

July 31, 1880.]

THE SPECTATOR.

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Stoops to Conquer, and by the many stage versions—why did he not write one himself?—of his *Vicar of Wakefield*, one of those dramatic stories which is ready-made to the playwright's hand. To every book-lover he is known quite as well by his *Good-Natured Man*, a comedy to the full as amusing, ingenious, and humorous as its more successful sister. We can hear Mrs. Croaker now, with her grumbling husband (by the by, the one fault we have to find in the performance presently to be mentioned is that that lady is not "made up" as old as she should be), "Never mind the world, my dear! You were never in a pleasanter place in your life!" The history of the play is curious, and may be read with interest in Forster's life of the author. How it was first presented to Garrick, who of course presumed, like all actors and managers before and since, that he understood the playwright's business much better than the poor man himself, and worried him to death about this change and that improvement, all of which, equally of course, would have been very much for the worse; how it was at last produced, under the management of Colman, on the 29th of January, 1768, —and the curious fate which befell it, are written in the chronicle. "Society" had just been ravished, being in a sentimental and moral phase for the moment, by a ridiculous piece by Kelly, called *False Delicacy*. We are not at all sure by-the-bye, that a revival of this piece of sickness just now, while the town is on the moral tack, would not be timely and successful. The patronage of the leader of the Opposition once secured for the performance, all would be well; and with the critics, Hugh Kelly, being as dead as Oliver Goldsmith, would pass for as good a genius. Only fashionable actresses are geniuses in stage-land, while yet alive. When Goldsmith produced his comedy, three thousand published copies of *False Delicacy* had been sold on the first day; it had had a consecutive run, then a rare matter. The author had been treated to a public breakfast at the Chapter Coffee-house, and his publisher had presented him with twenty pounds' worth of plate. The result was that to the fashionable opposition collected on the benches of the theatre house, under the spell of *False Delicacy*, Oliver Goldsmith was as a very Bradlaugh. The acting of Shuter in the capital part of Croaker so carried the majority with it, that their boisterous laughter overcame the opposition at times; but as a whole, the play was a failure foredoomed, and the crowning blow was dealt by the inimitable scene in which the hero, Honeywood, passes off two bailiffs as his eccentric friends, in order to hide his real situation from his lady-love. The nerves of Society were quite unable to stand the vulgarity of this. What gentleman would do so indelicate a thing? The *London Chronicle* mouthpiece of the Jingo of the day, and ignoring the pits and galleries, said that it was "language uncommonly low,"—like the speeches in Midlothian; and the conscience of Society, unpleasantly stirred by the bodily propinquity of bailiff and gentleman, then and there Bradlaughed Goldsmith. Again, in the last act, Shuter, in the rich drollery of the incendiary letter, rescued the author from the pains of complete damnation; but the restoration of success was but partial. In the few representations which followed the bailiff scene was cut out, though it appeared once more at a single performance three years afterwards. That so admirable a specimen of comedy-writing is not as lost as the books of Livy is due to the fashion of that day, by which the play was published directly on its appearance. It sold at once, and Goldsmith "shamed the rogues" by the success of his scene in print. Now-a-days, the dramatic author has no such chance. He is not literary, and nobody will read him. His critics have no opportunity of being acquainted with his language, except through the actors and their memories; and he may perhaps, as happened in a recent instance, hear a sentence like this,—*"To do her justice, she asks as little quarter as she gives,"* thus amazingly paraphrased in perfect good-faith, on his "first night,"—*"To do her justice, she gives as little trouble as she takes."* For the modern English dramatist, there is no appeal from the excited verdict of the theatre to the cool judgment of the library, and the difficulty is well worth taking into account in discussions on dramatic reform.

To return to our text, however, this admirable comedy, which we believe to be one of the best acting comedies in existence, was a stage failure, and so remained. It was revived, we believe, at the beginning of this century, and Macready (according to Forster) intended another revival, when his management of Drury Lane abruptly ended. He proposed, oddly enough, to play the character of "Lofty," the Jack Brag of the piece,

