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I.

THE GENIUS OF NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE.

It is not sufficient for us to have a good thing and to enjoy it without knowing something of its nature, and inquiring how it has been produced, how far it is perfect, how far deficient, how it might have been improved, how it may have been marred. Would any one be contented to know that his watch told him the hour more or less correctly without understanding how it did so, and why correctly or why incorrectly? You shall have a horse that shall do all your work for you admirably out of doors, but bite and kick you if you go to him in the stable; or shall drag your buggy for you most obediently, but will never condescend to plow. How natural it is to look into the causes of the animal's proclivities! But when our intelligence is affected by something that comes to us from without, so as to make us aware that our inner self is being formed and reformed by what we receive,—as is the case with all that we read,—then the desire to search and ascertain of what kind is the instrument that is acting upon us becomes reasonably and naturally strong. It is not enough to have the book. We must know, if possible, how it was that the book became what it is, and why. How came it to pass that a man with no peculiar advantages of early education grew to be so many-sided as Shakespeare, and with every side so equal? How did he become so wise,—for you may

CONFESSION OF AN AGNOSTIC.

UPWARD of a year has elapsed since my old master, *An Evolutionist*, advertised in this "Review" (July, 1878) for a "new religion." I understand that very few of the multitudes, young and old, who are dissatisfied with all existing religions, have answered that application, and these have proposed schemes which my friend regards as absurd and fit only to be laughed at. A Bostonian, a leading member of one of the literary clubs of the capital of New England, advocates rationalism, being an advanced Unitarianism, which has got rid of the Bible, forgetting that the system was tried from the middle of last century to the middle of this, and utterly failed to attract the heart of any man or woman or child toward it; that it was all along felt to be as cold as an icicle; and that its favorite rationalistic principles about God and immortality have melted away into an offensive yellow foam. A professor in an enlightened college proposes a religion without a creed, and has propounded a modification of Christianity in which the doctrine of the Trinity is allowed in a philosophic sense, *à la* Hegel, while bloody sacrifice, and the need of regeneration, and eternal perdition, are left out; but Christ's religion has rejected the compromise, and, now that everybody knows that revelation has been superseded, nobody cares about the residual dregs of a religion which can claim no Divine authority. Some Western men have proposed a worship without any beliefs, like that of M. Comte, and would set up shows with music and processions, and the adoration of heroes such as Buddha, and Jesus Christ, and Mohammed, and Oliver Cromwell, and Voltaire, and George Washington, and Emerson—as soon as he is removed to the land of shades. My friend sees that such a mystic faith will be scorned by the hardy farmers and miners of the West, though it might be agreeable enough to some of their wives who

feel that they must have a worship. My advertising patron is thus left, as I confidently anticipated, without a religion.

I belong to a younger and a more advanced generation ; and I am entitled to go beyond my master, even as he went beyond his Unitarian teachers. Beliefs or unbeliefs are now hurrying on with amazing celerity, and make as much progress in a year as they used to do in an age—at this present moment they are rushing on as the waters do at Niagara, and are about to take a determined leap. All men are acknowledging that there is no hope or fear of a new faith being developed ; as some might wish to remove their doubts, or, as I know, only to restrict our liberty of thought, or to trouble us with ghosts coming out of the graves in which we have decently buried them. Mormonism, I expect, will be the last new religion appearing in our world, and I have no objection to its disappearing with the rest.

