

January 18, 1879.]

THE SPECTATOR.

79

that a body may seem to be moving very fast indeed, when it is the observer who is moving, and not the thing observed, than from any blindness or dullness of sense. It was clearly the force with which the mind of Copernicus grasped the true drift of astronomical phenomena, not the feebleness with which he was impressed by the apparent motions of the heavenly bodies, that led him to his discovery. In cases of that kind there is no reason to suppose that it is any deficiency at all,—except, it may be, a deficiency in those restless, social passions and interests which disturb all continuous intellectual study,—which conduces to genius; and certainly it cannot be a deficiency which constitutes it. Newton said that his mathematical genius was only an unusual power of paying attention. Possibly; but such attention as Newton paid to the subject of his “*Principia*” cannot be paid at all by ordinary men, simply because there is not the same natural correspondence between their minds and the subjects on which Newton fixed his attention. Such receptiveness as Newton’s is as rare as the receptiveness of Shakespeare for the “bloom of the world,” or the receptiveness of Beethoven for its harmonies.

No doubt the real reason why genius appears to have a certain connection with weakness is, first, its necessary receptiveness,—which always suggests a feminine temperament, though not one which has any but a superficial connection with weakness; and next, its frequent one-sidedness, and tendency, in the case of such one-sidedness, to shut out a multitude of useful energies which are really serviceable to man, and which are found in most strong men. But the proof that there is no necessary weakness in genius, is that in the case of genius which is not one-sided,—in the case of such genius as Shakespeare’s, or even Goethe’s or Scott’s,—there is hardly a sign of weakness. The reason why smaller genius suggests weakness, is that smaller genius needs exclusiveness, needs to abstract itself from many important aspects of life, in order to do its work at all. Of course, a poet like Shelley could not give his mind up as completely as he did, to the vibrations of the finest chords of emotion, without averting it from many regions of observation and effort which are most essential to ordinary men; and so his wonderfully receptive genius had a real flavour of moral weakness. Of course, there was weakness, and no doubt for a reason which on the moral side was very similar,—in the scorn of Heine, and the voluptuous cynicism of Byron. But take any genius that is not of this one-sided character,—genius such as Chaucer’s, or Shakespeare’s, or Goethe’s, or Scott’s, or Michael Angelo’s, or Titian’s,—and no phase of weakness is discoverable. For they had minds so highly receptive in their own sphere, that it did not need even an exclusive concentration of them on that sphere, to lead them to their highest achievements. On the contrary, without any such exclusion of other interests, they worked at their full power, and therefore their other faculties fed their special faculty with new and richer thoughts, instead of disturbing its action or dividing it against itself. Hazlitt hit the mark far more nearly than Mr. Hinton, when he defined genius as “some strong quality in the mind, aiming at and bringing out some new and striking quality in nature.” Receptiveness is, indeed, as positive a quality as any in the world. For receptiveness is adaptation of an elaborate kind, and corresponds in men to the most elaborate instincts in the sphere of animal life.

A DIALOGUE ON FATE AND FREE-WILL.

[AFTER BERKELEY.]

(THELETES.—PHILONOMUS.)

PART II.

THEL.—How vividly your gibes recall those happy days! But you forbade poetry. Let me sober myself with the memory of their conclusion.

PHIL.—I prefer even a slight dose of blank verse to that reminiscence.

THEL.—I know there are only a few events in your own prosperous life you regret as much as my Oxford break-down. But your part in that disappointment does not greatly trouble me. I cannot help sometimes recalling the hopes it extinguished, in those at home who hardly knew the meaning of prosperity.

PHIL.—You did your best to fulfil them.

THEL.—But my best was futile. They had starved their lives to enrich mine. What privations they bore for my sake! What unsatisfied needs! What unremedied ills! But all was easy to bear, till they lost my brilliant future.

PHIL.—You could not help their losing it.

THEL.—I can help nothing,—

“Quod fugiens semel hora vexit.”

Yet the past is not therefore stingless.

PHIL.—I said you could not help it then, not, you cannot help it now.

THEL.—What difference does that make? The events I deplore are unchangeable realities now. I was the cause that those who cared most for me divided their lives between anxious self-denial and bitter disappointment.

PHIL.—But you had no hand in the matter.

THEL.—Had I not? Everything that roused their hopes, and everything that disappointed them, was a part of my nature.

PHIL.—But not of your choice.