which it is still more odd that the late Charles Mathews never seized on. It would have suited him to a turn. Since then, it has remained on the shelves, till only the other day it came into the minds of four sisters to produce it for a few amateur performances, and at one of these it was our rare fortune to be present a few nights ago. The spirit of the enterprise must have been well rewarded by its singular success. We ourselves remember no amateur performance to touch it, and the readers of the *Spectator* may be the more interested when they learn that the young ladies who did this unique service to Art, which should lead to an early stage revival of what is now proved to be an admirable stage play, are the daughters of Richard Cobden. The name carries brains and heart; there were heart and brains in the ladies' acting. The eldest of the four (and all appeared in the play) took the part of Miss Richland, first borne by Mrs. Bulkeley, who believed in part and play. Miss Cobden clearly believes in them too, and she acted throughout with singular grace and distinction, and refreshing unconventionality. By that, we are far from meaning "amateurishness;" for, now-a-days, alas! when the amateur actor has become one of the banes of life, and has lost half his charm by gaining his half-knowledge, there is nothing more terribly conventional than the acting of the amateur. He knows all about standing and moving, and that is all. He speaks without a prompter, and his voice and mien are as an echo of his especial original, even as his repertory is a damnable iteration of the most hard-worn pieces of the stage, with the "crosses" and entrances correctly copied from the stage edition. The only excuse for amateur acting, its freshness, had died to us, when we suddenly found it again in Miss Cobden and her lieges. Her Miss Richland reminded us of some courtly dame of old masquing for relaxation; her dress and manner were in a graceful harmony with the design; and, high-comedy throughout, she succeeded in infusing into her last speech and confession to her timid lover a special touch of womanhood which fairly brought the tears to the writer's eyes. In sweet contrast was the delicious Olivia of Miss A. Cobden, whose humorous exposition of the audacious little minx who does the most daring things with the most innocent air caught the character to the life. We have found ourselves laughing at the recollection constantly since.

The men of the company seconded the ladies well. The great advantage of the play chosen was that all had to originate their acting for themselves. If we do not use the popular word "to create," it is because we have always a little associated that part of the business with the despised author. When an actor "creates" a part, it can only be, as it seems to us, when he departs from the author's intention. Mr. Irving's Shylock is, in some opinions, quite a creation. Every one of this little amateur band had thought out his author. Nobody could apply to Mr. Colnaghi's Honeywood the criticism passed on the original Powell,—*"uniform tameness, not to say insipidity;"* and Mr. Blomfield's spirited Lofty caught Charles Mathews's idea of similar parts so well, that it was he who suggested to us how well Mathews would have been fitted. But with all respect to all the others, the gem of the performance was the Croaker of Mr. W. P. Beale. The man lived before you in his queer identity, in one of the most thoughtful and consistent pieces of acting we have seen. The studied gloom, the real good-nature, the rough accent and the forlorn expression, were so thoroughly sustained, that the actor really reached that most difficult pitch where the identity becomes quite lost in the character presented. We do not remember, on any professional stage, a more remarkable performance. It stands by the side of the first Tartuffe we remember to have seen, as Goldsmith is very suggestive of Molière.

We hope that this chrysolite among amateur performances may soon be repeated upon some larger stage, where some of our leading comedians may see it. If it should lead to a successful professional revival, the name of Cobden will be as worthily associated with the cause of Art as with that of Free-trade. And the instalment of a superb comedy upon the standard acting list, a century and more after its first unsuccessful production, will supply another instance of the victorious appeal "of Truth to Time."

ARISTOTLE ON FREE-WILL.—II.

WE have endeavoured, in a previous article, to set before our readers the first dawn of this controversy, as it appears in the pages of one whose writings hold, in germ, the thoughts of many following centuries. We would now

inquire into the intrinsic value of the views there brought forward, and disentangle from whatever was merely temporary in their expression their value in the eyes of the seeker after truth.

The advance of the Aristotelian beyond the Platonic point of view consists, we have seen, in the discernment—difficult for a modern to accept as a discovery—that it is possible to act against conviction. Everywhere throughout the Platonic Dialogues we find it assumed that the one barrier to rightness is ignorance. To see the good, is to pursue it. He who does not pursue it, therefore, cannot see it. This is a doctrine which leaves no room for human responsibility, and as such it appears to us to embody important error. Yet surely all must feel its powerful attraction. To see truly is so great an advance towards acting rightly, that from the distance at which many of us regard these moral stations they are indistinguishable. And deep in every heart must be the suspicion which we find in the works of Aristotle, though he is not its author,—“Perhaps, after all, men really yearn after the same pleasure, and not that which they think and say they are pursuing,” a sentence which appears to us far more Platonic than Aristotelian, and, indeed, to sum up a large part of the Platonic teaching. But it embodies also all that makes it difficult to believe in Free-will.