Professor Tyndall and certain middle-aged philosophers are still telling us that religion is natural to man ; and Herbert Spencer has provided a grove for it in the “unknowable,” and Huxley, we may believe, is there paying his devotions, “chiefly of the silent sort.” They are correct historically in saying that in ages past man has been a religious animal. The few noted exceptions, such as Lucretius and Hume, prove the rule ; they may be compared to those anticipations of coming man which Agassiz took such delight in pointing out in certain anticipatory organs of the earlier geological ages. By our new theory of development we can account for all this. We can show, on evolution principles, how man should insist on having some object to fear or to trust, and that this tendency should take certain shapes ; that he should first be a fetich, then an idolater and a polytheist, and finally a theist, with all sorts of intermediate forms, such as Popery with its own God, and its Virgin and saints, and Protestantism, with its one God and Bibliolatry. All this grew out of man’s position, out of his felt wants produced by his environment, and the stages of his intelligence and tastes. In the struggle with his surroundings, man felt that there was a power above him and independent of him, guiding Nature in a mysterious way, and restraining him by terrible penalties. We now know this to be Development, which is all but deified by my old master, *An Evolutionist*. We younger men, led by Darwin and Spencer who are being left behind by us, have seen clearly how all this has been produced, and we know and are sure that all religion must disappear. The veil has been withdrawn, and we dis-

cover how haggard and repulsive the prophet who so long kept us in terror. The secret has been let out, or rather we discover that there has been no secret. The temple has been opened, as that at Jerusalem once was, and it is found that there are there no tables of the law, no mercy-seat, no pot of manna, no rod that budded, and that there never were any such objects, except in the superstitious imaginations of the worshipers. In the struggle for existence, which is the characteristic of our world, "the fittest survive"; and we have the law of development, which is our temple standing, while the superstitious are dying out like the extinct races of animals, and these contests of religion with science are merely like the writhings and death-struggles which Hugh Miller used so graphically to describe among the animals of the Old Red Sandstone when they could no longer live in the new and better state of things. We are at present in a transition state like that between one geological era and another, and every belief is unsettled; and our young men are driven from the old to the new, and, for a space, from the new back to the old, by the recoiling waves. The turmoil of warring elements will soon cease, and there can be no doubt that this will end in a settled state of confirmed unbelief. We are now in the tossings and the foam where the cataract has fallen, but the surviving stream will soon flow on peacefully and resolutely. Our youth reared at our advanced colleges in England, Germany, and, of later years, in the United States, and reading our scientific works such as those of Darwin, Spencer, Huxley, and Tyndall, and our progressive periodicals such as the "Contemporary," the "Nineteenth Century," and "The Popular Science Monthly," know not what to believe. But the bolder of them will soon come to the conclusion that it is no matter what they believe, it being certain that there is no supernatural religion, and, therefore, in fact no religion to believe in; while the weaker will skulk back in a cowardly manner to the popular Christianity, and quietly shelter themselves from annoyance in a creed in which they have no faith. It may require another struggle and convulsion before all men have the courage openly to avow the unbelief in their hearts.

We are under great obligations to the men represented by "An Evolutionist" of the age now passing away into the past as the dawn does before the day. They have awaked us from a troubled dream into which we can never again fall. They occupy important positions in some of our higher colleges, European and American.

They talk to their young men and in their addresses to popular audiences of a faith which they still cherish and which they mean to hold by, but they do not deign to tell us what it is or what its foundation. With many of them it is a determination to cling to some broken spars of the shipwrecked vessel, to keep them from sinking in bottomless waters. Such persons disclaim with indignation the charge of atheism, and they go to church at times to save appearances, and would rather that their children, especially their daughters, would adhere to some form of religion. With some the profession of religion is mere vapping and pretense, is in fact hypocrisy to avoid public odium and the business injury it might do them. In the case of others it is a wild cry proceeding from an emptied heart, which has had its idol pulled down, and with nothing to take its place. But the struggle will be only for a brief space, owing to the rapidity of the evolution in the pregnant womb of time much more rapid than in the earlier revolutions of opinion. The travailing has begun, and the birth must soon follow. The old faith is nearly dead in Germany, is kept alive merely by infidel theologians, and will soon have to be buried out of sight. Sustained by Oxford and Cambridge, which only half believe, it is clinging to a feeble life in England, and will probably continue to do so for an age longer. The lease of an age longer may be allowed it in America, where it has had a convulsive activity given it by sensational preaching and by revivals which disgust all men of intelligence. New hereditary instincts are being already evolved in the wombs of mothers without their knowing it, embodying and transmitting the doubts and the unbelief of the father, and rendering all credence of an old creed or a new physiologically impossible, and these will go down from father to son and one generation to another—just as the old religious beliefs used to do.

