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CLOUDS
AND
SUNSHINE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF
MUSINGS OF AN INVALID, FUN AND EARNEST, FANCIES
OF A WHIMSICAL MAN, &c.

NEW-YORK:
JOHN S. TAYLOR, 17 ANN-STREET.
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TO
MY FRIEND AND KINSMAN,
RUSSELL H. NEVINS,
THIS LITTLE BOOK
IS
AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED.

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CLOUDS AND SUNSHINE.

INTRODUCTION.

THANKSGIVING DAY.

WELCOME to this dear old festival! Again, with cordial salutations, do we greet its coming. May it be kept through all time! May it be set apart, dedicated ever as now, to holy thoughts, and hymns of gratitude, and deeds of love!

And to-day, we bid it a thousand welcomes. To-day, for the first time in our history, has it become a National Holiday, and all the members of our great family of States have come together, with heartfelt unanimity, to sing praises, and to pour out thanks to the great Father of Mercies. Oh, may the good example this day set, be faithfully followed,

and may this, henceforth, be a fixed feast in our national calendar!

And will it *not* be so? I believe it. I believe this day is to play a glorious part in our great future, to exert a mighty influence on our career. How many noble deeds will date from it! How many princely benefactions, right royal charities, will it bear witness to, with each coming year! How many happy firesides, renewed friendships, buried quarrels, sacred vows, how many, many precious things of all kinds, will originate in the impulses of this blessed period!

Thanksgiving day, two centuries hence! *What* a day! And what a land! One great garden, its walls washed by either ocean; one vast congregation of cheerful, thriving workers. But this day, their labors are suspended, and they go forth, with one accord, to offer their prayers and praises to the great Giver. Hark to the myriads of church-bells, as they send forth their invitations from city and hamlet, from hill-side and valley! Behold the countless multitudes of worshippers, young and old, thoughtful parents and happy children, as along every lane, and road, and street, and avenue through-

out the land, in scattered groups or orderly procession, they take their way alike to rural chapel, and cheerful village church, and sumptuous cathedral. And now we hear the blended strains of ten thousand organs, and the swelling notes of innumerable voices, chanting their festal hymns unto the all-bountiful Creator. And now all is hushed in silence, and presently the low, solemn tones of prayer are heard, ascending unto heaven, rising alike from the hearts of stately cities, and from lone vales, deep hid in woods; ay, from every vale, and hill, and plain of this vast, this thrice-blest land; the acceptable incense of grateful souls unto the great Father. What a spectacle, what a service is here! Oh, that the poor, tempest-tossed men of Plymouth could have beheld it, could have had their souls cheered by such a vision, their eyes greeted with sounds like these!

Thanksgiving day, throughout the world! Will not that day yet come, upon the earth? I believe it. A day of solemn, universal recognition and commemoration of God's goodness; a day on which, following the example of the great parent republic, all the other commonwealths of the civilized, Christian-

ized world will, with one consent, come together and join their orisons and hymns with hers; when every nation, and tongue, and island, and valley, and hill-side of earth, shall bear part in the glorious service; when every Art shall lend its choicest inspiration, to render that service worthy of the great Father; when, in a word, this our once little New England festival, shall become the great holiday of earth! Blessed consummation, thrice blessed spectacle, whereat the angels pause to gaze with rapture! A world in prayer; a world chanting its Maker's praise in glorious concert!

And *are* these things to come to pass, indeed? Is this blissful future in store for our dear planet? Are all these triumphs of truth, these precious victories over evil to be secured? Are the bloody rites, the gloomy superstitions, the cruel wars, the ignorance, apathy, imbecility, the groveling appetites, the savage passions of men, to be exterminated, and all nations to be resolved, at last, into one great, peaceful, loving, Christian family, and earth itself to become a miniature heaven, and every day that dawns upon it a day of Thanksgiving?

I believe it. I cling to the glorious thought.

Call me dreamer, visionary, if you will. Be it so. May I ever dream such dreams, and be blest with such visions!

Yes, I confess it; mine is a hopeful, cheerful nature. I love to look on the bright side of things. I love to draw good omens from the past, to put a comfortable construction upon all the mysteries, and to trace a paternal hand in all the trials of the present, and above all, to keep ever in view an inspiring, magnificent future; to look along the vista of ages, and behold, *not* sullen clouds and angry spectres, but golden smiles, and waving palm-trees, and smiling angels, to cheer the pilgrim on.

Well, who of us are right in this matter, we the children of hope and believers in progress, or the croakers, the chanters of perpetual lamentations; the men who see nothing in the world of to-day, wiser or better than in the world before the flood; and who see nothing ahead, but the same dreary round of folly, vanity, and vice, that they declare human life to have ever been, from the first syllable of recorded time? the men, whose whole creed may be summed up in those most dismal lines that ever poet wrote:

"What is't we live for? tell life's finest tale—
To eat, to drink, to sleep, love, and enjoy,
And then to love no more!
To talk of things we know not, and to know
Nothing but things not worth the talking of!"

Again I ask, which of us are right in this matter? With whom is the truth, with whom the wisdom in this controversy? What says the great teacher, History? What say the phenomena of daily life? Do they bid us despond, despair, or do they cheer us on to ever-renewed exertions, in behalf of ourselves and our brethren?

I have had a good deal of talk on this and kindred topics, of late, with my good friends B. and C. Our conversations have been, of course, entirely familiar and immethodical in their character; spontaneous expressions of our ideas as they rose; by no means, models either in the way of style or sentiment, and at times, it must be acknowledged, somewhat tinged with levity; but on the whole, as I trust will appear, animated by a becoming heartiness of feeling, and integrity of purpose. Else I certainly should not, as I have, ventured to reproduce them, with becoming modifications and amendments, and in their original form.

My friend B. is an excellent fellow, full of good impulses, and continually rendering stealthy acts of kindness to those about him; but he is sadly given to skepticism and despondency, and almost always expresses himself on moral subjects, in a gloomy, and quite too sarcastic style. He seems to have little or no faith either in himself or his brethren, in the progress of the race, or in the blessed life to come.

Friend C. on the other hand, is a most firm and ardent believer in immortality; though his faith, perhaps, rests far less than he would be willing to allow, upon a Scripture basis, and far more on what he reads in the great volumes of nature and providence. But he is *not* a believer in any steady, permanent improvement of the human family. The movements of society (he *will* have it) have been, ever since the first page of history was written, vibratory, not progressive, in their character. More or fewer degrees of the great circle have been described, in the various eras of that history: still is it oscillation, not progress. While I not only cling to the blessed thought of a future state, and magnificent theatre of action hereafter, for every human

soul, however humble or abject on earth, but also cherish the belief of a slow, steady, sure and triumphant progress to perfection, of the great brotherhood here below, and of the final conversion of this dear world of ours into one grand, delightful family mansion, as it were, of loving, happy kinsmen.

Such are our differences of opinion. In *one* thing, I trust, we will be found to agree, and that is, a due sense of our own frail, erring, sinful natures. Far from us be the temerity, the presumption to set up for models, or teachers, or to suppose that we have been particularly profound, or brilliant, or witty, in these our interlocutions. A fair share of naturalness and truthfulness, enlivened here and there it may be, by an occasional bright thought, or happy illustration, such is the sum total of our pretensions in the premises.

With this brief explanation, I submit the following pages to the consideration of such kind and courteous reader as may be willing to throw away a little hour or two upon them.

CONVERSATION I.

A. Pensive as ever, my dear B., this morning! A penny for your thoughts.

B. Too much, too much. As a conscientious man, I should have to give you at least three farthings' change.

A. But what *were* you thinking about?

B. Oh, nothing special—the same old story; the beautiful uncertainty of life, the magnificence of human nature, the sweet gloom and mystery that o'erhang the grave; in short, the usual agreeable topics.

A. And you were discussing them, of course, in your usual gloomy and cynical spirit. Always harping on the same melancholy string, always chanting in the minor key! Ah, my friend, you are very wrong in this.

B. You think so, do you?

A. I do, indeed. I think it most unmanly and unchristian in you, to cherish such sad, such perverse feelings. You, of all men in the world, too; who have so much to be thankful for; you, who have youth, health, friends, means, talents, leisure, all the prizes of life, indeed; who have every motive to be happy, and to make those about you happy. You—

B. Stop, stop, my good friend. Be pleased to recollect that this is Monday, and that I have hardly had time yet to digest the very able and effective discourse of yesterday morning. Besides, it's asking too much of a man, to be text and audience both.

A. You're bitter.

B. Not at all. I really *do* think, though, that you were cut out for a clergyman. You'd have been a most devoted one. You'd have been in the pulpit full seven days in the week.

A. Better the pulpit of the Christian, than the tub of the cynic.

B. Now *you* are complimentary.

A. But sarcasm apart, and talking over the matter like the true friends that we are, I must repeat, my dear fellow, that you are terribly off the track, in cultivating the gloomy views of life that you do. I think you are alike sowing the seeds of unhappiness for yourself, and defrauding society of its just claims upon your services. You have no right to keep in a corner thus, and to be cherishing this fastidious, morose, sceptical, inactive disposition. You

ought to be up and about, doing good, lighting up the clouded faces of your poor brethren with words and deeds of kindness. At your time of life, you ought to be full of hope and faith, ever sanguine, ever cheerful,—

B. Preach away, preach away. Don't spare your powder.

A. I don't intend to; nor the offender. Hardened sinner that he evidently is, he may yet live to profit by a friend's advice, and thank him for it.

B. I ask pardon. I was wrong in interrupting you thus. But seriously, my friend, I cannot look upon this matter as you do. I do not consider existence such an unqualified boon, nor my own particular lot in life, however favorably it may compare with that of the majority, as carrying with it any such overwhelming weight of obligation or of gratitude. If you think you can alter my views, however, go ahead. I am quite ready to listen; nay, I cheerfully admit the excellence, both of your intentions, and of your oratory.

A. There you are again, sneering as usual.

B. Sneering?

A. Yes, sneering; but the fact is, you have got into such a habit of sarcasm and irony, that you are not conscious of it.

B. Forgive me, my dear fellow, forgive me. I certainly meant no offence. But I say again, I differ with you, *toto cælo*, on this subject. I can't see

any such cogent reasons why I or my neighbors ought to be so wonderfully cheerful. Cheerful, forsooth, in a world like this, where all is frailty and instability; where a man is liable to fall down in a fit every moment; where his nearest and dearest friends are snatched away from him, even while his head is turned, by perpetually recurring casualties; where ten thousand subtle and malignant diseases are flying about, and Death is incessantly discharging his poisoned shafts at him and his, from every nook and corner; cheerful, in a city like this, where every man's neck is at the mercy of bullies and omnibus-drivers; cheerful, say you, in a community like ours, where a citizen is afraid to go a few miles up the river to make a friendly call, lest he should be burned, or drowned, or scalded to death; with the comfortable assurance, too, that his murderers, instead of being brought to condign punishment, will at most be dismissed with a gentle rebuke, and within a twelvemonth, perhaps, of the occurrence, become the recipients of massive services of silver. What is there in all this, to call for any such superabundance of gayety or of thankfulness? Look at that morning paper on the table there, and then ask me to be cheerful! Isn't it crammed with all sorts of horrid crimes and disasters? Not to speak of the thefts, robberies, murders, suicides, just glance at that frightful list of fires, and explosions, and railroad accidents, and above all, at that heart-

sickening account of that steamboat collision. If there is anything to move mirth in all this, it must be the mirth of some grinning, mocking demon. And isn't every day's paper filled with the same dismal records? the same dreary evidences of human wickedness and wretchedness? Cheerful, indeed! no, no. So far from singing these psalms of thanksgiving that you are so eternally harping upon, I confess I *do* feel at times disposed to call in question the goodness of the Creator, and to curse the very hour that I saw daylight.

A. Don't, don't, my dear friend, talk so unreasonably, so wildly.

B. So you say; but I maintain that the facts and the reason are with me in this matter.

A. I deny it. I join issue with you, most distinctly on this point. Nay, I will call your own witness. I take up this very paper of yours, and I say that I see far more in it to fill me with pride and admiration and gratitude, than with their opposites; far more manifestations of enterprise, skill, and benevolence, than of folly and villainy. There are some sad accidents here, to be sure. There are many things to grieve, to weep over, but far more to make me rejoice in my country, and in my race, and to pour out my soul in thanks unto the great Father.

B. What say you to *this* item? (*pointing to the Inspector's Report.*) Two hundred and fifty chil-

dren swept off last week by Cholera Infantum and Dysentery! Is that a theme for thanksgiving? Could you see the dear little massacred innocents all in a heap together, you wouldn't talk so. Look at that black list of victims to Consumption, too; and all the rest of those grim weapons in Death's magazine of terrors. What is there to glad the heart of friend or parent, in such a statement as this?

A. At first blush, I grant you, the record seems a dismal one; the sad index of a sad volume of sufferings and bereavements. Faith alone can solve, can reconcile us to dispensations like these. Still, my friend, do not forget how many of these same departures were blessed releases from long sufferings, how many were in the order of nature. But above all do not forget, as you seem disposed to, while dwelling on the fallen ones, the tenfold greater number of those who have been rescued from the destroyer, by generous Nature herself, or by timely skill. Is it logical, is it decent, to take the ground you do? Is it fair, either, to make so much of (and in such a shamefully bitter and heathenish spirit) the thousandth casualty that occurs, and have not one word of gratitude to offer for the nine hundred and ninety-nine safe arrivals, by sea and land, that are cotemporaneous with it? I see in this very column to which you have referred, an account of two vessels foundering at sea. It is a sad story, cer-

tainly; but then I cast my eyes upon the column alongside, and I see a long, long catalogue of ships from all corners of the world, that have reached their journey's end, unharmed. Had it been the other way, now, there would have been some ground for lamentation, some excuse for grumbling.

B. Plausible as ever.

A. *Just*, just. 'Tis *you* that are plausible. You judge by the exceptions, I by the rules. You take for standards the crimes, shipwrecks, and casualties of life; I the wise, orderly, beneficent course of nature.

B. In other words, I suppose, I'm a grumbler, and you an optimist.

A. Be it so: between two such extremes what heart can hesitate? At the same time, I think the truth is far nearer my end of the line than yours.

B. Of course you do.

A. And I think I could demonstrate it; that is, if we were to discuss the subject in a friendly and liberal spirit, and not an acid and sarcastic one.

B. You seem to think that verjuice predominates in my composition. Don't you now?

A. Candidly, I do somewhat; not by nature, however, but from a wilful cherishing of perverse habits and opinions.

B. That is, what you *call* perverse. That's just the difference. What I think a reasonable caution, and slowness of belief, for instance, you denomi-

nate crabbedness and skepticism; and on the other hand, what you would call a noble generosity, I should be apt to resolve into vanity and enthusiasm. Who is to decide between us?

A. No doubt, my dear friend, persons of our opposite views and temperaments, are too apt to misunderstand, and undervalue each other. The only way is to toil faithfully after the truth, and to own up handsomely, and act accordingly, when convinced. But to return to our paper.

B. True, true. I suppose now you think those three miles of advertisements there, are gratifying, inspiring objects; are each and all models of truth and soberness. I must take the liberty of considering at least nine-tenths of them abominable falsehoods, worthy of Falstaff himself; got up by quacks, showmen, swindlers of all sorts and sizes, to mislead and victimize the verdant. Indeed, I doubt whether a single one of that page-full of certificates of the superhuman qualities of all those pills, candies, liniments, cordials, and razor-straps, is signed by a *bona fide* human being, a living, breathing tax-payer. Of course, you think differently. So far from seeing any thing to awaken that pride and admiration, of which you speak, in such a frightful aggregation of fibs, I consider them a disgrace to the metropolis; I see in them most shameful evidences of the corrupting, degrading tendencies of trade.

A. Severe and unjust criticism! That there is

some trifling with truth here, especially under the medical head, I grant you; but that the great bulk of these advertisements are the representatives of facts, ay, and of most creditable facts, I am convinced. Yes, I *am* proud of them; proud of these silent witnesses to so much wealth, and thrift, and enterprise. I *do* look with gratification at these long files of ships, and steamers, and rail-cars; at the millions and millions of tons of merchandize set forth in these one-line notices; at these solid columns of banks and insurance companies; at this goodly array of amusements, that tells us where a world of innocent fun may be had, after the day's work is done; at this long, bristling catalogue of wants, that bespeaks a bustling, thriving population; yes, at the whole record, as bearing testimony to a free, active, flourishing, ingenuous, noble-spirited community.

B. Well, well, one of us must be terribly mistaken in this matter. I can't help thinking that you are surveying the ground through your usual rose-colored magnifiers.

A. And you, it may be, through *your* usual cloudy and yellow tinted ones. But even were this same journal, the gloomy record you try to make it out, is it altogether fair to pronounce upon human life and human nature, from such data as the columns of newspapers and the pages of historians?—Are they not perpetually overlooking the orderly and commendable parts of both, in their chase after

the piquant and surprizing? When the current of existence flows smoothly and beneficently on, they have nothing to say about it; when swollen and mischievous, we are sure to hear the full particulars of all its evil doings. What cares the historian for the piping times of peace, for quiet villages, and thriving towns? His laurels, like those of his heroes, are only to be gathered in revolutions, and on battle-fields. What interest does a journalist take in a respectable, well-regulated neighborhood? Let some foul scandal, or black crime spring up, to o'erthrow the happiness and fair fame of a whole household, and he will not fail to do ample justice to the sad theme, while he passes by, in barren silence, the hundreds of peaceful firesides around him; just as he will blazon forth the ostentatious bequests of some rich neighbor, while the hundreds of poor widows' mites that are daily dropped into the treasury, do their blessed work without a chronicler. Yes, there is a world of unrecorded goodness all about us, that we are quite too ready to overlook and ignore, in our rash denunciations of human nature.

B. And, by the same rule, is there not a loathsome mass of meanness, vice, and villainy, to which we are equally blind, in our rash eulogiums upon it?

A. I think not. I think the evil parts are far more apt to see the light; to be talked and written about, and to find their way into print. Rogues, like invalids, are always chattering, and betraying them-

selves, whereas goodness ever keeps its own counsels, and is chary of singing its own praises. How many glorious entries are there, on the records of the angels, that *we* dream not of; how much stealthy benevolence, how much patience under affliction, how much faith and resignation; ay, and in countries that we look down upon, as heathens and barbarians! How many humble women are there, scattered all over the globe, whose lives are spent in ministering unto sickness and sorrow! Every river-side, every village, hamlet, every sequestered dell of earth, bears witness to them; bears witness also, to a little world of obscure but heartfelt happiness, that we quite forget in our sweeping lamentations over human life.

B. I can't agree with you. Of course, I admit, there is a good deal of worth, and of happiness, that don't find its way into the pages of the annalist, or the columns of the journalist; but I also maintain that there is a fifty-fold greater amount of obscure misery and rascality. As to the angelic records, to which you allude, I confess I shudder at the thought of them. For every page in them that is matter of rejoicing, I believe there are hundreds that are themes for bitter, burning tears. Nor do I see how any accurate reader of his own heart, or of those of his brethren, can come to any other conclusion. Yes, we are a poor, wretched, sin-loving set. We love to commit it ourselves, and we dearly love to read about the sins of others. And the journalist who does not

duly recognize and cater to this propensity, and stuff his columns accordingly, is only courting a speedy bankruptcy. Didn't our neighbor — try that experiment to his cost? Didn't he resolve, one fine morning, that he would thenceforth banish from his sheet all acrimonious, scandalous, and criminal matter; and did not his subscribers fall away from him like autumn leaves? A newspaper without lies and casualties, forsooth! As well talk of a bank without specie, a quack without his gamboge, a magician without his army of placard-bearers!

A. Cheerful, cheerful views, these; so inspiring, too; so calculated to arouse a man to noble effort!

B. And yet, does not every page of history, from Adam down, proclaim their truth?

A. Not so, not so: I cannot, I will not believe it. I will not cherish, nor can I bear to see you cherish, sentiments that I consider alike blasphemous towards God, fatal to one's own happiness, and opposed to all heroic exertions for the happiness of others; sentiments that seem to me to spring far more from a selfish and rebellious spirit, than from a calm, wise survey of nature or of providence.

B. You speak plainly.

A. But not in anger or bitterness.

B. No, no; I believe you. However skeptical I may be on most subjects, I have yet never questioned the truthfulness of your nature, or the sincerity of your friendship.

A. Well then, let us discuss these matters, like friends, fairly and coolly. If I am wrong, let me be convinced, and let me cheerfully surrender my opinions. If right, let me have the satisfaction of feeling that I have done something towards expelling these (for so I can't help thinking them) most gloomy and unsound notions of yours.

B. If you think any good can come of such discussions, so be it. I have no great faith in them myself, and moreover think them far better suited for seraphim, than for poor earth-worms. At the same time, I feel that it would ill become me to meet your evident earnestness and heartiness in this matter, with either a dogged obstinacy, or an uncourteous silence. There certainly is a world-wide difference between us, on these points. I cannot construe myself, or my brethren, or life, or history, as you do.— I see little in the past to beget complacency, nor can I look with your longing, credulous eyes, into the future. On the contrary, the more I see and observe, both within and around me, the more hollow, unsatisfactory, and worthless does existence appear.— Within, what is there, but weakness and frailty; faculties, feeble in their best estate, and which the merest trifle may, at any moment, impair or destroy; an ever-present consciousness of ignorance; a memory that betrays and torments, far more than it serves or soothes; that tells of wasted hours, neglected opportunities, cherished sins; of most magnificent pro-

mises and most contemptible performances: what is there, but a soul groaning under the iron rule of a body; a reason mocked with royal titles, but shorn of all true sovereignty; a conscience that hardly shows fight even, with the evil one, but falls before every pitiful temptation. What is there here to begot any great degree of self-love, or any very ardent desire after immortality? And do I wrong my brethren and neighbors, when I say, that I see in nine-tenths of them pretty much the same characteristics? the same imbecility and ignorance, the same mad chase after present pleasures and excitements, the same wilful turning of their backs upon true wisdom and goodness? Yes, I confess it; life *does* seem to me a frightful complication of mysteries and evils and inequalities; here the pangs of penury, there the nausea of satiety; here the martyr to business, there the victim to idleness. Is not mankind the same motley crowd that ever it was, of peers and paupers, priests and pick-pockets, scholars and sots? And is there not, now as ever, the same frightful predominance every where, of folly, sin and sorrow? Of course, you will say, no, and will, as you did just now, utterly repudiate and denounce such sentiments.

A. I do, indeed, and it grieves me to the soul to see you entertain and dwell upon them thus. *I* say that you do injustice alike to yourself and your brethren; that the world never *was* so bad as you

paint it; that it is far wiser and better to-day than ever it was, and that I firmly believe it will go on growing and advancing in goodness and happiness, unto the end. But above all, do I believe in a blessed life to come, that is to solve these same mysteries and sorrows, of which you so ceaselessly complain (while you have no word of thanks to utter for your ten thousand benefits and privileges), and that is to reveal in Him that hath sent or permitted them, an infinitely wise and gracious Father.

B. Well then, if you *will* discuss the matter, which of us is right—you, who entertain this belief and these expectations; or I, who have no faith in the amendment of this world, and (I own it) little or no faith in, or even hope of a world to come?

A. What, not even a *hope* of immortality?

B. No, no. I ask no future life. The present is quite burthen enough. I would fain drop that burden at the grave, and there have an end. I covet not the possible glories, I shrink from the possible sufferings of any second existence. No such risk for *me*. No, no; give me the sleep that knows no waking; not a mere truce between two turbulent, tumultuous worlds, but a sweet and lasting peace. I ask no more. Heaven knows I have no claims upon it, in the shape of future rewards, nor shall have; and I would most gladly evade its punishments. I am for closing the account, good and all, at the tomb. Yes, let that be the finis of my little

volume. No continuation, no new series for me; no enlarged or amended edition; no—

A. Don't, don't talk so wildly.

B. Wildly, absurdly, if you will; but still, honestly. I speak what my heart dictates; and oh, how many, many hearts are there, that if their owners interpreted them as fairly, would with one accord cry, Amen, amen!

A. What?

B. Yes, would gladly drown alike their hopes and fears of an hereafter, in endless slumber; would gladly compromise for annihilation.

A. I cannot think so. On the contrary, it seems to me such cases are even more rare than they are sad. Nay, I had almost said, I do not believe that any such case exists, if fairly tested. The vilest wretch and murderer even, that ever disgraced and desolated the earth, who knows that there is no beginning, even, of adequate punishment for him here, and who can only look forward to long and bitter sufferings hereafter, would he not yet, does he not in his inmost heart, prefer to face those sufferings, to the dread thought of nothingness? Does he not cherish the latent hope, that beyond all this terrible but most righteous retribution, there is something of comfort and encouragement; that there will yet dawn upon his poor benighted soul a day of peace and of favor, a day that is to usher in a useful, a glorious career in the service of Heaven? I believe

it. And, apart from this hope, does not the vanity of human nature reluct at the idea of being thus summarily and contemptuously dismissed into oblivion? Is there any punishment that a poor sinner would not be willing to undergo, rather than to owe his release to any such humiliating, crushing thought as this? No, no, my dear fellow; I disagree with you entirely on this point. You do *not* speak from the very, very depths of your heart, when you utter such sentiments. It cannot be. *No future life?* What, have you so little curiosity, even, as to be willing to go down to your grave and be extinguished for ever, having seen no more than this little corner of God's glorious universe, and that but dimly and hurriedly? Are you so easily satisfied? Would you explore no farther? Have you no desire to taste the blessed air, and behold the lovely flowers of Heaven? Or to know more of the stars above you, and their histories, and to survey the blessed plan of creation from other points of view, and to gaze upon earth from some brighter, happier orb? Would you not, if you could, scale the heights and pierce the depths of this wondrous frame of things, and go on, perpetually enlarging the boundaries of your knowledge and your experience? Have you no desire for any new organization, or series of them, each surpassing its predecessor in strength, and beauty, and capacity; for faculties of motion, and perception, and thought, compared with which the

choicest endowments of mortals and their exertions, are as the timid creeping of the babe, alongside of the vigor of the full-grown man? Would you not have a vision that could pierce through thousand leagues of air, and a hearing that could embrace alike the chirp of neighboring cricket, and the strains of distant angels, and a power to course through ether, and to perform heavenly journies, compared with which the poor travel of earth is as the brief, fluttering voyage of the butterfly, to the soaring flight of the eagle? Have you no wish, either, to meet the loved ones of earth in some happier home; to behold in brighter climes, and under more genial influences, the brave, and wise, and good, and lovely that have adorned the planet in times past, and that are to grace and bless it in times to come? Have you no longing for the glorious society of angels, no ambition to become, yourself, a ministering angel of God? to go on, growing ever in grace and wisdom, and becoming more and more familiar with the plans and purposes of the Creator; to read more and more clearly and deeply the book of providence; nay, to be a partaker of God's counsels, to be employed by Him in heavenly missions, to have the charge and guardianship, it may be, of stars and systems filled with intelligent, accountable beings; to enlighten, rescue, and redeem them from the thralldom of sin, and from the wiles of the arch-enemy? Or do you see nothing to inspire or cheer, in such hopes and

aspirations? No, no, my friend; I will not so libel, so insult you, as to suppose you the incurious, unambitious, cold, dull, grovelling creature that you would fain declare yourself; to suppose you capable of thus wilfully turning your back upon visions and possibilities like these, and of preferring to go down to your grave, and rot, and pass away forever, of no more worth or significance than the meanest weed or vilest reptile of earth.

B. Fine talk, brave words these; but as usual, my dear friend, you have quite left out the shadows in this fancy sketch of yours; you say not a word about those *other* visions and possibilities that belong to the future. You talk of angels and arch-angels, and of happier climes and homes above, and of ever-expanding capacities, and joys, and duties; but you quite overlook the demons and arch-demons, and their dismal abodes, and their ever-increasing powers of inflicting and of suffering evil. You talk as if all these stars around us were miniature heavens, dedicated unto peace and love. Where then, let me ask, are Satan's dominions? Are then, the seeds of good so scantily sown here on earth, to yield such glorious fruit hereafter, and are the far more plenteously sown seeds of evil to come to nought? If there is to be this illimitable growth in grace, why not in wickedness also? You seem to think this world a mere nursery for angels, but may it not be far more of a primary school for dev-

ils? I fear so. If there *be* any thing beyond it, it seems to me that the powers of darkness will be tenfold more the gainers thereby than the powers of light; that—

A. How *can* you talk so? The idea that God's bright and beautiful earth is a mere infant school for fiends—monstrous, blasphemous assumption!

B. I see not how. I think my gloomy picture has far more truth in it, than your brilliant one. That the great mass of men do, and ever have served the devil most devotedly, here, who can gainsay? And why shouldn't they continue those services hereafter? Why shouldn't the same cursed infatuation that leads and keeps us astray on earth, lead and keep us astray through all eternity? Will it not be so? Is not the future far more alarming than inspiring? If I *should* exist beyond the grave, are not the chances altogether in favor of my continuing the same wretched, wicked part that I have been playing here; of my becoming, not a ministering angel of God, but a vile emissary of Satan; going about on *his* cursed errands, corrupting youth, seducing innocence, doing all I can to disturb the peace and poison the happiness of the universe; ever growing in guilt and wretchedness, and in the power and will to cause and to inflict them? And is not annihilation to be preferred to a career like this? I repeat it, then, I ask no future life. I wish to take no such risk. I am willing to forego

its possible joys and glories, so I may be secured against its perils and its horrors. Let me stop here. Make an end of me in the grave. There *may* possibly be one seraph round the throne the less in consequence, but it is far, far more likely that you are thereby nipping in the bud an abominable limb of Satan.

A. What language! Far more suited, certainly, to a benighted Persian or Hindoo, than to this Christian age and land. Nay, you are far *worse* than a Manichean. They were willing to allow the Lord at least a divided sovereignty in His own universe; but from your talk, I should think the Evil One had almost exclusive control over it. You cannot be in earnest, in expressing such sentiments. You do not anticipate any such horrible career for yourself hereafter. Nor have you the remotest idea, and you know it, that that dear little boy there, who is smiling so sweetly in his slumber, can ever become a howling fiend in hell.

B. God forbid! And yet, why not? Cain himself, no doubt, was a very pretty baby. And how many just such little rosebuds as this, have fond young mothers cherished in their bosoms, who have turned out Satan's own minions at last; have done all that in them lay, to make a hell of earth!

A. Don't speak so bitterly. Oh, no, no; this dear young soul was destined for happiness, for heaven. So were all human souls. Who can doubt it?

Who can doubt that we shall all, in God's good season, our trials and perils past, our sins and sufferings over, meet in that blessed land at last; shall enter on a glorious career of joys, and duties, and contemplations, compared with which all the beauty, and glory, and wisdom of earth, are the veriest toys of children? You smile, and will no doubt call these the dreams of an enthusiast. But are they not better than the horribly gloomy picture you conjured up just now? Nay more (if you *were* in earnest in what you said), are you not far more ultra and visionary in your notions, than I in mine; far more unreasonable and wild in your despondency than I in my high hopes? If I have left out the shadows, as you say, in my picture, have you not utterly banished every glimmer even of cheerful light from yours?

B. Well, to tell the honest truth, I was rather replying to you in your own fanciful and extravagant strain, (for so, my dear friend, I must consider it,) than speaking the real sentiments of my heart. I confess, I have very few hopes or fears about the matter. I certainly do not look forward to any such horrible hereafter as I hinted at, any more than I do to the magnificent one, which you have painted in such glowing colors. To me, the terrors and the splendors seem alike visionary. Your angel-thronged palaces of light, and my demon-haunted abodes of darkness, are they not alike the creations of o'erbusy

fancies, alike devoid of any solid foundation in reason? I confess, I am more and more inclined to think so, every day.

A. As you will. In either case, your views seem to me as little consistent with sound reasoning, as they are gloomy and repulsive. You begin by finding fault with every thing in this world. Not a thing suits you: all is vanity and vexation, gall and bitterness; and you end by rejecting any other; or should there possibly be another, you can only see in it a thousand fold more guilt and wretchedness. You seem to have no faith whatever in your own freedom, or in God's goodness; in your power to repent and reform, or in God's acceptance of your penitence; should you possibly survive the grave, you take it for granted that you will be consigned to the tender mercies of Satan; but on the whole, you do not believe in any such survivorship. In other words, you deliberately accuse your Maker of amusing himself at the expense of His poor children; of putting them here, surrounding them with trials and sorrows, vexing their souls with all manner of riddles and problems, tantalizing them with all manner of desires and aspirations, and then, so far from vouchsafing them a single word of explanation, or a single look of comfort and encouragement, of wantonly slamming the door in their faces, of deliberately stopping their mouths forever, in the grave! Can you believe this? What would you say to an

earthly father, who would take his little darlings on his knee, and talk to them about Christmas and Santa Claus, and excite their young imaginations, and kindle their hopes of coming toys and dainties, and after all mock the poor things with empty stockings, or fill them with odious rods? Would you speak to such a wretch? Would you live in the same hemisphere with him? And yet you do not hesitate to tax the heavenly Parent with just such cruelty and malice. Beautiful doctrine! Does not the bare statement of it demonstrate alike its folly and wickedness?

