absurdity.

How much higher intelligence is than any of the other forms of force—that is, the secondary forms—may be seen at any moment. The steam-engine, with all its huge machinery, holding in control one of the mightiest forces of nature—a power capable of destroying the grandest building that human ingenuity has erected, not only owes its very existence to human intelligence, but may be set in action or stopped by a child. Intelligence is, then, the highest form of force—the one, in fact, from which every other springs. All the forces of nature consequently owe their origin to a Great Intelligence. By some this has been said to be unconscious intelligence; but unconscious intelligence is nonsense. Intelligence implies consciousness, and the Divine Intelligence is therefore a conscious Being, by whose volition—expressed in what, for want of a better term, we call “laws of nature”—all things are upheld.

There is another point, in addition to the origin of force, that

* Higher Law.

might be considered if I had time, that is, the direction of force. This most unmistakeably points to an Intelligence. Not only is motion produced, but it is directed to a particular end. Now, what determines that end? A force cannot, of course, act without following some direction; but we want to know why it takes one more than another. To use the language of a most able writer on this question: "Suppose the subject of our inquiry to be the origin of a crystal, the leaf of a tree, or any other special form, organic or inorganic. We inquire, first, What is it that moves the particles while the crystal or the leaf is being built up? We refer the motion to a force, and feel satisfied with the explanation. But force or energy accounts for the mere motion of the particles. We inquire next, What are the particular paths taken by the moving particles? In what manner or way do they move to their positions?—in other words, What are the *laws* of their motions? But even if we knew this, and could answer both of these questions, we should not be satisfied. We must not only know the paths taken by the particles, but must be able also to explain why the paths are taken."* All this is unmistakeably governed by an Intelligence, and upon no other principle can it be explained. There is always seen a means to an end—a purpose to be wrought out. Gaze where you will in nature, and witness in any of her varied phenomena the operations of force; and purpose and plan will be seen indelibly written upon every movement, whether it be the revolution of a world around its central sun, or the fall of the autumnal leaves from the trees—the rolling waves of

"Old ocean's grey and solitary waste,"

or the tear trickling from the sorrowing eye—the organisation of the most colossal mammoth, or the gambols of the minutest animalculæ disporting themselves in a drop of water.

"In the vast and the minute we see
The unambiguous footsteps of the God
Who gives its lustre to an insect's wing,
And wheels His throne upon the rolling worlds."†

Sir William Thompson, one of the most illustrious of your citizens, says—"Overpoweringly strong proofs of intelligent and benevolent design lie all around us, and if ever perplexities—whether metaphysical or scientific—turn us away for a time, they come back upon us with irresistible force."‡ No man living has felt the truth of this more than I have. For over twenty years I was, if not a disbeliever, at least a doubter respect-

* What determines Molecular Motion?—the Fundamental Problem of Nature. By James Croll.

† Cowper.

‡ Inaugural Address, delivered at the British Association, Edinburgh, 1871.

ing the existence of a Personal God, and His fatherly care for His creatures. I have again and again, in public lectures in this city, as well as elsewhere, endeavoured to show that the facts of nature did not warrant us in inferring Design; and that belief in God, therefore, if held at all, must be held as a sort of religious sentiment springing from the emotional part of our nature, and in no sense as the result of scientific observation or logical reasoning. But the great truth has come back to me with "irresistible force," and I see now—not dimly, or in the shade, but in the brightness of the noontday glare of spiritual light—that the finger of God may be traced on each of His works, and that His fatherly care is over all that His hands have made. This change in my convictions I owe to Spiritualism. By it I have been led to see that materialistic philosophy is as irrational as it is cold and cheerless, and that the only real, substantial, solid existence is that which pertains to spirit; and, what is of still greater importance, that man's career does not terminate at death, so called, but goes on for ever in a brighter and happier world, the whole surroundings of which are far better suited to the highest aspirations of the soul than anything that can be found here. This is the grandest, noblest truth that has ever been made known to mankind. What beside this is the wretched struggle for gold, in which so many men are at present engaged, to the sacrifice of all the higher instincts of their nature—what the statesman's ambition, the warrior's glory, titles, honour, rank, all that the world calls great?—what even the treasures of art, or the discoveries of science, compared to a certain knowledge of the fact that we can never die? This age has become terribly materialistic and selfish. A cold chill—the chill of the tomb—hovers o'er it; for its faith is of the tomb, and the grave the destiny it clings to. Even religion has become tainted with materialism, and partakes of the general torpor, and has to a large extent as a consequence lost that real vitality that she was wont to possess in days of yore, and by means of which she reached the hearts of men and controlled the destinies of nations. But the clouds are clearing away and bright sunshine—the sunshine of spirituality—is breaking out afresh, and men will again feel themselves to be the children of God, and heirs of immortality—

“ Men grope to find the wrecks of primal matter,
 And waste long years in putting bone to bone;
 Babel revives where the world's gossips clatter,
 And fossil words adjust to fossil stone.
 O'er fossil homilies the churches nod,
 Stone heart, stone service, and a stony God,

“ Fault not the book, O man of curious learning,
 Else shall the daisy thine accuser be;
 But come, the splendid east with morn is burning;
 Take morning to thine heart,—believe and see.