My old master was ever telling me that he had to follow truth whithersoever it might lead him, even should this be into an utterly unknown region. In this respect I follow him. But, in doing so, I am driven by the momentum he gave me further on than he had light or courage to go. I can not return to the flesh-pots of Egypt, and resign myself to the old principles which the scientists and philosophers of his age have established. What I have to do is to pursue these to their logical consequences, and this though it should lead me to conclusions from which he would shrink, more especially as having to lecture to young men, whom he would not have abandon religion altogether. I confess I have had to pass through

some terrible struggles (Herbert Spencer has shown that this world has been one of struggle with its environment from the beginning) before I reached my present firm position. I have had to resist the remembrance of a father's counsels of prudence, and an impulsive mother's entreaties, and some hereditary instincts which, in spite of all my efforts to subdue them, crave at times for light and guidance and comfort from a supernatural power. But logic, following science, has driven me on to my present position, and left me no retreat, having thoroughly shut up the road behind me.

One after another of the old beliefs which I got by that powerful law of nature, heredity, and in which I was trained by my mother when the religious feeling was upon her, have been peeled off like the husks and scales of a bursting bud, or as the blossoms are blown away when the fruit is being formed. I am not to defend the positions which have been so successfully gained and thoroughly established by the great men, many of them still living, of the age immediately preceding my own. My father's father had felt the influence of Tom Paine and the French Revolution, and started doubts and uttered scoffs which sunk deep into the soul of his son; and from these that son, my father, could never deliver himself. But he saw the excesses that followed the convulsions of opinion, and he could not on the one hand uphold the system that led to them, while on the other every seed of faith had been rooted out from his bosom. So he shut himself up in silence and opened his mind to no one. My mother was full of religious emotion; but had no steady faith, or in fact consistent religious conduct. My teacher in the state school professed neither religion nor irreligion, did not seem to have had any earnest belief, and at times let out a scoff which showed what was passing within. My education was completed under "an evolutionist." He came originally from England, and had felt the undermining influence of the philosophy of James Mill (who had thoroughly imbibed the principles of Hume), which was confirmed by the abler exposition of the negative system of his son, Mr. John Stuart Mill. He was a professor in one of our most advanced and liberal colleges. His public lectures were simply undermining, showing that the arguments for the separate existence and immortality of the soul and for the existence of God are not conclusive. But in quiet conferences in his study he ridiculed the religion of unreasoning faith, of blood, and of eternal punishment, and talked enthusiastically of a new religion, rational and benevolent, about to appear, and, like the sun, dispel all darkness. The

inherited seeds of belief derived from an indifferent father, with some physiological units (Darwin can explain what these are) descending from the body of my scoffing grandfather, predisposed me to listen to him. I had doubts of the Bible from an early date, though I clung to it for a time as a man falling down a precipice will hold by a stalk of grass to stay his descent. As my father never made any profession of religion, I was horrified with the thought coming upon me at the time when he died that he would have to wriggle for ever in the lake of fire and brimstone, and the language of Burns rung in my ears—

“In hell they’ll roast thee like a herring.”

I was now told that the argument for the Divine existence was inconclusive. It proceeds on the principle that every effect has a cause, which may be true within our experience, and “a reasonable distance beyond,” as John Mill says; but, as we know nothing of the nature of a cause, it may not be true of world-making of which we have no experience. When on one occasion I saw death with grim visage looking in at the curtain of my bedstead, I did feel reluctant to give up all hope of living in another world; but then I had no God to guarantee the belief, and as physiology had taught me that the soul was a complication of nerves, and philosophy had taught that things were merely an aggregation of appearances or impressions, I saw that we have no proof whatever that the soul would live when the nerves are dissolved, and that the impressions would continue after the senses that produced them ceased to act. The Christian’s hope is a pleasant dream to those who believe in Jesus Christ, but it can bring little comfort to the great body of mankind, who, as not having passed through the process of regeneration, must perish everlastingly. So I resisted the temptation presented in my hour of weakness, and have ever since been more courageous, as having fought a battle and gained a victory.