B. You speak warmly; but notwithstanding the strength of your language, my friend, I am not convinced. I cannot see these things as you do. If we *must* discuss such subjects, why not go to the bottom of the difficulty? I repeat it, then; I have *not* the faith you speak of. I cannot get up that confidence, in myself or my brethren, in the present or the future, that seems so to sustain and elevate you. I say it not sneeringly, still less in any tone of triumph. I often wish it were otherwise. I often envy you that cheerful, sanguine, credulous nature of yours. But so it is. I cannot look with your eyes. I cannot read those glorious meanings (as you call them) in every event that occurs, nor perceive those magnificent developments that you say are in store for us. The longer I look at life, the more dreary and complicated does the snarl appear;

say rather a tawdry, flashy melo-drama, full of noise and nonsense, having all the gloom of a tragedy, without its dignity, all the absurdity of a farce, without its fun.

A. True; and it is these same dismal, horrible notions of yours, that I so seek to combat. I cannot bear to see one whom I esteem and love, giving way to them thus.

B. Well, I am willing to listen. As I said before, I have no great faith in the utility of such discussions. Ninety-nine times in a hundred, they only end in the exchange of unpleasant epithets, and in leaving the parties clinging with firmer grip than ever to their respective opinions.

A. But why should it be so? Surely such themes as these, discussed by true friends, and with becoming candor, courtesy, and modesty, ought to lead to profitable issues. However, I have no idea of taxing your patience any farther, to-day. I shall insist, though, on renewing the argument when next we meet.

B. As you please, my dear fellow; and meanwhile farewell.

A. God bless you.

CONVERSATION II.

A. In our last conversation, my dear friend, I expressed a wish to discuss farther, certain sentiments of yours, which, the more I reflect upon them, the more and more dreary and frightful do they appear. Let me ask you again, *were* you in earnest in uttering them? Do you really entertain a skepticism so dismal, so fatal to all peace and happiness, to all noble ambition, and to all hearty effort after improvement?

B. Why should you doubt my sincerity? I certainly *did* speak as I felt, on these subjects; gloomily, wickedly, if you will, but God knows, frankly. I might better have held my peace, no doubt. As I then told you, I have no faith, myself, in such speculations, or discussions. We poor mortals have been puzzling over, and prattling about these mysteries, from the beginning, and what good has ever

come of it all? Are we not just as much in the dark as ever? For every wise word that has been uttered in these controversies, have there not been ten thousand foolish and wicked ones? Why seek to multiply them, then? What have *I* to say, in the premises, worth combating, or worth hearing? a poor, whimsical, ignorant, frail sinner, like me?—Wouldn't silence be far more becoming? How visionary too, the attempt to make any permanent impression upon each other's opinions, any more than to alter our temperaments. No, no. You, my friend, are blessed with a cheerful, hopeful nature. You appear to have a faith, and zeal, and enthusiasm upon all subjects. You cannot, if you would, look upon the dark side of things, past, present, or to come. I am differently constituted. I neither have, nor sympathize with these sanguine views of yours. But why should I seek to shake your faith? If you can see your way clear through this world, and have a beautiful vista beyond, to cheer and inspire you, why should I wish to interpose clouds, if I could?—Oh, no, enjoy, make the most of this generous ardor of yours, and leave, leave me to my gloom and unbelief.

A. Not so. I am not willing to drop the matter thus. These themes are, indeed, as you say, old as man, but are they any the less vitally important on that account? Is not the peace of our souls as deeply involved in them as ever? I am not willing

to believe that calm conferences about them, and friendly explanations might not do good. If I *am* the wild enthusiast you seem to think me, I ought to be set right; if you are unreasonably desponding and skeptical, let me, at least, try to shed some little ray of light upon your gloom. I should, indeed, like to know more of the grounds and details of these opinions of yours, and by what process you have arrived at such dismal conclusions.

B. Well, if you insist, I am bound by all the laws of friendship and of courtesy, to speak honestly and to listen patiently.

A. Tell me, then: do you really mean to say, that you have no faith in any future life?

B. I will answer you candidly. I have neither any lively faith in, nor ardent desire after immortality. If I *should* exist hereafter, if I *should* dwell in other worlds, I have no confidence that I should be a gainer thereby; nay, might I not be a terrible loser? Apart from all moral considerations, may not this earth, with all its troubles and sorrows, still be the most tolerable part of creation? May not we children of men, with all our follies and our crimes, yet be God's best work? Who shall say? I have as much right to my conjectures, as you to yours, where all is fog and ignorance. Suppose it to be so. How dreary, then, the thought of any thing beyond the grave! The idea of a perpetuity here, is sufficiently distressing; but to go from bad

to worse; to be transformed to a planet still more dismal, and to society still more worthless; to be condemned, for instance, to a long term of consciousness, in Jupiter, that (for aught we know to the contrary,) foggy, stupid, milk-and-water, shockingly lighted, sterile orb; where there is nothing genial or exhilarating; where no such thing as a flower or fruit is ever seen, or lovely landscape, or brilliant sunset; nothing, nothing but one eternal round of dull, leaden skies, and bitter herbs; to go through such a dreary routine as this, half brutal, half human, with ever and anon, the tormenting recollection of the (with all its vexations and sufferings) thousand fold pleasanter earth that I had left; and to find no escape from such an existence; or if I should succeed in severing the tie that bound me to it, to be still worse off; to find myself suddenly removed to some such tumultuous and inflammable planet, perhaps, as Mercury; who knows? and there to go through a career, all fret and feverish excitement: my blood ever at the boiling point: my brain "one whirling gulf of fantasy and flame;" no peace, no quiet; and so on, on, on, ad infinitum, shifting about from one theatre of action to another, each more wretched than the one before it, and always in extremes; now, all that is dull and dreary and stagnant, and now an insane and ceaseless energy: the idea of such an immortality as this! Is it not also-

gether frightful and intolerable? Wouldn't extinction be perfectly delightful in comparison?

A. Unquestionably it would; but what right have you to indulge in any such wild and absurd conjectures? Precious notions yours, of the Creator and his universe! How *can* you talk so, with that Bible on your table, too; with God's own promise of a glorious life to come, if you will but secure it; of a world of beauty and grandeur and happiness, infinitely beyond all human conception, even, in store for his faithful, obedient children? The idea that frail, sinful man, with all his capacities, is the highest effort of creative wisdom, or that this little earth of ours is the masterpiece in the great gallery of Nature, would be absurd enough, I should think, to the mere philosopher; but to give vent to such whimsical, such presumptuous speculations, right in the teeth of that blessed revelation there, it seems to me perfectly inexcusable.

B. But, my friend, suppose I were to tell you, that I have no faith in that same revelation?

A. Well, I ought to have expected it; at the same time, I confess, it grieves me to the soul to hear you say so.

B. Why should it? Why should I not speak out honestly? If we *must* discuss these subjects, I am for going to the root of the matter. I am for making a clean breast of it. I *have* no faith in that volume, other or greater than I have in that Shaks-

peare alongside of it, and I feel just as much at liberty to criticise it. I see no more of a divine origin in Job, than I do in Hamlet. I no more believe that God dictated the parables of Christ, or the Epistles of Paul, than he did the eloquent pleading of Portia, or the sublime talk of Prospero. This grates harshly on your ear, I see, but so it seems to me. I would not speak disrespectfully nor ungratefully. I have read with delight the exquisite story of Joseph and his brethren; but is it one whit more exquisite than the Winter's Tale? Or is Ruth herself, standing amid the golden corn, one whit more pure and loveable than the flower-crowned Perdita, or is Jephthah's daughter a finer conception than Cordelia? Is the wisdom of Solomon any more genuine and world-embracing than that which the bard keeps pouring forth continually, alike in the palaces of kings, and the dungeons of convicts—in the caves of Bohemia, no less than under the pleasant trees of Arden? If the man of Jerusalem was inspired, surely the man of Stratford was. Nor have I any more confidence in the truth of the statements of Kings and Chronicles, than I have in those of the historical plays; nay, not half so much.

A. I suppose not. You mean to say, then, in a word, that you have no more faith in the facts of the Bible, than in those of any other respectable quarto; that you build no bright hopes upon its promises,

that you fear not its threatenings, and that you feel under no obligation to obey its commandments.

B. I do. I say, too, that I see at least a score of works on those shelves yonder, philosophical, historical, poetical, and ethical, for which I have quite as much admiration and reverence.

A. Knowing full well, too, when you say it, that the learned, wise, and good men of the last nineteen centuries, have nearly all received it, and bowed down before it, as the Word of God.

B. True, true. I know, too, the utter insignificance and worthlessness of any opinions of mine upon this and upon all subjects. Still, I must be honest about it. I have read some few of the writings of the great and good men you speak of. I should be sorry to think that I did not, in some small degree, appreciate the force of their genius, the zeal, learning, ingenuity, eloquence of these illustrious champions of the Church. But if, after all, my own slender and feeble understanding remains unconvinced, I must claim the liberty of saying so.

A. Certainly. But not to dwell upon this point at present, let me further ask you, do you see nothing in God's book of nature, or in the workings of His providence, or in the phenomena of your own heart, whereon to ground a faith in immortality?

B. I do not. I see abundance of material for hope, fear, conjecture, but no evidence at all satisfactory. So far as my poor senses can interpret this

same book of nature, they tell me that all is over at the grave; that this soul and body, as we call them, are born, grow, and die together; that I have not had any previous existence, and why then any future one; that when the brain is wounded, the soul is wounded—when it slumbers, the soul slumbers—when it is destroyed, the soul is destroyed. You will, of course, repudiate their testimony; will have it, that the spirit survives; but you will not, and cannot answer any one of the ten thousand questions of the doubter. You cannot begin to explain the nature of that partnership, of which you say death is the dissolution. How does the mind act? Separate, if you can, the several faculties and processes whereby I perceive, and remember, and reason, and moralize. Give us the analysis. Show us how the machinery works, while the man is alive, before rashly and dogmatically pronouncing upon the phenomena of death. Whither does this surviving spirit go? Does it still linger about the earth, or does it straightway pierce the clouds and the air, and soar far away into the illimitable ether? What bright, what dark scenes does it visit? When does it return, and what tidings does it bring of its wanderings? Where is it in sleep, in swoons, in trances? Till you can begin to shed some little comfortable light on any of these points, cease to wonder, or to chide, if I can find in the phenomena

around me, no materials for any rational, much less any lively faith in an hereafter.

A. But the daily occurrences of life, its inequalities, casualties, bereavements; the innocent sufferings, the unpunished iniquities, that each hour bears witness to; how can you explain these things, how reconcile them to the goodness and justice of God, save by the life to come?

B. What do I know of the goodness and justice of God? What data have I for forming any opinion, one way or the other? For aught you can show to the contrary, He may be capricious and cruel. This sounds horribly to you, of course; but is it one whit more presumptuous and impertinent than to take the opposite ground? What would you say to a poor, ignorant Hibernian, who, after a two days' residence in this country, should undertake to pronounce upon the attributes of the government, either in the way of eulogy or condemnation? You would tell the fool to hold his peace; that he knew nothing about it, and that it would be infinitely more becoming in him to keep his gratuitous and worthless opinions to himself. Just so gratuitous and worthless seem to me the opinions of us poor fools of nature, upon the attributes of God's government; opinions based on our feeble, scanty investigations of some few natural laws, in this little corner of creation. The idea of our speaking in a positive, peremptory way, either *pro* or *con*, is monstrous.—

What do we know about it? What do we know of God's motives, in making earth or man? The whole panorama of life may have been got up, and may be kept going, without any particular regard for our welfare, but for the amusement and instruction of some other order of beings; an experiment for them to learn by. Or it may have been a mere wanton display of creative power. Who can tell? Who can tell if God *does* actually govern the world? He may have abandoned it to inferior intelligences, who, while they are incapable of destroying his exquisite workmanship, nevertheless so bungle matters, that we poor mortals are thereby involved in continual vexations and mishaps. We know nothing about it. All is sheer guess-work. We have no opinions, worthy the name; we have our whims, and humors, and conjectures, varying as a man's health varies, or his capacity, or his situation in life, or the company he keeps; and above all, modified by the temperaments our parents give us. You, my friend, are by constitution an optimist, and are forever dwelling on the cheerful aspect of things—the flowers and fruits, the music and beauty of nature. I ride in the regiment of grumblers (so, at least, you say), and dwell with corresponding power and eloquence on the tornados, diseases, reptiles, poisons, follies, crimes, that I see scattered about, in such frightful profusion. But are we not both equally wide of the mark; mere ignorant chatter-boxes?

The truly wise man smiles at us both, confesses the profundity of his ignorance, and holds his peace.

A. Charming doctrine, this! How delightful a one to impart to a child, or to comfort a mourner with, or to encourage a poor penitent! A doctrine that turns all prayers and thanksgivings into a mockery; that converts all the bounties of God into caprices, all the sorrows and sufferings of life into wanton displays of cruelty! But go on. Let us have all the articles of this lovely faith of yours.

B. You accuse *me* of being sarcastic. I think *you* are quite a proficient in the art. I was merely answering your own question. I say again, I don't pretend to explain the ten thousand mysteries and miseries of life. I have no opinion, one way or the other. I see things, certainly, that seem to speak of a kind Creator, and bountiful provider above; I see others that look all harshness and injustice. I saw but yesterday, a spectacle that I confess seemed to me alike unnatural and cruel; I saw a sweet young bride, torn by a merciless disease from the arms of her husband, and from all the delights and endearments of home, and consigned in a narrow box to the damp ground. I saw, recently, three lovely children, snatched away by the same fell agent of death, all within a few hours; borne off from loving parents, and from the bright joys and hopes of childhood, and laid side by side together in the dismal tomb. Every hour, as you say, bears

witness to such occurrences; every hour shows us the sufferers by others' crimes and vices; shows us good men involved in perpetual mishaps, and sleek scoundrels thriving in their iniquity, and going down to their graves, unwhipt of justice. Who *can* comprehend these puzzles? If I say that they betray a cruel or negligent Creator, you take me to task at once as a heathen and a rebel; as rashly, in turn, pronouncing them the manifestations of God's love, and the pledges of immortality. But are not both criticisms alike worthless? Are we not utterly in the dark? I certainly cannot derive any comfortable faith from such phenomena. What is such faith, but the mere creature of vanity and self-love? We don't like to be treated in this way. We don't like to be deprived of our friends and comforts thus. Wounded pride, and mortified vanity, and disappointed ambition, all protest against such dealings; all join in the cry for an hereafter. We insist upon it. We call on God to explain himself, and to clear up His conduct. We poor worms of the dust call on the great Creator to demonstrate to our satisfaction, the accordance of His dispensations with our notions of justice! But suppose He should not condescend to do so? Suppose He should utterly withhold from us the illumination, and the compensation, that we so clamor for! What then? What are we to do about it? Who shall presume to read the riddles of the Almighty? It *may* be a part of God's plans,

that this puppet-show of earth is to continue for hundreds of thousands of years yet; the individual puppets all the time coming and going; each generation destroyed in its turn, to make room for another, as flower supplants flower, or weed weed; the race still surviving, the entertainment still kept up, not for *our* edification or happiness, but for purposes to us unknown; a panorama perhaps, as I said before, for youthful angels to learn their lessons by, or to try their young wits and hands on, in the way of government. Who knows? It *may* be a part of those plans, that we shall all be annihilated before another sun sets; that this globe and all which it inherit, shall be crushed to dust ere then, or melted in some vast, fiery gulf; or if not thus violently disposed of, taken up, and thrust aside, into some dark, silent corner of the universe, as so much old rubbish, or as an experiment with which the Creator has become completely tired out and disgusted. Why not? Who knows any thing about it? Such a consummation is not very palatable to our pride, certainly; such a reply to all our claims and entreaties may seem very harsh and cruel. But what are we to do? Here we are, poor, blind, ignorant slaves, depending for every breath we draw on God's good will and pleasure. What *can* we do but grumble, or grin and bear in silence, whatever he sees fit to send?

A. Still more exhilarating and inspiring, these

last sentiments of yours! You improve as you proceed; to say nothing of the fine vein of filial piety and resignation that pervades them!

B. You're severe; but recollect that this discussion is not of my seeking. You asked for my views, and you must take them as they come, however gloomy, or absurd, or wicked they may seem to you.

A. Certainly; and I ask pardon for interrupting you thus unseasonably. Go on, go on.

B. Well, I was merely about to add, that in this thorough and universal ignorance of the workings of God's providence, one conjecture appeared to me quite as admissible as another, and all alike unsatisfactory. Your cold-blooded philosopher would laugh at us both. He would say that all these occurrences, these inequalities, casualties, bereavements of which you speak, explain themselves pretty well, after all, if rightly considered, without any necessity for calling in any hereafter. On the whole, he would tell you, the distribution of life's prizes and sorrows was a pretty equal one; that he who had a liberal share of the gifts of nature or of fortune, had a corresponding share of cares and anxieties, just as the musician has his tortures, no less than his delights, that the unlearned ear is spared. And so with life's casualties. While, at first blush, they seem stunning, heart-rending things, on a more deliberate investigation they are found to have their bright sides. A steamboat blows up on the Father of Waters, carry-

ing with it its hundred victims. Is it harsh to say, that full half of these victims were useless, nay mischievous members of the community? If some valuable labor and talent have been withdrawn from it, more drunkards, and gamblers, and reckless fellows of all sorts, have been cut short in their career of folly and knavery. The apparent wrong is, after all, a benefit to society. The same with the bereavements of life. There *are* such things as broken hearts, and griefs that death alone can cure; but oh, how rare! He would point quietly to the statistics in the case, and ask if an overwhelming majority of widowers and widows were not speedily reconciled to their losses; did not often consider such bereavements as most seasonable separations of parties mutually disagreeable; and did not take unto themselves accordingly, second, third, fourth, yea, fifth mates successively, should their lives be sufficiently prolonged for such indulgences; obeying, no doubt, the customary decencies of life, and going through the customary gradations of mourning, in each interval; but wearing, too often, jubilant hearts beneath their sable garments and hypocritical countenances. The little children, too, who are borne each summer by thousands to their little graves, martyrs to dysentery and cholera infantum, how many of the dear things, had they lived, would have been presidents, or the wives of presidents, would have been true heroes or heroines in the strife

of life? how many might not have been poor, abandoned drunkards or harlots? Some few, we know, must have ended their days within prison walls, or have perished ignominiously on the gallows. How much better, then, for them and the community, that they were swept away just as they were! And so would he go on, probably, smoothing over and explaining away, all the ills and sorrows of life, without any reference whatever to any thing beyond the grave. Or he might even go farther, and say that the great mass of men neither had any real confidence in, or care for a future life. They might go to church indeed, and repeat creeds, and even pen obituaries, and put inscriptions on tombstones to the contrary, but in their very hearts, and when talking and acting honestly in the matter, they would acknowledge their scepticism and indifference. Nay, he would ask, do not their language and conduct betray them, in spite of themselves? If they really believed in a future state, would they talk of death as they do? Would they apply such epithets to it as they do? *The sleep that knows no waking; peace to his ashes; he has gone to his long home; after life's fitful fever, he sleeps well; we are such stuff as dreams are made of, and our little life is rounded with a sleep;* what mean these and ten thousand such expressions, that we hear continually, if men really believed that death was a mere introduction to another world? Why do we dodge the

subject, too, as we do, and take refuge from it behind our pipes and pots? Why do we keep away from funerals, and out of churchyards as much as possible? Why do we lament over and pity the dead as we do, if they have only gone to some bright land before us? Why are we so anxious about the disposal of our remains? Would Shakspeare himself have expressed himself so feelingly about the repose of his bones, had he really thought that in dying, he was merely exchanging his frail tabernacle of flesh for a more glorious body and a higher sphere of action?

A. Excuse me, but I *must* interrupt this same philosopher of yours, for a moment. I should rather say, that had the poet not believed in an hereafter, he wouldn't have cared the toss of a copper about the matter.

B. I can't agree with you. On the contrary, had he been a firm believer in immortality, he would, I think, have been at the same time far more indifferent about the disposal of his bones, and far more anxious about the disposal and preservation of his plays.

A. Oh, no; the poet's indifference about the fate of his plays is, to my mind, far more agreeably and satisfactorily explained by the thought that, conscious as he was of their merits, they nevertheless fell so far below the glorious ideal that was ever present in his mind, that he got out of patience with

them. Nay, is there not a tradition that on being visited by a brother poet one morning, he threw aside his unfinished Othello in disgust, saying, as he did so, "I hope the day will yet come, my friend, when I shall do something worth showing to the world"?

B. I must say, I never heard that story. You must have dreamt it, I think. But we are wandering from the subject. Do not all these things, then, (our philosopher would ask), this clinging to the good things of life to the last possible moment, this unwillingness to think or talk about death, and the expressions ordinarily-made use of in regard to it, all go to show the latent mistrust in men's minds of any thing beyond it? And do they not treat it accordingly? When young, and hearty, and prosperous, death is then a presumptuous intruder, or rather a vile kidnapper, come to snatch them away from the half-tasted banquet of life, from their boon companions, and pleasures, and excitements; when old, and poor, and weary, and wretched, then is he a kind friend, who comes to light them to their beds, where they may straightway forget all their aches, pains, and sorrows, in sweet and endless oblivion. Is not this, he would ask, and has it not always been, the real, honest creed of the great mass of the world?

A. I don't believe it. I reject alike the facts and arguments of this plausible friend of yours. He

has not condescended, by the way, to explain the puzzling case of those others, embraced in my question; I mean the victims of others' crimes and vices, and the criminals themselves, whom human justice never overtakes. Does he dispose of them also, in the same off-hand and superficial style?

B. Well, he would tell us, of course, that God is not to be taxed with these evils, but man. 'Tis our own abuse of our freedom, that is at the bottom of all these troubles. If we lived right, if we obeyed the dictates of reason, there would be no crimes or vices or wars or famines or diseases in the world. Every man would have his fair share of years and of comforts. God has done his part. He has given us the materials and capacities for happiness, if we will only make a good use of them. How monstrous to charge God with all the paupers and lunatics and criminals that deface society. 'Tis our own accursed folly and infatuation. Had men employed aright their time and powers, from the beginning, what a magnificent spectacle would earth and man both present, this day! But we have chosen to do otherwise, to give the reins to our appetites and passions, and lo, the result. These evils explain themselves, and man must mend them, without calling on God or a future life, to interpret them, or compensate for them. Let us live according to nature, and she will reward us accordingly. Natural death, now fast becoming obsolete, will once more be heard of. Is it not so? In this

false, feverish life that we are leading, are we much better than suicides? Nay, worse than this, is not every other babe almost, that is born, a matricide? Call you this God's plan, or man's perverseness?—Who can hesitate about the matter? Who can doubt that if men set about it in earnest, these troubles would soon be remedied, the world be changed into a smiling garden, and that length of years, peace, plenty and prosperity would soon become the portion of every family between the poles? Every man would be as rugged and as flourishing as the trees of his own planting, and would give way at last, from sheer decay of nature; and so, with slowly dimmed perceptions, and gently fading faculties, drop quietly into his grave, and be gathered to his fathers; perfectly contented to make way for the new-comers, and satisfied that he had got all God ever meant to give him; undisturbed by any idle fears, unvexed by any idle aspirations after any thing beyond. Such would probably be his explanation. Of course, you reject it with disdain. But, after all, may he not be nearer the truth than either of us? Are not such views more sound and just than my growling, grumbling ones, than my spectre-haunted and terrible hereafter, on the one hand, or than your fond, credulous reading of the book of life, your angels and angel-worlds to come, on the other? I can't help thinking so, at times. But here I am, prattling away,

my dear fellow, and having all the conversation to myself.

A. Not at all. You are doing what I wished.—Go on. Speak out freely. I am anxious to know your real sentiments on these points. You have the floor. Depend upon it, I shall claim the privilege of replying at length, in my turn.

B. Certainly.

A. Well, then, let me repeat the third branch of my question, though you have partially answered it already. Do you see nothing in the phenomena of your own heart, whereon to build a faith in immortality? Are you conscious of no desires that this world cannot meet, no capacities that it cannot develop, no ambition that all its prizes and conquests cannot satisfy?

B. Candidly, I am not; that is to say, when I look at those same phenomena, coolly and deliberately, and not through the magnifying glass of self-love. I do *not* see in myself any such thirst after knowledge, truth, or goodness, as this world cannot satisfy, and therefore none on which to base any reasonable claim to a future life. I confess I have a childish curiosity, at times, to know more about my Maker, and of these stars around me, and to find out what they are made of, and who occupy them, and to see the crops, and the curiosities, and the amusements, *etc.* A journey through the sky would be an agreeable novelty, no doubt. But what is it,

after all, but a mere traveler's fancy? What poor man does not, at times, by the same rule, feel a desire to go round the globe, and have a peep at its different nations and kingdoms? But is it a reasonable, or practicable wish? Has he any more right to grumble, if not indulged in it, than a small boy would have, because he may not be treated to the contents of every toy-shop and confectionery that he may happen to pass in the streets? Are such whims as these to be the basis of a claim to immortality? If I had a real, ardent wish to lead an arduous, honorable career of truth and duty, hereafter, it would be one thing; but I detect no such generous ambition in my nature, no, nor any corresponding capacities. Vanity, indeed, may sometimes whisper in my ear, that I have parts and powers above my station; that I might figure in a loftier theatre and drama than this earth affords; but meanwhile, how abominably I am playing the humble part, the great Manager *has* assigned me! How much knowledge is there here, that I have neither the wit nor the will to find out; now many golden opportunities of doing good, that I am too indolent and selfish to avail myself of! And what is worse, I see no symptoms of any thing better in myself. I can make cheap and copious confessions, to be sure; but as to any thorough, hearty reform, I have not the courage or grace to attempt it. If I were allowed another life, I should only throw it away as I have this, so far. And, my

friend, in speaking thus for myself, do I not speak for the great mass of my brethren, from the beginning? I do not deny that there have been some brilliant exceptions, scattered over the pages of human history, or the obscurer annals of daily life.—What particular action the Lord may see fit to take, in these rare cases, we may not presume to conjecture; but as for the majority of us, are we entitled to any hereafter? No, no; let us find out more of God's secrets here, let us turn this earth into a far more respectable and agreeable place, before we presume to cry aloud for any other world. I see you consider these sentiments unjust, nay, libels on human nature. I can't help it. I say it again; I really believe that ninety-nine out of every hundred of the sons of Adam, that have been born into the world, from Anno Mundi I. to this hour, have neither deserved nor desired any heaven worthy to be so called. They have always avoided the thought of an hereafter, when possible, and when forced to dwell upon it, what sort of conceptions have they formed of it? What, but this earth over, with such fanciful improvements, as each man's whims, humors, condition, or temperament may have suggested. Let me illustrate the point a moment, by referring to our neighbors. Take our fretful, nervous friend—, opposite. What sort of a heaven is his, but an exemption from the petty annoyances of life; from corns, duns, mosquitoes, east winds, poor relations,

long sermons, political discussions, anniversary gatherings, national jubilees, railroad excursions; from crowds and noises of all kinds. Give him quiet, an even temperature, an easy chair, a good fire, and the papers, hot and punctual meals, a good bed to sleep in, a good toddy to sleep on, and the glorious privilege of grumbling upon all occasions, and his happiness is complete. Promise him a perpetuity of these things, and he will ask no brighter paradise. Our invalid neighbor—would probably put up with much humbler arrangements. A mere tea-and-toast heaven, with a guaranty against a torpid liver, rebellious bowels, and lying awake of nights, would no doubt satisfy his proudest hopes. Not so, though, with the gross epicurean, who lives alongside of him. Who cannot see at a glance, the ingredients of *his* cup of happiness? Viands, and dainties, and sparkling wines, and the caresses of houris, and voluptuous music; the utter oblivion, in a word, of every care and duty of life, in one eternal round of self-indulgence. Precious paradise his! And that haughty beauty of a sister of his, has she any loftier conceptions? No, her heaven is the preservation of that fine complexion, and attractive figure of hers. Let her be petted, caressed, fêted, surrounded by worshiping beaux and bouquet-holders; let her be the cynosure of all eyes at balls and operas; ensure her these, and will she not snap those pretty fingers of hers, in disdain at all your spiritual joys? *She can-*

descend indeed, to become a pure, serene, thoughtful, dutiful angel; an humble chanter of her Maker's praise! She would prefer extinction to any such unselfish, honorable part as that. She might be willing to take it for a moment, in some tableau vivant; nothing more. Do I wrong her, when I say that she would set infinitely more store by a sonnet, concocted by some fop, in honor of her eye-brow, than by the grandest anthem angel ever composed?

A. Stop, stop. Don't be so cynical, so merciless in your criticisms.

B. I am not cynical. I know the creature too well, and all her hollowness: beautiful, I grant you; yes, a superb spectacle, when duly arrayed and equipped for ball-room conquests; but, my friend, dust, dust and ashes within. And that dainty and fastidious cousin of hers, that man of wit and taste, what sort of a place would he turn heaven into? What but a grand gallery to lounge in, filled with masterpieces, crowded with all manner of delicate thoughts in arabesque, and mosaic, and fresco, and relief-work; with comfortable sofas scattered about, whereon to loll, and to look along the beautiful perspectives, and to have his fancy ministered unto by every form and attitude of beauty, and to trace all sorts of delicate analogies, and to deliver himself of sharp and sparkling criticisms, and to be duly applauded therefor by kindred spirits; a fancy heaven, a paradise of self-conceit and super-refined sensu-

ality. And our other neighbor here, ———, the philosopher, as he sometimes presumes to call himself; will his ideal of a future life bear inspection any better? What is it, but an indulgence in fine talk and dreamy speculation, over sempiternal pipes and coffee; weaving curious theories, and discussing nice problems, not to benefit his brethren or promote the cause of truth, but for his own gratification, or to win the admiration of brother wits, who have intelligence enough to keep his faculties agreeably stimulated, but not to shake his sway over their minds: a heaven, not so gross, certainly, but full as selfish as that of the epicure. And that silly wife of his, her heaven seems to be lying abed all day, reading novels; having at the same time, neither memory to retain, nor judgment to discriminate between them. Nothing comes amiss to her, from the Lady of the Manor down to Jack Shepherd, from Peregrine Pickle to Salathiel. I dare say she is, this very minute, deep in her ten thousandth, without being one whit more wise or witty, than she was when cutting the leaves of her first, a quarter of a century ago; having just about as intelligent an appreciation of their contents, as that board-fence opposite, has of the long generations of play-bills that have been pasted upon it, for the last ten years. And will God condescend to humor such whims as these? Will He perpetuate such a set of fools, fops, profligates, and self-seekers as most of us are?—

Yes, I repeat it, slanderer though you think me, I don't believe there are a hundred men on the round globe this moment (there *may* be as many women), who would take, if they could get it, the spiritual heaven you speak of; a heaven of active duty, of going about the universe doing good, of temperance, and faith, and holy meditation; no, they would altogether prefer annihilation.

A. A melancholy answer this, to my question, certainly. Such views, from a man of threescore, would sound harshly enough; but in you, my friend, who are not yet near the top of life's hill, how unnatural, how repulsive do they appear!

B. Well, I dare say, I have got old somewhat before my time. But, according to your theory of life, why should a man of threescore years have more gloomy views than one of twenty? On the contrary, ought he not to be far more hopeful and enthusiastic, being so much farther on the road to that perfection which you say is his destiny? Your language and sentiments seem hardly consistent. The top of life's hill, indeed! Don't that very form of speech betray the real feelings of men on this subject? Would they use such language, if they thought life was only the first step of an endless progress? Would—

A. Excuse me, but this sounds to me very much like hyper-criticism. In discussing all subjects, we must, of course, draw our illustrations from familiar

objects. If my faith, like yours, rested merely on the evidence of my senses, I should acknowledge the force of your remark. But I do not care to argue the point at present. Go on, finish what you were going to say.

B. I was merely going to add, that the phenomena that I see in my own heart, and in those of others, in connection with these same advancing years of life, only tend to make me more and more distrustful and indifferent about a future existence. What are they? A word or two on this head, and I surrender the floor. Youth, I grant you, is not without its generous impulses, its lofty aspirations, its dreams of victory over the ignorance and wickedness around it. There is something beautiful in its faith and enthusiasm, its gay visions and gorgeous cloud-palaces. Its very failings are not without their fascinations. But how long do these things last? How long is it before we begin to doubt and criticise our brethren? How soon, alas, does contact with the world rob youth alike of its lustre and of its hopes! How soon does the uncomfortable business of self-inspection begin; the cross-questioning of each desire and motive; the constant discovery of latent evil, in our own hearts, and those of others; the dreary task of analysis; the pulling to pieces of all the bright creations that before so engaged and cheered us, and the erection of far different structures in their stead, where suspicion sits

ever watchful at her window, and selfishness ever guards the portal! How skeptical, and calculating, and sordid do most of us become, long before reaching middle life! How do we weigh, and measure, and count the cost alike of every pleasure and of every task! There is something to forgive in the heedless dissipation of youth; but this cool, scientific sensuality of middle age, this deliberately striking the balance between every indulgence and its price, in the way of health, or property, or reputation, this arithmetical debauchery, how disgusting is it! And yet how all but universal! If we gain in vigor of intellect, too, as we advance, do we not lose in loftiness of ideal? We may have clearer perceptions, and more tenacity of purpose; we may grasp a few things more firmly, but that noble ambition after excellence in all things, where is it? Does not every added hour find us with a lower standard of goodness and of greatness; more disposed to acquiesce in small performances; more willing to forego the pursuit, now of this accomplishment, now of that branch of science, now of the other plan of benevolence; and to concentrate our faculties upon mere money-making, or office-seeking, or the acquisition of a comfortable position in society? And so on, on, with the horizon ever growing narrower and narrower, even to old age. And what do we see in old age, even in its pleasantest aspects, that reminds us of that immortal life and endless progress

you speak of? What, at best, but a quiet resignation to fate, and conviction of the folly of struggling with the decrees of nature, and not a hopeful looking forward to the future; and as we ordinarily see it, a fretful, peevish thing, jealous of little attentions, far more anxious about its meals and small comforts, than about its own growth in grace or the progress of the race; singing the praises of old times, perhaps, in feeble strains of mingled vanity and regret, but seldom or ever pointing us to any bright vista beyond the grave; speaking of that grave, in which it is so soon to be laid, not as the portal of eternity, but as the end of the journey, the long home, the place of rest. How can you reconcile such phenomena as these, such language as this, with the doctrine of immortality? I know you will reject this as an untrue picture. You will deny that the mind decays with the body. You will say that the senses bear false witness in this matter; that this apparent imbecility and peevishness are merely on the surface; that the soul itself is as sound, and bright, and hopeful as ever, could we get at it, withdrawing more and more as it does into its inner world, as its means of communication with the outer one are impaired. I *must* differ with you. I cannot recognize the truth of this version. There is a kind of attractive plausibility about it, at first blush; but it soon resolves itself into a mere comforting suggestion of our own self-love. At least it seems

so to me. But why multiply words? I can only repeat, by way of conclusion to this feeble reply to your question, that the more I think of all these things, the less disposed am I to believe in any future life, or to see any other destiny in store for myself, than for the tree that may have chanced to give me shade or shelter when living, or that may wave over my bones when I am gathered to my fathers. I have done.