Nature and Revelation both shall rise
From seeming death, when thou art spirit-wise.'**

What has Modern Spiritualism to say regarding God? His existence, as a matter of course, is involved in the very fundamental principles upon which it is based. Atheism and Spiritualism are totally incompatible, and in no respect has this modern movement, perhaps, proved more beneficial to mankind than in showing that the material universe is under the control of an Almighty Spirit, whose volition is supreme in the government of what is called Nature. True, all this could be proved without spiritual manifestations, and has been demonstrated again and again by a totally different process of reasoning. Still, the argument receives fresh weight when beings belonging to the spirit spheres return to impress upon us the great and elevating truth. Atheism received a blow from which it never recovered when the old *a priori* argument was elaborated, perfected, and, above all, popularised by Mr. Gillespie, of Torbanehill. His book † has never been answered, and never will, simply because it is unanswerable. Attempts—lame enough, heaven knows—have been made to deal with its propositions, but with about as much result as a man would attack the multiplication table. It were as easy to upset the propositions of Euclid as those of Mr. Gillespie; and the existence of God is therefore demonstrated with a certainty that admits of neither reply nor escape. Spiritualism furnishes a totally different kind of evidence suitable for another class of minds, and meets the case of persons who have never heard of the argument *a priori*, nor, perhaps, if they did, would take the trouble to go through it. Nor must we ever fail to bear in mind the important teaching of Shakespeare, that—

“Truth can never be confirmed enough,
Though doubts did ever sleep.”

Spiritualism teaches not only that God exists, but that he is the Father of the human race, and demands of mankind obedience to His laws. The abstract Deity that scientific men are sometimes found referring to—a sort of primal force, or unconscious acting principle, in no sense meets the case, being God only in name. The wants of the human soul demand more than this, and none know it better than those who have passed to the other side. God is not simply a conscious and Intelligent Being, ruling all things by his almighty Power and Wisdom, but what is even of greater importance to man, He is Purity, Holiness, and Love, and has established a relationship between Himself and His creatures, based upon these attributes. He is the moral

* The Great Republic, by Thomas L. Harris.

† The Argument, *A Priori*, for the Being and Attributes of the Lord God, the Absolute One, and First Cause. By W. H. Gillespie.

Governor of the Universe, as well as the source of all its physical forces, the Parent as well as the Creator of mankind. And this relationship must never be lost sight of, since it should form the mainspring of all our actions. Love to God is after all the first duty of man, however much atheists may sneer when it is named. Love to man, say they, should be first. But why? Do those who profess to love man solely, and God not all, bestow any more affection on mankind than those who desire before all things to love God, and to let their love for man not simply follow, but spring from their love to God? You know they do not. Depend upon it, he is not the worst friend of man who loves God. I have no word to say against the morals or benevolence of unbelievers. God forbid. I will not follow in the wake of those who, having left the Secularists, suddenly discover that there is not a virtuous man or woman in the whole party. It is not true, and those who say it are aware that it is not true. I know of much, very much, real genuine disinterested morality amongst those who profess, if not to disbelieve in God, at least, to say they know nothing about the subject; but I can only regret that such men cut off from themselves the very highest source of happiness; they are themselves greater sufferers than any one else. Faith in God is one of the most ennobling acts of the mind, and worship, not of the lips merely, but of the heart, the natural instinct of humanity, bringing with it a peace, comfort, and calm unruffled consolation, such as can be found nowhere else on earth. This is the teaching of Spiritualism, and it is strictly in accordance with the profoundest feelings of humanity. Spiritualism declares that God should be thought of as a kind Parent, anxious for the welfare of his children, not as a stern monarch, sitting on an elevated throne, and swaying a despotic sceptre over his unruly subjects. We may fall into error and into wrong, but we are nevertheless God's children. We may commit immoral acts, and thereby lower the standard of our own moral nature, and as a result entail suffering upon ourselves for having violated God's laws; still God loves us, and desires to bring us back to virtue and to peace. A poet has most beautifully said—

“ God loves the erring as a shepherd loves
 The wandering lamb. No mother hates her child.”
 But crusted o'er with evil, sin defiled
 Cradles him in her bosom. All the world
 May curse him, but it matters not to her.
 She loves him better for his agonies.
 Sweet pity tends his fevered couch by night,
 Unstinted love her boundless wealth bestows.
 Were he a crowned seraph dazzling pure,
 King of a race of angels in the sky—
 Were all his thoughts beatitudes, not more
 Would that sweet love his being bathe and bless.”*

* A Lyric of the Golden Age, by T. L. Harris.