It was a favorite principle with my instructor that the students could not have a high culture without the assistance of the theatre. So I got introduced to a most fascinating woman, the daughter of a line of actors and actresses. I might have been joined to her in a civil contract. But the theatre, which I am prepared to defend, when it is properly managed, which it surely may, though I admit it seldom is, was not the fittest place for the training of a young, impulsive girl with such predilections as she inherited from her parentage, and I was afraid to connect myself with her in life by

a legal bond, though I meant to act honorably toward her. So we lived together in a relation which the prudish regarded as criminal, and the men and women of the world spoke of as ambiguous. I lost, in consequence, some of my early friends. My mother refused to visit me and my partner in our home ; and when we met by accident she fell on my neck and poured forth floods of tears. But I kept firm to my principles, and gathered round me a body of young men and women whose domestic relations were not much different from my own, and who indulged with me in all manner of speculations on religious subjects.

My preceptor had introduced me to his favorite authors. I read carefully Grote's "History of Greece," and was led to take the positive view of the development of events in history. But I received the greatest profit and pleasure from the poetry of Goethe, whom I reckon the greatest of modern poets. Shakespeare may possess more varied genius, but then he takes and describes life as he finds it, and starts no speculative questions and suggests no change or improvements in society or in opinions. Goethe, on the other hand, holding no fixed creed, views all sides of a question, even as he sought to pore into the hearts of all the ladies he fell in love with, and so has become the poet of an inquiring, doubting, unsettled age. I took my science, as might be expected, from Darwin, Huxley, and Tyndall, and became firmly convinced that the doctrine of evolution established in our days is more important than the law of gravitation discovered by Newton. Mr. J. S. Mill was my first philosopher : but I saw that no one could build any grand theory on his negative principles, and I resorted to Herbert Spencer, who, by help of modern physical science, can construct the whole universe. My favorite novelist was George Eliot, who, though brought up in evangelical principles, has had her faith in historical religion undermined by Strauss, whom she translated, and her faith in natural religion by her husband's, Mr. Lewes, science and religion. The domestic relations which had been maintained by some of these eminent persons, such as Goethe, Mill, and George Eliot, drew me toward them more closely, and helped to justify my connection with the woman who had such control over me.

Once more I had a terrible struggle. I was again prostrated by a dangerous disease. My partner nursed me with excessive devotion. At my suggestion she had followed George Eliot, and like her had inspected all creeds, mediæval reformation, methodistic and Jewish, but merely as we inspect the machinery of a clock on

a mantelpiece, to see its springs. Her heart, however, was melted on the occasion of my illness, and, as she watched by my bedside, she expressed an earnest wish that I would yield to some kind of religion—she did not much care which—and implored me to have our connection sanctioned by marriage; and urged, as an argument, that Goethe, and Mill, and George Eliot, had all, in the end, betaken themselves to marriage. But I had the courage to deny her request. Most unfortunately, the new science and philosophy have not yet settled the most perplexing of all questions, what should be this relation of the sexes. But all advanced thinkers are agreed that Christian marriage, with its indissoluble connection, is most unjust and irrational, interfering with liberty, and making love a bondage, and I felt that it would be a weakness and a dereliction in me to sanction it by my example. We are in a more advanced age than those persons referred to who betook themselves to marriage, and it becomes us to walk worthy of the times and of our convictions. My partner was deeply wounded, threatened to separate from me, and actually left my house. She was led by her hereditary instincts to go on the stage for a time; but she had too much personality of character to enter into the personality of others, and her acting was a failure. Finding herself helpless, she had to return, and I was glad that she did so.