We have already put before our readers the striking sentence in which (if we have understood it) “the master of those who know” hints at a view which would identify Free-will with this moral blindness; we would now bring home its meaning to their minds by presenting it in a modern dress. There is an essay in the posthumous fragments of that suggestive thinker, James Hinton, in which, after his wont, he explains the supposed power of Free-will as in reality an absence of power, and finds the explanation of all confusion on the subject in the fact that we have mistaken a minus for a plus quantity. Free-will in *thought*, he says, we should at once discern to be a weakness, not a strength. Yet a person with a notion “that two and two might make five when convenient, and that if it suited him best to-morrow would obligingly come before to-day,” may be conceived of as “proud of his power of thinking as he liked, and supposing it the true intellectual prerogative of manhood,” although all the while it would be “simply the absence of the rational power in man.” And free-will in acting, we suppose Mr. Hinton to mean, is simply the absence of the *moral* power in man. Were our conformity to the moral law as perfect as our conformity to the intellectual law (the intellectual law, we mean, as it affects, for instance, the simpler questions of time and space), we should be as unable to do wrong as to believe that two and two make five. Now this, we presume, is exactly the meaning implied in the quotation from the “*Metaphysics*” which we set before our readers last week. Freedom is there represented as a negative thing, just as it is here. The master of the household is too important to spend a moment according to his fancy. Merely to know his circumstances is, to a right judgment, to know how he will spend his time. The slave must do his work, of course (and the passage seems to us an important testimony to the lenient character of Athenian slavery); but when that is done, he may follow his own vagaries, and trifle away his time according to the impulse of the moment. The free man is never free in *this* sense; the slave, in this sense, is sufficiently insignificant to be free for a large proportion of his time. It is interesting to watch the emergence of the same idea, at the interval of two thousand years. It seems to us unquestionable also that some important truth must be contained in any idea which we can state in extracts from two thinkers separated by such an interval, and from this we would derive a warning against the belief, very common among the defenders of Free-will, that evil must necessarily share the eternity of good. That hatred and falsehood must remain possible to give truth and love their value is an assumption constantly made, but it is one which seems to us incompatible with a belief in Divine goodness, and finely refuted by the suggestion, if we have rightly interpreted it, of the Greek thinker and his unconscious English follower. Their truth, therefore, we should call a transcendental truth. To the condition of things in which we find ourselves, to the teaching of experience, and the expectations founded thereon, it is inapplicable. That there may be a morally certain goodness is what we could not bring ourselves to deny. What we deny is, that there can be a necessary guilt. And since in this world unquestionably there is guilt, man must here and now be free.

It was, we believe, an original thought in the mind of Aristotle, that a necessity for doing wrong was impossible. Underlying his desultory and sometimes vague argument, we shall always find the assumption that nothing wrong can be inevitable,—an assumption the originality of which we can only estimate by comparing it with the view of evil, in some respects so much deeper, of Plato, according to which it is a deadly disease. When Aristotle has given his definition of freedom—that those actions are free of which the cause lies wholly within the agent (an interesting sentence, as attaching this metaphysical problem to the conditions of freedom in a self-governed Greek state), he seems to remember that even the actions which are chosen most decidedly by the actor may be said in some sense to be caused by something without him, *i.e.*, the pleasure they will produce. “But you could not say this,” he protests (“*Eth.*” iii., 1, 11), “for if you did, you would make everything necessary.” The idea that it might be replied, “And in this sense everything *is* necessary,” does not seem to occur to him as possible. Evidently the thing that makes it impossible is for him the existence of guilt. He seems to find (and herein he reminds us of Butler) the great practical truth, that man deals with man as if wrong conduct were unnecessary, a sufficient refutation of all perplexing arguments on the opposite side. And when he quits this moral point of view, and deals with the question as one of logic merely (as he does elsewhere), his argument seems to us to lose all force, and to become confused and full of fallacies.