The doctrine of the immortality of the soul is one which has been held by the great majority of mankind in every age of the world. All the deepest impulses of man's nature seem to point to a life beyond the tomb, and hence the almost universal prevalence of the belief. In no age has this great truth been lost sight of, and, probably, it is so firmly rooted in human nature, that to destroy it altogether would be a matter of perfect impossibility. Nevertheless, it has occasionally become vague and shadowy, and such is its condition to-day; hence the necessity for a new class of evidence that should settle the matter beyond doubt, and render opposition impossible. Such evidence has been furnished by the irrefragable facts on which Spiritualism is based.

Nothing can be more terrible than the thought of annihilation at death—that is, as far as it can be realised, because it is exceedingly doubtful whether it can in reality be fully conceived of at all. Let any one try to imagine himself as non-existent, and he will find what a difficult task he has undertaken. If we cannot conceive of the annihilation of an atom of matter—and philosophers tell us that this is so—how much less is it likely that we should be able to conceive of the annihilation of mind. However, the idea that at death we shall cease to be—even as vaguely as it can be imagined—is a very horrible one, and can only be thought of with pain and regret. If Atheism were true, it would be a fearful truth—one to weep over in sackcloth, and only to be mentioned in tearful sorrow and heartfelt grief. He who has no hope of a future life, and looks calmly at death which is to end his conscious existence and terminate his feelings, hopes, longings, and aspirations, must experience a shudder of horror pass through his soul as he contemplates the dreadful event. Indeed, that this is so, I know, and many others can bear me out from their own experience. Mr. George J. Holyoake, in one of the most beautiful passages in his writings, admits his strong yearning after another life, in which he should again enjoy the society of his daughter, lost to him—according to his idea—for ever. His words are—“‘My dada's coming to see me,' Madeline exclaimed on the night of her death, with that full, pure, and thrilling tone which marked her when in health. ‘I am sure he is coming to-night, mamma,' and then remembering that that could not be, she said, ‘write to him, mamma; he will come to see me;’ and these were the last words she uttered, and all that remains now is the memory of that cheerless, fireless room, and the midnight reverberation of that voice which I would give a new world to hear again. Yes, though I neither hope—for that would be presumption—nor expect it, seeing no foundation, *I shall be pleased to find a life after this.* Not a life where those are punished who were unable to believe without evidence, and unwilling to act in spite of reason, for the prospect of annihilation is pleasanter

and more profitable to contemplate—not a life where an easy faith is regarded as ‘easy virtue’ is regarded among some men, but a life where those we have loved and lost here are restored to us again; for there, in that hall, where those may meet who have been sacrificed in the cause of duty, where no gross, or blind, or selfish, or cruel nature mingles—where none sit but those whom human service and endurance have purified and entitled to that high company, Madeline would be a Hebe. Yes, a future life, bringing with it the admission to such companionship would be a *noble joy to contemplate*.*

The desire to live after death is, in this case as in most others, one which will, whatever the belief may be, occasionally assert its sway, the more especially when the rough hand of death tears from us those dear ones to whom we are bound by cords of affection, that seem part and parcel of our own existence. My much esteemed friend, Thomas Cooper, has a passage in his great poem, written at a time when his mind was beclouded with doubts, which happily have now been dispelled by the bright sun that shines from the Eternal Land, of a far stronger character, and relating solely to the idea of annihilation in reference to himself. He exclaims—

“Farewell, grand Sun! How my weak heart revolts
At that appalling thought—that my last look
At thy great light must come! Oh, I could brook
The dungeon, though eterne!—the priest’s own hell,
Ay, or a thousand hells, in thought, unshook,
Rather than Nothingness! And yet the knell,
I fear, is near that sounds—To consciousness farewell!”†

What think you of that? Rather hell than annihilation! It is a terrible thought, but it has more than once occurred to myself, and I believe it is not uncommon, so very dreadful does annihilation appear to many minds.