A. Still the same gloomy conclusion, then; and the road that leads to it full as gloomy! I don't wonder, my friend, that you are a dull, moody, solitude-seeking man. You *ought* to be wretched, with such a horrible creed as this. That it is utterly unsound, that it blasphemes God, that it libels man, that it stands in the way of all true progress and peace, are, I think, demonstrable propositions. I may not have the ability to demonstrate them to your satisfaction. I certainly do not propose to undertake any such task to-day. Still I should like to be heard in reply, when we meet again. I should like to splinter a lance, humble champion that I am, in behalf of the blessed cause of Faith and Hope, and see if I can make no impression on this frightful skepticism of yours.

B. So be it, then. I am bound to listen, though this discussion was not of my seeking. If my opinions *are* so very frightful, I ought certainly to try to exchange them for something better. I will hear

patiently, and if convinced (though I confess I do not anticipate any such result), I hope I shall be honest enough to say so.

A. Very well, then; I claim the floor for to-morrow, and so, my dear friend, good morning.

B. Addio.

CONVERSATION III.

A. AND now, my dear friend, I propose to reply, somewhat at length, and in order, to the remarks that fell from you yesterday. You began, you remember, by saying that even if you *were* to live hereafter, and be transferred to other worlds, you felt no confidence that you would be a gainer thereby; that this world and man, bad as they were, might, after all, be God's master-works, etc., etc. Now I must say, this notion of yours seems to me altogether fanciful and unsound, opposed to all that science teaches us about the universe, utterly opposed to all our ideas of proportion and harmony. Had you started precisely the opposite doubt, you would have been far nearer the mark. I should have put the question thus: Can it be, that this earth, filled as it is with life and beauty, crowded as it is with specimens of creative wisdom and good-

ness, is, after all, anything more than a mere introduction to grander things to come? or that man, with all his marvellous gifts, can furnish us with any but a very feeble image of the powers and attributes of grander performers on grander theatres of action? I should feel as a stranger would, standing before the sculptured portal of some vast cathedral; *not*, that the architect had exhausted all his skill on the outside, but all the more eager to explore the world of splendor and majesty within, of which it was the earnest. If this planet of ours, with its scanty proportions, and its narrow circuit through space, is yet so laden with lovely and precious things, what must the treasures and splendors be, of the hundred-fold greater Jupiter? If a summer evening on earth be so charming, with its soft moonlight and lustrous stars, what sort of a spectacle must that be which is nightly presented to the favored inhabitants of Saturn? And why may they not have a correspondingly greater power of appreciation and comprehension of that spectacle? have faculties of mind and body, compared with which those even of a Milton are faint and feeble? Why may not the science, and art, and poetry, and faith of Saturn, have a corresponding grandeur, and beauty, and fervor, which we humble occupants of earth can hardly imagine? *This* it seems to me, would be the more fair and philosophical way of putting this question. Again, this idea of yours is, as I

said at the time, directly opposed to the promises of the Bible. You immediately replied, however, that you had no faith in those promises, or in their divine origin; and you straightway began to draw a most unbecoming and profane parallel (excuse me, but I *must* call it so) between the Scriptures and the plays of Shakspeare. Had the poet himself been by to have heard it, he would have been the first to frown indignantly at any such comparison, or at the thought of naming all the uninspired writers of earth put together, in the same breath with that blessed book. Do, my dear friend, revive your recollections somewhat of those same parables and epistles you spoke of so slightly, ay, and of the Psalms and Prophets, before venturing on any such criticism again. I will not dwell long upon this point. You say you have read several of the writings of the more illustrious champions of Christianity, but without being convinced by them. Why then waste any feeble words of mine? I can only reply that we differ *toto cælo*. My mind is convinced, overwhelmed by the weight of evidence for it, internal and external. Its long array of witnesses, sealing their testimony with their blood; the entire harmony of the sacred writers on all essential points of fact or doctrine, strengthened as it is by their occasional differences on unimportant ones; the precious quality of the truths revealed; their quantity also, enough to give us cheerful hopes and com-

fortable glimpses of the life to come, and not enough painfully to pique our curiosity, and so seduce us from the legitimate tasks and enjoyments of earth; the feeling of the absolute necessity of some such tidings from heaven, as the only thing that could meet the great crying want of humanity, the only solution of and balm for the troubles and sorrows of life; what have I to say, on these and kindred topics, that has not been a hundred fold better said already? The idea of rejecting such a revelation as this, is to my mind inconceivably painful and horrible; and the idea of criticising, or finding fault with it, because it contains things not quite in accordance with our humble notions of the sublime and beautiful, or because it contains puzzles too deep for our frail wits, seems to me the very height of impertinence and presumption. As well might the rescued sailor presume to criticise the vessel that had just snatched him from destruction, or the prophet of God to have sneered at the very chariot that bore him to heaven. But to proceed. I next asked you, if you saw nothing in the great volume of nature, on which to build a rational faith in immortality. Was it not so?

B. It was; and I replied, that so far as I could make out the contents of that same volume, with these poor senses of mine, their report seemed to be on the side of annihilation.

A. Even so; and you went on to ask a series of

questions, as to the true nature of the alliance between soul and body, and the phenomena of death; questions to which no human being ever did, or ever can, give any satisfactory answers. But what of that? Is the inference which you would derive from this imperfection of the senses, and our consequent ignorance, the just one? Oh no, no. It seems to me, that as in the previous question of the comparative values of earth and man, and of the other worlds about us and their inhabitants, so in this: you ought to have taken just the opposite ground. You ought to have argued thus: if these senses, of earth, limited and perishing as they are, yet do their offices so thoroughly, within the range assigned them, what phenomena will not be revealed to me, what mysteries not explained, when, in God's good season, I am endowed with faculties more subtle and powerful! If these frail senses of earth yet manifest to me, in myself and in all around me, such evidences of divine skill and bounty, what may I not expect to behold and to realize, when endowed with the glorious organization of an angel! If this delicate, shrinking, sensitive eye of mine hath yet such magnificent pictures spread out before it: if this tender, easily wounded ear is thus bountifully ministered unto, what must be the beauty and the music, what the revelations of all sorts, that are vouchsafed unto angelic perceptions! And why may I not look forward to such perceptions, and to spheres appropri-

ate to them? The idea that there is nothing worth seeing or knowing in the universe, off this little earth; that God has exhausted all His resources and His kindness on one small fragment of his works, is, as I said before, one which the mind instinctively rejects; nay, it is precisely the opposite one that is irresistibly forced upon it, and that all the discoveries of science, be they in the skies above us, or in the dew-drops at our feet, are continually strengthening and confirming. If then, these wonders, thus feebly shadowed forth on earth, *do* exist, far more profuse and perfect, in more favored worlds, why may we not be permitted to visit those worlds, and to contemplate those wonders? If God has gratified us thus far, if He has let us into some few of the secrets of His creation, and has thereby aroused our curiosity and stimulated our ambition, will he let us penetrate no farther? Were, then, the powers of a Shakspeare to be exerted on earth alone? Was he to study human hearts and portray human passions only? Was a Newton doomed to be a mere pebble-gatherer on the shore of truth, and were none of the treasures of the great deep to be revealed to him? Was a Herschel to be teased with a few stray glimpses of the wonders of the skies, and there an end? Who can believe it? Is it not more reasonable and fair, then, to cherish expectations of a future life, founded on our experience here, than to take the ground you do, and to

call in our senses as witnesses on the side of skepticism and materialism, and to argue from their imperfections, against the existence of all phenomena beyond their grasp? These same phenomena of death, this giving up the ghost as we call it, this wondrous process, far too subtle and delicate for our feeble perceptions, how simple an operation may it not be to a more curiously and rarely organized being; and just as palpable a matter of observation and calculation to him, as to us the beating of the pulse, or the changes of the countenance. But, my dear friend, does not a moment's reflection teach us, how utterly unsuitable any such organization would be for us? Suppose such a revelation *were* made to our senses; suppose we could trace the flight of the spirit from the bed of death, till it were lost in the depths of space, would we be the gainers by any such addition to our knowledge? Wouldn't it only serve to unfit us the more for the duties of life? Why, all the world would stand gazing curiously at the heavens, or would be hurrying away in pursuit of the departed ones; earth would lose all charm for us, would soon be abandoned to neglect and decay. Just as any more explicit statements in God's word would have been inappropriate, so any more light shed upon our senses on these points, would have only impaired our affection for those about us, and have taken away the due interest from our tasks and relish from our enjoyments, here. Who can help see-

ing that we have just the organization, alike in its strength and in its weakness, for our position; the organization that makes us at once the appropriate and willing instruments for carrying out God's designs on earth? And is it not fair to infer, from this exquisite adaptation of means to ends here, that when we take our leave of earth, we shall receive a new endowment of faculties, just as felicitously contrived for the new and loftier scenes and employments that await us? Isn't it quite as reasonable a view of the subject as yours, to say the least?

B. Perhaps it is; at the same time there seems to me to be a most uncomfortable preponderance of hypothesis over fact, in all such speculations. But I must not interrupt you. You were to be the talker, you know, I the listener, to-day.

A. Well then, let me say a word or two more on this point. The more we examine this same argument of yours, which would ignore the existence of an hereafter, upon the imperfect testimony of the senses, the more and more untenable does it appear. For how many processes are going on continually around us, just as much without the range of those senses, as is the translation of the soul in death. I am not speaking of the tricks of jugglers, or of curious experiments in science, but of the most familiar mental operations that every moment bears witness to; that marvellous process, for instance, whereby a few words sung or spoken will melt an audience to

tears, or convulse them with laughter; that subtle alchemy whereby, at the sight of a little cross, the hardened ruffian is straightway converted into the trembling, crouching penitent; in a word, all those curious inscriptions, be they sad or joyous, beautiful or loathsome; that the passions are perpetually writing upon these countenances and forms of ours; what light, I ask, do the senses shed upon these phenomena? The effects are ever before us, but the processes themselves, are they not as completely beyond the cognizance of those senses as the soul's flight is in the dying hour? Certainly they are; and the only difference that I can see in the two cases is this, that in the one the effects are necessarily presented to us, for our well-being and guidance through life, while in the other, they are as wisely withheld from us, because the perception of them would utterly unfit us for all life's duties and enjoyments. So it seems to me, and I should therefore think it just about as unreasonable, to call in question the immortality of the soul, because I cannot trace the actual separation of that soul from its body, in the act of dying, as I would to call in question the reality of the telegraph, because I cannot trace with these eyes the flight of its mysterious messenger along the wires. Let me then, in conclusion, once more state my proposition. I say, then, that it appears to me far more rational and philosophical to infer a continued existence, with new pow-

ers in new spheres of action, from our actual existence here, and the wonders that this life reveals to us, than to argue against it, simply because our senses cannot solve the problem of death.

B. Or, in other words, you are for carrying the good, old-fashioned motto of "Live and Learn" beyond the grave.

A. Even so. But to our next point. I then asked you, how you could reconcile the daily occurrences of life to God's goodness and justice, save by an hereafter; and what was your answer? A most unsatisfactory, a most gloomy one. You quarreled with my premises. You said that for aught you knew, God might be a capricious and cruel being; that you had just as much right to take that ground as I the opposite; that neither of us had any data for any intelligent opinion on the subject, &c., &c. You threw doubt on that great cardinal truth of truths, in which the mind has sought refuge, in all ages, the goodness of the Creator. You would deprive us of that feeling of filial love and confidence towards God, which every child instinctively feels towards his earthly parent. Nay, you went on to describe him, as some vile Nero, throwing worlds about, in sheer wantonness, or crushing them to powder, or tossing them into dismal gulfs of fire. Monstrous conception! The idea of our Father in Heaven's taking up this earth of his, and, without one glance of pity either for his own work or for man's,

heedless alike of its pleading beauty and of all the recollections clustering round it, of its hallowed spots, its sacred battlefields, of the homes of the living and the resting-places of the dead, of the cries of its poor innocent women and children, of the infirmities of age and the helplessness of infancy, without one word of warning or explanation, no, not even giving us time to toll our bells, or say our prayers, or chant one last sad funeral hymn together, and so expire with decency, but, in the twinkling of an eye, and in the veriest caprice of tyranny, consigning us to a destruction so cruel and ignominious, such an idea as this, how revolting, how blasphemous is it! How can you, how can you, my friend, allow your imagination to wander in such forbidden paths? You, who have been so blest of heaven, who have been permitted to taste so many of the beauties and bounties of nature; who, this very summer past, while others have been chained to their desks, prisoners in sultry cities, have been free to go forth among the sublime and beautiful scenes of earth; whom I have seen gazing delightedly on lake and mountain and waterfall; you, who have been surrounded by waving grain-fields, and fruit-laden trees, and the music of birds and bees, and the sweet company of flowers, scattered o'er fields and hillsides, or daintily arrayed in gardens; you, my friend, to preach such a doctrine as this, and to call in question God's goodness, when it has been thus inscribed all around you, in letters of light,

attested by myriad forms of loveliness! Thank heaven, I look with far different eyes upon these things, I read far different lessons in them. They tell me, not of heaven's unkindness, but of my own unworthiness; of my own frail, sinful nature; of my tardy, scanty thanks for all this munificence; they bid me awake from my sloth and self-indulgence, and be hearty and diligent in my duties, and so earn an entrance into worlds still more bright and beautiful, still more crowded with tokens of a father's love.—But, my friend, you did not stop there; you would accuse your Maker of neglect, as well as cruelty. Beautiful consistency, indeed! One moment you call God a tyrant, and the next you attribute all the evils of life to the mal-administration of inferior intelligences, to whom he has abandoned the charge of earth. Abandoned the charge! How can you use such language; you, (excuse my being again thus personal) who see the north star nightly from your chamber-window, who hear the constant music of the waves that wash your own lovely villa, and the punctual morning service of the birds, and the faithful evening chants of the insects; the meanest pebble of whose garden-walks, bears witness to the care and bounty of God; how can you, I say, talk thus, thus call in question the reality of the divine government; with all this exquisite machinery in motion about you, this prodigality of thought expended on the very minutest details that appertain unto

your comfort and well-being? But I will not stop to argue such a point as this. You then went on to throw suspicion on the feeling itself, which leads us all instinctively to refer to another life, for the solution of the mysteries and sorrows of this. What is it, after all, you asked, but mere mortified vanity or wounded pride, or disappointed ambition? A pretty basis, indeed, to build a faith upon! Yes, you were for resolving it all into the mere idle clamor of children at having their sports stopped, their toys taken from them; the mere remonstrance of self-love, vexed and indignant at being cut short in the midst of its follies and indulgences. As unjust in this, to your brethren, as before to your Maker: as if no noble career was ever interrupted by death, no laudable ambition thwarted, no holy zeal for others' good untimely snatched away from its labors, no pure and lofty genius cut down in the morning of its triumphs, no single case ever made out of a fair claim on God's equity, for light or recompense hereafter. Such an explanation belies humanity. Take the case, too, of the poor penitent, who from his bed of death looks back upon a misspent life, who feels how miserably he has fallen below that ideal of excellence that is yet ever present to him, who in the anguish and bitterness of his heart prays God yet to give him a chance to redeem his character; not to be released from punishment, but after the dread penalty is paid, to reappear in some brighter world, and by a

long career of faithful service, atone for all the follies and the sins of earth; do you mean to say there is nothing pure and genuine in such a feeling as this? Will you explain it all away into a mere childish whim, or morbid vanity, or selfish shrinking from annihilation? I do not accept any such interpretation of the matter; nor do I believe that God will turn a deaf ear to such a claim as this; still less to the cries of innocent suffering, or the prayers of a true ambition, and thus cruelly shut the door in the faces of His poor children. As to the idea you suggested, that this world may have been constructed, not for man's welfare, or for his education and preparation for loftier scenes, but as a mere puppet-show, to amuse youthful angels with, and after having served its turn, to be thrown aside, like some old, worn-out panorama in a museum, to make way for some new entertainment, so far from being reasonable, it seems to me the veriest caprice of an o'eractive fancy. And yet, you seemed to think this explanation quite as admissible as any other, and that we were utterly in the dark as to all God's plans and motives: all opinions (so you said), are alike worthless on the subject; what do we know about it? what are we, at the best, but poor, blind, ignorant captives, utterly at God's mercy; what can we do but grumble, or else bear in grim silence, whatever He sees fit to inflict? Yes, you spoke of our Father in heaven, just as the poor tenants of the

dismal dungeons of Venice might have spoken of the cruel and mysterious government of which they were the victims. Horrible perversion; utter misreading of the text of the great volume of providence! But, my friend, when I taxed you with these sentiments, as being alike unreasonable and unfilial towards God, you chopped suddenly round, and from grumbler turned cynic. You introduced, you remember, a philosophical gentleman on the carpet. A pretty philosopher, truly! Allow me to say that he had far more of the squalor of the tub, than of the dignity of the academy, about him. His was a very pleasant, off-hand solution of the problem of evil. He thought this world explained itself, on the whole, quite satisfactorily, without bothering our brains about any other; that the inequalities and accidents of life resolved themselves away into pretty much nothing, when critically investigated; that the punishment of having to take care of one's property, was about equal to the blessing of owning it; that an ear for music was the source of quite as much torture as pleasure to its owner; that such casualties as the burning of the Henry Clay, for instance, or the sinking of the Atlantic, so far from being the themes of lamentation, or of indignant remonstrance, were on the whole, blessings, as tending to rid society of far more nuisances and villains, than they deprived it of valuable citizens; and that the sufferers themselves, were they reasonable,

would take that view of the subject. He would say to one of those sufferers, whose heart might still be bleeding for the loss of some dear wife or daughter, "Cheer up, my friend, cheer up; true, you have been suddenly deprived by this disaster of loved companions; but hark'ye, a word in your ear. Know then, that when this accident occurred, there was a gang of counterfeiters on the fore part of the boat, and that every rascal of them has perished, together with the implements of their accursed trade. Many similar facts connected with this occurrence have also come to light, all going to show, in the aggregate, a most decided balance of good, with which it ought to be credited on the books of the community, and which fairly earns for the individuals who caused it, the title of benefactors. How unreasonable, then, how unpatriotic your grief! So cheer up, dry your tears, and be a man." Such would be the consolations of your philosophical friend. Oh, out upon such shallow sophistry, such hideous mockery as this! In the same heartless, flippant way did he speak of all life's bereavements. Death was a kind friend, come to put a stop to family jars; decreeing divorces that were not to be had in chancery, and so paving the way for other and more agreeable alliances; death in infancy, especially, was a matter of congratulation; the dear things were thereby delivered from far more temptations and troubles, than they were defrauded of enjoyments: let the benedic-

tions of patriarchs say what they will, let the hearts of mothers plead as they will, for length of days for their loved ones; they are wrong, wrong in the matter; Herod was right, and the day of the slaughtered innocents was a blessed day for Judea. Charming conclusions! Beautiful tribute to the wisdom and goodness of the Creator! He then went on to say that the great mass of men, however much they might play the hypocrite in public on the subject, yet in their very hearts were alike skeptical and indifferent about a future life; nay more, that their language and conduct betrayed them in spite of themselves. He would have made out the great poet himself a materialist, on the strength of his epitaph, and of some few equivocal expressions scattered over his plays; as if for every one such passage, there were not a thousand that would be alike worthless and meaningless, save on the supposition of an hereafter. I could cite fifty from Hamlet itself, of this description. Let me repeat a few only:

Do not, forever, with thy veiled lids,
Seek for thy noble father in the dust.
Thou know'st 'tis common; all that live must die,
Passing through nature to eternity.

Thus was I, sleeping, by a brother's hand,
Of life, of crown, or queen, at once despatched;
Cut off even in the blossoms of my sin,
No reckoning made, but sent to my account,
With all my imperfections on my head.

In the corrupted currents of this world,
Offence's gilded hand may shove by justice;
But 'tis not so above;
There is no shuffling, there the action lies
In his true nature.

We defy augury. There is a special providence
in the fall of a sparrow. If it be now, 'tis not to
come; if it be not now, yet it will come; *the readi-
ness is all.*

Lay her i' the earth;
And from her fair and unpolluted flesh,
May violets spring! I tell thee, churlish priest,
A ministering angel shall my sister be,
When thou liest howling.

Now cracks a noble heart. Good night, sweet prince,
And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest!

What rest? Annihilation, say you? the extinc-
tion of those glorious faculties? no, no; rest for a
while, from the troubled world that he had left; from
that polluted court, where incest, murder, treason,
tainted the very air; whence wisdom had fled in dis-
may, and where love had been driven to madness; a
release from such harsh, dismal scenes as these, and
a reunion with the loved and lost, in brighter worlds.
Shakspeare a materialist? The interpreter of hu-
man life, the expounder of the heart, a materialist?
Monstrous calumny! To cite his own epitaph, too,

as a witness against him; that epitaph so full of pathos, informed as it is, with such an intense humanity.

Good friend ! for Jesus' sake forbear
To dig the dust inclosed here.
Blest be the man that spares these stones,
And cursed be he that moves these bones.

The poet is not here speaking in his own behalf merely; no, he is pleading for the great family of man, pleading for the repose and sanctity of the grave, and invoking a world's denunciation upon its ruthless violators. But, my friend, to return to our philosopher; I deny utterly his statement that the world generally are disbelievers in immortality, and are merely playing upon each other, in their professions of faith. I wonder how any reasonable man could ever make it. It seems to me a most outrageous libel on mankind. The annals of every age and nation belie it; nay, the experience of every human heart, from Adam's down, if honestly set forth, I believe, would demonstrate its falsity. Yes, the most perverse of reasoners, the veriest hair-splitter that ever abused his understanding, cannot run away from the great cardinal truths of God, and immortality, and accountability; truths coeval with man; truths never expounded, indeed, in their sublime purity and simplicity till Christ came on earth; still, recognized alike in the rudest rites

of the rudest savages, and in the brilliant and fascinating polytheism of Greece; defaced, more or less, in both, by unworthy conceptions and by cruel and obscene ceremonies; still, shining conspicuous through them all, the essential, vital parts of every creed under heaven; truths, without which, the world would seem the most pitiful of snarls, the earth itself the merest mass of rubbish; without which, there would have been nothing for history to record, or art to commemorate; nay, all the transitions of life, all its loves and feuds and excitements would have been of no more interest or consequence than the amours of so many cats, or the squabbles of so many curs. But I have not patience to discuss a point, that seems to me so clear as this. There was still, my dear friend, as you will remember, a part of my question, which you did not undertake to answer. I mean that which referred to the unpunished criminals of earth, and their poor, tortured, slaughtered, violated victims. How were they to be disposed of? This most painful and puzzling part of the problem of life, how was it to be solved? You were silent, but your philosophical friend undertook to put the matter at rest, in a most off-hand and comprehensive way, to be sure. He said, that all these evils were to be laid at man's door, not God's; they were simply the result of our abuse of our freedom; God had given us the capacities and the materials for happiness; had given us the light of nature and of reason;

we had but to follow them, and farewell, at once, to the crimes, diseases, sorrows of the race; every man would be happy; every man would have length of days and abundance of comforts, in fact, all that his Maker ever intended to give him; and therefore, so far from having a right or a disposition to grumble, if no other world were vouchsafed him, he would still be a contented, thankful debtor for the blessing of this. Plausible statement, truly! Why, look at it a moment. According to this reasoner, God has had nothing to do with the world, since creation morning. After making man and earth, and the laws that were to govern them, he has turned us adrift, to look out for ourselves. Every thing that has happened on the planet since, is of man's doing. Let him be duly credited then, with all the blessings, and debited with all the evils of life. God is not accountable for any of these things. His care and bounty were exhausted on the work of creation. As to any subsequent interference or supervision, save through these same unbending laws of nature, there is no such thing.—Ask not then, poor sinner or sufferer that thou art, for any light or help or recompense from above, for this must be the reply to thy petition: 'I have nothing to do with the matter. I refer thee back to thy brethren. In their hands alone is thy destiny. I made man. I gave him the hints and the materials for happiness, and I left him to himself. If he hath not availed himself of them, tax not me with the

consequences. I have not interfered. I will not interfere. Man must work out the problem for himself. Call not on me, then, in thy distresses. Ask me not, to hurl my lightnings against the transgressor, or to stay the assassin's hand, or to stop the breath of the pestilence, or to arrest the subtler poison of the slanderer. These things are not of my doing. As human guilt and folly caused, so must human wisdom and goodness relieve or compensate for them. Back then, to thy brethren, and importune me not with thy vain appeals.' Horrible as this sounds, yet what other answer to his prayer, could the poor sinner have, according to this theory? Away, away with it! Who that hath any heart or soul about him, can tolerate it for a moment? A doctrine utterly at war, not only with all the statements of scripture, but with all the analogies of nature. What, the Being who created this beautiful earth of ours, who hath arrayed it in such robes of splendor, who hath stocked it with such boundless varieties of life, who hath contrived all this exquisite machinery for making it comfortable and agreeable to his children, who hath expended such a world of care and love upon us all, from imperial man, down to the vagrant sparrow; He turn his back upon this blessed work of his, from the very moment of its consummation, and never since vouchsafe a single kind look, never condescend to interfere, with a solitary act, or even suggestion, for its welfare! It seems to

me that the bare statement of such a proposition as this, sufficiently demonstrates its absurdity. Far, far better believe the opposite doctrine, that there is no event in life, however insignificant or repulsive we may deem it, that is not controlled by God. Yes, with all its liability to misinterpretation and abuse; with all the excuses that it may seem to furnish to the criminal, with all the scope that it may give to the shallow and presumptuous reader of God's book of providence, how much better is it than this other notion, which thus isolates us from our Maker, thus damps the spirit of prayer, stops the mouth alike of thanksgiving and of penitence, banishes from earth alike its guardian and avenging angels, and consigns it to a sullen, wretched independence. I confess, my friend, the longer I live, the more and more convinced I am of the perpetual supervision of the Almighty, of his perpetual interference with human freedom. How far this interference was decreed from the beginning; how far the Creator may see fit to modify his plans from time to time; how far the mysteries of foreknowledge and free-will may be reconciled to each other; these, and such like knotty themes, are not for us poor laymen. We must humbly leave them to the grave and reverend doctors of the church. And even of these, how few seem willing or competent to discuss them aright, to bring to them the proper discipline of mind or body: a chosen few, indeed, there have been, scattered over the pages of history,

pure and holy men, who, in the quiet of their lonely cells, far from the smoke and stir of the world, have dedicated clear heads and pious hearts to these deep problems; but they are not for us, the turbulent, the giddy, the care-worn dwellers in cities. Far then be it from me to offer any worthless speculations of mine concerning them. Thank heaven, the peace of our souls is not involved in these mysteries. For all the practical purposes of life, we *have* our freedom. It is this very ignorance of ours that makes us free and responsible; that gives significance to the laurels that we may win, or the stripes that we may incur. Still, that there is this constant divine interference; that there are messengers forever on the wing between earth and heaven; that humiliation and sickness and death are continually sent as special lessons to our pride and ingratitude; that God's grace does mysteriously descend, to soften the stony heart of the sinner, and his anger, to overtake and destroy the oppressor; that there are often, special interpositions between the murderer and his victim; that we are often warned in dreams, of impending perils or disasters; all these things do I firmly and fervently believe. Why should I not? Is not the good book full of them? Wherein do they contradict reason? Nay, will our hearts be satisfied with any thing less? Why pray at all, then? Yes, I do believe in these special interventions; not merely in those that have been revealed to sense, and duly re-

corded in God's holy word, but in those innumerable ones that are continually occurring about us, but, for wise ends, hidden from our sight. I believe, not only that God talked with Adam and with Noah, that angels conversed with Abraham, and ministered unto Hagar in the wilderness, that the ravens were sent with food to the prophet, in a word, all those touching, those beautiful stories of holy writ, but that unseen spirits guided the bark of the great discoverer, and saw the Mayflower safe to her haven, and kept off the venom of the pestilence from the self-devoting philanthropist, and turned aside the death-shafts from our own patriot-hero; that they are constantly doing God's bidding on earth, constantly modifying or controlling human conduct; and that, while many of these interpositions sufficiently explain and vindicate themselves, in this life, all will be made clear hereafter. Call me credulous and visionary, if you will. I repeat it, I would far rather believe all these things, than that opposite doctrine, which would deprive us of the light of God's countenance, which would leave man to his own wilfulness and ignorance, which would substitute for our Father in heaven, a system of inflexible laws, beneficent in the main, of course, but still ne'er tempered with equity, that no prayer can ever bend, no plea avert. All our best affections and aspirations seem to me to favor such belief, and to justify the expectation that all these mysteries of the divine government, however

dark and painful many of them may seem here, will be expounded, and their wisdom and justice made clear to us, in the world to come. I cannot then, accept your philosopher's interpretation of this matter. So far from this world's explaining itself, as he would have it, it seems to me that it is only when we have left it, that we shall begin rightly to comprehend it; just as its physical features and beautiful movements through the heavens, could only be fairly perceived and appreciated, when surveyed from beyond it. And as I cannot but cherish the hope of being, in God's good season, endowed with an organization, that will enable me to behold and enjoy a panorama so magnificent, so do I humbly look forward to an intellectual capacity, with which to penetrate the meaning and the moral of the great drama of human existence. But, my dear friend, I must not abuse my privilege, and tax too much your patience.

B. Not at all, not at all. I am listening with interest, I assure you, though I confess I am by no means convinced of the soundness of your reasoning, upon this last point. But go on, go on. Your earnestness is certainly entitled to my respect, if your arguments may not convince my understanding.

A. Well then, allow me a few words upon the last part of my question. I asked you, my dear friend, if you saw nothing in your own nature, where-

on to build a faith in immortality; no aspirations, no capacities, that all the acquisitions, all the experience of this life failed to meet or satisfy. No, said you, no; nothing that will bear inspection; nothing that does not resolve itself into a mere traveler's fancy, or schoolboy's whim, or the merest exaggerations of self love; no honest thirst after knowledge, no real desire to do good; nothing, in short, either in the way of power or of disposition to make myself useful hereafter, that God would condescend to recognize as a claim to a future life. And in speaking thus for yourself, you insisted that you were speaking for ninety-nine hundredths of the human family, in all ages; that they uniformly avoided the thought of an hereafter, when they could; and that when their minds were forced in that direction, their conceptions were of the most gross and unworthy character. You proceeded to illustrate your remark by some most biting and unreasonably severe (as I thought) criticisms upon your neighbors; and you concluded by asking, will God humor the whims of creatures like these; will He perpetuate such a set of sensualists and self-seekers? No, no, no. We neither desire nor deserve immortality. What a reply! You could not have been in earnest, my friend, in making it; in thus belying your own better self, your friends, your brethren; in thus denying all noble qualities to human nature. What, nothing worth preserving, no solitary germ of excel-

lence, no one element of growth or promise, that God might turn to account, might put to glorious uses hereafter?

B. I admitted, however, that there were a few brilliant exceptions, you remember, who—

A. True, but the great, the overwhelming majority of us were neither fit for, nor had any right to expect anything beyond the grave.