We are getting on as well as most married couples do; all the better because neither is tied to the other by any legal bond, which would certainly chafe the souls of both of us. The romance of life is now over with us, and we submit to our position. I have found her engaging in practices utterly inconsistent with my life-theory. She told me boldly, almost impertinently, that she must have a religion and a worship, and I noticed her stealing away to the Catholic Cathedral on the occasion of its high festival. I was at first amazed and indignant when I discovered that she had set up an altar in our nursery. It was of a composite structure. Proceeding from her heart, it unconsciously represented the stages through which religion has passed. There were flowers in profusion, corresponding to fetichism or nature-worship; there were idols, and among these the Virgin and Child, corresponding to the worship of human heroes; and there were statues of philosophers like Rousseau and Comte, pointing to the worship of mind. The whole had a theatrical look like stage scenery, and much of the time of the mother and girls was employed in ornamenting it. I resolved on repressing the practices, and threatened to burn the figures; but

this only led to a scene, and I found it best to let nature, that is, heredity, have its own way. It may take an age or two to remove the inherited diseases of the past.

My oldest son was a boy of bright parts, and I proceeded to train him, as James Mill did his son John. I have the most confident faith in the progress of the race. Natural selection has developed new species in the past. Why should it not do so in the future? The coming man should as far surpass the present man as the present man does his ancestor, the monkey or the fish. Indeed, I cherish the hope that, in thousands of ages, man will rise as far above his now condition as he has already risen above the ascidian. I had a secret expectation that my son might have some original quality, which would go down to posterity. But man's progress is still greatly hindered by his environment. My boy's brain was of an excitable character, like his mother's, and gave way under the strain to which it was subjected. I would rather not express the feelings that rose as I consigned him to the tomb. There was not only disappointment but resentment, but I could vent it only on objects which, like the cold mountains and distant stars, took no notice of me. My oldest would have followed my schemes, but my second son has no such enthusiasms. His mother at one time made him spend a considerable time at the domestic altar, but he has become wearied of it and indulges his mother's taste for theatrical performances. She has succeeded in getting our two daughters to enter into her spirit, and I think it better not to interfere. Since the death of my first-born, I feel I must give to the world directly what I would have given first to him. My philosophy tells me that we must overlook the individual in attending to the species.

Meanwhile our system is making progress all around. We have with us knowingly, or unknowingly, all the shining spirits of the age. The great historian Grote was altogether with us, and has shown us how events can go on by natural causes without a providence to ride upon them and guide them. Science is entirely in our own hands, and there is not a naturalist under thirty years of age who does not believe in evolution. There has really been no reply to Darwin except the denunciations of priests and sectaries. St. George Mivart is too great a naturalist (and so has made immense concessions to the theory) and too poor a philosopher to counteract Darwin. The more knowing of the clergy have been obliged to change their tactics, and, admitting development, are trying hard to reconcile it with their theology. The theories and the nomen-

clature of our school are circulating through all our literature and our scientific text-books; and we read in every periodical of "evolution," of "development," of "the struggle for existence," of "the survival of the fittest," and "heredity." Our young men are imbibing the hypothesis as unconsciously as they draw in health with the air they breathe.

Philosophy has now come in to give stability to the system. We have two living philosophers of our own. We have Spencer, whose field, like that of Bacon, is all knowledge, and who can construct theories, *ad libitum*, to account for all phenomena and bring them within his ambitious grasp. Quite as influential as he, we have Huxley installed by Darwin as specially the philosopher of his school. By his courage and outspokenness he has gained the whole Saxon race who love frankness, and by his style he can command the attention of the common people. He has just published a summary, with a criticism of Hume's system, which furnishes an immovable foundation to our Agnostics, and will henceforth be the text-book of our philosophy.