Now, if Spiritualism can clear away these doubts that overshadow the minds of so many men regarding the future life, and point out the clear and open path to immortality, then, indeed, it will accomplish a great work. This it has already done in some scores of cases, and is destined, I doubt not, to do so in many others. Its teaching is, that man’s existence is perpetual—that, in reality, there is no such thing as death; that when the material body—which is no more the man than the coat he wears—is worn out and thrown aside, the man himself, that is, the spiritual being in whom all the identity resides, walks forth in the majesty of renewed vigour in the bright summer land prepared by God. In this land dwell all the loved ones who have gone before, and the parting from

* Last Trial by Jury for Atheism.

† The Purgatory of Suicides.

whom had been so keenly felt by those to whom affection's ties had bound them. Here families unite, and friends—real, loving friends—meet to part no more, but to enjoy the society of each other for ever. Never has a more glorious consolation come to humanity than this; and although I am quite willing to grant that immortality was known and clung to, as the greatest consolation in suffering and sorrow long before the movement known as Modern Spiritualism had been heard of, yet it does not alter the fact—that this movement, and the manifestations upon which it is based, have reached many minds that had remained disbelievers or doubters, despite every other kind of evidence that had been furnished. Robert Owen became, late in life, convinced by spirit manifestations that heaven was a reality, in the face of more than half a century of unbelief; and it is very doubtful whether any other class of evidence would have satisfied him. He it was who first drew my attention to the subject—a fact for which I feel I cannot be sufficiently grateful. Robert Dale Owen, his son, the author of some of the ablest letters ever written in defence of Atheism, was compelled to accept the belief in God and immortality when the overwhelming evidence that Spiritualism furnished was brought under his notice. Dr. Ashburner first, and his friend Dr. Elliotson, many years afterwards—both dogmatic materialists, the latter especially—were obliged to admit that they had been wrong, and that death was not an eternal sleep, but the portal to a brighter and happier sphere; and the evidence that changed their opinions was furnished by spirit manifestations. A score of such cases could be named if I had time, but, after all, they would amount to very little more than I have already said—that Spiritualism has been the means of destroying a vast amount of scepticism, and substituting for it faith in God, and a knowledge of the future life. This is surely something to have accomplished.

The knowledge that our loved ones are not lost, but gone before, to await our coming in the brighter region, is a truth that lights up our path in life, and brings joy amidst the deepest gloom, occasioned by earthly trials and sorrows. The believer in annihilation must be a pitiable object sitting at the death-bed of his wife or daughter. He beholds the last flickering of the lamp of life, and sees his loved one fading away before his eyes—all that upon which his affections are placed is passing from hence into oblivion, to be seen no more—going, in fact, into nothingness, similar to that which existed before birth—

“The dead and the unborn are both the same,
We all to nothing go, from nothing came.”*

* Seneca's Troas.

His heart-strings are wrung with grief. He clasps the dying one to his bosom; but she is not conscious of his embrace. He presses hot kisses upon her cheeks, which are cold as marble now; he looks into her eyes, all light has faded from them, and they see no more; every trace of expression has gone from her features, and there is nothing left but the clay-cold corpse. His brain is maddened with grief; he is alone in the world. There is a vacancy in his heart which can never again be filled. Black clouds hover around him, and a blacker abyss still is behind the clouds. There is dark midnight, with never a star. All beauty has passed from earth. The deep gloom is terrible to contemplate. Where is consolation to be found? Alas! nowhere. Science says the thing was inevitable, philosophy prates about controlling one's feelings, and being a man—pshaw! 'tis because he is a man that he feels the grief so keenly. And how is he to be consoled? Why, his loved one, who is gone, will come up again in violets and primroses and beautiful flowers! Is this consolation for a broken-hearted man. I tell you 'tis the veriest mockery that has ever been heard of. Science, philosophy, secularism, all are powerless in such cases—they cannot remove the load of grief that weighs the sufferer down. If he goes into the darkness, the gloom harmonises with his feelings, and makes his sorrow the deeper; if he walks in the sunshine, the brightness appears to mock his sufferings. Birds sing not to cheer him, but to taunt him with their merrymaking, and to draw attention to the contrast between themselves and him; and flowers bloom but to make light of his grief. No hope, no consolation can there be; for is not all that he cared for on earth gone, and no power can bring it back again. What could Spiritualism have done here? Told him that his loved one was not dead, but living even more perfectly than before—that the lump of clay that had been her earthly covering was but the outer garment of the real person on whom his affections had been fixed, and that she could do even better without it—that she was as near to him now as ever, and loved him as well as ever, or even better than before—that she would care for him, be with him, and watch over him still, and that, in fact, there was no separation impending. Here is real consolation worth in such a case the wealth of Cræsus. Those who have witnessed such scenes, as I have, will know how true is all I have said. The spiritualist keeps his eye on the life beyond, where parting is no more. As Mrs. Tuttle has it—

“ I think of that city; for, oh! how oft
 My heart has been wrung at parting
 With friends all pale, who with footfalls soft
 To its airy heights were starting.
 I see them again in their raiment white,
 In the deep blue distance dwelling,

And I hear their praises of calm delight
 Come down on the breezes swelling
 As I dream of the city I have not seen,
 Where the feet of mortals have never been."