THEL.—Just so, Philonomus. You put your finger on the source of my consolation, under the pressure of recollections that will sometimes recur, and never quite lose their pain.

PHIL.—Ah! you, in your turn, want to make use of my advertency!

THEL.—I want, as you did, to translate a view of facts in a principle. Consider whether, under a consistent application of your theory, the distinction you urge upon me does not disappear. It is meaningless to remind me that what rendered vain the sacrifices my family had gone through to send me to Oxford was not my will, but my fate, if my will is but a part of my fate.

PHIL.—To any one but a metaphysician, that reflection leaves the case unchanged. Do you suppose the difference between moral and physical disease vanishes when they are regarded as equally subject to law?

THEL.—Not in the future, or in the past, so far as it is a basis of inference for the future. No matter whether will is or is not a mere result, in every case, so far as it is also a cause, we are bound to exert it, and the different sense in which you and I should explain our meaning in saying that we are bound to exert it does not affect the fact. But it is otherwise when we are considering the past by itself.

PHIL.—How so? How can the mere lapse of time affect our point of view?

THEL.—Because the question what I do or do not choose has, unless the will is free, a merely practical reference, of which time robs it. The choice of to-morrow will become the fate of to-day. But while it is hidden from our eyes, our very ignorance is a part of the system by which our character at once moulds and is moulded by our destiny. We put forth energies of which we know not the limits. Our actions, according to you, are both voluntary and necessary. While they lie before us, our practical concern is with the fact that we *can* act in accordance with our strongest desire; when once action lies behind us, we have only to remember that we *must* so have acted. For retrospect, then, the distinction between what is chosen and what is reluctantly accepted would, on your view, vanish.

PHIL.—It seems to me that the distinction is just as important as any other historical fact. If idleness or dissipation had caused your Oxford failure, your retrospect would have had a different set of objects. You would be the worse man.

THEL.—Not necessarily now, at this distance of time. It would often be as misleading to judge the man by the youth, as the son by the father. What we can choose to be, we can, though in a less degree, I am afraid, choose also not to be.

PHIL.—So that, according to your view, wickedness would be a less evil than weakness! Does not that inference refute it?

THEL.—No; for he who remembers both evils, knows that they are incommensurable. But I concede that you suggest a great difficulty on our side. The belief, indeed, does bring us to the edge of difficulties which nothing could overbalance but the actual knowledge of what responsibility means. I see, when I look backwards, a long string of mistakes in my life. I cannot say that any of them have been so fruitful of ill to me and mine as my Oxford failure, and they are all inevitable now. Yet in referring to the disaster which, measured by results, was the most important of my life, you imply that other disasters might claim my regret with a power here lacking. In what would their superiority consist?

PHIL.—I suppose you will not let me say, “In the supremacy of moral aims to all beside,” because among our Oxford contemporaries it is possible some may have been worse than you were then, and better than you are now.

THEL.—Just so. Morality, on your view, almost loses its retrospect. The only question with regard to moral disease, if it be no more than disease, is: Is the patient cured now? To confront the part of life that is unchangeable, and find any value

in the reminder that such and such events were not due to choice, when once the heart, as well as the mind, is penetrated with the idea that what we mean by choice is an illusion,—this, I am convinced, will be impossible. It will be idle to remind another that he is blameless,—the word will have lost its meaning with its antithesis. And I firmly believe, if the time is coming when your view is to become dominant, that a great change will come over men's feelings towards the Past, and that self-reproach will be a thing unknown.

PHIL.—And should you regard that as a misfortune? Considering how much there is to be done in these seventy years of ours, and how uncertain is our tenure of even their brief span, I have always felt the energy spent in self-reproach a waste of something valuable.

THEL.—Yet I doubt how far you would welcome the change, on the whole, with all its results. However, I will not mix opinion with conviction. What I am certain of is that if the distinction between disastrous mistake and crime be adequately described by saying that the agent could not have avoided the one *if* he had wished it, and the other *unless* he had wished it, the most vivid feeling of our lives would be also the most out of relation to fact. I feel, when I have done wrong, that I have done something I could have avoided,—the accusation of conscience directed against that which I mean when I speak of myself. When you change the absolute statement, "I could have done otherwise," for the conditional one, "I could have done otherwise, if I had preferred it," you remove that on which self-reproach rests; you turn what seems the most profound reality of life to a dream.