B. I certainly said so, and I can't help thinking so.

A. And I say, that such a doctrine is to me inexpressibly painful and repulsive. Nay more, I consider it an atrocious libel on humanity. I take directly opposite ground. I say there is no human being so sunk in vice and ignorance, but there is something precious and sacred about him, which, however we may overlook or deride it, God fails not to recognize, will not fail, in His own good season, to ripen and develop, unto glorious issues. There is nothing about us, thus absolutely worthless. It is our own want of perception that makes us thus decry and condemn human nature. Just as the child sees nothing in the collection of the mineralogist, but a mere congregation of worthless and misshapen stones, so we thoughtless, ill-judging children of men, pass through the world, throwing about our presumptuous criticisms on each other, our wholesale censures of God's works. I don't believe in them. I never yet saw the man or woman, so stupid or degraded, but

could teach me something, could beat me at something. I doubt whether there is a creature alive, that hath not some latent gift about him, some talent or other, that only needs auspicious influences, and kindly culture, to be a positive blessing to society. Out it will come at last, too, depend upon it, at some time or other, in some part or other of God's dominions. How unreasonable to suppose it otherwise! What, when I see so many marvellous results produced by human skill, in the development of the animals, and fruits, and flowers of earth, am I to be told that the soul of man has nothing improvable in it; and that, if defrauded of its due culture here, it may not, when transplanted to some more genial sphere, there flourish and bear golden fruit? Are we so intrinsically worthless, then, and on the ground of that worthlessness to be consigned to ignominious extinction; to perish forever, and be of no more validity than the meanest worm or vine that may creep over our graves? Is a man to be put out of the way, then, just as you would pull down an old house, in some crowded thoroughfare, forgotten ere the very foundations are laid of its successor, and there an end forever? Oh no, no. I have no patience, my friend, with a doctrine so degrading as this; a doctrine which shocks alike my imagination, and reason, and affections. The idea that all the sweet babes, and gentle maidens, and dear old men, all the heroes, and martyrs, and sages, that have

been consigned to their graves with solemn rites and tributary tears, have passed into mere corruption and nothingness; that this earth, instead of being the honored depository of such precious relics, as a sacred trust to be surrendered on God's great day of audience and of judgment, is nothing more than a mere heap of rubbish, a mere aggregation of matter, a mere succession of ever shifting forms; that instead of being a theatre where a grand drama is ceaselessly enacted for our instruction, it is a mere idle, gaudy, meaningless spectacle; who can be reconciled to such a thought as this? If so, indeed, farewell all the beauty and venerableness of the planet; farewell all the charm of its landscapes, all loveliness in tree or flower, all glory in the skies above it; farewell the majesty of sea and mountain, the sacredness of its battle-fields, nay, of all its associations: what a mockery are all its shrines and monuments; what a very harlequinade are all the toils, and trials, and achievements of men! Yes, the man who has really brought his mind to acquiesce in such a doctrine as this, who has deliberately turned his back upon all the glories and responsibilities of an hereafter, has wilfully made himself brother to the perishing brute, what satisfaction, what pleasure is there left to him? What can he do, but sit and grin, in scorn, at the pitiful mummeries around him? What else can they be to the holder of a creed like this?

For, from that instant,
 There's nothing serious in mortality.
All is but toys: renown and grace is dead;
 The wine of life is drawn, and the mere lees
 Is left this vault to brag of.

I must not quote Scripture, my friend, on this point, for you, alas, repudiate its authority; but how contrary to reason your doctrine seems! How derogatory to the Almighty! All the rest of God's works, the more their properties are revealed to us, the more and more do they show forth His wisdom and bounty. To the eye of science, there is nothing insignificant or valueless in nature; the meanest pebble at our feet tells us of the matchless contrivance of the great Architect, of the exquisite adaptation of means to ends, in every department of his works. But if there be no future life, what a pitiful exception to the rule is man; what a standing satire on that same wisdom and goodness! In this regard, how worse than contemptible seem all the thought and labor expended upon his creation and education! If there is no other world, wherein to profit by the lessons learnt in this, then is the heavenly parent far less wise than any earthly one. What earthly parent would go to the expense of a multitude of teachers, and complicated course of studies, and costly apparatus, for a poor sickly child, that he knew must soon be taken from him, without ever having the slightest opportunity of turning the

knowledge thus set before him to any practical account? Such an illustration seems to me neither irreverent nor unjust. What is this world but a magnificent and thoroughly appointed institution for the development of human souls? Take away the life to come, and all this training, all these elaborate and munificent arrangements, what a perfect mockery are they! Who can endure a doctrine that leads to such absurd results, that thus isolates this earth from the rest of creation, instead of making it a link in a glorious chain, a primary school in a grand scheme of education? I believe it to be such, and I believe that we shall all, as, under God's good guidance, we go on advancing to higher and higher steps of this spiritual development, come to look back on it with the same affectionate veneration, with which the man looks back in after years, upon the old school-house where he learnt his first lessons. You may call all this very fanciful and visionary. Be it so. Any thing rather than this horrible skepticism of yours. Yes, I *do* cherish all sorts of glorious expectations, in the life to come. I *do* believe that all the mighty intellects of earth will go on, in other worlds, continually gaining in vigor and resources, and advancing from loftier to loftier careers of usefulness. I believe that the great jurists of earth, the Marshalls, the Storys, the Kents, will meet hereafter their learned brethren of other lands and ages, ay, and planets; will confer together; will

develop together new and loftier systems of jurisprudence. Why should *not* a Marshall meet his elder brother Coke, in some other sphere, and talk over with him, not merely the rule in Shelley's case, and other pleasant old subtleties of the law of Real Property on earth, but newer and grander systems; or discuss higher and more comprehensive doctrines of commercial law, with his brother Mansfield, than they ever dreamt of in their earthly tribunals?—Consider such a suggestion flighty and absurd, if you will; and yet what is there more strange in it, than that two such intellects are permitted to confer together, here below, either in person or through their writings? Till you can get over, or explain away, the miraculous realities of this life, call me not romantic, for indulging in such anticipations, as to the next. I believe too, that a Shakspeare will study hearts, and portray characters, and build the lofty rhyme, for the delight of other worlds; that a Milton will be inspired by grander scenes and contemplations, to the production of still grander poems; that a Newton will go on, enlarging and expanding his researches, from more central and commanding points of the universe; that a Raphael is destined to embody far loftier thoughts and lovelier visions, in brighter worlds. Tell me not that a Michael Angelo is to rear no more stately domes, or more gorgeous palaces than those he left behind him; or that a Beethoven is to compose no more glorious music, to

hear no sweeter hymns than those of earth. Tell me not that that mighty intellect, that was recently borne away from us, the sage, the statesman, the patriot, he who was so grand in the forum, so majestic in the senate, so sublime on the hallowed spots of his country's history; tell me not that that august soul is to slumber in oblivion forever; that it is never more to impart or receive wisdom in other spheres; never to confer with its great brother-spirits of Greece and Rome and England, or with those who have swayed the destinies of other planets. Tell me not, either, that these, and all the great spirits, who have here labored unto mighty issues, are not permitted to return at times, and behold the blessed fruit of their toils; that a Washington may not look down upon the magnificent republic that he founded, or a Columbus see the results of his discoveries, or a Fulton behold the ceaseless, world-wide miracles wrought by his inventions. Say not that this notion is unscriptural, either; that it interferes with God's moral government. Not so. Let the claims of divine justice be met. Let every human soul, however regally or humbly endowed, pay to the full the penalty that its errors and its sins have earned. We ask no exemption from merited punishments. No, no. Give us a future life. Give us the sufferings that are fairly ours, e'en to the last drop of bitterness, the last groan of anguish and remorse; but oh, defraud us not of the duties,

the privileges, the glories that are beyond them. I need not stop, my friend, to dwell upon the blighting influence of this doctrine of yours upon the affections; to say how it renders all the moral discipline of life as unmeaning and worthless as it does the intellectual; how it degrades our love of friends and kindred into a mere animal attachment; how it robs the mementoes of that love of all lustre and significance; what a perfect mockery it makes of all the tears, and vows, and prayers we offer at their graves. What, tell me that the mother who bore me, the wife of my bosom, the children of my hopes, have all crumbled away into nothingness; have become less significant, in God's eyes, than the clods of the valley that cover them; do you really, my friend, wish to persuade me of any such doctrine as this? Tell the mother, that the son who has just been taken from her, in the pride of his manhood, her prop, her comforter, the delight of her eyes, is to be hidden from her sight forever; that there is to be no heavenly recognition, no interchange of sympathies or endearments hereafter; or that that other poor son of hers, who has neglected alike her and her counsels, who has disgraced his name, and has just terminated a loathsome life by an ignominious death; tell her that that wretched soul is to have no opportunity of redeeming itself, of yet blotting out the memory of its crimes on earth, in some worthy career hereafter; tell the friend who has just heard

of the death of one with whom he parted in anger, that there are no such things as blessed explanations, and peace-makings, and the renewals of earthly vows, in brighter worlds; that it is all a mere delusion, an idle dream of fancy.—Oh, what heart can listen to such suggestions as these? There is, there is a life beyond the grave; there is a glorious destiny yet in store, even for the vilest sinners. Yes, it is pleasant to think that the veriest monsters of earth, whose names degrade and deface the pages of history, and must ever be associated here with all that is infamous and detestable, have already, perhaps, become burning and shining lights elsewhere in God's universe; that *our* Neros and Borgias are even now, perhaps, playing the blessed parts of Fenelons and Howards, in other worlds. You will of course call me credulous and fanciful; and yet, why seek to rob me of a thought that has in it so much of comfort and encouragement, so much of stimulus to honest effort? But enough of this. You went on to say, that the phenomena of advancing years, as you watched them, in your own heart, and in those of your brethren, only served the more to confirm your skepticism and indifference about the future. You would have it, that every added hour of life took away something from the ingenuousness of youth, and from the loftiness of its aims; that we all became more sordid and narrow-minded, with every step we took towards the grave; the standard

of excellence ever sinking, the horizon of our thoughts ever contracting, even to the imbecility and helplessness of age. And what saw you in age? At best, you said, a sort of stupid acquiescence in the decrees of destiny; and ordinarily, a mere bundle of peevish, fretful humors, and small jealousies, and perpetual disparagements of the present, and whinings over the past, but no bright looking forward into the future; nothing cheerful, hopeful, heroic about it; nothing, in short, but growing decay of mind and body, till overtaken at last by the same extinction and oblivion that await the trees of its own planting. Oh, what an unjust, what a perverse picture! In the name of all the dear parents and children of this broad land, do I protest against it.

You to talk thus, who know at least a score of families, within a stone's throw of us, each one of which is presided over by a venerable grandsire, whose pleasant, wrinkled face and silver hairs are the great crowning charm and ornament thereof; tell me, that because time hath robbed them of somewhat of their suppleness, because their senses will not do their bidding quite as promptly as they did, because they cannot pick up the passing incidents and sentiments around them as readily as they once could, that therefore these dear old men are fast going to decay and annihilation; that all the virtues they have been forming, all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge they have been hiving for years, are to be thus

summarily disposed of, to be thus swept away in oblivion; do you ask me to believe any such blighting, monstrous doctrine as this, and that, too, merely on the evidence of my own frail, fallible senses? If so, indeed, then is life the most contemptible of farces, and the vilest old hat that was ever kicked about in a gutter, or tossed by dogs, is the fittest emblem of our declining years! That there are painful and puzzling phenomena accompanying old age, what heart feels not? What heart would not gladly solve them if it could? But how much wiser and more filial in us, patiently to wait for God's solution of them, and of all the other mysteries of life, than to preach the doctrine you do! I would not speak arrogantly, my friend, or presumptuously. What light can I shed on themes like these? I am no man of science, or metaphysician, and but a feeble reasoner, at best. I speak merely as a man of common sense and common feeling; as I believe ninety-nine hundredths of my brethren and sisters would speak, when I say, that our reason and affections alike protest against the monstrous, crushing results involved in the thought of annihilation; that all the texts and parables of Scripture, all the fables of the heathen world, all the allegories of art, all the analogies of nature are, when interpreted aright, on the side of immortality. But I must not tax your patience further. You took me up rather abruptly, my dear friend, you may remember, in our last conversation,

for making use of the expression, the *downhill of life*; you seemed to think such language utterly inconsistent with the doctrines I was advocating. Let me, in reply, quote a passage from the great poet of our age, which I think most appropriate to this very point; in which he seems disposed to combat the popular notions and phrasology on this subject, and to illustrate the phenomena of age by those of the mountain-top, and not of the valley. It seems somewhat subtle and elaborate, at first, but a second reading (as ever in his works), makes it luminous with wisdom and beauty. Allow me to repeat it, and so take leave of the subject:

" Rightly is it said
That Man descends into the *Vale* of years;
Yet have I thought that we might also speak,
And not presumptuously, I trust, of Age,
As of a final *Eminence*; though bare
In aspect and forbidding, yet a point
On which 'tis not impossible to sit
In awful sovereignty; a place of power,
A throne, that may be likened unto his,
Who, in some placid day of Summer, looks
Down from a mountain-top,—say one of those
High peaks, that bound the vale where now we are.
Faint, and diminished to the gazing eye,
Forest and field, and hill and dale appear,
With all the shapes upon their surface spread:
But, while the gross and visible frame of things
Relinquishes its hold upon the sense,
Yea, almost on the Mind herself, and seems

All unsubstantialized,—how loud the voice
Of waters, with invigorated peal
From the full river in the vale below,
Ascending! For, on that superior height
Who sits, is disencumbered from the press
Of near obstructions, and is privileged
To breathe in solitude, above the host
Of ever-humming insects, 'mid thin air
That suits not them. The murmur of the leaves
Many and idle, visits not his ear:
This he is freed from, and from thousand notes
(Not less unceasing, not less vain than these,)
By which the finer passages of sense
Are occupied, and the soul, that would incline
To listen, is prevented, or deterred.
And may it not be hoped, that, placed by age
In like removal, tranquil though severe,
We are not so removed, for utter loss,
But for some favor, suited to our need?
What more than that the severing should confer
Fresh power to commune with the invisible world,
And hear the mighty stream of tendency
Uttering, for elevation of our thought,
A clear sonorous voice, inaudible
To the vast multitude, whose doom it is
To run the giddy round of vain delight,
Or fret and labor on the plain below."

CONVERSATION IV.

A. THERE are some other points, dear B., on which I confess I should like to have a little more free and full interchange of opinions with you; not, you will believe me, from any mere idle wish to hear the sound of my own voice; still less, I trust, from any presumptuous expectation of being able to overthrow your doctrines; but, as I said before, because I really think such discussions, if conducted in a courteous and truth-seeking spirit, may be made mutually profitable. So, if brother C., here, has no objections, we will renew our colloquy. Perhaps he may be willing to act as umpire between us.

C. Oh, no; no; far from me be any such presumption as that. I will be a cheerful listener, however, and may perhaps venture on a stray remark or two, myself. But what was the particular point, you proposed to discuss, this evening?

A. Well, let me briefly explain myself. Our

friend B. here, in the course of previous conversations, and indeed whenever we have met, almost, has taken the ground, and *will* insist upon it, that this world of ours has always been a poor, miserable, deplorable place; in its best estate, scarce fit to live in; that it is *no* better now, than ever it was; and, moreover, that it is never going to be any better; that the men of to-day are pretty much the same ignorant, stupid, wicked set, as were their antediluvian brethren, &c. &c. Such is the constant burden of his song. Now I should like to have him a little more explicit, and give us some of the reasons for his arriving at conclusions so very uncomfortable, and, as I think, so exceedingly unjust.

C. Come then, brother B., unfold your views.

B. Well, I told A. before, that *I* had no faith in such discussions. Even where the parties are competent, and their tempers good, there is still so much uncertainty hanging over these subjects, there are so few substantial, well-authenticated facts to argue from, that they hardly repay the arguers, for the time and breath invested in them. And then, when I think how meagerly I am furnished forth for any such speculations; when I call to mind, what an incompetent historian, feeble geographer, miserable chronologist, wretched linguist, and most inefficient reasoner I am, with no very great surplus either, I fear, in the way of amiability, I am all the more disposed to hold my peace.

C. Come, come; we can't all expect to be Miltons or Coleridges, of course; but what of that? I believe, that honest, hearty expressions of opinion, on these and such like subjects, from almost any quarter, are not without their interest. So, speak out. Do I understand you then, to say, that the world has made no progress worth speaking of, in the way of knowledge, goodness, health, liberty, general development, since the great submersion? How is it?

B. I certainly *am* inclined very much to that opinion. I believe that the points of resemblance between ourselves and the men of antiquity, are to those of difference, as ten thousand to one; and as you insist upon going into particulars, let us look at the items, a little. First then, in the matter of knowledge. I believe that the ignorance of the masses, and the learning of the few, are now, substantially, what they were in the days of Belus; that the great herd, in all ages, have been condemned to a little better than animal existence, by their incapacity, and the necessities of their position; and that the few who have had brains, time and diligence to devote to study, have been learning pretty much the same lessons, in every century; that science and art are pretty much the same, now as ever; that many of our fancied discoveries are mere revivals; that while thinking that we are laying out new roads in the realms of knowledge, we are merely removing the

rubbish, under which Time had buried the old ones; and that the actual gains we may occasionally make in both, are counterbalanced by corresponding losses. I believe that if the savans of to-day, are ahead of those of old, in natural science and its multiform application to the useful arts, they are as far behind them in metaphysics and the fine arts; that if Aristotle and his brother philosophers, or the sages of the East, could be revived to-day, and confronted, they and their works, with the intellectual luminaries of our own time, the Edwardses and Kants and Cousins and Coleridges, that the latter would have all they could do to hold their own, in any discussions with these elder brothers; that they would find a strength and agility and acuteness of understanding, and a profundity of research, quite equal to their own, with far more facility and vigor of expression; that, in a word, they would learn quite as much as they would impart in any such conferences. Is it not more emphatically true, in literature and the fine arts? Does not the whole world swear, to-day, by Homer and by Pindar? Who but Milton is to be named with the one, and where is the other's peer? The tragedy of Greece, what is there like it, out of Shakspeare? Surely not in France or Spain, or even in Germany. The comedy of Greece, little as we have of it, and dimly as we perceive its qualities, is there any thing in Moliere, or Congreve, or Sheridan, like it? Is there any thing short of the blessed

Twelfth Night, or the delicious *As You Like It*, that could bear away the palm from it? And even Shakspeare might tremble, perhaps, for his supremacy, were he confronted with those hundred sparkling plays of Menander, that all the wits and scholars of antiquity went crazy about. And what must those audiences have been, who insisted nightly on a new one, considering it a rare compliment to allow a second hearing, even to the *Frogs*? What must their calibre have been, and culture, and readiness at repartee? And the sculptors and architects of old, are not their works, to-day, the delight and despair of their modern brethren? And even the music of old, on which we think we have made such wonderful improvements; were we not told the other evening, by a learned lecturer, that on the banks of the Ganges, a thousand years before Christ, the young men and maidens were chanting the very melodies, that now take captive the ears of our beaux and belles at the opera? Our orchestras may be stronger and more varied, our harmonies more full and expressive, but the airs themselves, like the passions they interpret, the very same; fashioned according to the same rules, just as they appealed, with the same irresistible power, to the same throbbing hearts. In all that appertains unto the passionate, the beautiful, the picturesque, have we gained any thing, to say the least, upon our brethren of antiquity? I think not. I think the world is growing more homely every

hour. Every art and craft of life, good or bad, seems to me to be losing some of its poetry, continually.—Take the art of war. A fight was worth looking at, in old times; worth transferring to canvass. An Achilles preparing for a *mêlée* before Troy, as painted by Homer, or an Alexander arraying himself for his bloody, but brilliant day's work at Arbela, as he is described by Plutarch, was truly a magnificent fellow; and an army of such fighters, when once fairly engaged, heart to heart, and hand to hand, with their gay and glittering antagonists, call it what else you will, was surely a most superb and fascinating spectacle. How different from the mechanical, angular, sombre, smoky, unmusical transaction, called a battle, in our times, which defies even the skill of a Vernet, to make it attractive! There was some pomp on the sea, too, formerly. The galleys of Greece and Carthage, with their shapely prows and sterns, and purple sails, and oars that moved to the sound of flutes, whether going in procession, on some pious pilgrimage to a neighboring island, or when involved in "all the heady currents of the fight," were certainly objects that an artist might look at with satisfaction, might take pleasure in perpetuating in fresco or mosaic; but what is there poetical in our ships of war, or in the representations of modern naval fights? Who ever dreams of exploring their beauties, as they adorn the galleries of provincial museums, except an occasional small boy,

or grog-inspired old salt? The splendid turn-outs of Venice, too, her gay gondolas, her sumptuous Bucentaur, where are they now? Sleeping the sleep of death, with the poor fallen city they adorned. The stately ships that loom up so, in the pictures of Claude and Vander Velde, with their lofty, gilded sterns, and quaint mottoes, and dainty carvings, and images of saints, how are they banished from the deep! A group of such tall argosies, dressed out in their gay robes, and lit up by the setting sun, might indeed have kindled the imagination of poet or of painter. But their day is over, and a far different generation has succeeded them; a generation of saucy, sharp-set, officious clippers; far more nimble and servicable, certainly; that would go round the globe four times to their predecessors' once; but no more to be compared with them on the score of beauty, than a locomotive is to the car of Phœbus; and it looks as if even these last would soon be driven from the ocean, yes, everything that sails with wings, and as if every sea, and bay, and river of earth were to be monopolized by little, black, noisy, ugly steam-tugs, and huge, unsightly propellers. And the costume of men, as well as ships, is it not taking the same direction; got up exclusively for purposes of utility and rapid motion, and in defiance of all the laws of beauty? Take even the dandies and bloods, the Pelhams and Waterfords of our times, and are they to be named in the same

breath with those of antiquity? Do they sail such yachts, or drive such teams? An Alcibiades dashing along the Ceramicus, in his superb chariot, with his Thessalian steeds, was he not far ahead of any thing the Champs Elysées or Hyde Park ever witnessed, in the way of costume and appointments? The epicures of old, were they not far more learned than their modern brethen? Is there any Fish-Sauce extant, which is to be compared with that which Heliogabalus used to put upon his turbot? Could Soyer himself have devilled a crab with Apicius? Is there a cook on earth this hour, either snoring in his night-cap, or issuing his edicts in the kitchen, that could begin to get up a supper with the *chef* of Lucullus? Is there any such wine in any chateau of Metternich, or cellar of Dijon, I will not say as Priam or Xerxes used to go to bed on, but as was stored away in the vaults of Tiberius or in the Aurea Domus of Nero? Beckford himself, with all his wealth, and wit, and taste, was he any thing more, after all, than a third rate Sallust or Mæcenas? Are there any entertainments coming off, this day, in any quarter of the globe, at all comparable, either in the intellectual or physical departments, to the Olympic Games? I don't believe it; no such poetry, no such jumping. Where are the individuals in this century, who clear fifty-five feet at a leap, and ring a quoit at a hundred and fifty? Even Gabriel Ravel, I fear, would have cut

rather a small figure at Corinth, and the double somerset of Hiram Franklin have been coldly received. Ought we not to remember these things in the midst of our self-laudations? Because we can analyze substances more minutely, and have found out a few more secrets in electricity, and can calculate distances and eclipses with more certainty, and can plough the waters and rattle over the earth faster than our antique brethren could, and manufacture more paper money, and circulate more cheap periodicals, we should not forget that they could raise heavier weights, rear loftier piles, make better statues, and if they could not illuminate their buildings with the same rapidity, knew far better how to ventilate them and to clear them of crowds. Think of the Colosseum, that would hold an audience of a hundred and twenty thousand, and yet could be emptied in ten minutes, while we enlightened Gothamites nightly put our persons in peril, at (what we call) monster concerts, and lectures at Metropolitan Hall. Besides, as I said before, how many of our fancied novelties are mere revivals: we now know, that the youngsters of Greece used to rub their little noses and fingers against window-panes, and that the fine women of Rome used to take their opera glasses to the theatres; that balloon excursions were common things in the days of Sanconioth, and spiritual rappings no novelty in the time of Zoroaster. They, no doubt, had their Mesmerism

too, and their Socialism, and their miracle-working pills and ointments, their quack remedies of all sorts, for all the physical, moral, and social ills of life. And why should not these same Greeks and Romans have had their contrivances for multiplying manuscripts, and their water, or even steam-propelled machinery, for grinding their corn, and for making their purple and fine linen, and for facilitating the operations of their mints and foundries? I can't believe that the men who could put a Parthenon in marble, who could manufacture such superb plate and jewelry, who could furnish so daintily a palace of the Caesars, were so ignorant of these auxiliary forces in nature, and of the art of using them, as we suppose. It seems more reasonable to believe, that most of these inventions of ours, as we call them, are mere reappearances of what the world has seen already; that they had their day, and gradually fell into desuetude and decay, from the diversion of human thoughts and wits into other channels; that the same causes will kill them again, and again revive them, and that they will continue to play this game of hide-and-seek, for aught we know, through all eternity. The more I think of these things, the more disposed am I to believe that the capacities and acquisitions of men have been substantially the same from the beginning; that there is the same ignorance of the learned, and learning of the ignorant, now as ever. I believe that the doctors who

prescribed for Darius, knew just about as much, and about as little, concerning the real causes of diseases and the operations of remedies, and the phenomena of sickness and death, and the true relationship between soul and body, as the medical advisers of her Britannic Majesty do; and that then as now, the wisest and best in the profession, would have been the very first to avow their ignorance. In a word, I believe what Solomon preached, and Shakspeare sang, and our own hearts re-echo, and Pompeii has proved, and Nineveh is hourly proving; that there is no new thing under the sun. I shouldn't be surprised, at any moment, to hear of some Rip Van Winkle of a city, suddenly roused from its sleep of a thousand generations or so, in some silent, desolate corner of the Old World, perhaps on the banks of the Euphrates itself, with its buried locomotives, and steam-tugs, and gas-pipes, and telegraphic wires, and all the appliances that we so coolly appropriate, as the exclusive property of our own century. May not the Creator condescend, some fine morning, to show it to the world, through the medium of some silly, wandering shepherd, for the very purpose of mortifying and humbling this most conceited and self-glorifying generation? But enough on this head. You spoke of health, too. Is the world any healthier now than it used to be? Are there more hearty, ruddy specimens of humanity, moving about the globe, this morning, than there were in the time of Nebuchad-

nezzar? I have no idea of it, myself. I believe, moreover, that, could we have taken a walk through the streets of Athens in the days of Pericles, or of Rome in those of Augustus, and immediately after, have had a peep at our own Broadway, as we see it to-day, we should have found a frightful balance against us, in the way of bright eyes, and good looks, and general muscular developments. There can be little doubt where the sculptor would have gone for his models; little doubt in which of the cities the largest share of round shoulders and spindle-shanks would have been found, or nine-tenths of the coughing and sneezing and general complaining would have been heard; or in which metropolis a sudden call for an outlay of physical force would have been least satisfactorily answered; or in case of a collision between the ancient and modern promenaders, where the victory would have been. Could we have had time to get at our fire-arms, I grant you we might have carried the day; but, with nature's own weapons, can there be any doubt that we of the 19th would have been soundly thrashed? But seriously, I believe that the world is a sad loser in this regard—that there is far less of high health and animal spirits on earth than ever before; less of God's fresh air tasted; less out-door work or play; less familiarity with the beautiful sounds and sights of nature. There are far more prisoners than ever, toiling in mines, and galleys, and factories; more

people than ever, killing themselves in crowded cities, martyrs to fashion, and care, and business; more poor wretches locked up in narrow, noisome lanes, who scarce ever see a star in heaven, who only know of a sunrise or sunset by hearsay; poor caged birds, who see no more of the blessed fields and woods of earth, than a stray flower-pot or box of turf can show them; pale, puny, meagre things, just fit to be swept away by the first disease that may be prowling round for victims, the first pestilence that may ride the tainted air. Is it not so? Am I wrong, when I say that there were never more miserable, unpromising babies brought into the world than now, more deaths in child-birth, more cruel, fatal disorders, more little contemptible ailments of all sorts, more persons in every walk of life, who are defrauded, or who wilfully defraud themselves of their fair share of years? I think not. But I will not dwell any longer on this point. Let us look a moment at the item of Freedom, of which you next spoke. Is there any more of the real, genuine article in the world now than ever? There are great apparent gains, certainly, in some quarters; in our own and the mother country, and other parts of Northern Europe, and in some few scattered colonies; but are there not quite as many palpable losses in Spain, Italy, Greece, Turkey, Asia Minor, Syria, Palestine? Are they not worse off than ever in this and all other desirable things? What

a spectacle does the Holy Land present, this very hour! Look at Bethlehem itself, the spot of all others, one would suppose, that guardian angels would hover over, to keep the peace and protect the pious traveller; why, it is as much as a poor pilgrim's life is worth, to visit the shrine of his Master: in no part, even of Judea, are robberies and murders so plentiful. And so throughout all these regions; the only freedom to be found there is that of prowling Arabs; the freedom of ruffians and cut-throats! Look all through the continents of Asia and Africa, and show me any thing like a Runnymede or a Bunker's Hill, in either; any spot amidst all those millions of acres, and myriads of souls, where a solitary battle has ever been fought for human rights. Not one; tyranny and ignorance have pervaded them from the beginning; the same savage wars and superstitions deface Africa, the same apathy and stupidity preside over all the trades and arts of Asia to-day, as did thousands of years ago. The freedom of the South American Republics, too; what a bitter mockery is it! The privilege of the strongest arm and sharpest sword, to mow down all opposition, and amuse and plunder its subjects, till in turn driven out by superior power. How much better is it, too, in Austria and Russia? France, too, after all her demonstrations and fine words, her fêtes and fireworks, how quietly at last has she succumbed to a miserable usurper; about whom there

is nothing lustrous or fascinating; whose whole life has been a lie, a mere mass of humbug and self-indulgence! Freedom, indeed! Even in our own comparatively favored land, how much downright, bona fide liberty is there? I grant you, that our rights are more explicitly defined than elsewhere, in constitutions, and statute-books, more discussed by the press and the pulpit, more harangued about by orators at all sorts of gatherings; but what do they all amount to, when fairly analyzed? Leaving the embellishments of rhetoric, and the exaggerations of self-love out of the question, and coming down to sober, naked facts, I ask how much real freedom does a citizen, and especially one of small income, enjoy in this same metropolis of ours? How far may he express, unharmed, his honest opinions? In Religion, for instance, suppose I were to say to-day, aloud in company, not in any sarcastic or malicious spirit, but frankly and modestly, that I did not believe in the divine origin of Christianity; what would probably be my portion? Not melted lead, certainly; I should not be roasted alive before morning, I grant you, nor imprisoned, nor even fined, nor excluded from the ordinary places of resort. But just as certainly, I *should* be exposed to all sorts of little annoyances and persecutions; doors now open, would be closed against me; daughters would be denied me in marriage; customers would drop off from me; my notes would have a harder

time of it in bank; my creditors would be more importunate than ever; my very servants would be less attentive and respectful. I should pay, in ten thousand small ways, for the luxury of giving breath to an opinion, which was unpalatable to the majority. My prospects in life would be materially injured by any such honest, but injudicious statement; it matters not, though my skepticism may be the result of the reading and reflection of years, while the so-called faith, of three-fifths of my persecutors, may be mere hypocritical assumption, or the fruit of servile fear and ignorance; I must none the less pay the penalty. Let me express any unwelcome opinion to any party in power, I care not in what department of thought or branch of trade, and am I not quite as likely to pay roundly for it, in this as in any other era? I may not have to gulp my poison down on the spot, like Socrates, but I may confidently rely on the slow poison of misrepresentation and abuse; I may not be shot down with that promptness and mystery with which plain-spoken men are sometimes disposed of, in the court-yards of imperial palaces, but I, in all probability, *will* be pelted, even to the edge of my grave, with the missiles of hired scribblers and slanderers. And so the poor wife may not have *her* throat cut by her husband, with the same impunity now, as of old; but he may torment the very soul out of her, by his ceaseless neglect or cruelty, just as thoroughly and effectually as in the days of Nero.