We believe, for our own part, that the distinction between knowledge, as the region of necessity, and action, of freedom, important and true as it is, may yet be exaggerated into a denial of all freedom. That man has a choice whether he shall do what is right, in a sense in which he has not a choice whether he shall believe what is true, is conceded by every one, whether he believes or disbelieves in Free-will; the only difference made by this alternative is as to the meaning of the word “choice.” And yet, wherever a strong personal interest comes in, every one recognises a voluntary element in belief. No one who has had a loan of a thousand pounds and repaid one hundred can persuade himself that he is not still a debtor to the amount of nine hundred; but experience shows us that it is possible for a debtor, not only to spend his money otherwise than in paying his debts, but also to persuade himself again and again that a debt had better be paid to-morrow, instead of to-day. No course of life will continue to seem wrong to him who pursues it, and we doubt if the worst crime is often recognised as criminal in the moment of commission. And if this voluntary element in belief is present in cases on which all unprejudiced person think alike, much more must we expect to find it in matters on which there are two opinions. When we come to any period of religious controversy, we shall find numerous cases of conversion which are at once interested and sincere; it would be a great mistake, for instance, to suppose that all the devout ex-Huguenots in the service of Louis XIV. were hypocrites. A belief that shall move mountains, that shall become an influence in the history of a nation,—this is not a thing that any man can choose; but he who denies that a belief may be perfectly sincere in the sense that a man is always ready to act upon it, and yet that it may be the result of choice, that it may have been taken up from reasons that have no relation to truth, knows little of the history of belief, or of his own heart.

We hold, then, that if we would retain a belief in free action, we must go further, and accuse or acquit a man according to that not only which he does, but which he believes it right to do. Of course, there are certain inexorable facts against the belief of which will is powerless. I may think, as Wilkes said, that the money subscribed for my creditors had better be spent in ministering to my present necessities; there are plenty of moral devices for adjusting the facts to suit that theory, and it is often held quite sincerely, no doubt; but the laws of arithmetic are inexorable; no sophistry can change my view of the amount of my debt. When I come to these laws, I am merely passive; I have passed under the domain of Necessity. But it is not true that I enter on this domain when I quit the region of action for that of thought. It is not entirely true even of the region of suffering. Even that part of man's being which is least voluntary is not wholly involuntary. We choose to a certain small extent even what we shall *feel*. Many a mourner is weighed down beneath a sorrow unquestionably real, which

would yet depart at the exertion of one resolute volition. It is unjust in such a case to say, as is sometimes said, that what is embraced is the appearance of grief when the reality is departed. The grief does not cease to be real when it becomes voluntary.

It would seem, therefore, that if we are to keep Freedom for one part of our nature, we must keep it, more or less, for all. But on the other hand, we cannot keep it for any, unless we keep it in an especial sense for one. Our actions have grown out of our feelings and our beliefs, but it would not be enough, though we think it would be partially true, to say that action is free because thought and feeling are to some extent free. In thought, and still more in feeling, we are often mere recipients of a foreign influence, which it does not lie with us to resist or to modify; we exhibit in its completeness Aristotle's definition of necessity; the cause of our feeling or our belief is wholly external to us, and we, as individuals, contribute nothing to it. And do we imply, it may be asked, that this is never the case with action? That depends what is meant by action. So far as we are inhabitants of a visible, sensible world—so far as action means, as it must mean, for the most part, the result of our will on this world—we think it is true very often. Perhaps every man is blamed for actions for which he has no more responsibility than a tender-hearted soldier who has to lay waste the enemy's country. But the true question is, what does each of us mean when he says "I?" If it is an illusion to suppose "that at each moment the *ego* is something more than the aggregate of feelings actual and nascent, which then exist," as Mr. Herbert Spencer says it is, then freedom is impossible, for the being of which we predicate freedom does not exist. That in each of us which remains the same, amid the strange whirl of thoughts and feelings which perhaps leaves amid them no common element,—that which connects the Rev. John Newton, curate of Olney, and friend of Cowper, with a profligate and blaspheming sailor; that which connects Strafford dying on the scaffold as a martyr of loyalty to his King with the imprisoned Wentworth, martyr of a cause which his King was endeavouring to crush; that which perhaps each one of us finds difficult to associate with a hopeful and arrogant youth of whose history he has a wonderfully intimate knowledge,—the true question is, is this a mysterious and inexplicable reality behind all phenomena, or is it merely the outward form, and the power of recollection? The one alternative excludes the idea of Necessity, and the other of Freedom.

One of the chief points of interest in this discussion in the pages of Aristotle—its strong political tinge—seems to us an important indication of the actual scope of the controversy. It is often said that the question has no practical importance. That a change in the opinion of ordinary people would not immediately produce any change in their actions, we readily allow. The shallow fallacy that a belief in Destiny opposes vigorous exertion might well be refuted by logic, if we had not the stronger refutation of history, teaching us, as it does, that perhaps the most strenuous actions which it is called upon to record were, in the belief of the actors, inspired by the will of God, the will of man in no respect co-operating therewith. Nevertheless, we are convinced that the belief in Determinism would, in the long-run, modify some of the most important of human actions. It would be vain to make the constantly-repeated protest that if the criminal could not help committing murder, we could not help hanging him for it. Though it would still be true that by hanging him we should enable other people not to be criminals, we should find that practically we could help our action, and he could not help his. We do not see that the rational justification for punishment is greatly impaired, even in the case of criminal lunatics; in nine cases out of ten, their punishment would have about as much deterrent force as any other criminal's would. The power to punish, which is subtracted in their case, would be subtracted, on the theory of Determinism, in every case. We should find that without the force of indignation, our penal legislation would be like artillery without gunpowder.