Hume may be regarded as the founder of Agnostics. From what a host of unfounded beliefs did he deliver the thought of mankind! Thomas Reid sought to bring these back, but had no argument to urge except that of common sense, which has no right to dictate in philosophy, and all the erudition of Sir W. Hamilton has not been able to buttress him up. Kant allowed to Hume all that we care to claim. Kant has, in fact, done more to establish our principles than any other philosopher. He started with our position that man can never know anything about things; that all he knows or can know are phenomena in the sense of appearances. Grant us only this, and our system has got a foundation from which it can never be moved. We can now let Kant and his followers in Great Britain and America have as many high-sounding transcendental forms as they please (say the forms of space and time, the categories of quantity, quality, relation, and modality, and the ideas of God, freedom, and immortality), as long as they suppose them formed by the mind, in no way relating to things, and having no subjective existence. Huxley has evidently a partiality for Kant's phenomena; but he wisely falls back on Hume and on *Impressions*, and has given us the whole of Agnosticism, which is evidently destined to be the final philosophy in a nutshell.

People believe that they know things; that they know themselves, as perceiving, thinking, resolving; and know material ob-

jects immediately around them. But in all this they are adding by their imaginations to what we actually perceive. All that we actually know are *Impressions*. I suppose that I have a *red rose before me*, but I have really no evidence of the existence of anything else than a red impression, and it is an illusion to conclude that I am a person perceiving it, or that there is a rose perceived. Our impressions are of three kinds: SENSATIONS, PLEASURES AND PAINS, RELATIONS. To this we have to add IDEAS which are simply copies of our impressions. This is the whole "content of the mind." The relations which the mind can discover are of impressions and not of things. They are three in number: coexistence, succession, and similarity. It has been proved by physiology that all these impressions with their relations and ideas are the product of brain-action.*

This is his simple but comprehensive science of mind. Mind is a congeries of impressions the result of brain-action, which brain-action—Huxley does not see this—is again simply an impression. The mind has not the power (which metaphysicians allot to it) of discovering the relation of identity, and there is no proof of its having any identity or persistency of any kind. Metaphysicians have made much about the mind perceiving the relation of causation. But cause and effect are mere invariable succession as far as our limited experience goes. People argue that there is a God, the cause of the order and fitness of the world, but the argument is palpably inconclusive, as we have no reason to believe that cause and effect rule beyond our experience, and we have no experience of world-making. The argument for the soul's immortality is gone now that the soul is found to be a bundle of impressions produced by a bundle of impressions which we call nerves. This leaves responsibility and a judgment-day among the superstitions of the past. Nor are we entitled, in order to relieve our perplexities, to appeal to a supernatural revelation; for it would be as difficult to prove that there has been such a miracle as to prove the existence of a centaur; and the supposed testimony is not able to carry such a weight. Huxley has said little about morality and the relation of the sexes; but all this will be cleared up in the great work on "Morals" which Herbert Spencer is busy in preparing, and which will soon be published amid loud cheers, with only a few hisses which will show how much some are afraid of it. Huxley has laid the foundation and Spencer will put the cope-stone on our building. It thus appears that, when people ask what Agnostics are, we can

* This is an epitome of "Hume," by Professor Huxley.

now hand them our creed and confession written out in clear articles.

As more satisfactory than these able expositions and defenses, we see Agnostics working its proper effects and forming character. There have been anticipations of this result in all ages in some men and even a few women—such as Miss Martineau—being able to live without religion. But these are becoming more numerous as creeds are dying out, just as races of animals did in the geological ages when they were no longer suited to their environment. I may refer to Babington Macaulay, brought up in the strictest sect of Pharisees, and yet never referring, after he had passed through the training of Cambridge University, to religion as either troubling or comforting him. We have a like example in a late great orator and statesman of Boston, who tells us that he had no desire for or aversion to death or immortality. But the most noted example by far of the effect of our training is seen in our illustrious living novelist, the greatest analyst of character that ever lived. Von Baer and embryologists have shown us that the young animal in the womb goes through in a few months the same stages as its ancestors have done in long geological ages. George Eliot has in her own person gone through in a few years the stages which developing thought has been passing through for generations. She has in her own person exemplified the grand generalization of M. Comte, and has advanced from the theological, up through the metaphysical, and has now attained the positive stage. Starting from evangelical faith she gave us “Janet’s Repentance” and “Dinah.” As years rolled on, we have a searching and an exposure of the hollow religion of the respectable middle classes in England. In “Daniel Deronda” she showed that all religions are alike, and put a sort of galvanic life into Judaism. Her husband in his last work has proved that psychology is a branch of physiology and to be advanced by the study of the nerves; and now, as evidently having felt his influence, she is constantly accounting for peculiarities of character by heredity. She seems now incapable of entering into her early faiths, and seems to have lost all her former ideals (this is evident in her resorting to the Jews), and in “Theophrastus Such,” out of the accumulated sweepings of her study, she is describing such characters as we may expect in the era of Agnostics from one who has imbibed the creed. It is an indication of the state to which not only novel-writing, but poetry and history, must come.