Again, how much freedom of motion have I, in this thriving city of ours? How far is it modified and restrained, in the day-time, by the lawlessness of omnibus-drivers, and the incursions of cattle-droves, and in the night, by the aggressions of rowdies and ruffians? How much of what is so liberally accorded to me in my Bill of Rights and Declaration of Independence, do I practically enjoy, if caught out of Broadway, and one or two other thoroughfares, after nine P. M., without the guaranty of Bowie-knife or revolver? Honest answers to these questions, how mortifying, how disgraceful are they, to us and to too many of our sister-cities! Freedom of election, too, that boon of the race, that showiest flower in the bouquets of our orators, what becomes of nine-tenths of it, when fairly sifted? What proportion of the votes polled in our town, last November, were the embodiments of intelligent, unbiassed, honest conviction? I speak not of the sacrifices made, the degrading exactions submitted to, by the candidates for office, in order to get their names formally before the people; but the sovereigns themselves, and above all, the colored portion of those sovereigns, how much freedom of choice or action, did they have in the premises? Why, even the white Whig voter has found it a sufficiently perilous undertaking, in some of the wards of our city, to indicate, in the usual way, his political preferences; but woe betide the colored taxpayer, who, in some unguarded moment, should un-

dertake to turn into realities, the promises of the Constitution! Freedom, say you? And not only must this worthy old soul be frightened away from the polls; he is not even allowed to show that pleasant face of his, nor his excellent wife, inside of any omnibus or rail-car, in this enlightened town. I am no abolitionist, my friend. I have no sympathy with them. I consider them a set of ultraists and aggressors; but I confess, it has made my blood boil, at times, to see an old man turned out of a car, in a cold, rainy night, because of his black skin, at the bidding of a set of creatures, infinitely below him in all the substantial qualities of humanity. These are disgraceful, damning facts, and are of far more significance, to every thoughtful mind, than a frigate-load of Fourth of July odes or orations. Need I say, how many other things there are, to compromise my freedom? The tribute to be paid to fashion, if one would avoid unpleasant notoriety; the tyranny of tailors, who one month incarcerate you in horribly tight garments, and the next, set you adrift in a perfect fog of clothing; the innumerable exactions of etiquette; the ceaseless invasion of bores, duns, and quacks of all sorts; the visitations of tax-gatherers, both professional and amateur; the small slavery to one's own whims and caprices, and bodily needs and infirmities, and to those of kindred and friends; and the cruel fetters that our appetites and passions are continually forging for us: what becomes of all this

boasted freedom of ours, when we think of these things? I say again, I see about as little as ever of it in the world. I see the same predominance of tyranny as ever; the same disposition to over-ride and crush opposition, in all ranks and classes; the same unwillingness of the intellectual man to surrender his sway over the minds of his brethren, and of the belle to bear a rival near her throne, and of the prima donna to divide plaudits and bouquets with the new-comer, and of the wit—but why illustrate further—of every wielder of power, to share it with his fellows. Tyranny, where is it not? At hearth and at altar, at social and political gatherings; the tyranny of the majority, as we feel it, in our own land, to day, is it not about as cruel and unwise as any thing we read of, in Grecian or Roman history? A majority that wilfully turns its back upon the most politic measures, the most imperative duties of the Republic; that excludes its oldest and most honored sons from its high places; that rushes recklessly on, in the career of annexation and aggression; that would plunge us in a bloody war, to-morrow, for the sake of a few paltry acres, while it utterly neglects the legitimate development of its resources, and protection of its industry. And then, that most grinding, crushing tyranny of all, the tyranny of mammon; the great autocrat, who has ruled the world from the beginning: when was the money-power ever more firmly established than now? In

what part of its dominions, is it more omnipotent, than in this same boasting metropolis of ours?—What will it not buy here, to-day, that should *not* be bought? What votes, and signatures, and puffs, and unlawful merchandize of all sorts, can it not freely command, for itself, and for its enemies, what pens of hireling scribblers, and pencils of caricaturists, and, if need be, bludgeons of ruffians? We talk, with horror, of the degrading rites and obscene ceremonies of the Bacchanalia and Eleusinian Mysteries of old, but were they, after all, much worse than the abject prostrations and cruel sacrifices that belong to this wide-spread Dollar-worship of our own times? I can't see much difference in them, I confess. The more I think of all these things, the more unsubstantial and illusory does this vaunted freedom of ours appear. Toleration is just as scarce an article as ever. If tyranny deal less in racks and faggots than she did, she has far more small ways of punishing her victims, than ever she had. An opinion, however honest, if unpalatable to her, is about as costly a luxury, and truth-telling generally as unprofitable and perilous a business, now, as it was under the Cæsars; nay, the whole pilgrimage of life is just as full of clogs and restrictions and annoyances and perils, to-day, as when the first generation of sinners performed it. Brother A., of course, has no faith in, or sympathy with such a doctrine, and I will not dwell upon it. A few words upon the item of good-

ness, and I have done. Is the world, then, any better than ever it was? Is the spectacle which the earth presents, to-day, one whit more acceptable to its Creator, in a moral point of view, than in olden time? I don't believe it. I don't believe that the sum total of the thoughts, words, and deeds, that will have transpired in this metropolis, between sunrise and sunset of this pleasant day of December, in the year of grace, 1852, will any better bear divine inspection, than a similar aggregate would have done, in Tyre, or Babylon, or Rome, in the days of their plenty and prosperity; and if there be, indeed, as we are told, a record kept above, of all these things, and we could turn to the celestial books, and make the comparison for ourselves, we should find the points of difference, in this regard, as nothing, alongside of the multitudinous, the hideous points of resemblance. There would be less open bestiality and throat-cutting, in the modern city, I grant you; less blood of men shed in theatres, and of beasts in places of worship; less downright brutal ignorance in the lower walks of life; but not one whit less of secret vices and villanies, of wide-spread selfishness and sensuality; the same domestic bickerings, the same ceaseless squabbles about nothing, the same multiform frauds in trade, and quackeries of all sorts; the same corruption in high places, and small stealing in low ones;

The oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,
The pangs of despised love, the law's delay,
The insolence of office, and the spurns
That patient merit of the unworthy takes;

all, all the same; the same sad, guilty story that human life has been, from the beginning. Is it not so? Look again at the two multitudes, as they sweep by us; the one, as revived by the magic wand of the poet, the other as we see it with our own bodily eyes, this day. Where is the difference, save in the hue and fashion of their garments? I can't see it. There are in both, the same passion-stained faces, the same martyrs to care and business and avarice and lust and gout and glory; in both, the same tender babes, and frolicking children; the same tottering age; the same few scattered philosophers, the same handful of men and women, going about on errands of love; in both, the same overwhelming majority of fops and clowns and pickpockets and sleek hypocrites and smooth-tongued scoundrels and painted harlots; the same frightful preponderance of oaths and falsehoods and filthy jests, over words of gentleness and prayer and thanksgiving. Gloomy and repulsive as the picture may be, in either case, yet is it not the true one? Are we not enacting the same old drama, in New-York, to-day, with some slight changes in costume and scenery, that the men of Babylon were, in the days of Semiramis? I can't help thinking so. Else have I utterly misinterpret-

ed the teachings of history, do I utterly misread the records wherein our passing life is mirrored, do I belie the workings of my own heart, and of the hearts of my brethren. But why dwell upon the sad theme? It was not of my seeking. My friend here, will of course reject this version of the matter, as unsound and unjust. Be it so. Meanwhile I am prepared to listen respectfully to whatever he may see fit to say in reply.

C. Well, friend A., what is your answer to all this?

A. I certainly *do* reject it, as utterly untenable and unjust. I say there is a decided balance in favor of us moderns, in all those particulars which brother B. has glanced at; and with your leave, I will follow briefly in his track. First, then, as to knowledge. I say there is far more knowledge to-day in the world, in every department of science and art, than ever there was; far more acquaintance both with the outside and the inside of the earth, and with the properties of its contents, animate and inanimate; far more, with the attributes of the other heavenly bodies, and with the laws that govern them; and above all, there is a thousand fold greater power of imparting, and multiplying, and circulating our knowledge all over the globe, and of preserving it safe, forever, from the power of accident and the clutches of time. In this last respect, how marked our superiority! *We* may defy all the

torches of all the Omars. If every imperial and royal library of Europe were destroyed this day, nay, if the Old World itself were to disappear beneath the waves, what is there really precious and substantial, either in Art or Letters, that we men of America would not still have, or could not, with these materials and resources, these keen wits and iron wills of ours, in good season, reproduce? Not a thing. All that is valuable in science and the literature of every clime, we should of course have, safe and sound already; and as for the rest, even the dearest and most famous master-pieces of Painting, Sculpture, and Architecture, is there one of them, that American genius could not in time replace? No, not one, from the Cathedral of Cologne down to the daintiest knick-knack of Paris. Thanks to modern skill, no precious thing of earth need ever again perish. No triumph of genius, no noteworthy deed of art or arms, no act of piety or patriotism, need ever pass from memory, but may live forever, and be scattered freely abroad, for the delight and instruction of the children of men. Think of these marvellous powers of multiplication and circulation that we have, and then of the slow processes of antiquity: with what ado have a few stray fragments of their choicest poets, orators, and historians, been rescued from the jaws of oblivion. But I maintain that we have equally the advantage over our brethren of old, in the amount of our acquisitions. No

addition to the knowledge of the world, indeed! I have no patience to argue such a point, and I confess I am amazed that any man who has ever made the tour of a menagerie, or of a museum, or turned over the pages of an encyclopædia, or even cast a curious eye over his own drawing-room, could think of maintaining it for a moment. I deny it *in toto*. I say again, there is no branch of science, no walk of Art, from highest to lowest, wherein we are inferior to the ancients, while in ninety-nine hundredths almost, we are immeasurably their superiors. I deny their superiority in Metaphysics or the Fine Arts. I do not believe there were any more profound or subtle reasoners, in the days of Aristotle, than Fearne, or Cousin, or Edwards, or Calhoun; nor that there were any grander or more beautiful thoughts embodied in stone, either in statues or in buildings, in the age of Pericles, than our own land can show to-day. Our sculptors are already the worthy brothers of Phidias and Praxiteles, and as to Architecture, I would ask what more princely structure did Athens ever contain, than the Girard College; what building of its kind to be named in the same age with the Philadelphia Penitentiary, that masterpiece of skill and invention, which every capital of Europe, almost, has imitated? And so in music. If the specimens of Grecian music that have recently been exhibited to us, truly represent the art, it is perfectly monstrous to compare it with

the strains of Haydn, and Mozart, and Rossini. If such were the melodies wherewith the Athenian maidens were serenaded, or the Athenian bridegrooms summoned to marriage, I can only say I pity them. They certainly sounded to me far more like that eccentric and lugubrious piece of vocalization, the morning song that poor old Red Jacket used to mumble over his cups, than like any thing in the Messiah, or the Sonnambula. And in painting. I cannot believe that the best specimens of the art ever produced in Rome or Athens, were to be compared with the apostolic heads of Rubens, or the angelic faces of Raffaele, and Correggio, and Overbeck. I believe Christian art, in this department, to be as far superior to pagan, as are the themes with which it deals. Take Raffaele himself, and who would compare, for a moment, his Galatea, or his Councils or Banquets of the Gods, with his Holy Families or Transfiguration? or the Hours in Guido's Aurora, lovely as they are, with his Madonnas and Saints? By the same rule, how much more grand and suggestive, how much more eloquent in its appeals, both to our imagination and our affections, is a modern Cathedral, such as the Duomo of Milan, for instance, with its pictured windows, its countless spires and angels, than any of the cold, cheerless temples of antiquity, for all their rich façades and harmonious proportions! Nay, so persuaded am I of our superiority in this walk of art,

that I would not, on a venture, exchange the Mercy's Dream of Huntington for all that was ever done, in oil or fresco, by the greatest masters of the heathen world. And in poetry; who will say that we have fallen behind our brethren of old in this department? Or rather, who will *not* say, that Shakespeare and Milton alone are worth all the classic bards put together? It seems to me sheer profanity to compare the Iliad or Æneid with the Paradise Lost, whether we consider the theme itself, the wondrous stores of learning with which it is illustrated, or the daring flights of imagination with which it is filled. And as to tragedy; would not the loss of King Lear alone, be a far greater one to the world than that of all the tragedies of old that have come down to us? And I believe the same would be found true in comedy. Sparkling as Menander's plays must have been, and bright the wits that listened to them, I yet doubt whether they had any such brilliant passages-at-arms in them as those between Benedict and Beatrice, Orlando and Rosalind. No, no; there has been but one Mercutio, one Hamlet, one Imogen, since the great drama of life itself began. But not to dwell any longer upon the fine arts, let me venture to cast a hasty glance over the broad domain of the useful. And here, surely the superiority of us moderns is most apparent, and overwhelming. In every branch of natural science, in our investigations of the laws of light and heat and

motion and attraction, in our analysis and classification of all the objects about us, animate and inanimate, can there be any doubt about our wonderful progress in all these things? Why, England alone can produce four names, within a century back, that represent, I believe, fourfold more knowledge of all the secrets of nature, than would those of all the philosophers of Egypt, and Greece, and India combined. Could we bring together, to-day, all the wise men of the East, from the flood down, on the one hand, and the four intellects of Newton, Davy, Herschel, and Brewster on the other, and have their respective acquisitions tested, if you will, by a select committee of seraphim, who can doubt to whom the prizes of victory would be awarded? And in the application of this knowledge to the business of life, is there not a corresponding progress? What sort of a figure would Archimedes cut to-day, as engineer and mechanic, alongside of the architect of the Crystal Palace? And which of his countrymen would you select as the worthy counterparts of Watt, and Fulton, and Daguerre, and Morse, and Ericsson? It is very easy to say that the ingenious contrivances of these and kindred benefactors of their race, for the multiplication of objects and images, for the transmission of men, and things, and thoughts over the globe, and for saving, in ten thousand ways, the labor of their brethren, are all mere reappearances of lost arts; but what thoughtful

man can believe it for a moment? I have no more idea, myself, that steam, and caloric, and lightning were ever before pressed into the service of man, as we now behold them, than I have that the manufacturers of Babylon turned out more beautiful and truthful time-pieces, in the days of Semiramis, than do those of Geneva to-day; or that there were Power-Loom Carpet Factories in Jericho, in the days of Joshua, supplying Judea with more superb fabrics than those of our own Manchester and Lowell. Lowell itself, where was its counterpart among all the cities of antiquity? What land did it enliven and benefit? What stream fed its industry? The Indus, or the Ganges, or the Tiber? Ah, no; these names are associated with deeds of blood and conquest only; not of peaceful, honorable labor. Suppose Confucius himself were alive to-day, and on his travels; is there a sight on earth that would so impress and delight him as this same Yankee-notion of a city? How would he contrast its exquisite machinery, its comfortable dwellings, its various and intelligent industry, its comely, bright-eyed, well-clad laborers, with the stupid, squalid, wretched creatures that did the work of the world in his time! Tell me not, that all this is a mere repetition of the past. Such a spot *could* not have perished from the face of the earth, without mark or record. No, no; as I said before, nothing short of the destruction of the planet itself, could deprive us of these

same steam-presses, and steamships, these railroads and telegraphs of ours, and of their mighty results. They defy all that time and chance can bring against them. Once ours, we will keep them, and their fruits, safe and sound till doomsday. Had they existed before, why, we should only have been so much the farther on the road to our destined perfection, than we are; should have had so much the more material to study and to work from, so many the fewer problems for the philosopher and the philanthropist to work out. Ah no, these things are not mere revivals, but the genuine growth of our own times; the legitimate result of the enlarged experience and matured thought of the world; the natural forerunners of still greater improvements and blessings to come. And so in all that belongs to commerce, navigation, agriculture, manufactures; to state is, it seems to me, sufficiently to argue the question of superiority, as between us and the ancients. Take the merchant of Tyre, or of Babylon, in its prosperous days, and the merchant of New York; could we follow them from their respective homes to their counting houses, and through the business of the day, who can doubt that in every item connected with that business, from the ink he writes with, up to the lawyer he consults, the man of New York would be found to have the advantage? I have no idea, for one, that the Tyrian or Babylonian had any such set of books, or system of book-

keeping, or Salamander safe, or Manifold Letter-Writer, or gas fixtures, any such comfortable Custom House, or Exchange, or Reading Room to frequent, any such Commercial Dictionaries or Prices Current to consult, any such facilities in the way of Insurance, or of transmitting funds and orders all over the globe, as his American brother enjoys to-day. I have no idea that the lawyer of Tyre had in his library, any books that were fit counterparts to Abbott on Shipping, or Bayley on Bills, or Park on Insurance, any more than I believe that the fellow of Lord Stowell ever sat on the Tyrian bench, or that a Joseph Story ever administered justice in the courts of Babylon. No, no; such jurists, such treatises, such improvements of all sorts, could not have existed in those days; the world was not ripe for them. They are the genuine results of the enlarged commerce and knowledge of the race, and we ought so to consider them, and be grateful for them, instead of grumbling as we do, and perversely chanting the praises of the past. The commerce of antiquity, indeed! I should as soon think of comparing it with that of our own times, as of comparing the semi-piratical cruise of Jason and his companions in search of the golden fleece with our own Australian and Californian expeditions. The old Persian kings, we are told, used to keep the bottled waters of the Nile and Danube, in their palaces, to show their guests, as memorials of their travels and conquests.

Such a fact might have had its significance, in those days; but how small and childish a thing does it seem to us, whose Newark cider is drunk at the base of Ararat, and who, in one little month, can circulate all over the globe the healthful waters of Saratoga or of Sharon! The products of ancient commerce, what were they, compared with ours? Not to speak of cotton and sugar, I verily believe that there is more business done to-day, in India Rubber alone, with its myriad shapes and uses, than all the commercial transactions of Greece would have amounted to, put together. The navigation of antiquity, too! The timid, creeping navigation of the shipmasters of Tyre and Carthage, how monstrous to speak of it in the same breath with our world-searching merchantmen and whalers! But I may not stop to multiply illustrations. Brother B., in the course of his remarks, then went on to assert and to mourn over the departure of the beautiful and the picturesque from earth. He said the planet and every thing on it, were growing homelier every hour, and that every calling of life was fast losing all its poetical surroundings. More especially was this the case, he said, in the art of war; a battle, now-a-days, was a very ugly, dingy affair, compared with a similar exhibition in the time of Coriolanus. Well, it may be true, to a certain extent. The description in Plutarch, to which he referred, of Alexander arming himself, in true Homeric style, for conquest, is indeed most

graphic and spirited; and no doubt it would have given a Salvator Rosa more pleasure to have painted a fight, in which such combatants figured, than to have transferred those of Bunker's Hill, or Yorktown, to canvass. But in all other points of view, I should say, our modern warfare was far the more interesting of the two. Take the battle of Arbela, as one of the most memorable specimens of antique fighting, and look at it, alongside of Waterloo.—Think of the scale on which things were done, the character of the agencies employed, the amount of science and art expended in getting up the respective exhibitions, and who can hesitate for a moment in deciding as to which was the grander and more terrible display of strength and of genius? Why, the former sinks into a mere dog-fight, in comparison.—In the same way, put Salamis alongside of Trafalgar; for mere pictorial purposes, no doubt, the former would have been more acceptable to a Claude; but as a manifestation of physical and intellectual power, how altogether inferior is it! Why Nelson, with his good ship Victory alone, had he been there, would have scattered the combined fleets of Greece and Persia, like so many chickens in a barn-yard. In one thing, however, I must join issue with brother B., most distinctly; I mean, in seeing more beauty in the painted tubs that figure in Vander Velde's pictures, than in our own gallant clipper-ships. I think he libelled these last most atrociously. How-

ever, every one to his notion. If he prefers creeping round the globe, in one of the former, with its awkward decks and clumsy arrangements and comfortless accommodations, to a smart, dashing trip in one of the latter, it seems hard that he should be deprived of the privilege. By the same rule, he would no doubt also prefer, were it practicable, to go to sea, to-day, and test his stomach, and take his chance, in one of those same gilded galleys of Greece, or of Carthage, that he so eulogized, utterly unprovided as they were, with chart or compass, life-boat or life-preserver, to all the appointments and luxuries of a Collins' steamer. To me, I confess, such language seems most unreasonable; a most ungrateful return for the manifold blessings and comforts that we moderns enjoy. He then went on to say, and seemed to take it for granted, that in pretty much all matters of taste and luxury, we were far behind the men of imperial Rome; that we could not begin to get up such dandies or curricles, dinners or dinner-services; that our turbots, and the sauces we put upon them, were alike inferior to those discussed by Heliogabalus, etc., etc. I don't believe a word of it. I believe the facts are all the other way, and that there are a thousand-fold more dainties and knick-knacks and objects of luxury, as well as of comfort, in the world, this day, than there ever were before. I am amazed that any man should think otherwise; should presume to say, that there was any such show or variety

in the shops of Rome, in the days of Augustus, as we see in those of the Boulevards or of Broadway. Tell *me*, that Cicero had any Appleton's to look in at, or turn over dainty books in; or that his wife had any place to buy bonbons in, for the children, to be named with Thompson and Weller's? I don't believe it, any more than I do that the counterpart of Stewart's Palace or the St. Nicholas Hotel, was then extant. Santa Claus himself, who can doubt that he has a thousand-fold more materials to fill his blessed old pack and wagon from, to-day, than were ever dreamt of in those heathen times? Nor have I any idea that Horace ever washed down his jokes, with any thing comparable to our own Chateau Margaux; or that Mæcenas ever set a supper-table, half so crowded with dainty dishes, superb specimens of confectionery, bright thoughts put into sugar or chocolate or jelly, as those of our own merchant-princes nightly groan under; or that the kitchen of Lucullus ever turned out any such complete works of art, as the *foies gras* and *dindes truffées* of Strasburg. I believe Heliogabalus would have given a province to have sat down to such a meal, as the carte of the Trois frères, or Véry can furnish. That famous house of Nero, too; what was there in it, to be named as a combination of beauty and utility, with one of the chandeliers of Cornelius? Where, too, were its Paris clocks, and grand pianos? No such pleasant music, in those days. Where was their Punch, and

Lantern, and Comic Almanac, and Illustrated News? Where their Gift Books, and Monthlies, and Quarterlies? Why, a man has only to put his hands into his own pockets, to find a score of evidences of the progress of the world. Is there indeed, any want or whim, either of fop, epicure, or scholar, that cannot be gratified, in this age of contrivances? But not to illustrate by small things, let us look at large ones. Take Chatsworth, then, as the exponent of modern civilization, and Adrian's villa, as that of the ancient; and in which of these microcosms would the philosopher and the poet find most materials for thought and fancy? Whose grounds would shew the most scientific planting and gardening, whose gardens the finest fruit? From whose conservatories could the lover cull the choicest bouquet for his mistress?—The magnificence of the latter might be on a grander scale, but surely it would be far more monotonous. There might be a few chef d'œuvres in his galleries that his English brother could not rival; but as to the variety and suggestive character of their contents, who can doubt which would have the preference? The imperial library, too, might be more lofty, and its frescoes more brilliant. There might be some charming manuscripts in its alcoves, that we would gladly have, to-day; but we see no Bible there, no Shakspeare, no Waverley Novels, no Robinson Crusoe, no Vicar of Wakefield, none of those ten thousand other dear and precious books that

grace the English shelves. And so throughout the two domains. And what a shame it would be, if it were not so, seeing that the Duke hath a world twenty centuries older, and twice as large, to pick from, as the Emperor had. The discovery of America; who can begin to estimate aright the accession to our knowledge, in all the kingdoms of nature, that has grown out of it? Why, had Niagara itself been the sole fruit of the researches of Columbus, he would have been still entitled to the hearty thanks of the world; but when we think of the magnificent rivers, and forests, and boundless seas of fertile acres, that he has revealed to his brethren, and of the mighty part they are playing and to play in the drama of earth, what language can express his claims upon our admiration and gratitude? What are all the demi-gods of antiquity, alongside of a hero like this? But I must not linger any longer on this topic. How is it, then, as to the health of the world? Are we gainers in this regard, or losers? Here again I must differ from friend B. I think the statistics would be found against him. That we shamefully neglect the rules of health, too many of us, and have to pay the bitter penalty, in consequence, and our children after us; that there are far too many martyrs all about us, to all sorts of intemperance, is, of course, not to be gainsaid. At the same time, I have no idea that we have any thing like the number of sick, famine-pinched, deformed, crippled, muti-

lated creatures, that defaced and disgraced the times of old. I believe that, take the world through, there is far more health, and comeliness, among the children of men, this day, than ever before, and that the improvement in this respect is the necessary result of a higher culture. I have no patience with the doctrine, that as the civilization of the race advances, its bodily vigor declines; that mental and physical power may not go together; that disease is the ever attendant slave upon the triumphs of genius. Oh, no; I believe that the greatest minds of the world have been, almost universally, in its soundest bodies; I believe, moreover, that there are far more such minds and bodies at work, this hour, than earth ever knew before. Besides, who can doubt that there are far more preventives against sickness, known to us, than there were to the ancients. Let me again cite India Rubber, that boon to humanity. What such shield against the assaults of the elements, had they in Greece or Rome? Surely, Hippocrates or Pliny would have made honorable mention of it, had it existed in their time, with its ten thousand ministrations unto human comfort. And as to remedies: who will say, that twenty added centuries of observation, have not enlarged our stock of them? have not augmented our knowledge of the

Grace that lies
In herbs, plants, stones, and their true qualities?

Surely, we have a larger assortment of mineral springs, than our elder brothers had, a more thorough analysis of them, and infinitely more facility of scattering their treasures abroad; we have a far choicer stock of climates to select from; a far more copious medicine-chest to prescribe from. Can any one doubt it? Wouldn't Galen himself say so, were he here, to-day? Wouldn't he confess, too, that there were no such hospitals in Rome, or Alexandria, or Athens, in his time, as our cities contain; no such resources for the student, in the way of lectures and galleries and laboratories and libraries; no such comforts for the patient? When he was Marcus Aurelius's doctor, Rome was in the very zenith of her splendor, having millions of souls within her walls, and filled with sumptuous edifices; but among them all, we read of no asylum for orphan, foundling, or lunatic; no Institution for the Deaf and Dumb or Blind; no Home for the Friendless; no Eye or Ear Infirmary; no Dispensary; in a word, of no provision, either by prince or people, for the relief of the poor, infirm, or aged. It would be unjust, certainly, to infer from this silence, that the ancients utterly neglected these duties; but it would be equally unreasonable, I think, to suppose, that had there been any truly munificent outlay for such purposes, any thing at all comparable to the Greenwich or Chelsea Hospital, the Hotel Dieu or Invalides of our own day, that the memory of such benefactions

could have thus utterly perished. Fame could not have been so neglectful of her deserving children. No, no; these institutions belong to a far more civilized, Christianized age, as do all the appliances and contrivances that we find in them, to a far more learned one than that of Greece or Rome. I certainly cannot believe, myself, that there were any such surgical instruments or performances then, as we now have; any such beautiful operations in dentistry, any such application of ether, any such artificial legs or eyes, as ours. I have no idea that there was any apothecary's shop in any metropolis of antiquity, to be named in the same breath with our own Rushton's or Delluc's. The world wasn't old or wise enough, hadn't half mineralogical, botanical, chemical knowledge enough, in a word, had neither the tools nor the wits, adequate to the production of any thing so superb, so complete and thorough in all its appointments, such a charming combination of science, skill, and taste. Will any one tell me, then, in the face of all these numberless resources in the way of prevention, and alleviation, and restoration, that the health of the world has gone behind hand? It seems, to me, most unreasonable. But far more unreasonable and unjust still, was brother B.'s statement, that there was no more Freedom in the world to-day, than ever. How he could make it and contend for it as he did, in the face of such palpable, such glorious facts as we see

all around us, is to me surprising. I shall, very briefly, reply to some few points urged by him. After first casting a very sorrowful glance over the rest of the world, he then went on to illustrate his remarks by our own country, and to call in question the reality and value of our privileges as freemen. And first, in matters of religion. He could see no more toleration in that regard, now than ever. He almost said, in so many words, that there was very little to choose, so far as peace and comfort were concerned, between the position of the infidel in New York to-day, and that of the Christian in Tarsus in the time of Paul; that the only change, indeed, that he could see, was in the character of the missiles employed, and not in the hearts of the persecutors, and that if the modern skeptic were less exposed than was the ancient believer to the downright, brutal violence of a mob, he was yet pretty sure to be pelted, all through life, with small slanders and libels, and to be subjected to affronts and annoyances innumerable. Now, this seems to me a most extravagant and unfair representation of the matter. I see no such spirit of persecution in the community myself. On the contrary, I see a great and constantly increasing spirit of toleration and courtesy, not merely between different denominations of Christians, but towards infidelity. I have no idea that the modest expression of disbelief has any such penalties annexed to it, as brother B. so fancifully described; or that a

young man of fair talents and blameless life, even though he be an avowed skeptic, need therefore be defrauded of a good wife, or a good business, or any other lawful prize that he may aspire to. If, indeed, he go out of his way to sneer and rail at Christianity, if he make a mock of the most sacred functions of the church, wherewith all our best affections and dearest associations are entwined, then must he be treated accordingly; must expect to have the doors of worthy men closed against him; and most righteously, as an offender against good-breeding and decency, and a disturber of the public peace: but as to the honest doubts of the well-disposed man, surely there was never such a readiness as now, all over Christendom, to meet them in a spirit of candor and conciliation. How any intelligent observer can deny a fact so plain, so cheering as this, I confess amazes me. Equally fanciful and extravagant seemed to me friend B.'s assertion as to the restrictions upon the freedom of motion, of the citizen, in our metropolis. He could not have been in earnest, when he undertook to infer, from the occasional outrages of a gang of rowdies, in some obscure quarters of the town, or from the occasional shortcomings of a not yet perfectly developed police-system, that the great blessing in question is not practically enjoyed by the people; still less, when he undertook to say, that because there has been a breach of the peace now and then, in one or two wards of one or two cities

of the Union, in times of political excitement, that freedom of election is not a great and glorious reality throughout the land, but a mere figure of speech in our statute books, a mere rhetorical embellishment in the flights of our orators. How unreasonable, how ungrateful to talk thus! Why, when I look back upon the fourth of last November, and think of the spectacle which America presented to the world on that day; when I think of the prompt, quiet, orderly way in which twenty-five millions of people changed their rulers, without a solitary loss of life or limb, no, not even of an eye or tooth, that I have heard of, I am lost in wonder and admiration. When did men ever see any thing like it before? Show me its counterpart, if you can, in Grecian or Roman experience, or in that of any other nation. Was it not as great a novelty in the political history of the world, as the magical rapidity with which the result was sent by steam and lightning, all over the globe, was without precedent in its social experience? And again, when I look forward to the fourth of March coming, and consider in what an unpretending, pleasant, courteous way our excellent Chief Magistrate will hand over the keys of office, and the chair of state, that loftiest and most honorable chair on earth, to his successor; what a simple, old-fashioned, republican ceremony it will be, with no absurd parade of troops, no superfluous precautions against outbreaks; with nothing in it either to dazzle or ter-

rify the beholder; occasioning, too, not a feather's weight of disturbance in the nation, interrupting not for a moment the grand, beneficent movement of the great wheels of government; I say, when I think of these things, I am far more disposed to fall on my knees and thank God, for having permitted me to draw breath in such an age and land, and to be an humble participant in such privileges and blessings, than to carp, and rail, and make unfavorable comparisons, and deny the palpable, the glorious progress of the world in all that belongs to freedom. Is it necessary to argue a point so clear as this? Will any man deny, either, that the people of Europe have far more rights and comforts now, than they ever had before; that the tyrants of Europe are far more afraid than ever of public opinion; that political crimes can no longer be hushed up, but are straightway dragged forth from the strongholds of autocracy, and branded with a world's execration; that Wit is more free than ever to throw its shafts at all sorts of abuses; that Truth has a far better chance than ever before, of triumphing over the cabals of cliques, or the bayonets of ruffians; that a good word, from a wise man, is listened to by a hundred-thousand fold greater audience than ever; that any good thing, be it in matters of Faith, Art, or Science, hath far more potency and significance than ever, traveling as it straightway does into all lands, translated as it is into all languages; in a word,

that the masses are hourly gaining in intelligence, dignity, and power, while their enemies and oppressors are hourly losing strength and heart? I should as soon think of denying my own existence, as of questioning these things, nor will I stop to discuss them. Need I say, finally, that I think brother B. was equally astray from the truth in his last statement, that the world is no better to-day than ever it was? Surely, surely the facts are all the other way. I believe there is a most cheering progress in this respect; that the spectacle daily presented by our New York is far more acceptable to God and holy angels, than was that of Rome or Babylon in their happiest days; and that alike the fallible records of men, and the unerring ones of heaven, had we access to them, would demonstrate it; that we have far more happy homes and virtuous households; more good women going about, ministering unto sickness and poverty; more good men devoting their time and money to purposes of charity; more benevolent associations of all sorts; more looking after poor vagrants, and foundlings, and idiots; more asylums for all manner of distresses and infirmities; more good preachers, and sermons, and the blessed fruits thereof. Do we not, every day, hear of some munificent donation, or see the corner-stone laid of some building dedicated to charity, that may be traced directly to the timely words of some good priest, whose eloquence has aroused the zeal, or con-

firmed the wavering purpose of the benevolent?—These are not idle fancies, but substantial and delightful realities, to which every ward bears witness. I have no idea that any metropolis of old had any such blessed list of charities to show, no, not imperial Rome herself, in any period of her career, as our own dear town can, to-day, with all her imperfections and short comings; else has history most cruelly belied them. And so throughout the world; looking, not at mere isolated spots, but taking a broad, generous survey of the whole, will any one deny that there is a most marked improvement in the moral condition of the race; that there is more good feeling among nations, more equity in international law, more liberality in treaties, more humanity in war; a more merciful administration of justice, a better prison-discipline, a far more wise and gentle dealing with all the maladies of the body politic; more efforts made, both by governments and individuals, for the diffusion of knowledge; more grand gatherings for lofty and honorable ends; more disposition to speak and listen to the truth, to bury old animosities, to promote the arts of peace, and the interchange of the products of industry, and to put an end to the horrible business of throat-cutting? Will any one deny that there is far less profanity and bestiality in the world; less cannibalism, less abominable superstition of all sorts; less of that bitter, malignant spirit that so disgraced the feuds of rival states and cities, in old times, that

warred alike with the dead and the living, and that made a slave of every captive? I cannot hesitate, for one, in my answers to all these questions. I believe, too, that the march of mind, of which we hear so much, has been, not the mere figure of speech that brother B. would make it out, but a veritable, arduous, glorious progress; that the mission of Christ has been, not the miserable failure it would be, if his picture of humanity were the true one, but a source of infinite blessings to the race; the fount from which all the best thoughts, words, and deeds of the world have been derived. No culture less thorough, no creed less lofty could have given us the innumerable privileges and improvements, moral and material, that we enjoy. To say that these things are all mere repetitions of the past; that they have had their day before on earth, and have disappeared and slumbered for ages, without trace or record, and have then been revived, only to go through the same round and to die the same temporary death; such a view of human life and destiny, however it may amuse the fancy, seems to me as unreasonable as it is discouraging. I have no belief in it myself. I believe in the steady progress of the race, ever since creation-morning; and that the things that most adorn and bless our day were utter strangers to the men of antiquity. I have no idea that we shall ever stumble on that slumbering fac simile of London or New York either in the deserts of Arabia,

or beneath the waters of the Euphrates, to which friend B. alluded; or that any Asiatic records will ever be exhumed, wherein the counterparts of our own Washington or Webster will be found; any more than I have, that a Peace Congress ever came together in Babylon, or any Grinnell Expedition ever left the port of Tyre, or Crystal Palace ever drew travelers to Athens, or that our own glorious common school system was known to the lawgivers of Egypt. No; such men, such deeds, such ideas as these, are the blessed result of an older, wiser, better world; as far superior to any thing antiquity ever witnessed, as I believe they will be found inferior to those of twenty centuries ahead. And now, friend C. (for I have talked quite long enough), let me appeal to you in this matter. What say you? Which of us seems nearest to the truth? Are these improvements that I see all around me, and these bright hopes that I build upon them, the mere creations of a credulous enthusiasm, as brother B. seems to think them, or is he himself unreasonably skeptical and gloomy in his views? I confess, I should like to hear what you have to say on these points.