PHIL.—Perhaps I am not very well equipped for such a discussion. I will not take credit to myself for not knowing much about remorse. I am afraid, with a good many of us, what is wrong is inconspicuous merely for want of a background; nothing being quite right, nothing seems very far wrong either. However, when that confession is made, I will add that I deliberately turn my mind from all my past mistakes, whether they are mere mistakes, or whether they deserve a harsher name. The best step to take, when one discovers that one did wrong yesterday, is to try to do right to-morrow, it seems to me. To occupy oneself with a retrospective sifting of misfortune from guilt, is surely to make the most of the thing we need to have done with.

THEL.—Yet that is the main object of your profession.

PHIL.—Only so far as it is necessary to prevent crime in the future.

THEL.—That certainly ought to be the sole purpose of Law. And yet so strong is the instinct in the heart of man which does homage to the sense of moral Responsibility, that whenever, by that exceptional condition of mind which we call insanity, the criminal can be represented as *irresistibly* impelled towards the crime, he escapes punishment, even if his knowledge of its punishable nature be clearly proved.

PHIL.—Quite wrongly, in my opinion.

THEL.—And in mine also. Still, the thing does happen. Against all the obvious and weighty reasons for making the operation of Law strong enough, and certain enough, to control the Will under temptation, its action is allowed to be checked and enfeebled, in the case of persons who differ only from ordinary human beings, so far as one can see, in having a stronger bias towards evil.

PHIL.—It is an extraordinary piece of stupidity, I think.

THEL.—So do I, but surely it is also a very striking tribute to that in us which witnesses to the freedom of the will.

PHIL.—The fact—which is, after all, a practice of lawyers, rather than a principle of law—appears to me so foreign to the true spirit of jurisprudence, that it is impossible to see it as an illustration of anything but human weakness and confusion. The inexplicable thing behind desire, which you call Free-will, does not seem to me a subject of legal investigation, even if it exists.

THEL.—I fully agree with you. To complicate the problem of Criminal Law by any attempt to penetrate behind the fact that the action punished was known to be punishable, and that some kinds of fear prevent some kinds of action, seems to me, as much as it does to you, a misunderstanding of the scope of the legislator and the Judge. But what an argument you acknowledge on my side, in conceding that men cannot, even when their plainest interests demand the temporary oblivion, ignore the Freedom of the Will!

PHIL.—I am not sure that I agree with you as to the issue involved.

THEL.—On this point you do. The view of moral insanity on

which you must more than once have seen murderers spared, who were quite aware that their act was murder, and that murder was punishable, is that they were impelled towards the act by an impulse which not even the fear of the gallows would restrain. Now, what other account could you, on your view, give of any murder?

PHIL.—I do not concede that the incapacity to distinguish between the victim of moral insanity and the victim of evil passions is a confutation of Determinism. Suppose *all* crime were treated as moral insanity, the influence of such treatment would still be deterrent, and might become much more so when criminal law was a consistent embodiment of this view.

THEL.—No doubt it would. It is only because men regard this irresistible impulse as exceptional, that they can forget the public interest in dealing with it. But then it is just this belief that irresistible temptation is exceptional which bears witness to Moral Freedom.

PHIL.—I suppose I ought to concede the blunder to be, as far as it goes, an evidence that in dealing with crime men incline to your view. The fact that it is a blunder seems to me to empty that concession of much importance.

THEL.—I can hardly undertake to say what the legal protest against crime would mean to me, apart from that voice of the conscience of which it is the coarse and dull echo. It is only as a witness to that which I have recognised first in my own self-accusing heart that I find, in the very blunders of the Legislator and the Judge, a tribute to that in man which accepts responsibility.

PHIL.—Do you mean that a man does not accept responsibility unless he believes in Free-will?

THEL.—I think responsibility has so different a meaning on the lips of one who does and does not believe in Free-will, that it would be better to express their different meanings by different words.

PHIL.—Well, never mind about nomenclature. What I want to know is this,—Do you think that, as a Determinist, I surrender my right to hate falsehood, meanness, or cruelty? Because I consider it the result of something that went before, am I debarred from thinking it evil.

THEL.—No more than you are debarred from thinking bad toothache an evil.

PHIL.—And if men become as eager to escape meanness or falsehood as they are to escape bad toothache, we may be pretty well satisfied, I think, Theletes.