We are misled in this respect because, as Determinism has been exhibited in history it has been allied with a profound belief in the will of God. Human will has been obliterated to make way for Divine will, but will itself (in the full sense of the word) was never denied till now. No great thinker of the Christian past believed that man's will was a link in the chain of fate, who did not believe also that fate was simply a divine decision. Man was not subjected to things, but to a personal ruler,—a

ruler, it is true, who, while the world remains what it is, could not be called good in our sense, but still who had determined that man should be good in our sense, and who enforced that determination upon his creature by the most stringent and awful penalties. The moral effect of such a belief would be quite different from what is now called Determinism. If God punishes, man may punish, so long as it is to uphold God's law. But this divine pattern removed from us, and also that sense of indignation which is but the moral side of a belief that the deed reprobated was evitable, man would lack all strength to inflict pain. Perhaps, to some extent, we see this loss already telling on our legislation. If ever Determinism becomes the creed of the Legislature, we are certain that we shall see its effect exhibited much more positively.

"No man prefers a crime, or spurns a bliss," is quoted by Aristotle (iii., 5. 4.) as a well-known saying with reference to the Will; and in dissolving the fallacious bond of antithesis, and disentangling the true from the false half of the saying, he seems to us to hint at all that has been truly said in this great controversy for two thousand years. "No man spurns a bliss, but crime is voluntary." That short sentence sums up the truth of both these great parties. It is, we fear, the last half of the truth with which we have most to do in this world. But while owning that the criminal and the profligate must be dealt with as beings who have chosen evil, it is not forbidden to us to remember that "no man spurns a bliss,"—that in ways inconceivable to us the blessedness of love, and purity, and truth may be brought home to those who, as far as we can see, are least capable of discerning them. All the legislator can do in this direction, perhaps, is to enforce on those who fail to perceive it the evil and wretchedness of wrong. But he will lack courage for this course unless he is able to deal with the most degraded of mankind as beings who can afford to suffer, since suffering may invert their path, and set them in the direction of that human aim which truly to recognise is to accept for ever.

GUY'S HOSPITAL AGAIN.

THE case of presumptive manslaughter in Guy's Hospital seems likely to be actively used for the purpose of misleading the public as to the recent controversies affecting that institution. Of course, we have no intention of prejudging the trial of the nurse who has been, so far as the public can judge, most properly committed for manslaughter; but the attempt made to discredit the present system of nursing, on the strength of that case, and the other case mentioned by Dr. Habershon in his letter to Saturday's *Times*, is unwise, and not likely to be successful. The fact is, that neither in the case of the unfortunate woman whose death is said to have been either caused or hastened by the improper administration of a bath, nor in the case of the child who died after tracheotomy, in consequence, as it is held, of unskilled nursing, was the new system to blame. The Sisters of both the wards in which these misfortunes happened are well known to be Sisters not appointed by the new Matron, but who were there before she came; and whatever fault there is in either case, so far as it is due to the negligence of the superiors at all,—and on this we do not presume to offer an opinion,—is due to the negligence of superiors to whom the medical staff wish to restore the administration of the hospital, and not of those who have been placed there as a result of the recent changes.

Dr. Habershon, however, attempts, rather unwisely, we think, to excite the prejudice of the public against the new Sisters, on the ground that "they go to prayers." So far as we can ascertain, these prayers, which are short and simple, and involve no neglect of the patients, since the night-nurses are still in attendance while the short morning prayer is going on, are nothing more than the devotions which begin the day for all sincere Christians who like to realise their religious responsibility for the duty before them; and they are totally devoid of any ostentatious or pharisaic prolixity. There is no pretence for the assertion that any single patient has been neglected for these short religious services, and we regret to see the effort made in some of our contemporaries to sneer at these modest devotions, as if hospital nurses would be the better for a loss of piety.

We fear that cases where there has been a certain failure of accurate medical nursing have not been so uncommon in any of our great hospitals, as every one would like them to be. What is new just now in Guy's is the desire to turn these