Death from this point of view ceases to be the hideous and terrible spectre that it has been so often depicted. The "King of Terrors" lays aside his grim and ghastly frown and approaches, smiling on those he comes to release. Andrew Jackson Davis very truly remarks, "It (death) is the fair stranger which conducts the immortal soul to more glorious scenes and harmonious societies. Let mankind never lament because of the mere departure of an individual from our earth; for the change, though cold and cheerless to the material senses, is to the interior vision, and to the ascending spirit, bathed in auroral splendour. To the enlightened mind 'there is no more death; nor sorrow, nor crying,' to those who live in constant conjunction with eternal truth."* The frightful idea that the grave is our final resting place—an eternal sleep, the end of our being—and nothingness the destiny of the entire human race, clothed death in a garb calculated to appal the most stout-hearted. "It is the heaviest stone," says Sir Thomas Brown, "that melancholy can throw at a man to tell him that he is at the end of his being."

God and immortality—how intimately are they blended together. They stand as cause and effect, separate them you cannot. "Can man," asks W. J. Fox, in one of his most eloquent discourses, "call God his Father without implying his own childhood and in that filial relation his own future destiny? Does he not feel the truth of that saying, 'God is not the God of the dead, but of the living'? Must he not have the conviction that all live to Him? Does he contemplate these grand relations only as things that are to pass away like the other passing phenomena of this world of ours? When he says, 'My God,' is it as sometimes has been suggested only with a sense of propriety? Is it not rather with that of relation, that of the filial condition, and in that of participation in the future parental eternity! In that unfinished melody of our Hymn Book—'Art thou not from everlasting to everlasting, O God, mine Holy One! We shall not die.' Is there not a sequence of thought as close as in the most logical chain of causes and effects that was ever linked together?"† Most unquestionably there is. If there be no God, then may immortality be a madman's dream, and resolve itself into the wild speculations of a disordered imagination, and the tomb be the final termination of human existence. But if on the other hand, God lives and rules, then certain are we that the aspirations and longings after eternal life in the soul of man will be realised, and that a never ending future is in store for each of us. The converse of this is also true. If man be immortal, as Spiritualism demonstrates him to be, then that undying portion of his nature—which is in truth his real self—owes its existence

* Philosophy of Death.

† On the Religious Idens.

to an Infinite Spiritual Being on whom he feels himself every moment to be dependent, and whose paternal care never ceases to be exercised over all the children of men.

The glorious truth of immortality has given consolation and imparted strength to mankind during periods of suffering in all generations. In their heaviest trials and severest afflictions men have leaned on it for support, and in the hour of temptation it has been the mainstay of millions. It has nerved the persecuted and downtrodden victim of oppression—cheered the lonely life of the friendless and the forlorn—and soothed the dying pillow of those whose physical frames have been racked with the agonies of a thousand pains. The martyr at the stake keeping his eye on heaven has lost consciousness of the torture he was undergoing on earth; and fire and flame have seemed to him but the gentle gales that should waft his bark to the happier shores where he should find his everlasting rest. The exile banished from his native land has found comfort in looking forward to that glorious country where tyranny shall be unknown, patriotism receive its just reward, and infinite goodness form the basis of every law. The philanthropist whose schemes to benefit mankind may have been sneered at and rejected, and himself slandered, maligned, and denounced as a visionary, a fool, and even an imposter, casts his eyes from earth to heaven, and goes to work with increased energy, when he remembers the glory of the goal that is a-head, and how soon it will be reached. Men of thought have found in this one truth more real consolation than in all philosophy besides, and men of action have been prompted by it to their noblest works. When weary and fatigued with the labour and turmoil of earth, we approach the grave and lie down on the couch from which there is to be no more an uprising, how sweet the thought that we are entering into the region where “the wicked cease from troubling and where the weary are at rest.” The many mansions of the heavenly home then appear in view, and full of hope and of confidence in the future life, and trust in the paternal care of God, we are really able to exclaim with heartfelt truth, “Oh Death, where is thy sting; oh grave, where is thy victory!”