THEL.—Ah, yes, indeed. But do not suppose for one moment that as men lose the ultimateness of moral evil, they will supply its place with the immediateness of physical evil. When both a tooth-ache and a lie are regarded as in the same sense a *result*, you will have lost, indeed, all that gave the moral disease its deeper claim on the attention, but you will not have gained that which made the physical claim more imperious. You cannot, as you subtract sinfulness from wrong, subtract vividness from pain.

PHIL.—But may you not give the moral physician a better standing-ground, when you teach him that moral evil is subject to law as much as physical?

THEL.—The question involves the whole issue between us. You cannot improve the position of any one by withholding from him the main characteristic of the evil he is trying to eradicate, and of course, you help him by taking from him a delusion. But your meaning is, I suppose, whether we must not lack a certain moral advantage on one hypothesis, even if it is true, which we should possess on the other?

PHIL.—Exactly.

THEL.—But do you not see that our issue lies beyond the advantage you suppose us to forego? Our discussion started from the fact that I was acting on your principles in refusing to expose my friend to a temptation to which I feared that he would yield.

PHIL.—Yes, but my whole aim was to show you that in doing so you were adopting in action the creed you opposed in word.

THEL.—You did show me more clearly than I had seen before, though I had always seen it, that Free-will is invisible, or almost invisible, when we are considering the actions of other men. When the attempt is made to recognise it there, we are landed in such mistakes as the legal theory of moral insanity. The greater part of what we can judge in other lives seems to me to belong to the region of Necessity, or to use the newer and I think inferior word, of Determinism.

PHIL.—You puzzle me. Put into plain, unmetaphoric, prosaic words, what you mean in saying that you believe in Free-will,

while you consider that in our discussion on the character of your friend, we took up a position from which it was invisible.

THEL.—I mean that I am almost as far removed from the belief of those who consider this to be a mere question of words, as I am from yours. I do not consider, as many do, both on your side and on mine, that the problem will be solved when we have analysed our conceptions successfully, and expressed them clearly. I believe, indeed, that there is confusion of thought in the matter. I think men have inverted the relation between Cause and Will. They do not recognise that Will is the older, as it is also the simpler conception; that to try to express Will in terms of Cause is to express the known—and indeed the thing best known—in terms of the unknown. They need to return to the perception that Cause is no more than the shadow of Will on the outward world. But when all confusion is cleared away, the more clearly it would be seen, I believe, that there are two beliefs, and weighty reasons for both. When we were speaking of Dystiches, I felt that we were confronting those which told for necessity; while in turning from his fate to my own, I was forced to recognise the meaning of moral freedom.

PHIL.—Well, but truth is absolute. One of these ideas must be true, and its opposite false.

THEL.—If I am driven to that concession, Philomus—and for the present, I accept it—which is most likely to be true, the belief that is grounded on my knowledge of Dystiches, or of myself? Can any amount of the knowledge that is a matter of inference equal or overbalance the knowledge that is a matter of consciousness? While you would say you were sure of something within my knowledge, of which I had given you my solemn assurance, would you not feel sure of *your* experience in a different sense from that in which you would feel sure of mine? It is to this very core of certainty that I trace my conviction of Free-will. When I review that which I am most certain of—my own past—I find a portion of it blend with that stream of cause and effect which we call Nature. I know that all occupation of regret with this part of my past would be as much wasted as regret for a storm in which those dear to me had perished. And I see—and you see, when you try to console me for such a case—that the whole of this part of life is as a background to something different. I see a portion of this irrevocable Past detached from its background, by my consciousness that it lay with me to have decided that it should not have been. That I can always distinguish the two, I do not pretend. But I know that the difference which I sometimes discern so clearly is there, whether I can discern it or not. And if I seem to lose this distinction in other lives, I remember that I discern their experience by a fainter light than my own; and that it is not wonderful that to such beings as we are, some important truths should not be simultaneously visible. I remember—But lo! there sinks my candle in the socket, and the star, but through a different pane now, shines in once more. J. W.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR.

CATHOLIC ESCHATOLOGY.

[TO THE EDITOR OF THE "SPECTATOR."]