B. And I.

C. Well, friends, I certainly *have* some rough notions of my own, on these matters, though I hardly think them worth listening to. At any rate, I have no idea of inflicting them upon you to-day. If when

we next meet, you are disposed to renew the discussion, you shall be heartily welcome to them, such as they are.

A. Very well, let us so understand it.

C. Till when, farewell.

CONVERSATION V.

A. And now, friend C., for your opinion on the matters discussed at our last conference. What say you? Am I right, in my rose-colored views of the present and the future, or brother B. here, with his gloomy ones? How is it?

C. Well, to be candid, brethren, I do not agree with either of you. I certainly have no sympathy with the sad and skeptical spirit that seemed to pervade brother B.'s remarks. I think he was quite too hard and bitter upon poor human nature; and yet I cannot help thinking, also, that the facts are, on the whole, far more on his side of the question. I do not believe, in a word, that there has been any material progress, either in the wisdom or goodness of the world, since man first set foot upon it. Take any detached age or nation, and compare it with another, we see, of course, marked differences; but looking at the whole earth and race, from the begin-

ning, I believe that what we call human life and human nature, are just the same now as ever, and that they will be so, unto the end. I believe that the history of the future will be substantially the history of the past; with the same lights and shadows, the same alternations and vicissitudes. I have no idea that the twentieth century of our era will be as brilliant a one as the present, or that the historian of the twenty-first will have any such triumphs of art or science to record, as we see to-day; but that there will be the same reaction that there always has been; nay, that we shall have, in due season, the dark ages over again; that the Course of Empire must be everywhere fulfilled; that it is not henceforth to be a mere flourish of rhetoric, a mere thought elaborated on canvas, but just as much the experience of nations yet unborn, as of those that perished ages ago. I believe that London and Paris are destined to be the same heaps of ruins, that old Rome and Ephesus now are; that our own land, after going through a glorious development, and reaching a higher point of culture in some respects, perhaps, than human annals have yet borne witness to, must, in turn, bow her lofty head, and droop and die, and return to her primitive desolation; must become the same beast-and-savage-haunted wilderness, that the men of Plymouth found her. I believe, in short, that the perfection to which brother A. looks forward so hopefully, exists only in his own ardent imagina-

tion; that there never will be any better or worse men on earth than we have had already; no intellect more subtle than that of Aristotle, no heartier lover of truth than Socrates, no patriot that will ever dim the lustre of Washington's fame; and, on the other hand, no wretch that will ever make us forget the atrocities of Herod or of Nero; that the planet was never intended to be the abode of angelic loveliness, or of fiendish malice, but the home of man, our brother; the same yesterday, to-day, and forever; the same compound of strength and of weakness, of good and of bad qualities, in the one hundred thousandth, as in the first century of human history. I believe that the same impassable barriers exist now, and ever will, that ever have, to man's knowledge of those very things that yet most interest and disturb him; to the knowledge of his own origin and destiny, of the principles of life, the phenomena of death, the wonders beyond the grave: that God hath not, either in his works or word, and never will give his children, while on earth, any more than the vaguest hints concerning these mysteries. I believe the same obstacles exist, and will exist, as ever, to the mental and moral progress of the race; obstacles growing out of these frail, craving bodies and wayward minds of ours: out of our native aversion to labor, and love of ease and self-indulgence; and upon which no conceivable organization of society, no stimulus of precept or example,

no multiplication of books, or schools, or teachers, can ever make any permanent impression; and therefore, that the great and good of earth will always be, as they have been, in sad disproportion to the ignorant and sinful. I believe that all the inequalities of endowments and condition, all the accidents, struggles, feuds, pains, sorrows of life, will exist while earth exists; just as much as I believe that men will always be looking up at the same stars, climbing the same mountains, and sailing over the same oceans that they now do; in a word, that the orchestra of nature, the drama of life will never change. I have not the remotest idea that we mortals will ever become so peaceful, wise, and happy, that the plays of Shakspeare will cease to interest us, save as curiosities; as the representatives of infirmities and evils no longer extant; but that they will be the same faithful mirrors of humanity, ten thousand years hence, as to-day. I have no doubt that there will be just as many whims to humor, follies to laugh at, vices to lash, crimes to punish, just as much work for the satirist, and caricaturist, and magistrate, in A. D. 18,530, as in the year of grace 1853; that life will be the same web of mingled yarn; the same many-colored thing as ever. I believe, too, that the children of men will be found living in the same old-fashioned homes as ever; not distributed in any orderly array of groups and series and phalanxes, but scattered about the valleys

and hill-sides of earth, or congregated in cities, as we now see them; that the same family joys and family jars will, then as now, cheer and torment humanity; that the same visionary schemes for supplanting them, will continue to haunt the brains of dreamers; that the men of those days, like their brethren of to-day, will persist in loving their own kindred, and firesides, and land, and language more than those of the antipodes; that there will be as great a multiplicity as ever of creeds, governments, and opinions in the world; that

—"the king's crown, and the deputed sword,
The marshal's truncheon, and the judge's robe,"

will be, not obsolete ideas, extant only in the verses of forgotten poets, but living, significant realities; that liberty, equality, and brotherhood will still continue to be the same objects of desire, the same bright and beautiful illusions as ever. In short, I believe that the world will remain the same primary school for souls that it always has been; with the same feeble understandings to deal with, the same limited range of studies, the same rough discipline; that the brevity of life, the liability to sudden death and loss of reason, the infirmities of age, nay, that all the disappointments, inequalities, doubts, temptations, perils, evils, about us, must ever exist on earth, as the indispensable accompaniments of that very scheme of education which God intended

for his earthly children. But not to expand or illustrate this thought at too great length, I would ask, what is there in it so very irreverent, or unphilosophical, or discouraging? If I believe, as I most fervently do, in immortality, as proclaimed alike by reason and scripture, and in all the glories and terrors that are involved in it, what is there so repulsive in this picture of humanity? Why should not just such a planet as earth have been set apart by God for just such a purpose; as the first of a series of experiences, for the formation and development of spiritual character? Why, then, seek to disturb the arrangements? Why break up this beautiful order of things? Why call for a course of lessons, or system of discipline here, that would be inappropriate to our position? Why fondly expect to realize on earth, those visions that can only become realities in a more advanced stage of our career? Or why, on the other hand, madly and blasphemously pronounce all about us, mere vanity and rubbish? Are not both these extremes, of credulous enthusiasm, and sneering skepticism, alike unreasonable? There are ten thousand subtle and puzzling questions, of course, that grow out of such a thought, and which our poor wits cannot begin to fathom; but the thought itself seems to me the most natural and appropriate, nay, encouraging, that could enter the mind; certainly the most in accordance with Christianity. Why else, indeed, was Christ sent on earth, to establish a per-

manent religion? Why was that blessed medicine for souls given us, to last, as we believe, while man lasts, but because these very infirmities, sins, and sorrows with which it deals, are to be with us always? I am for taking the world, then, as I find it, with all its rough teachings and heart-vexing mysteries; for playing my humble part and studying my humble lesson as best I may, without asking impertinent questions, the answers to which are wisely withheld from me; without clamoring for impracticable improvements; without grumbling, because the stripes may appear to be laid, at times, on the wrong backs, or because the sweets and bitters are not distributed according to my poor notions of right; believing that as I advance from stage to stage of my spiritual education, all these problems will gradually be cleared up, and the wisdom and goodness of the great Teacher be made manifest. Of course, then, holding these views, I cannot look forward to any such revolutions here below, as brother A. speaks of. As I said before, his idea of a steady progress to perfection on earth, seems to me a mere fancy sketch. I have no faith in it. I believe the world will remain as it is; that it will present the same motley spectacle, ages hence as now; the same variety of phenomena, alike in nations and in individuals; that it is not going to become one great garden, one scene of uniform peace and plenty and happiness; or mankind a band of brothers, speaking the same language, sitting down

to the same bounteous table, interchanging tasks and sports and civilities, without distinction of rank, clime, or color. Oh, no; I believe the poet will have the same old song to sing, in the long ages to come, as he is singing this hour; the historian the same many-sided story to tell; that earth will have, then as now, her sterile and accursed spots, her noisome weeds and venomous reptiles; that there will always be wildernesses enough for beasts to roam and howl in, ruins enough for owls to build in, and moralists to muse over; that her church-yards will always hold the same motley gathering of wise and simple, of young and aged sleepers; that wars and famines and pestilences will still be sent forth upon their terrible missions; that whirlwinds and earthquakes and volcanoes will still play their fearful, but God-appointed parts; that there will always be, as now, the same warfare in the elements, and in the hearts of men; yes, while the earth continues to perform her journey through the skies. These things make life the battle it is; this is the schooling, the training whereby God prepares his children for the more lofty and arduous tasks that are to follow. And is not the planet itself, all the more dear and interesting to us, on this very account; as a place not intended to be handed over, either to angels or to devils, but set apart, forever, as the theatre of human action? Why do we so love to linger over the tombs of old, or to meditate among the ruins of dead cities?

Because the men they commemorate or recall, were our brethren; because their joys, feuds, sins, sorrows, were the same as ours; the drama of life precisely the same then, that it is now; the 'still, sad music of humanity,' that we listen to, the same that was chanted of old. And will not, for these very reasons, the same sighs be heard, the same homilies be read over our own remains and monuments, hereafter? I have no doubt of it. I have no doubt that some future Marius will yet moralize over this same shattered metropolis of ours; or that the traveler will, ages hence, be gathering wild flowers among the ivy-hidden ruins of Marshfield, as he gathers them, to-day, at the tomb of the Scipios. And why not? I repeat the question; is not this view of human destiny more reasonable, than that which on the one hand would turn this world into a paradise, for which God has not furnished the materials, or on the other, would treat it as so much rubbish only fit for the flames? So it seems to me. Why then seek to alter God's arrangements? Why should not the earth continue to play the part thus assigned her, and as she still keeps on in her thousand-fold repeated journey through the heavens, so keep on, through all time, telling the same old story, reading the same old lesson as ever, to man; to man, alike when here, in the midst of the strife of life, and to man, when translated to other spheres of action?—What different systems of discipline, what higher

courses of study, what more grand or subtle organizations may await us, in those other worlds, these things are all, in God's wisdom, hidden from us.—Meanwhile, here we are, in the preparatory school, with its teachings and trials, corresponding to this, our spiritual childhood. Surely it is not a discouraging, but a grand and inspiring thought, that this earth of ours is thus the beginning of a magnificent scheme of education; the first of a series of divine academies, for developing and perfecting that spiritual culture, which our affections and understandings, which nature and revelation alike proclaim to be the destiny God hath in store for all his children. In this light, all the evils and sorrows of life are as much divinely appointed teachers as their opposites; and that very preponderance of sin and suffering that we see about us, the arrangement of all others, the best suited to bring out both the passive and the active virtues; in a word, to make our schooling here, the most complete and thorough. Such, my friend, is my humble interpretation of the matter, an interpretation, endorsed, I think, by the soundest philosophy and poetry of the world, and by the Scriptures themselves. But I see you don't agree with me.

A. I certainly do not. Your doctrine seems to me to have far more assumption than proof about it, far more plausibility and poetry, than truth. It would puzzle you too, exceedingly, I think, to recon-

cile it with the old-fashioned, scriptural notions, either of this world, or the next. But, not to argue the point on scriptural grounds, the great cardinal objection I have to your theory, is its inevitable tendency to depress and discourage all efforts after improvement. What *can* be more disheartening than to tell me, that whatever I may do, or the generation to which I belong, towards transmitting this trust, the earth, which we have received from our fathers, in a sounder condition to our children, will all amount to nothing; that those very children, or theirs, will only undo all that we have been doing; and that this is the history of the world from the beginning; that not an inch of veritable progress has been made, but that we have been describing the same dreary round ever since God first made and blessed man? Why, what is this but a direct invitation to sloth and despondency? I cannot, I will not accept such an idea. I do not believe that the deeds and lessons of the past have been so thrown away upon us. I will not so insult my Maker, or belie history, or the instincts of my own heart, as to cherish such a notion, and turn human life into such a pitiful game of see-saw as this. I believe that God has a far higher destiny in store for earth, than the one you describe; nay, that he has given men the capacities and materials for working out the problem of perfection, here; and that they are now, and ever have been, slowly and painfully,

but surely, working out that problem; that every day is adding facilities for its solution; that there are now far more brains employed upon it, more truths shedding light upon it, than were ever known before; and that, in God's good time, the glorious consummation will be reached; yes, here, on earth, by living, breathing man. I cannot accept any thought less cheering than this. This alone can animate me aright to the discharge of my humble part in pushing forward the blessed work. I must discard your doctrine, then, my friend (fancifully and poetically as you have set it forth), as an unsound one; as not in harmony either with the facts of history, or the statements of Scripture, or with the exquisite machinery and munificent arrangements of the natural world; in a word, as derogating from the wisdom and goodness of God.

C. I see not that. On the contrary, this very distribution of parts and duties, among the different worlds of the Universe, whereby every star hath alike its prescribed path in space, and its prescribed system of discipline, differing from those of every other; such a picture as this seems to me far more in keeping with our ideas of the divine perfections, and presents a far more varied, grand, and exciting whole, for our contemplation, than yours of a monotonous perfection, alike toiled after, and alike consummated, in all.

A. Well, all such speculations, perhaps, ought to

be frowned upon, as unbecoming and presumptuous in us poor mortals. Still, if our imaginations *will* wander, at times, in such paths, I can't help thinking my picture a far more delightful one than yours. Surely, the thought of a universe, in which good is everywhere finally triumphant, with no solitary sin or sorrow lurking in a single star thereof, is more grateful, more worthy of our Father in heaven, than this ceaseless, terrible conflict between good and evil, that you would thus seek to perpetuate. Besides, if this earth *be* the primary school you speak of, what right have you to assume that its discipline has already been perfected; that there will be no grander developments of character in it than the world has yet witnessed; no more profound discoveries in moral and natural science, no new revelations of his will vouchsafed by God? In other words, that the future is to be a mere *fac simile* of the past? I say, that such a remark is mere gratuitous assertion. I don't believe it. I believe that there are manifold precious secrets yet to be found out by human wits, and that they are to work mighty influences on human character and destiny; that these same scholars are to have a far better chance than ever before; that their numbers are to be continually augmented; that the course of lessons is to be continually enlarged and amended; that the comforts and conveniences of the pupils are to be more and more studied; that alike the means and ends of education

are to be better understood; that the cannon and the bayonet are to give way to the sweet constraints of reason and of love; yes, that brotherly love is to prevail at last in the whole human family. I repeat it, no vision less bright than this satisfies me; for no issues less glorious, was this exquisite mechanism of earth, were these marvellous faculties of man designed.

C. And I say again, in reply, that I do not believe that vision will ever be realized here; and that in attempting to realize it, we are striving against God's own decrees; against the very means whereby our wits are trained, our virtues formed. The whole machinery of life, is it not based on those very evils that you would thus vainly seek to banish? What becomes of all the professions and crafts of men, of all the triumphs of genius, all the blessed charities about us, in this ideal scene, which you so insist upon? But why needlessly illustrate a thought so obvious? It seems to me as clear as sunlight that this pseudo-perfection of yours, is but another name for destruction; for taking all its form, color, relish from existence; for knocking out of the play all its meaning and moral. No, no, it may not be; that day may never dawn on earth, when sin and sorrow will not abound; when children will not be brought forth in pain; when the whole pilgrimage from cradle to grave will not be beset with perils. Such is the divine programme;

why madly seek to change it? Why run away from that very conflict that calls forth our best affections, and furnishes us with our brightest thoughts? Why seek to bring about a state of things, wherein the poet would have no more elegies to chant, the preacher no more warnings to sound; wherein all the finest, most thrilling passages of the drama would be left out? It is altogether unreasonable. As if we *could* have, or appreciate the calm wisdom of the judge, without the previous wranglings and sophisms of the advocates! Banish the waylaying, murdering thieves, and what becomes of the blessed part of the good Samaritan? Blot out the blasphemous, crucifying Jews, and where is the meek and suffering Saviour? How monstrous, then, to seek to sever what God has indissolubly linked on earth! As well talk of leaving out the minor keys from the music of life, as of leaving out its evils and sufferings from human experience. Just as surely as our ears would be cloyed and wearied with the never-ending allegros, in the one case, so would our hearts sicken, our souls droop and pine, for want of nourishment in the other.

A. Plausible, but most dangerous doctrine; palatable enough, certainly, to the sluggard and the criminal; easily twisted to their evil purposes; but not one, that the philanthropist can ever be reconciled to. Yes, my friend, this view of life seems to me, alike narrow-minded and presumptuous. What

right have you to take for granted, as you do, that when this blessed consummation, this reign of peace and good-will, which both reason and scripture set before us, is reached at last, then forsooth, the world will not be worth living in; that there can be no entertainment, instruction, relish in life, without the perpetual presence of evil? Is there no such thing, then, as skill in art, or progress in science, but what is necessarily based on bodily or mental infirmities? Can there be no love, but that which binds up wounds? Are the secrets of nature, the domains of thought so easily exhausted? Will there be no new varieties of beauty, no new fields of inquiry, where all are alike students and brethren, to keep up the charm of existence, and to stimulate the wits of men? Nay, will there not be loftier themes than ever, for the poet's lyre, the philosopher's homily? To doubt it, seems to me to call in question the resources of God's wisdom and goodness.

B. I can't agree with you. I can only say again, what I have so often repeated, that I do not believe the materials are to be found on earth, either for a natural or moral paradise. Every boy, of course, dreams of it in his turn; but every thoughtful man must reject it as utterly impracticable. Yes, this same world-wide diffusion of plenty, peace, and good will, that you are so fond of dwelling upon, would be the very worst thing for us, could we get it; the most unpalatable and unprofitable arrange-

ment for humanity. The point seems to me too clear for argument. As certainly as the inequalities in the face of nature are necessary to give beauty and interest to the landscape, so are the inequalities of human condition essential to all enjoyment and instruction. As certainly as the coming together of the sour and sweet gives its flavor to the fruit, so the perpetual collision of good and evil, of pain and pleasure, constitutes the very relish of existence. The idea of altering this divine arrangement, of banishing these eternal contrasts, seems little less than blasphemous. No; I am for taking the world as God made it; for swallowing the draught as the great Physician hath mixed it. I ask no emancipation from the temptations or the casualties of life. Let me fight the good, old-fashioned fight appointed unto Adam, and all his children. Let me fairly earn and receive my stripes or laurels, according to my conduct. Let me struggle as I best may, with the motley crowd about me; not idly attempting to convert it into an orderly procession of philosophers, but taking it as I find it; the same parti-colored gathering of peers and paupers, of saints and sinners, that it has been from the beginning; the same old crowd that Homer sang to, that Raffaele painted from, that Shakspeare studied; and life itself, the same divinely prepared compound of good and evil, of sweet and bitter, of jest and earnest, that it always was, and will be through all

time. Yes, my friend, the more I think of this progress-doctrine of yours, the more wild and visionary does it appear. Progress from world to world, from the tasks and discipline of this life to those of a higher sphere of action, and so on, on, till the mind is swallowed up in the abyss of the infinite; such a progress as this, dimly as I apprehend it, yet seems to me a far more philosophical and animating thought, than yours, of solving the problem of perfection here on earth, or in any other single world of the universe; and, as I said before, presents a far more sublime and varied whole for our contemplation. It is not fair, I know, to argue from things physical to things spiritual; and yet, what is there in this same universe, from the revolving planet down to the passing shower, that suggests the progress you speak of? On the contrary, is it not all circular movement; a return to the place of beginning; a giving up of the thing taken; death overthrowing life, life springing up out of death; and this as well in the career of the proudest empire, as of the meanest weed? And why should not these same circles, great and small, be ever thus completed, as in the past? Will it not be so? Yes, the stateliest metropolis of earth, to-day, must go down to the same dusty death as have all that have gone before it; must return to that wilderness state from which it came, and in its turn, furnish the stone and the timber out of which future builders are to rear

future cities; and human luxury, and corruption, and war, and wretchedness, must be, as they have ever been, God's own selected agents for the carrying out of the decree. Who can doubt it? Call this a dreary round, a pitiful game of see-saw, if you will; but to me it seems the beautiful fulfillment of the very mission that the Creator designed for earth.

A. I cannot accept this interpretation of the matter; nor do I think the records of history justify any such assumption. Nay, they tell quite the opposite story to me. Are there not cities on earth this hour, that have celebrated their thousandth birth-day; and which, so far from manifesting any symptoms of corruption or decay, are growing and thriving continually? I have no idea, myself, that either London, or Paris, or New York will ever die that death you speak of; that they will ever be lodgings for wild beasts, but will continue unto the end, the same centres of trade, the same head-quarters of art and science that they now are. I reject, altogether, your version, my friend. Dress it up in what gay robes you will, plead for it as persuasively as you may, it yet seems to me unsound, sophistical, nay, heathenish. It may minister unto a morbid fancy, but it discourages all healthful exertion. I have no patience with it; this perpetual holding up of the past as the model, this want of faith in the present, this unwillingness to admit what appears to

me as clear as light, the palpable onward march of society: this hanging back from the ranks, and not helping along the consummation of the blessed problem: yes, the problem of perfection, which, I say again, I verily believe God designed man to work out on earth, and not to be eternally describing that pitiful old round into which you would resolve human destiny.

C. Not so: not a pitiful old round, but a divinely appointed plan. And why should the thousand fold repetition of that plan, make it any the less divine, or life any the less exciting or instructive to us? Such reasoning as yours quarrels with the very light of heaven, and with the stars above us. Is the good wine, then, any less agreeable because our forefathers gathered grapes from the same vines? Is the beauty of woman any the less charming, because there were as pretty girls, in the first century of earth, as there are to-day, or as will be found embellishing home-circles, ages hence? Does the boy's lesson stimulate his young brain and excite his young imagination, any the less agreeably, now, because boys were studying pretty much the same tasks, in Thebes and Athens, thousands of years ago? Are not these things all the more pleasant and interesting, because of this very identity? Is it not this very feeling, this community of joys and sorrows and labors, that binds the generations together, into one great whole, that gives a meaning to

history, a significance to the face of the earth? And, by the same rule, will the cathedral that is now slumbering in the quarry, with all its marble saints and angels, any the less charm and instruct those who will be wandering about its aisles, and studying its monuments, ages hence, because St. Peter's is playing that same part for us, to-day? Or are the pleasures we receive, the lessons we learn from St. Peter's, any the less palpable, because we know that it must crumble to dust in its turn, must go through the same mill that the Colosseum has, before it, and become a quarry for future builders to plunder materials from? Does not the very fact, that time, and neglect, and violence are to bring about this same destruction, make it all the more beautiful and dear to us? The idea of its remaining safe and fresh, always, in mad emulation of the works of nature, is it not intolerable to us? Would not future ages turn away from it, as an impertinent nuisance, that had no business in a world like this? And why should not the same reasoning apply to a nation? Why should not our own land become a wilderness again, and fade away from human knowledge, and again be brought to light by another Columbus? Such an idea is far less repulsive, and unnatural than yours, of a steady progress to a consummation from which there is to be no decline, a meridian splendor which no night is ever to follow: a mere dream, that cannot be realized in a world

like ours, the very laws of whose being are ceaseless change and conflict. No, no; a world without its sorrows and its ruins, what charm could it have for student or traveler? A history, that had no bloody wars and tottering thrones to tell of, no crimes and vices in it, how soon would it weary and repel the reader! And why? Because it would not be the history of man; of man as he was in the first age, as he will be, in the last age of earth. How idle to question, how wild to seek to change these things! I say again, then, call this a dreary round, if you will; to me it is none the less a divine drama; nay, I take comfort, I rejoice in the thought, that the scenes and characters of this drama, will remain the same, through all time; to feel that I am heaving the same sighs, shedding the same tears, struggling with the same doubts, obstacles, temptations, as did my brethren of the patriarchal ages; just as much as I am looking up at the same stars, am surrounded by the same flowers, listening to the music of the same brooks.

A. Well, well, my friend, we shall never agree on this point. You cling to your idea, certainly, with commendable firmness, and illustrate it, with characteristic copiousness. None the less, however, must I fight against it. Especially do I deny the force of your last illustration. I deny that we men of to-day, are looking up at the same stars, are confined to the same scanty range of flowers or fruits,

that the patriarchs were. I say, there are far more stars in *our* heavens, and that we know far more about them; that we have far more copious and dainty fare, both for mind and body, than the men of old had; that the brook's music hath far more meaning in it than ever before; that the brook itself is playing a nobler part than ever; that its waters are less often stained with blood; that all the brooks and rivers of earth have far more beauty and significance, than ever; that they are not, as of yore, mere boundaries of hostile kingdoms, and scenes of conflict, but are more and more becoming peacemakers, and blessed ministers unto human industry; that the landscapes of earth have more amenity, more of the smiling labors of peace in them, than ever; nay, that the prospect from every mountain-top, bears witness to the glorious progress-doctrine that I preach, and shall persist in preaching, my friend, in spite of all that you have urged. I say again, the facts of history are all on that side of the question. Every day's reading and observation strengthen me in this belief. I have already dwelt on this point, in talking with brother B., and must not repeat myself. I believe then, most fervently, in the reality of that progress. I believe that there are far more acres, and brains, under cultivation, to-day, than the world ever knew before; more hearts alive to truth, more rational faith, more ardent piety —

C. Ah, no, no; I can't agree with you there. It

seems to me, that there was a fervor about the piety of antiquity, that we have quite lost, in our day ; a hearty, earnest communion with God, to which our worship is tame and frigid ; a simple, child-like faith, for the loss of which, we are poorly compensated by all our pompous rituals, all our elaborate treatises on Natural Theology.

A. I don't think so. I say, on the contrary, that we are far nearer God than ever we were. I cannot listen to the doctrine, that science tends to withdraw man from his Maker. He that knows best the works of God, sees best the friend and father in them. The most learned philosophers have ever been the most filial and devoted worshippers. If here and there a rebellious nature is found, perverting the lessons of the great volume, thank heaven, they are rare exceptions. And how can it be otherwise ? Piety and knowledge must, from the very nature of things, sustain and elevate each other. As the learning of the world increases, so must the intensity and fervor of its faith increase. I quarrel not with the faith of the patriarchs ; it was a blessed thing, in its day, and in entire accordance with their scanty knowledge of the frame of things about them ; but oh, compare it not with the enlightened, the sublime faith of a Newton. And this latter kind of faith it is, that I maintain is continually increasing in the world, with all other desirable things, in the ever onward march of mind. Progress, progress, progress ; yes, my

friend, I must cling fast to the glorious thought. I believe in the ultimate redemption of the race from sin and ignorance. I believe the day will yet dawn, when the whole earth will bear witness to the same blessed changes, the same emancipation from idolatry and bloodshed, that the great poet so eloquently sets forth, as having taken place on the borders of his own loved lake. You may remember the passage. He is pointing, as he speaks, to a placid cove, shut in by hills, and illuminated by a magnificent sunset, which he has just been describing.

“ Once, while the name, Jehovah, was a sound
Within the circuit of this sea-girt isle
Unheard, the savage nations bowed the head
To gods delighting in remorseless deeds ;
Gods which themselves had fashioned, to promote
Ill purposes, and flatter foul desires.
Then, in the bosom of yon mountain-cove,
To those inventions of corrupted man
Mysterious rites were solemnized ; and there,
Amid impending rocks and gloomy woods,
Of those terrific idols some received
Such dismal service, that the loudest voice
Of the swoln cataracts (which now are heard
Soft murmuring) was too weak to overcome,
Though aided by wild winds, the groans and shrieks
Of human victims, offered up to appease
Or to propitiate. And, if living eyes
Had visionary faculties to see
The thing that hath been as the thing that is,
Aghast might we behold this crystal Mere
Bedimmed with smoke, in wreaths voluminous,

Flung from the body of devouring fires,
 To Taranis erected on the heights
 By priestly hands, for sacrifice performed
 Exultingly, in view of open day
 And full assemblage of a barbarous host;
 Or to Andates, female Power! who gave
 (For so they fancied) glorious victory.
 A few rude monuments of mountain-stone
 Survive; all else is swept away. How bright
 The appearances of things! From such, how changed
 The existing worship; and with those compared,
 The worshippers how innocent and blest!
 So wide the difference, a willing mind
 Might almost think, at this affecting hour,
 That paradise, the lost abode of man,
 Was raised again; and to a happy few,
 In its original beauty, here restored."

And is not this same blessed change, my friend, yet to be the destiny of earth? I believe it. I believe that Civilization and Christianity are to play no less a part than this; are, in God's good time, so to mould and temper our passions, and develop our powers, that this same paradise *will* be raised again, and restored, not to the happy few, but to the whole family of man.

C. Never, never; 'tis the enthusiast's dream, that you describe, not God's future. But suppose it realized; suppose this blessed consummation to be reached, and all the wars, famines, and pestilences, all the follies, sins, and sorrows of earth banished; what then? How long, my dear friend, do you suppose this delightful state of things would last?—

Where would it finally lead us? How many generations would it take to bring us to the inevitable upshot of it all, an o'erstocked planet? Yes, a world groaning under a load of life, that it could no longer carry; crowded with beings, whose mental as well as physical wants it could not supply? He would be a bold calculator, to be sure, who would undertake to furnish dates and figures, in reply to these questions; but, my friend, what child cannot see that such a catastrophe would be the necessary result of that unrestrained prosperity, that worldwide reign of peace and good will to which you look forward? You smile, I see, at the idea of o'ertasking the productive power of the earth, and of exhausting its sources of knowledge; and yet, who knows but what we should have reached that very result this very hour, had the past been what you would make the future? Who knows whether there would have been an acre of wild land left for the cultivator, a solitary new enterprise to stimulate the capitalist or the philanthropist, a single new field of knowledge for the student? At any rate, this would be the final result of such a state of things. Where then would this vision of yours be? How gladly, then, would you hail the return of those very evils that you are so intent on banishing, as blessed ministers sent to relieve the earth from its frightful burden! Are not, then, these same crimes and casualties and diseases of the world an indispensable

part of the divine economy? I repeat it; had men all lived out their threescore and ten years from the beginning, and women all been fruitful; had there been no undeveloped faculties, no wasted hours, no neglected enterprises, no lost arts, no follies, vices, wars in the world, no relapse of nations into barbarism, and of cities into wildernesses, is it not altogether likely that there would have been a most uncomfortable crowd of us on earth, this very moment, clamoring for food and employment, I had almost said for very standing room? Would we not have reached a crisis, the only relief for which would be that same throat-cutting, pestilence, and untimely death, that we so idly seek to extirpate from the world? Would we not be enduring at last, and in one hideous mass, those very calamities that the race has been receiving piece-meal, as we find them scattered over the different ages and nations of earth? Would not this be the issue of this same visionary paradise of yours? I think so.

A. Not at all, not at all. On the contrary, had men played their parts in the way you describe, I believe that earth would have presented, to-day, a spectacle as much more lovely and interesting than the one we see, as that surpasses what it was when it came wild from the hands of God. There would have been some precious things missing from the picture, that we now have, certainly; many rare works of art, commemorative of past trials and sor-

rows; many monuments to goodness, many piles dedicated to charitable uses; there would, of course, have been no occasion for, no significance in these things, in a world where all were alike good and happy; but who can doubt that there would have been glorious substitutes for them; temples reared to Faith, and Science, and Industry; ten thousand additions to our flowers and fruits, to all the products of intelligent culture, in every walk of art; ten thousand new manifestations of beauty and of truth, in every department of knowledge. Your picture seems to me as untrue as it is horrible. The idea that any such catastrophe as you speak of, should be the result of an universal obedience to the Creator's laws, what a reflection is it on that Creator's goodness! How unreasonable, too, for you to insist as you do on sin and sorrow as divine ordinances, as indispensable parts of God's government! I have no patience with a doctrine that may be so readily perverted as this; that endorses and sanctions wickedness; that turns every vagabond and ruffian into an agent of the Almighty, an essential feature in the discipline of life. I do not believe that God thus seeks to perpetuate evil. Every transgression, every abuse of our freedom is offensive in his eyes, and must be paid for in full, here or hereafter. He hath no pleasure either in the sin or the suffering. He would infinitely prefer that all his children, this hour, all over the universe, were

walking in the paths of wisdom, and reaping its blessed fruits. To suppose that God would abandon us to starvation and wretchedness, in the way you speak of; that he hath made no more generous provision than that for his earthly tenants, and that this same blessed consummation which they had reached at last, would soon compass its own destruction, how monstrous, how blasphemous a notion is it? He *would* be a bold arithmetician, as you said, who would presume to fix a date for any such calamity, or to set down in figures the productive power of a planet like ours. To count, weigh, or measure the returns it gives, even now, to our scanty and immethodical labor, would be no light undertaking; but what imagination can conceive of the extent or variety of the crops that would respond to a world-wide and scientific culture? And is there not a corresponding munificence in God's provision for our intellectual wants? How romantic to suppose that we can so easily explore and exhaust the treasures of truth, all around us; that the charm and stimulus of novelty could ever be wanting; that there would not be new beauties continually springing up for the poet to celebrate, new discoveries continually rewarding the toils of the philosopher! But suppose we did know (as in God's good time, we will,) precisely the number of human beings that the earth could comfortably sustain, when tasked to its utmost capacity, where would be the difficulty; what the neces-

sity for any such horrible scenes as you describe? Would not the good sense of mankind accommodate itself to the limits thus ascertained? In the universal temperance, loyalty, wisdom, that would prevail, would there be any danger of transgressing them?