I have thus fully explained my position. I am not ashamed of

it. I am proud of it. I would not, for all the hopes that heaven holds out, sink back into the low level of the superstitious world I have left. I call no man master. I am independent and free. I am afraid of no power above me, and of no evil in the future. The past is past and can not touch me ; and we mean to make and mold the world to come.

Those who hold our creed may have to part with some things that are pleasant. Now that we know better, they can please us no longer. The charm has been broken, and can never be restored. It is certain that, now that we know what nature is, that we know what mind is, and what matter is, we shall have to give up our admiration of these. Schelling labored to show that the beautiful arose from a correspondence between the subjective and objective worlds. Men like Wordsworth, and his worshiper Principal Shairp, have been raving about the loveliness of vale and lake, and the grandeur of rock and mountain. But all this illusion has been dispelled. Mr. Grant Allen is proving scientifically that all beauty arises from pleasant physiological sensations. A shrewd critic in the "Contemporary Review" for November, 1877, has put an end to all the vaporing for the last age or two about the beauties of nature. "If language be intended not to veil but to convey thought, the phrase 'the poetic interpretation of Nature' implies that Nature means something, and has something to say. I must venture to affirm, in contravention of this implication, that Nature is a dumb oracle, who of herself says nothing, but will most obligingly emit any voice the poet chooses to put inside of her." This is the necessary issue of all recent science, and of the philosophical view of the mind.

If Agnostics have taken away some pleasant feelings it has, at the same time, rid us of more unpleasant ones. It delivers us from the regrets, the remorse which have hitherto so tortured humanity. What propriety can there be in mourning over acts which have been evolved by laws which work irresistibly, and allow the will an apparent and no real freedom, as was so elegantly shown by Tyndall in his Birmingham address? Let life be enjoyed as long as it is enjoyable, and then parted with when it becomes intolerable. What a relief to the miseries of our world if men were taught that they can take away life when it pleases them, with no risk of being afterward tormented eternally! As society advances, I believe there will be an authorized means of ending, in a painless manner, the life of those who so wish it ; and this without requiring them

to imbrue their hands in their own blood, and exposing them to public scorn.

Mr. Mill has thrown out the idea that there may be a religion without a belief in a God. I do not call it a religion, but it may be a faith to take the place of the old faiths. There may be grand aims, gathering round them all the energies of our nature. If Agnostics shear off some of the superficial æsthetic sentiments, it may generate and evolve some deeper mental forces, like those exhibited by Paul and by Mohammed, only devoted to more liberal ends. I feel this power moving, like the strong wind, within me. We see it working with tremendous impetus in the nihilists of Russia, in delicate women quite as much as strong men, fearlessly facing Siberian banishment and the gibbet. I have myself felt the impulse that has moved the Communists of Paris. In nearly every country there are tyrants to be moved out of the way by all means, because they are crushing liberty. In every country there are idols to be cast down. How eagerly do I enter into the spirit of the Persians when they hewed down the huge bulls of Egypt, and of John Knox when he dashed to the ground the images of the Virgin, and of Christ himself; and I feel that I am called on to go and do likewise! As we thus courageously fight with our opposing environment, the walls will fall down, and after the battle will come peace, when all foes have been destroyed, as the idolatrous Canaanites were.

AN AGNOSTIC.