SIR,—I am truly sorry to be obliged to obtrude myself again upon you in what may seem a personal matter, but I am sincerely anxious not to be misunderstood on questions of such grave importance, and what I have to say shall be compressed into the fewest possible words. You were perfectly right in understanding me to be stating and explaining—and of course "giving my own assent to"—the authoritative teaching of the Roman Catholic Church on the condition of infants dying unbaptised, in the passage you have quoted from pp. 19-20; nor did I venture to offer any comment on *that* portion of your review, though I might have much to say in reply to it, as I could not reasonably ask you to allow me to use your columns for criticising your criticisms on my book. But the case of *adults* dying unbaptised and ignorant of the Gospel is quite a distinct one, and is treated in a different part of my book, and of your review of it. And it was to a partial misapprehension of my meaning in what I had said on this latter point (pp. 49, 111), as to the "preaching of the Gospel in the next world to those who have never heard it in this," that the correction in my last week's letter referred.—I am, Sir, &c.,

H. N. OXENHAM.

[TO THE EDITOR OF THE "SPECTATOR."]

SIR,—It surprises me that so able and unprejudiced a writer as the reviewer of Oxenham's works in the *Spectator* of the 4th inst.

should say that the only passages in the New Testament which appear to affirm the universality of salvation are these two:—"I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me;" and "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." The last enemy that shall be abolished is death, that God may be all in all." There are several other passages equally clear on that subject. In the passage in the Epistle to the Romans, chapter v., verses 12 to 21 inclusive, there are five repetitions of the assertion that God's grace is not only potentially but actually co-existent with man's need, and more abundant than man's sin. See also the following:—"God hath concluded all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all." (Romans xi., 32.) "Having made peace through the blood of his cross, by Christ to reconcile all things unto himself; even by him; whether things in earth or things in heaven." (Colossians i., 29.) "Heaven and earth" is the usual expression in the New Testament for the visible and invisible worlds. Compare Hebrews xii., 26-27,—"That in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth." Ephesians, i., 10. "Who shall change the body of our humiliation that it may be fashioned like unto the body of his glory, according to the working whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself." (Philippians iii., 21.) "Our Saviour Jesus Christ who hath abolished death." (2nd Timothy, i., 10.) Here, as in 1st Corinthians, xv., 26, death, which is to be destroyed, or abolished, means the entire collective result of sin. All enemies are comprised in sin and death, and all are to be abolished. "That through death he might abolish him that had the power of death, that is, the devil." (Hebrews ii., 14.)

When we get properly into our heads the truth that the word "eternal" is an indefinite one, the foregoing quotations will show that the doctrine of universal salvation is taught not only in a few isolated passages, but in the consistent teaching of a great part of the New Testament.—I am, Sir, &c.,

JOSEPH JOHN MURPHY.

Old Forge, Dunmurry, County Antrim, January 12th, 1879.

[TO THE EDITOR OF THE "SPECTATOR."]

SIR,—I, too, like Mr. Oxenham, am surprised that you should think that, to an educated mind, 1 Cor. xv., 22-28, would seem to make in favour of Universalism. I know that, to a superficial reader, "as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive," might sound as if struck in that key; but I cannot understand any *student* of the sacred text so taking the Apostle's words. Look at the context,—“Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order; Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. Then cometh the end.” Is it not clear that St. Paul has simply the physical resurrection in view, without reference to the condition or destiny of those who are raised?

And so with the "all things subdued unto him," and "God all in all," which we find farther on. St. Paul represents the kingdom as now in Christ's hand, as a militant one, whose work is to "put down all rule and all authority and power" that is independent of or opposed to it. The last of these enemies to be destroyed is, he says, Death. When, with this last remaining foe, all things shall have been subdued to him under whose feet all have been put, then shall the Son deliver up the conquered kingdom to the Father, and himself be subject to him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all,—i.e., that all may be done and perceived to be done "to the glory of God the Father." (Phil. ii., 9-11.) It is the drawing-out in its full meaning and bearings of the victory over death which is expressed in the words "in Christ shall all be made alive," but neither here nor there, I submit, can we read into the text any thought of the salvation, or otherwise, of those over whom death ceases to reign. The "some to the resurrection of life, some to the resurrection of judgment," of our Lord (John v., 29), and the "second death" of the Apocalypse, suggest that there is no necessary relation between revival to life and admission to felicity.

While I write this, however, allow me most heartily to subscribe to your general statement of the bearing of Revelation upon this and other matters of the kind. They have not been brought into the region of the understanding, as yet; as part of the infinite issues of good and evil, they appeal to the imagination and the heart, and do so only as they speak out of some cloud of mystery.—I am, Sir, &c.,

RICHARD HUGHES.