C. And do you really, my friend, think the day will ever come, when the passions will be thus thoroughly subjugated; when wisdom will thus everywhere preside, alike over all the great and small things of life? If so, indeed, why then of course this same paradise of yours will be reached, and kept, safe and bright and beautiful, for aught I see, through all eternity. But I repeat it, I see nothing to justify any such expectations, either in the history of the past, or the phenomena of the present. I see no preparations making in my own inner man, or around me, for any such thorough revolution in the planet; nor do I see either the physical or moral materials adequate to produce it. I cannot look forward, therefore, to any such radical changes in the feelings, experiences, annals, and dictionaries of the world. On the contrary, I believe that the old passions will be just as vigorous, and the old song-books, story-books, play-books that tell about them, will be just as fresh and popular in the last year of earth as they are to-day; that Scripture and history and reason will be teaching precisely the same lessons, sounding the same warnings, then as now; in a word, that human nature was not design-

ed for, could not endure that bright and beautiful scene you so love to linger on, any more than these poor, easily fatigued senses of ours could endure the glare and noise of an uninterrupted day.

A. Well, well, we can't agree, I see. None the less, my friend, must I cling to the blessed thought, far more animating and inspiring as it is; far more likely to make heroes and philanthropists, than that perpetual preponderance of evil, that endless series of sins and sorrows, that you so insist upon!

C. But what says brother B.? He certainly don't *look* as if he saw any very brilliant prospects ahead, in *either* world. How is it, my friend? Do you still hold fast to your old views, or has friend A.'s eloquence here, somewhat shaken your skepticism?

B. Oh, I've nothing to say for myself, more than I have already said. There is an individual, to be sure, could we only get at him, who might favor us with some really valuable facts and prophecies upon these points.

C. And who may he be?

B. The man in the moon. He, of course, has watched all that has been going on here below, from the commencement; and I dare say, has kept most copious and accurate records thereof. If we only had power, now, to send for persons and papers, he might shed a deal of comfortable light on these vexed questions.

A. Sarcastic and skeptical as ever, I see.

B. Yes, I am. I own it. I cannot get up any faith, either in your own fancy-future of this world, or in brother C.'s picture of endless progress in the worlds to come. Both seem to me alike visionary, alike unsatisfactory. I certainly agree with him, however, in looking forward to none of these radical changes that you do, in human affairs. I believe that human life will continue to be the same old song in the grass it now is, while that grass continues to grow. So long as God condescends to keep this sorry ball in motion, so long will the children of men keep up the same old, sorry game on it, as ever. I can't help thinking so. Why these things are thus decreed, why God permits all these puzzles, sins, and sorrows, how long they are to last, what is to be the upshot of it all, these are topics, as I said before, about which we have been fretting, chattering, scolding, shedding ink and blood without measure, ever since language was first organized; and yet, what comfortable knowledge have we about them to-day, any more than when the sun of the first day went down? At least, so it seems to me. Others may be fortunate enough to read in God's book of nature, or in what they are pleased to call revelation, or in historic records, satisfactory answers to all these questions; to me, all is doubt and perplexity. Meanwhile, with brother C., I see no indications of any change of programme. I see no pre-

parations making, moral or physical, for these same paradisaical developments of yours. I see schemers and dreamers enough, to be sure, as of old, who are perpetually promising all manner of good things and good times coming, and embarking in all sorts of visionary experiments, to that end; but I cannot see any thing in them, or their schemes, which should rescue them from the same thorough failure, extinction, and oblivion, that have uniformly befallen their predecessors. Of course, therefore, I am far from being on the *qui vive* for their predicted revolutions. I certainly do not anticipate, at least in my day, any general clubbing of lands, goods, and coins, the world over; nor do I see any symptoms ahead, of a world-wide movement, having for its object the prompt conversion of the globe into a fascinating combination of orchard, flower, and kitchen-garden, with every laborer therein a capitalist, every capitalist a laborer, and every mother's son of us receiving daily his own fair share of fruits, and bouquets, and garden-sauce. Nor do I see any very imminent danger of the extinction of the gains of the translators and interpreters of earth, from the universal adoption of one common language; or any immediate prospect of having one current hand for all our letters of love or of business, or one uniform currency for the cash-books and ledgers of both hemispheres. On the contrary, I can't help feeling that there will be full as much bad English uttered by

Frenchmen, and worse French growled forth by Englishmen, in the far future, as to-day; full as great a variety in the show-cards of the then flourishing writing masters; full as great opportunities for swindling, among the then extant exchange-brokers. Nor do I believe there is to be any such immediate and uniform good health, the globe over, as will render obsolete the fees of doctors, or the manifestos of quacks; any such all-prevailing piety and love of justice, as will vacate the mission of the clergyman, or the vocation of the judge; or that the schoolmaster, however wide a circuit he may make, whatever new means of education he may devise, will very speedily, or indeed ever, make any permanent impression upon the stupidity, indolence, and self-indulgent propensities of the masses; but that they will always be the same creatures of appetite and impulse, the same sheep following after their leaders, that all history proclaims them. The idea that education will alter these things, will ever root out the native perverseness of our hearts, or overcome the essential inequalities of our minds, how unreasonable, how opposed to all experience is it!—We may wish, and theorize, and plan, to the contrary, till doomsday; but there are the naked facts, old as Adam, that defy alike explanation and alteration. As if any conceivable method or amount of culture could have turned Shakspeare's next door neighbor into a Shakspeare! Monstrous supposition! I do

not believe, then, in the triumphal career of the schoolmaster, victorious over all the evils and follies of men. I do not believe that all the children of the next, or any coming generation, are to be little *Bate-man's*; but that their fascinating intelligence and sprightliness will be just as much exceptions to the rule, and that performances like theirs, will be just as profitable to managers, ages hence as now. I do not believe either, in any forthcoming revolution in their moral natures; but that they will continue to manifest the same old-fashioned frowardness, and turbulence, and disposition to overload their young stomachs, the same proclivity to naughty words and actions, as ever. Still less do I believe that the pains and perils of childbirth are to be evaded; or that "the piping cry of lips, that brook no pain and small suspense," is no longer to be heard on earth; but, in its stead, the merry notes of babes, that will come singing and dancing into a world, all light and gladness. And so with the adults. It is a pretty idea, certainly, that of the sun shining on a world-wide family of brethren and sisters, all alike well-formed, well-fed, well-dressed, and well-behaved; all alike good talkers, sound reasoners, faithful doers; but I would ask, not in what kingdom, but in what township of earth, are there any *bona fide* preparations making, for any such consummation? Wherever I go, I see the same old-fashioned infirmities and troubles, the same inequalities of condition and

endowments, the same preponderance of bad grammar, and bad logic; of selfishness and sensuality; the same imperfect sympathies, and unreasonable antipathies, and absurd jealousies and feuds, the same vices and crimes, that have formed three-quarters of the histories of all nations and parishes, from the beginning.

A. You have no faith whatever, then, in any substantial improvements in the morals or manners of the world; any real progress in its knowledge or religion?

B. Not much. I believe with brother C., that we have already, pretty much sounded the depths and scaled the heights within which all human effort is doomed to vibrate. I dare say there *are* a few scientific truths to be found out, yet; a few inventions in store for us, that are to be of more or less service to humanity. I have no doubt, either, that we are going to have pretty stirring times on earth, for some years ahead; that there are to be a good many miles of wires stretched and rails laid; a large and growing family of locomotives and steamers, to run our errands; in short, a great and unreasonable expansion of business, throughout the world; to be followed by as unreasonable a panic, and revulsion, and absurd fall of prices, and extinction of fancy stocks. No doubt there *are*, still, a few latent treasures, in all the kingdoms of nature; a few stray herbs, and fruits, and minerals, that the eye of sci-

ence has not yet lighted on. They will doubtless come along, in God's good time, with the customary perils and sacrifices on the part of their discoverers, will be duly christened and sent forth into the world with the usual trumpet-flourish, as wonder-workers and revolutionizers; will be received with the same old-fashioned sneers and shrugs, on the one hand, the same gaping credulity, on the other; and so fall in time to their proper level, of greater or less utility or harm to the race. Whose experience does not sufficiently enlighten him on these points? You and I, my friend, are old enough to remember when the *Tomato* first left its native woods, and made its début in the civilized world. What a cold shoulder people gave it, at first; what an absurd reaction there was in its favor, afterwards! For weeks, the papers were full of it. Its praises were chanted without measure, as the great boon of humanity, God's last, best gift to his children; at once, meat and sauce, fruit and vegetable, tonic and cathartic. Nothing was heard of, in all circles, but Tomato soups, and salads, and catsups, and tarts, and puddings, and pills, and powders. It even gave its name to clubs and benevolent associations and packet-ships. One enthusiast, you may remember, our friend —, (like yourself, by the way, an ardent admirer of Wordsworth,) even went so far as to commence an epic poem, in its honor. But it sank, at last, to its true position, as a piquant addition to, and not a re-

volutionizer of, our kitchens. Is not this the history of every new pill that heaves in sight, every new mineral spring, either of God's making, or of man's? None are positively worthless; none do more than a thousandth part of the work assigned to them, by the inventor or discoverer. And so with the patent contrivances and quack remedies of all sorts and ages, for the social and moral disorders of humanity; these fanciful organizations of society, these ever-shifting groups of laborers, and ceaseless interchanges of tasks, whereby every man is to be, at once, master and servant, judge and crier, sexton and pastor, captain and cabin-boy; these laws for the immediate extirpation of vice; these periodical distributions of property, that dreamers and demagogues have been crying up, from time immemorial, as grand panaceas for all the ailments of the body politic: no man will deny, that there are some few grains of wisdom and goodness, mixed up with all the folly and madness of their projectors; that there may be peculiar cases, and local affections, wherein even Agrarianism and Socialism might be of service; but the idea of holding them up to the world, as the great medicines of humanity, the miracle-workers, that are to revolutionize alike the hearts of men, and the face of nature, seems to me too thoroughly childish to waste one's breath upon. Still, I doubt not that there will always be, as now, quacks and visionaries enough to cry them up, and try to force them down the throats

of their brethren. Meanwhile, the old chronic complaints of the race will subsist in full force, the old passions retain their supremacy, and life itself remain the same sad, strange drama, with the same motley performers, as ever. I say again, then, with brother C., that I cannot see any of the preliminary movements towards this paradisaical consummation of yours. It looks to me as if the old arrangements, the old contrasts of good and evil, sweet and bitter, high and low, fat and lean, wise and simple, were going to last, as long as night and day last; and one half of the world continue to live as ever, by ministering, not merely to the necessities, infirmities, and innocent desires, but to the caprices, vices, crimes of the other half. I do not believe that we shall ever outgrow these arrangements—that with all our progress, we shall ever outrun the constable; or that Jack Ketch will retire from business, any sooner than Jack Frost. I can't help feeling as if Counterfeit Detectors were to form a part of the literature of every coming generation; and as if there would always be a fair market, not only for false teeth and wigs, but for Anglesey legs, and pasteboard noses; a fair opening for chiropodists of talent, even unto the closing scene. I believe, too, that the balls of the pawnbroker will be found suspended, in the streets of the last metropolis of earth, and that his windows, with their medley of curious contents, will be, then as now, the same fit emblems of many-color-

ed life. I believe that the nettle and the flower, the clown and the philosopher, the hero and the hog-thief, the beauty and the fright, will continue to jostle against each other, as they have jostled, ever since the centripetal and centrifugal forces began to act. Call me croaker, if you will; I still can't help thinking that the last generation of earth will have full as many small and great vices, and oversights, and shortcomings in it, as our own; as many unreturned umbrellas, unsettled bills, uncalled-for dividends, robbed orchards, stolen kisses, runaway matches, fraudulently obtained signatures, feloniously exchanged hats; that there will be quite as much Punic faith shown towards its tailors, as much turbulence and villany in its hack-drivers, as much struggling and scuffling for the choice dishes, in the hotels of its watering-places. So far from looking forward to the balmy airs, sweet flowers, and pleasant music, of this same Paradise of yours, I can't help feeling that the same old eyesores and discords of earth will ever prevail, as now; and that the noses of the long generations to come will have the same vile smells to encounter, as our own; and that the same neglect, filth, and corruption, will be at the bottom of them. I have no faith, I confess, in any thorough or lasting victories over nature, or ourselves. I do not believe that *Sahara* can ever become that smiling garden, dotted with fruit-trees, and enlivened with phalansteries, that some enthusiasts predict. Where are

the faith, and patience, and skill, and guano, to come from, that are to work such changes? It is easy enough to sit in our arm-chairs, and talk down all the nuisances, drain all the marshes, subdue all the stubborn soils, soften all the harsh climates of earth, blot out all the Dismal Swamps and Dead Seas, and Hard-Scrabble hills, and Break-Neck Hollows from the face of nature; all the Rotten-Rows, and St. Gileses, and Five Points, from our cities; but what man of sense believes in the practicability of these things? God has withheld the materials, both within us and around us. There is neither faith nor courage enough in the moral, manure or sunshine enough in the natural world, for any such revolution. As well talk of extirpating all the blemishes and infirmities of the outer man! Who really believes that the day will ever come, when there will be no bad profiles, on earth, no lisping, stammering, hobbling, shuffling, squinting, face-making; no nasal twangs, no murders of royal or republican English? Who believes, either, that there will ever be a complete extermination of the great brotherhood of rats, skunks, scorpions, spiders, mosquitoes, and other such nuisances? I am old fogie enough, my friend, I confess, to have little or no faith, either in the extinction, or in any radical change in the proceedings of these creatures. I believe that the mosquitoes of a hundred centuries ahead, will be at their posts; will be found biting the youngsters of those days in

the same old-fashioned way, and to the same old music as ever. I believe the sharks of the far future will go about in the same schools; will nip off the legs of their victims, in the same prompt, quiet modus operandi that they now practice, without stopping to inquire whether said legs are attached to the bodies of pirates or of missionaries; and that the discipline in said schools of sharks will remain unchanged; the great leading idea of that discipline being, then as now, to keep as much as possible out of the way of the larger fish, and *in* the way of the smaller ones, during meal-times. I believe, too, that there will be quite as many land-sharks about; and that the same shark-like views and propensities will continue to be manifested alike in the business transactions of nations, and of individuals; that there will be as many absurd wars about trifles, as many bad treaties negotiated over good brandy, as many government frauds and frauds on governments, as the truth-telling historian of our own century will have to stain his page with. You may call it perverse blindness on my part, but I really cannot detect any symptoms of obsolescence, myself, either in prize-fights or poultry-raffles, in fi-fa's or fire-arms; nor do I find any greater scarcity of quacks or pick-pockets, now than ever; or any reason to believe that we shall shortly see no more elephants than what are already stuffed, and under glass. I cannot think, either, that the lion is to be put out of the

way in this summary style, but that he will keep up his royal state for some time yet; if he be compelled to retire before the march of mind, and vacate some of his kingdoms, will not time, and luxury, and war, be preparing new wildernesses for him, as of old? I believe it. At any rate, I have no idea that he will ever so far forget his native majesty, as to bow the neck to, and become the drudge of man. I have no faith whatever in any thorough or permanent subjugation, either of the wild beasts or wild lands of earth; but think, with brother C., that there will always be ruins enough scattered about for artists to sketch from, deserts enough for winds to howl over. Still less do I believe that we are to bow the elements to our wills; that any contrivances of art can rob the whirlwind of its terrors, or turn the thunder-storm into a pastime, or the earthquake into a pleasant excitement, or convert the volcano into a mere piece of pyrotechny. On the contrary, I believe that a gale at sea will be just as unwelcome a guest to all coming voyagers, as it was to Jason; that it will be the same trial to the temper of captains, the same severe test of the nerves and stomachs of passengers, as ever. And so with the fevers and pestilences of earth. What reasonable man believes that any resources of science, any energies of association, will ever be adequate to their expulsion? Not I, for one. I believe that Death will be setting more traps than ever for

us, as the world waxes older; that there will be more obstinate diseases, with unpronounceable names, on his list, than ever; more Latin and Greek hieroglyphics, round the jars of apothecaries; quite as many pseudo-consultations, and professional murders, and patients dying, while the doctors are bowing or squabbling outside; quite as much gout and rheumatism, among the buyers of Bibles and readers of Shakspeare, in A. D. 10.000, as to-day. No, no; we shall never get the better of these monsters, or ferret them out of their hiding-places, or track them to their mysterious births, either in the loathsome haunts of men, or amid the rotting weeds and stagnant waters of the wilderness; but they will continue to steal upon us, to torment and destroy us, and make lanes through our families, and snatch off our dear children by clusters. We may talk, and scheme, and found new systems, and erect new professorships, till doomsday; but as to dodging or getting round these things, who is wild enough to believe it, any more than that we can escape from the shrunk shanks, and dimmed eyes, and cracked voices of old age? I say again, then, and for the last time, I have no faith whatever in these glorious revolutions, this bright, and beautiful, and world-wide Eden of yours. I believe in the old alternations of shine and shade; the old intermixture of frowns and smiles, alike in the face of nature, and in those of her children; the old vicissitudes that have consti-

tuted human experience; now a season of plenty, now of scarcity; now a period of temperance and prudence in our pursuits and pleasures, now of wild speculation and excess; and their corresponding fruits of bankruptcy and ruin in the business world, of headaches, shame, and remorse in the social. I believe these same ups and downs will last, while moons wax and wane, tides ebb and flow. I believe it, just as much as I do that the future occupants of the planet will continue to have the same average number of inches in their stature, and of pounds' weight in their bodies, and ounces' weight in their brains. I do not believe that any coming generation will ever celebrate the solution of your perfection-problem, any more than that they will pick posies and gather peaches on the summit of Mont Blanc; or behold a grove of nutmeg trees rising of its own free will, and in the quincunx form, on the shores of Nova Zembla; or gaze delightedly on a Home Circle of icebergs, formed round the equator.

A. Well, well, my friend, notwithstanding all your quips and sarcasms, I am not to be frightened away from my faith in this same perfection; no, nor to be seduced from it, or lulled into inglorious repose by all the plausible sophisms (for I can't help calling them so), of brother C.

C. But don't misunderstand me, my dear friend, or tax me with indifference or lukewarmness on these points. I would hail, as gladly as you do, all

these blessed changes, these glorious improvements, in our hearts and our homes, all over the earth, if I could see any good reason for believing them within our reach. But I cannot. The more I look at these same evils and troubles of life, which you would thus banish, the more clearly do I see God's hand in them; the more necessary do they seem to the completion of our earthly education. But I have already dwelt sufficiently on this thought, and can only reiterate my conviction of the folly of trying to separate the lights and shadows about us, and to alter the decrees of heaven. In a word, I believe that the folly and wickedness of the world, are just as necessary to bring out and set off the splendid exhibitions of wisdom and goodness, for which we build our epics and rear our monuments, as the blood, and garbage, and putrid carcasses that we put about our graperies, are needed to impart that warmth and richness of soil which is to nourish our luscious Hamburgs and dainty Camelias. We must take the two things together, just as we must take the reptiles and fevers of the tropics, with their gay plumage and brilliant flowers; and as to any social organization or legislation, which is to extirpate these same vices and crimes of humanity, it seems to me just about as visionary to expect it, as to expect to see any machinery of man's contriving, for cooling, at will, the hot sands of the desert, or smoothing down the turbulent waves of ocean.

A. I can't agree with you. I am *not* convinced. I believe there is a great deal to be said on the other side of the question, both in the way of vindication and illustration. I am not going to trouble you with it to-day, however. When we next meet, I shall claim the privilege of a hearing, for a few moments, if you are not tired of the subject.

C. Most willingly.

CONVERSATION VI.

C. Well, brother A., here we are, ready to hear what you have to say for yourself. You still cling fast, do you, to this same doctrine of perfection, attained and kept, on earth, and will not be persuaded by any thing that friend B., or myself, may have urged to the contrary?

A. I do, my friend, I do. No less a destiny than this, do I believe that God designs for earth and man. But let me first briefly explain myself on one or two points, wherein I think I have been somewhat misinterpreted. I am not, then, as brother B. in his sarcastic remarks would seem to insinuate, the advocate of any new-fangled organization of society, or of any patent legislation, that is straight-way to bring about all these glorious changes; any more than I am of any of those miracle-working pills or powders, that he is so fond of satirizing, for

the instantaneous extirpation of all the diseases of the world. I am no Socialist. I believe in home; in the endearments, joys, sorrows, cares, duties of home, as a divinely appointed institution, the place of which cannot be supplied, the blessed functions of which cannot be performed by any substitute of man's contriving. But at the same time, my friend, I am for looking with an eye of tolerance, nay of encouragement, on every honest experiment for the amelioration of the social and moral condition of my brethren. I am for giving them all a fair hearing and trial, in this broad domain which God has entrusted to us. I do not believe in any contracted modes of thinking, or of action, or in any spirit of bigotry or persecution, in a land like this. They have no business here; are utterly out of keeping, alike with our principles, and with these magnificent estates, these world-traversing rivers and world-feeding vallies of ours. I am for listening patiently, then, nay for giving the right hand of fellowship to every sincere reformer. Let them all be heard. Let the principle of Association be fairly tested. If the truth be with it, let it vindicate that truth, by its successful action; if it be based on false views of human nature, let its failure fairly demonstrate that falsity to an impartial world. Again, I am not, as I just now said, the advocate of any pet law or series of laws, that are straightway to revolutionize human nature, to heal all the wounds and dry up

all the sores of the body politic. I rely on no such quack medicines as these, for the blessed changes that I look forward to. No, no; but on the slow, toilsome, patient, faithful, but in the end triumphant, world-including march of mind; on the gradually enlarged circuit of the schoolmaster, the gradually expanded and amended course of lessons that he is to teach; till at last, the whole family of man is embraced in his ministrations, and the minds and hearts of all are fairly developed, under his instructions. This is the perfection that I *dream* of (if you will), and this the road to it; a perfection, too, which does not, as brother B. also seemed to take for granted, imply any necessary equality of all intellects or conditions, or equal aptitude of each man for all employments, any more than it does an equal fertility in all the soils, or an equally genial character in all the climates of earth; but which *does* imply equal rights, the recognition of every man as a brother, the world-wide reign of peace and good-will, the extirpation of idleness, poverty, disease, vice, and crime; which *does* imply the bringing about of improvements, physical, moral, and intellectual, which so far from being measured by, can be but feebly apprehended, from any thing that has hitherto been realized on earth; scientific discoveries, triumphs of art, varied forms of industry, and manifestations of beauty, compared with which, all our doings, hitherto, are little more than child's play: a state of things, wherein preven-

tives and remedies will have been found for all that was before held noxious, latent virtues and uses discovered in all that was before thought worthless, and the wisdom and goodness of the great Designer, more and more completely manifested, in the more and more thorough exploration and comprehension of his works; a state of things, wherein violent and untimely deaths will no longer be known, but every departure be a gentle dismissal from a scene of faithfully completed labors, and innocent enjoyments, a gentle introduction to new spheres of action. This, my friend, is the perfection which I believe God has in store for his children. Far, far off, indeed, the consummation; but none the less certain is it, that the first steps of the progress thereunto, have been taken, and that its course is ever onward. Yes, this is my dream, which I am unwilling to surrender, still less exchange for that perpetual succession of nuisances, follies, troubles, on which brother B. seems to take such a perverse pleasure in dwelling; that ceaseless conflict of good and evil, which you so insist upon, as indispensable to the true discipline and relish of life. I see not the necessity of that conflict; on the contrary, I believe that in the universal diffusion of peace and innocence, there would be far more significance and charm in existence, than ever; far more employment for the goodness of a Howard or a Fenelon, for the genius of a Raphael or a Shakspeare. I have already, in a brief, glancing

way, undertaken to make out, in reply to friend B., a veritable progress, thus far; to show, (and how any reasonable man should deny such a proposition, is to me most strange,) the existence of all manner of inventions and improvements about us, that the world never knew, till now, and that would fill our brethren of the patriarchal ages, with wonder and delight, were they here to-day, to behold them. I shall not trouble you with any more illustrations on that point; but, with your leave, I will venture, with all due sense of my incompetency to the task, to shadow forth some few of those good things, that I believe the future is to reveal; and will endeavor not unreasonably to tax your patience, in so doing.

C. Well, my friend, I shall listen with pleasure. As I said before, this same perfection of yours seems to me the veriest dream of enthusiasm; a consummation, that no sun will ever rise upon. None the less, however, do I respect the earnestness and heartiness of your faith. Take us, then, with you, (our sarcastic, incredulous brother here, and myself,) and let us see some of the bowers and walks of this Paradise of yours, and of these pleasant things that are so to enliven and bless it.

A. Briefly then, and with all due modesty, to my task. Far indeed be it from me to presume to portray, or to imagine, even, the full splendors of such a consummation. 'Tis but a hasty glance at some few of its features, that I propose to take, and that

without any special order or method. Let us then, my friends, suppose ourselves to be making an ærial voyage over this same perfected world of ours; stopping here and there to see how the old homes and fire-sides, the old social relations will appear,—how the old cities and landscapes will look when peace and plenty, innocence and intelligence are thus presiding over them. We will alight, then, at one or two prominent points, if you please, and look about us, for a moment. And first, what sort of a spectacle will our own dear town present, in that happy period? Charming, charming, indeed, the picture, as we approach it! What comely dwellings, what spacious, well-kept streets, what clusters of bright handsome, courteous citizens! What clear, ringing voices, what pleasant salutations! What order and decorum everywhere prevail! No sots or paupers, or pickpockets, or harlots, or cripples deface the scene; no turbulent hackmen or insolent policemen, no haggard victims of business, hurrying down to their speculations, no martyrs to idleness lounging listlessly along; but a pleasant stir, a gay, sprightly movement, everywhere diffused, proclaims the reign of health and temperance alike in tasks and pleasures, and of the light hearts and pleasant fancies, that follow in their train. What splendid shops, too, are here, filled with fabrics from all corners of the earth! What magnificent porticoes greet the eye in all directions, and gymnasiums, and baths,

and fountains, and conservatories, and markets of all kinds, models of beauty and neatness, and crowded with all manner of good things! What a charming intermixture, everywhere, of stately mansions, and temples dedicated to Faith, Art, and Science; every science having its own hallowed pile, every art its own special theatre for the display of its triumphs. Such churches, too! As magnificent in their architecture and adornments as their rites are simple and solemn. No multiplicity of sects here bewilders the worshipper, no jargon and falsehoods of priestcraft, no vile confessionals, no monstrous nunneries, no dry and pedantic display of scholastic subtleties deface these services. One blessed creed alone prevails throughout the earth, and there are but two articles in it; Christ's precious commandments, love to God and love to our brethren. These alone are the themes of the preacher, the Creator's goodness as everywhere displayed in his works and ways, man's goodness and happiness, as he humbly imitates the great Master! And how admirably do the brief, but beautiful prayers, and the swelling anthems respond to them! What groups of school-houses too, and colleges are here, with their pleasant walks, and gardens and play-grounds! What companies of beautiful and ingenuous youths, are they sending forth continually, no longer to contend with a harsh and perilous world, but to apply, with generous emulation, and prompt success, the lessons learned in

them, to the infinitely varied, and ever instructive pursuits of life ! There *are* structures, that we miss, indeed, in this pleasant scene, as we miss the quarrels and infirmities, with which they dealt ; Forts and Barracks, Hospitals and Courts of Justice, Prisons, Asylums of all sorts ; no longer extant, thank heaven, save in the records and pictures of the past, save in the venerated images of the heroes and benefactors, who fought, or founded, or labored in them, of old, and who, by their ministrations helped along that blessed consummation, that we are now beholding. But what comfortable dwellings abound everywhere ! No such thing as an unsightly or rickety structure is to be seen. And what pleasant sounds issue forth from them ! What happy groups are scattered about in them ! No scowls, or scolding, here ; no reciprocation of harsh language ; but harmony and sympathy, both in their labors and their recreations ; but mutual esteem and regard everywhere prevailing between husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and servants. Good hours, good wages, good habits here tell their own blessed story, without needing any interpretation of ours. Ah, what stately building have we here ; crowned too, with all the statues of the great philosophers and inventors of old ? 'Tis the Observatory. What a pile ! What magnificent apparatus and instruments ! What precious discoveries have they made, are they continually making, in the great deep

of air ! What would a Galileo or a Herschel have said to such soundings as these ? See too, the superb Custom House ; and the Post Office, that triumph of architecture. Oh, how different the contents of those myriad letters and journals, that are momentarily passing through it, from those of older time ! Here are no records of fraud, of horrible casualties, of hearts broken by neglect, or base ingratitude ; all is glad tidings and gentle messages. And so, in that other princely pile, whose sculptured entablature makes the Parthenon itself seem rude. Here, too, are no unwise tariffs, no fraudulent valuations, no vile tricks of trade to deal with ; but equity, intelligence, courtesy, and promptness preside over its portals, pervade its manifold chambers. See the warehouses too, of the merchants ; how commodious, how capacious, how filled with all manner of contrivances for the facilitation and despatch of business ! What massive, what magnificent quays are here ! Dotted too, with the bronze and marble images of the great navigators and discoverers of earth. No vagabonds or rag-gatherers, no vile smells, or profane or filthy language here annoy us. All is decency and decorum. But who shall describe the infinite variety and beauty of the vessels that are continually coming and going, in this classic bay, these historical rivers of ours, or lying in graceful groups, in their capacious docks ? And now we look out upon the blessed sea. Let us venture forth upon it, in our

little ærial craft. Here are the old Narrows, to be sure ; but where are the Quarantine Grounds, and the gloom-suggesting Hospitals, and the bristling cannon, and frowning fortresses ? Gone, gone, thank heaven, never more to re-appear on earth. Gay villas and gardens, and solemn temples have supplanted them, and they live only in the quaint records and curious engravings of old times. But what a goodly gathering of craft of all sorts, is there, below us ; propelled by all manner of ingenious motive powers ; going forth, not as brother B. said, in any spirit of irreverent defiance, or mad mockery of the tempest, but none the less, armed and equipped with abundant contrivances for robbing the gale of its terrors ; with wise and good masters aboard, with temperance, intelligence, good will, animating their crews. Oh, what a spectacle does ocean present, in this happy period ! Not a solitary pirate lurking in any bay or cove thereof ; not a skulking slave-ship, not a frowning frigate to be seen ; nothing but fleet and comely vessels, going about on their peaceful errands, everywhere exchanging civilities and good offices ; every coast thoroughly surveyed and lighted, every hidden rock and shoal ferreted out, and proclaimed to the mariner ; every haven open to him, a pleasant welcome in every land ! Let us cross these waters, and take a peep, for one little moment, at dear old England, and see how she looks, in these happy days. Every where the same blessed changes and

improvements ! Science has long since banished the black clouds that overhung her towns, philanthropy has long since smoothed the brows and pillows of her laborers. What conveniences and comforts of all sorts in all her mines and workshops and factories ! How have all the old stench, and perils, and nuisances been extirpated from every craft ! What a well-rewarded, bright, intelligent thing has labor become, throughout the land ! What a world of good books, cheap amusements, innocent recreations are within reach of the laborer ! Nor palace nor work-house is seen in the picture ; nor are the streets lined with policemen, or crowded with gay uniforms, or the harbors thronged with ships of war ; but, blessed substitutes therefor, we see a world of smiling little school-houses, and happy little homes, with frolicking children about them, and singing birds, and gay flowers. No false pride of birth, or place, or purse, prevents the free interchange of kindly greetings, throughout this happy land. Ah, what Depots ! models of elegance and convenience ; nothing uncouth or unseemly meets the eye. What order and precision ! What admirable accommodations and reasonable charges ! What time they keep ! Every man knows his place, is at his post ; no collisions, fractures, explosions, but all is perfect comfort and clock-work ; and why not, when temperance, intelligence and self-respect rule the hour ? What magnificent exhibitions of cattle, are here. and

flowers and fruits ; to which those of famous old Chatsworth itself, that we read of, seem tame and primitive !

B. Excuse me, my friend, for this interruption ; but I really cannot help asking what, meanwhile, has become of the National Debt, the Income and other taxes, the descendants of Her Majesty, the peers temporal and spiritual, the overgrown estates, monopolies, fat livings, sinecures of all sorts, that to-day so crowd the picture ?

A. Gone, gone, gone, my friend, all of them ; not put out of the way, however, by fraud or violence ; no, no ; but they have slowly and gently melted away, under the light and warmth of the blessed day of equality and brotherhood ; they, and the vast domains and piles that were devoted to them.—Crowns, and coronets, and armorial bearings, have long since lost their lustre and significance ; while centuries of peace and prudence have cancelled the debts, and annulled the taxes that the wars and follies of old brought with them. And their substitutes are these same happy homes, these everywhere multiplied and circulated comforts that we see around us. Think not, however, that the picture suffers any, even in the artist's eyes, in consequence. We miss, indeed, a few stray palaces and stately hospitals, a few pompous parades and military funerals ; but we have, instead, the splendid processions of peace and infinitely varied industry, the number-

less domes that Freedom everywhere rears to Faith and Knowledge. I must not linger over them, however. Let us go, if you will, and look for another brief moment upon old Rome. We can but throw a passing glance at the smiling fields and gardens of lovely France, with their ten thousand improvements in drainage, tillage, and culture ; or at the stately bridges that cross her streams, her beautiful system of telegraphs, her railways radiating in all directions, each set in flowers, and bordered by superb trees ; or at the cities that dot her surface, so admirably built, paved, cleaned, lighted, ventilated ; or at the innumerable new employments and comforts that science has found, for the dwellers among the Alps. Here we are, at the gates of the imperial city. No traces, though, do we see of imperial or papal tyranny, but the same blessed transmutations as before. No lounging soldiers, or mutilated beggars, or crumbling towers disfigure the picture, but peace, plenty, industry, everywhere enliven it. The Campagna is covered again with farms and villas, never more to return to desolation. The Palatine is again crowned with stately buildings ; not the scenes, though, of royal riot and brutal debauchery, but dedicated to science. Here are vast libraries, and halls where chemistry unfolds the subtle mysteries of nature, where astronomy pores upon the never-tiring volume of the skies. But one ruin meets the eye ; the shattered, silent Colosseum ;

not the original stones, indeed; they long since crumbled into dust; but they have carefully preserved the aspect that it wore, with its broken arches, and vacant arena, in the 19th century of Christ; that it might remain, a lasting memento of the crimes of old, might sound its solemn warning to humanity, through all time. There is another Colosseum, hard by; even more vast and beautiful; but oh, how different the entertainments presented in it! Here grand conferences are held, of the wise and learned of all lands; magnificent flower-shows; beautiful scientific experiments; here concerts are given, with music such as was never before heard on earth. What hymns, what choruses are here, and grand and infinitely varied orchestral effects! Think of all these things, and then of the harsh clangor of the trumpets, the mad conflicts of wild beasts and wilder men, that disgraced and made terrible the arena of its namesake!

C. But St. Peters, and its precious works of art, and its superb pageants, and the palace hard by, with its manifold treasures; have they all perished, are they all forgotten, in these golden days of yours?

A. The originals, of course, were dust, ages ago. But think you, the world would have let such precious thoughts and images perish? No, no; careful copies have been made from time to time, of all these wonders. Still glows the fresco with the Hours of Guido; still bright are the mosaics, that tell the

blessed story of the Transfiguration; the School of Athens still holds its scattered groups of philosophers; all the old forms of Greece and Rome are here, in undimmed beauty and majesty. But where stood the old church itself, is now a pile far more grand and beautiful, more rich in monuments; and what is more, they were not so many years in building it, as they were centuries in putting up the other. Contributions flowed freely in, from all lands, and in one little week, the sum required was raised. Not a dollar, stained with fraud, or extorted from superstitious fear, was expended upon it. Well-paid, and worthy, were the laborers who reared its walls; and the rites that are celebrated in it, how do they contrast, in their sublime purity and simplicity, with the mummeries and absurdities that so marred the beauty of that famous one of old! And so throughout the happy city; peace, freedom, brotherhood; every street bears witness to them; they beam forth from every countenance. Naples, too, has the same pleasantries to tell for herself. No longer that Paradise of devils, that some old cynic once called her; but, in her loveliness and goodness, perfectly according with the exquisite scenery around her; long since extinct, those crimes, vices, diseases, that gave her such a "bad eminence," in the annals of the past; long since vanished, those turbulent, half-savage lazzaroni of hers, though their sparkling eyes and manly limbs still set off the virtues of their descendants. But I

must not trespass on your patience, my friends. Else might we linger over restored Thebes, rebuilt Athens, all Greece, revived, free, happy; over Turkey, redeemed for ever from despotism and superstition, and the magnificent Constantinople of these days. One little glance at Egypt, and old father Nile, and I have done. Glorious revolution, indeed, in man and nature! Smiling fields and shining cities everywhere greet the eye; innumerable structures and devices, too, for controlling and for circulating the precious waters of the river, through all the veins and alleys of the land; canals, aqueducts, and reservoirs, exquisite machinery for draining and for irrigating the lands, to which the contrivances of old, even of renowned Holland herself, seem the veriest toys. What factories, too, where innocent, happy labor plies its pleasant tasks, in airy, well-lighted chambers; what academies, filled with bright-eyed scholars! Ah, here are the famous old quarries; but to what different uses are they put! No more gloomy sphinxes or monster deities are carved out of them, or long lines of dismal pyramids, or temples dedicated to hideous rites, and vile beast-worship. Oh, no; but Christian churches, halls of legislation, observatories, viaducts, statue-crowned bridges, forms of the wise and good of all ages. But listen to the sweet chimes from yon tower. Strange music this, is it not, for grim old Egypt? Let us venture forth, a moment, on the

Lybian Desert, nay, on the great Sahara itself. What do we behold? It is *not*, indeed, quite yet given over to Socialism, as brother B. seemed to apprehend; a mere orchard, dotted with phalansteries; but there are glorious changes in it, nevertheless; improvements quite practicable in this period of universal locomotion; of rapid, constant interchange of thoughts and products, between all lands. There are orchards here in abundance, and thriving towns and villages, and intersecting rail-roads, and all the evidences of high culture. *Can* this be Africa, my friends; the Africa that old records tell of; that accursed, desolate land, with its unexplored rivers and wildernesses, its burning heats, fevers, reptiles, savage men and beasts, its murderous feuds? Is this fair coast, studded with cities, alive with commerce, the scene of that infamous traffic in human flesh, that stained the annals of past ages? Even so. After long centuries of toil and struggle, Faith and Science have won these glorious victories, at last; have righted all these wrongs, extirpated all these vile passions, drained all these marshes, rooted out these treacherous beasts and lurking fevers; Art has found out many precious secrets, in the way of planting and building; has contrived many cunning modes of cooling these hot airs, and of rendering these regions, not merely tolerable, but, as we see, the fit abodes of all those comforts, refinements, embellishments, all those moral and intellectual devel-

opments, that the philosophers of old times fondly imagined were confined to certain favored zones of earth. But you smile incredulously, my friend. You have evidently no faith in this same brilliant future of mine, and so I will dwell no longer upon it.

C. I have not, indeed. As I said before, I respect most sincerely, this hearty, enthusiastic nature of yours; I listen with pleasure to your glowing descriptions. Nor can I help wishing, at times, that all these good things were in store for us, and that men were destined to become the terrestrial angels that you paint them. But no, no, it may not be. God hath decreed it otherwise. The same old obstacles and objections, that I have already glanced at, still stare me in the face, as pertinaciously as ever, notwithstanding this bright, vivid picture of yours. A dream, my friend, a very dream! I say again; the whole machinery of life, as I understand it, is based upon these very evils and infirmities, that you have so carefully excluded from your sketch; and this pseudo-perfection you so insist upon, is but another name for destruction. Is it necessary to illustrate a point so clear as this? Can you help seeing, my dear friend, that you have been pulling to pieces, all this while, far more than you have been creating; impeding the very march of mind that you so seek to urge forward; narrowing the circuit, alike of the schoolmaster and the merchant; virtually shutting up three quarters of the shops of these same vision-

ary cities, that you have just been showing us? Pretty progress, truly, that annihilates, at one fell swoop, all the armies and navies of the world, and the vast and manifold industry, dependent on them; that cuts off all the fees of its judges and lawyers; that puts an end to the visits of its doctors; blots out the shining lights of its apothecaries; seriously injures, if it does not destroy, all those crafts, that live by ministering unto the elegant desires and caprices of men; worse still, that takes away from the priest, the best half of his mission, and from love, the most sacred part of its ministrations, that of reclaiming the erring, and binding up the wounds of the broken-hearted; that robs the artist, in every walk of art, of so many sources of inspiration; that deprives us all of so much innocent fun, too, in removing all those little absurdities and *contre-temps*, with which it deals. Are not these, my friend, the inevitable accompaniments of this insane attempt (pardon the epithet) to revolutionize human nature? If indeed, you can find adequate employments and appropriate excitements, for all these good people, whose callings you have thus rendered null, and whom you have turned adrift upon the world, in this wholesale and summary fashion, then will I acknowledge the injustice of my criticisms, and become a convert to your doctrine. Meanwhile I must continue to call it the veriest dream of the enthusiast.

A. Well, well, my friend; I admit that there is

some force in these objections of yours ; but don't misrepresent me. I have not looked forward to any such violent and rapid revolution in the hearts and affairs of men, as you speak of. I have taken no such ground. No, no ; long, long ages of toil, experiments, struggles, I know, must be gone through, before this blessed victory is won ; a host of prejudices and passions must be grappled with ; ten thousand practical difficulties, such as you suggest, must be met and overcome first ; many parts must be dropped from the great drama of life, many new ones introduced, before this vision of mine can be realized. I am not blind to, still less do I presume to solve these puzzling problems. All I say is, that I believe time will bring the solution of them all, at last ; will demonstrate the practicability of all these improvements ; will yet show to future ages, an earth all alive with innocent and happy workers. Such is my faith in human nature ; in the capacities and dispositions which God has given man, and in the materials with which he has surrounded him. Yes, I believe that the gradual diffusion of the sublime doctrines of Christ, and the sublime truths of science, will achieve all these wonders ; will finally gain the day, everywhere, over the ignorance, indolence, sensuality of men, will wake us all up, at last, yes, the whole brotherhood, from pole to pole, to a true sense of our position, and of the lofty tasks set before us. Slowly indeed, but surely, will all

these bad passions, and brutal appetites, be subjugated, or transformed, by them. Avarice will give up its long-grasped treasures ; ambition will no longer seek to reign by force, over the persons, but by love, over the hearts of its brethren ; intemperance will be redeemed from its vile thralldom ; false pride will no longer turn its back on proffered kindness, or keep men away from honest callings ; all the false estimates, petty jealousies, absurd prejudices of men, with the feuds and wars that grow out of them, yes, all the blunders and wickedness of the world, in God's good time, be banished, and thus will all these puzzles, social, political, moral, that now so embarrass and annoy us, be cleared up, in that day of world-wide wisdom and good-will. These evils are *not* to afflict earth forever ; they are *not* an indispensable part of the machinery of life. The world *will* be worth living in, my friend, when they are gone, will have plenty of good work and play in it, for all, and pleasant excitements of all sorts. Our affections will *not* droop and languish, because the objects of them will be all bright, and gentle, and beautiful ; our intellects will *not* flag, because they are not stimulated continually, by the moral and physical infirmities of our brethren. Oh, no ; on the contrary, there will be far more to keep both heads and hearts in healthful action, than ever ; a thousand fold more delightful and instructive objects all around us, making every day, every hour of life precious ; and

we shall all be enjoying these blessings alike ; not a man alive, defrauded of his own proper share of labors, studies and enjoyments. Then too, will the true dignity of labor be recognized ; every calling be alike honorable and attractive ; merit in every walk of industry appreciated ; every man of genius have a fair hearing, a fair field of action. Nor will there be any want of innocent fun, my friend, as you seem to fear ; fun growing out of the pleasant mistakes of childhood, the little infirmities of age, the eagerness of enthusiasm, the blunders of absent-mindedness ; but the fun based on malice, and kept up by the vices and follies of the world, there will of course be no room for that, in those blessed days. Nor will the artist have any lack of inspiring themes, but every face, every group, every landscape that he sees, will be a delightful study for him. Nor will there be any want of those dainties, knick-knacks, gems, and objects of luxury, that so enliven the windows of the confectioners and fancy-stores of our own times, nor of the purple and fine linen of the merchant. We shall have all these things ; and shall value them aright, neither doting on nor despising them. No, no ; the philosophers of those days will be no scowling cynics, railing at the good things and innocent recreations of their brethren, but we shall all rationally enjoy, and equitably distribute them. Many innocent employments, as well as guilty, will be missing from the scene, I grant you ;

but who can doubt that there will be abundant substitutes for them ; that other and better uses will be found for the drugs of the apothecary, other and nobler fields of labor for the physician and the lawyer ? Yes, my friend, the more I think of it, the more faith have I in the reality of this glorious consummation. No less a task than this do I believe God intended for man, both in the moral and physical world. One needs but glance at this same globe of ours, to see what magnificent enterprises have been shadowed forth, alike for the merchant and the schoolmaster ; what seas to be explored, mountains pierced, rivers pressed into service, wild men, and beasts, and lands to be reclaimed, and put to good uses ; what underground explorations to be made ; and hidden treasures and truths brought to light ; what secrets innumerable to be won from air, earth, and water, and made available to human industry ; what new revelations in the heavens ; what a mighty interchange of products, ideas, sentiments, between nations. All this work hath God cut out for us. We have fairly entered upon it. We *must*, we *will* finish it. No less an achievement will satisfy the ideal of poet or philosopher, will vindicate God's wisdom and goodness in creating us. Say not, then, that this consummation is impracticable ; still less, that when all these mighty victories shall have been won, over nature and our own hearts, that then, forsooth, there will be no stimulus or relish left in existence. Think

of the endless themes of thanksgiving for our meditations; the innumerable pleasant objects of contemplation, and pleasant paths of labor, that will surround us; not a moment will be without its delights and profits. Think of the glorious walks and talks of those days. Oh, think of a world where every eye will be bright, arm strong, brain clear; where no labor will be lost through sickness or intemperance, or diverted, to keep watch over the stupidity and wickedness of others, and where all the laborers will be pulling together. What must the public works, dwellings, gardens, cathedrals of such a planet be! How must it be stocked with inventions of genius, and infinite manifestations of beauty! How delightful to watch and tend such a world, to renew, embellish, and transmit it, in all its lustre and happiness, to our children! Oh, call not this a dream; call not the hasty glimpse I have ventured to take of such a world, the wild vision of the enthusiast. No; tame, tame indeed the picture, compared with those realities that I verily believe God hath in store for earth. Such a thought as this, my friend, is it not far more inspiring than the one you so love to dwell upon, of ceaseless alternations, and never-ending jars of good and evil? So it seems to me, and as such, I must continue to cherish it.

C. Well, well, my dear friend, as you will. I certainly cannot help admiring the hearty way in

which you advocate your doctrine. At the same time, I must say, I do not see the force of your arguments. You have not shown, at all to my satisfaction, the ways and means by which this paradise of yours is to be attained. You express, generally, great faith in human nature, and the wonders which religion and knowledge are finally to work in it; and you infer, as a matter of course, corresponding wonders in the outer world; but you do not describe the processes by which they are to be brought about. You do not tell us what these new and delightful parts in the great drama *are*, that are to take the place of the old and bad ones; or how the happy crowds of these ideal cities of yours are to be sustained, or all these brilliant shops supported. You indulge freely in vague and glowing generalities, but you carefully shun the statistical and practical questions involved in so stupendous a revolution. You insist upon it, and with characteristic earnestness, that that revolution must and will come; that these bad passions of ours must give way, at last, before the power of Faith and Truth; and that when this is done, then all these embarrassing and exciting problems, that now disturb society, will be happily solved. You then paint a glowing picture, as before, of the blessed results of such solution. This is all very well; but I confess, I *should* like to see a little more of the machinery that is to work these wonders, should like to have something a little more

definite and explicit, than these picturesque fancy-flights of yours, before I become a believer in them.

A. Well, I can only say again, in reply, that the machinery seems to me simple enough; the same machinery that has worked the wonders we witness to-day; the gradual diffusion of moral and scientific truth. As to going into the particulars you call for, I certainly shall not be so presumptuous as to attempt it. Who, indeed, shall dare to recast this great drama, to foretell the innumerable revelations of science and creations of art that are in store for us, or the new callings they are to give birth to, or the ameliorations and improvements they are to cause in the old ones? Who shall presume to anticipate the solution of all these problems, moral, philosophical, economical, that are involved in the bringing about of these glorious changes? That the world *will* meet, face, overcome them all in time, however, I doubt it not. My position, my dear friend, is simply this (and it seems to me a perfectly reasonable one); I look around me, and see the wonders already achieved by Faith and Knowledge, alike in the hearts and institutions of men, and in the face of nature, and I can't help feeling that they will go on achieving them unto the end; in the same slow and toilsome, but certain and triumphant way; till the generation will come at last, that shall see and enjoy, as a blessed reality, that very consumma-

tion that I have so feebly and unworthily shadowed forth.

C. Never, never. Excuse me, my dear friend, for saying so; but it seems to me that you are so carried away by the generous enthusiasm of your nature, so fascinated by this brilliant fancy sketch of yours, that you cannot, will not, see the innumerable, insuperable obstacles that must ever prevent us from realizing it.

A. And you, my friend, may you not be so perversely attached to things as they are, that you can neither appreciate aright the improvements that actually exist around us, nor see the practicability of future ones?

C. Too much so, certainly. Yes, I acknowledge that the Conservative element is quite too much in preponderance in my composition, and I think the Progressive equally in excess in yours. We shall never agree on this point, I fear; nor would I needlessly prolong the discussion. I have no such faith in human nature, myself, as you profess, nor in the future. I do not believe that religion and knowledge, however attractively presented, eloquently expounded, widely circulated they may be, are to work any such miracles as you describe. It is not *in* us, it is not in earth, to bring about such stupendous changes. As brother B. said, there is neither faith nor courage enough in the moral, materials nor sunshine enough in the natural world, therefor. No, no;

these visionary cathedrals of yours, my friend, with their pure and simple rites, will never be reared, save in the dreams of poets; nor those post-offices, whose mail-bags are crowded with glad tidings only. We cannot thus revolutionize either the hearts, or the letters of the world; but they will ever contain, as now, the same strange medley of good and evil propensities, in the one, of ups and downs, sudden revulsions and wind-falls, wise and simple criticisms, gracious and ungracious messages, in the other. Oh, no; we may not thus sever the thorns and roses of life; keep thus the innocent flower, and not the serpent under it; thus take away alike the pangs of parting lovers, and the raptures of their meeting, by putting them in a world all sunshine and constancy; thus separate the mother's love from the mother's care and anguish, or the triumphs of genius from its toils, and tears, and heartaches. Nor is it given us to work corresponding changes in the face of nature, or to win those brilliant, lasting victories over the elements, that you anticipate; to extirpate all the vile and desolate spots of earth, light up all its caverns, tame its angry seas and whirlpools, turn all its howling wildernesses into gardens. To expect any such revolutions as these, either in the moral or physical world, seems to me most vain and visionary. Angelic powers, indeed, might achieve such feats, angelic natures might enjoy and perpetuate a scene so brilliant as you portray; but

how utterly beyond the reach, nay, how undesirable is it, for us frail, fickle, sinful children of men!

A. You have but little faith, then, in the divine efficacy of Christianity?

C. Certainly not, so far as the conversion of earth into heaven is concerned. If I understand aright Christ's mission, he came for no such purpose, predicted no such result. On the contrary, while he sends forth his disciples, to spread the gospel abroad in all lands, does he not tell them, at the same time, that but few will listen to their teachings or apply them to the business of life; that these very evils, which you would banish from the world, are therefore, a permanent part of the divine arrangements, and his religion, in consequence, a permanent religion; not a revolutionizer of humanity, but a revelation of immortality; a perpetual source, both of comfort and of warning, for the ineradicable sorrows and sins of earth. Yes, my friend, from whatever point of view I consider the subject, whether from Scripture, or history, or my own daily observation of myself and my brethren, I am forced to abandon, as perfectly idle and romantic, those expectations which you so seem to cherish. I say again, it is not *in* us, or about us, the wherewithal to achieve any such conquests, over ourselves or Nature. When indeed, we *have* found out a way to stop the course of the tornado, or to push back the icebergs to their polar homes, or to silence the angry voice of the

thunder, or prevent the mischiefs of the earthquake, then shall we have also found out a charm potent enough to lull to sleep all the angry passions of men, to relax their clinched fists, smooth their wrinkled brows, win from them their weapons and their hatreds, ay, to turn all the parti-colored tribes of earth into serene, beautiful, loving angels. When the first of these series of victories has been achieved, the other will have been won also; and not till then.

B. And what monstrous delusion, to suppose otherwise! I ask your pardon, brother A., for the expression, but do you, *can* you really mean to say, that you look forward to all these fine things that you have been painting? And if so, pray how many tens of thousands of years do you expect to roll by, before those blessed days come round; those days of world-wide peace and brotherhood; wherein every brother will be alike comfortable and comely and courteous, every calling alike attractive and honorable, every house the home of cheerful industry, every mind the abode of happy meditations; when all the products of labor, from epic poems down to umbrellas, will be freely interchanged, all over the world, without money and without price; when no poet's reveries or philosopher's speculations, will ever more be invaded, (as in these harsh times,) by clamorous duns, or by the croakings of a neglected stomach; those blessed days, in which every wearer of a coat, that may have become too venerable for

beauty or utility, will only have to step in at the very first fraternal tailor's shop that he may see, and make the appropriate exchange, without tender of payment, without encountering either ill-looks or unpleasant language; at any rate, without hearing the, then obsolete expression, stop thief, grating on his ears; when every hungry brother also, may sit down, without ceremony, at the very first dinner-table, that his eyes or nose may happen to intimate to him, and be just as certain of finding that dinner a good one, and the company choice, as of finding himself a welcome guest; he in turn, when at home, being equally ready to share, and with the same cheerful alacrity, the products of his own industry, be they what they may, with the first passer-by, that may feel the want of them; those days of universal order, prudence, and security, when all the delays, fractures, collisions, that now so disturb passengers, and keep penny-a-liners busy, will be unknown; when no boiler will ever more burst, no train get off the track, no traveler get into the wrong car, or point out the wrong luggage, to his porter-brother; when all the treacherous memories, bad spellings, vicious penmanships of earth, with the innumerable troubles and squabbles that follow at their heels, will be no more; when there will be no more beggars for Murillos to paint, or little children to ask queer questions about, or ill-bred dogs to bark at; no more Shallows or Slenders, to be laughed at, or Falstaffs

to crack their jokes upon them; when Hogarth will be looked upon as the veriest caricaturist, Fielding the veriest libeler of humanity; when Lear and Othello themselves, will have become grotesque, hideous nightmares, and not those sublime pictures of the storms which rage in human hearts, that the fond critics of to-day deem them; when the artist will see no careworn or passion-stained countenance, in any group of brethren or sisters about him, but instead, one perpetual succession of ruddy, smiling faces, and round, comfort-speaking figures; those glorious days, when the pick-pockets will have all turned astronomers, policemen philosophers, mountebanks mathematicians; when the bolts and bars, and iron safes, and revolvers of our own times, will exist no more, save in the collection of antiquaries; when war will have vanished, with all its horrors and splendors; when navies will be extinct; when grog and pig-tail will be unknown to the merchant-service; when all the drugs and spirits of earth will be playing other and better parts in the great drama; when the sting of the scorpion, and the odor of the skunk, will be alike forgotten, in the latent uses and beauties, that science will have brought to light in them; when mixing mortar, and laying bricks, at high noon, in midsummer, and taking in sail, at midnight, in mid-winter, will both have become attractive employments, in which every member of the great brotherhood, will gladly parti-

cipate; when guns and drums and trumpets will be banished from all the toy-shops of the planet; when equity and temperance will preside over all its gold-diggings and silver mines; those blessed days, when death shall have been robbed of all his terrors, and the spectres driven from all the churchyards; when consumption shall, *indeed*, have been cured, and the clamors of dyspepsia no longer be heard in the land; when the jokes of the clown will be hushed, and the mission of Punch be at an end; when all the whims and sorrows, that were vented or portrayed by the Hoods, Mathewses, Cruickshanks of the ages past, will have been swallowed up, in a world-pervading wisdom and happiness; do you, *do* you, my friend, really believe that any such good times as these, are ever coming, on earth? Will the newspapers of any such days ever be published? If so, what, pray, will be the contents of their leaders, and of their telegraphic despatches? A fanciful man might amuse himself, indeed, by framing articles and advertisements, for the *Morning Herald* of Millennium-day; but will any son of Adam ever see such tremendous revolutions as these, in the journals and the literature of the world, such thorough changes in the contents of its shops, and Museums, and Patent Offices? No, no, no; any more than he will ever see snow-balling, in the streets of Congo, or good skating among the coffee-plantations of Java; or see the polar bear bringing down that warm win-

ter garment of his which his Creator gave him, for an arctic home, and rolling and tumbling in it, amidst the hot sands of Arabia; or the camel going up to take his place, and hunt seals in Greenland, or rove and swim about, among ice-islands.

A. Well, well, my friend, notwithstanding this smart shower of grape of yours, I still survive.—Neither brother C.'s arguments, nor your sneers, have been able seriously to disturb my faith, but I must still look forward to these same fine things that you so deride. Just such sneers have ever been the portion, both of the inventors and predictors of all the improvements about us. We all know how river and ocean steam navigation, and railroads, and telegraphs were received at first; how the idea of educating deaf mutes, and treating lunatics like human beings, and of amending the condition of prisoners, were scouted at, as the dreams of just such visionaries as you are pleased to consider me. What volleys of sarcasms have been discharged at them all! But the jibes have passed away, and are forgotten, while the improvements themselves everywhere surround us, and are hourly enlarging the circuit of their good offices. And so will it be, I believe, even unto the glorious end. Had a far-seeing contemporary told one of the Pilgrim Fathers that within three centuries from the landing at Plymouth, one of his descendants would travel, in ten little days, from ocean to ocean, without fatigue, without stop-

ping to take a meal or bed, at any inn upon the road, nay, without even dismounting, unless he saw fit, from the steed that bore him, what would the reply to such a prediction have been? Why, of course, he would have been looked upon as a miserable lunatic. Had he gone on to say, that this same descendant would dispatch a message by lightning, just before starting, in order to let his friends on the Pacific know that he was coming, and that said message would not be as many minutes reaching its destination as the sender of it would be days, who can doubt that the prophet in question would straightway have encountered the harsh discipline to which the poor maniacs of those days were subjected? And yet, are we not perfectly certain that this consummation will be reached long before the period assigned in this imaginary prediction? In the face of such obstinate, such glorious facts as these, my friends, who shall presume to assign a limit to our victories over nature? *They* are the credulous men, I should say, who refuse to see in these wonders an earnest of still greater ones. Brother C. spoke derisively, just now, of stopping the tornado in its path, and of silencing the angry voice of the thunder, and so following; when *these* thing are done, said he, then will the bad passions of men be subdued, and not before; but I say, that we *have* already robbed the tornado of half its terrors, have taken away its angry tones from the thunder.—

Think of the imperial Cæsars, burying their heads in the earth, or skulking away like felons at every passing thunder-shower, and then think of our old republican philosopher, quietly bringing down the electric fluid into his workshop, and putting it to all manner of uses ! Does not a simple statement like this, speak volumes for the progress of the world ? How many other phenomena, too, such as mirage, for instance, that the ignorance of old times had dressed up in superstitious terrors, is science continually solving ; driving away the spectres with which childish fear had surrounded them, and giving us the beautiful forms of truth, in their place. And will not these blessed explanations of her's continue, till the whole earth, at last, is radiant with intellectual light ? I believe it. I say again, how any man can deny the reality of the progress already made by humanity, in spite of the imperfect education and undisciplined passions that have hitherto prevailed, is to me amazing ; and above all, the progress of the last half century. If we *have* been asleep, indeed, hitherto, who can doubt that we have fairly woke up, at last, to the grandeur of the task assigned us ; to the true meaning and value of this domain of ours ; the true significance and dignity of all these mountains and rivers of earth, and the glorious destiny in store for them ; no longer the boundaries of hostile nations, no more to be stained with brothers' blood, but the agents of commerce and civilization,

the links in a vast chain of beneficent influences, that are to convert us all, at last, into one loving family. Yes, I repeat it, the fraternity of the race ; this is to be the great consummation of all these improvements. For no less a result was all this work cut out, for the engineer, and merchant, and school-master ; and, thank heaven, they are all alive, as never before, to the true extent and drift of their labors. We know already, my friends, on a small scale, what the benefits of judicious grafting, and crossing of breeds are, in the vegetable and animal kingdoms ; and our scientific culture and breeding are rewarded with flowers, and fruits, and cattle, that the world never saw the like of before ; and what are these, but humble precursors to the great experiment, that is to be carried through, on the whole family of man ; the world-wide intermixture of breeds, languages, and opinions, and interchange of products, from the poles to the equator ; from the rocks, and ice, and guano, up to the daintiest creations of art, the subtlest thoughts of the poet and philosopher ? And is not science hourly adding facilities, for this grand commingling of men and things ; hourly increasing the speed and security with which all these materials, moral and physical, are transferred from land to land ? When ever before, could men be brought together in such crowds, and at such short notice, for business or consultation ? When ever before, was so much cheap, por-

table, attractive knowledge (and in all tongues), sent abroad, even to the very humblest doors, as now? Who shall presume to estimate the extent and value of the crops that are to spring from the good seed thus freely scattered, or to imagine even, the developments that are to grow out of this grand coming together of the nations? Ay, and the moral part of the problem; can we doubt, that it will be solved, in the same satisfactory, glorious way as the physical and intellectual parts? As I said before, I am not blind to the many obstacles that stand in the way of that solution. There *are* ten thousand passions and prejudices to be grappled with; the waywardness, slothfulness, sensuality of men must be met and subdued first. Faith and Truth *have* a long, hard fight before them, I know; but equally do I know and feel, that they will win the glorious day, at last. There are good omens all around us, my friends; there are motive powers working for the good cause, as they never worked before. Christianity has *not* been, is not that sluggish and unfruitful thing, that some would represent it. It has already worked its miracles, blessed and numberless, in human hearts. The monuments of its labors, are they not every where about us? Has it not given birth, also, to a world of secret goodness, and unobtrusive charities, that were never dreamt of in heathen times? That greatest of all moral motors, too, the influence of woman, is it not hourly gaining in

strength and purity? Nay, more, is not the whole world far more crowded to-day than ever, with objects of interest and productions of genius; with good poetry, science, art, innocent amusements of all sorts, to excite and instruct us, and wean us from low tastes and brutal appetites? The press, what wonders is it working continually! When ever before, were the printer, artist, engraver, laboring together to such purpose, and for such a circle of readers and students? Cheap books, and lectures, and illustrated newspapers, are they not literally searching the earth, penetrating to the remotest streams, invading its most distant islands? Tell me not that all these agencies have no glorious consummation to achieve; still less, that when they have achieved it, the scene then presented will be less stimulating and desirable for men, than the imperfectly developed one about us. I cannot assent to any such notion. Tell me not that a world, thus explored, purified, embellished, will not be a thousand fold more attractive than ever; that God's book of nature, when thus read and expounded everywhere, by bright-eyed, innocent, intelligent readers, will not have far more glorious meanings in it, than the feeble vision, and half-finished tasks of to-day, can give us. To talk thus, and to insist thus, on keeping the world as it is, in preference to the magnificent world that the future has in store, seems to me just about as unreasonable, as it would be to

this same glorious problem; the perfection appropriate to each, implying, of course, tasks more and more lofty and difficult, and pleasures more and more intense and exalted, with every advancing stage of our spiritual education. And why may *not* this problem be thus going on, harmoniously, unto solution, throughout this same course of instruction; be thus successively worked out, in each stage of the discipline, from this earth, the scene of our spiritual childhood, up to that blessed star, wherever it may be, that is to witness the full and final perfection of our being? Why may not the Universe be filled with such series of Academies, where the same divine lessons are taught, the same spiritual culture is carried out, the same gradual amendment in the discipline going on, the same glorious consummation destined to be achieved; till, at last, perfect peace and love will prevail, every where, and in every part of these innumerable systems of education; not a sin, not a sorrow left, to mar a single star in heaven; till each child of God, in his turn, shall be brought at last to comprehend all the mysteries of His works and government. Yes, this final victory of Truth and Love, not only on our own little earth, but throughout the Universe, dimly indeed, as we poor infants, in this infant school of our career, can apprehend the thought, yet is it not the only one worthy of God, or satisfactory to his creatures? Will not the Creator's omnipotence, and goodness be

thus every where vindicated, at last, and all the powers of darkness, after having fulfilled their dread mission, be again transformed into their original brightness? But far from me, my friends, be the temerity to dwell too curiously or minutely, on speculations such as these, or to presume to shadow forth any of the wonders, or splendors of such an Universe. Bold enough were the task, to portray an earth, all light and innocence, but what imagination shall dare to penetrate into these wonderful worlds to come? And yet, our thoughts *will* wander at times, in spite of us, into these far off regions; will fondly seek to explore these pleasant homes, to paint their landscapes, rear their piles, compose their happy groups; *will* fondly dwell upon the flowers and fruits, the music and language of these new abodes; the new organizations that are in store for us; the new powers of perception, thought, feeling, evermore growing in strength and subtlety, as we advance from stage to stage of our spiritual development. What faculties, indeed! What powers of motion, hearing, vision, may be ours! Of contemplation, too, no longer invaded by the daily calls of appetite, the manifold bodily needs and infirmities that belong to earthly experience! What ever enlarging Science, Art and Faith, as we go on, scaling the heights, sounding the depths of this wondrous frame of things, learning more and more the properties and uses of God's works, finding out more and

more, continually, of the secrets and motives of His government! What grand gatherings, too, and conferences, of the wise, the learned, the beautiful! What marvellous contrivances for interchanging thoughts and sympathies! What wondrous modes of communication between star and star! What sights, what sounds, what infinitely varied labors and enjoyments, compared with which, all the scenery, and music, and tasks, and recreations of earth, seem as diminutive, as unto *us*, seems that little world, in which the bee toils and sings! Think, my friends, of faculties and privileges, such as these! Think of a being, so gifted with powers of motion, that he could pierce at will the depths of air, could course from star to star, could follow the earth, in its flight, and gaze at pleasure upon the fair map beneath him, or trace the beautiful succession of sunrises or of sunsets, that are forever flitting over its surface; whose vision could embrace, alike the grand outlines and the minutest details of a whole hemisphere, from its proudest city to its humblest village-spire; whose hearing could take in all the sounds that rose from it, from the shouts of its assembled thousands, down to the faintest note of its smallest bird or insect; and who could receive all these impressions, undazzled, unfatigued, and without tumultuous passion, but with a serene and holy joy; a being, whose mind too could grasp the meaning and moral of the drama beneath him, with the

same promptness and clearness, that his senses could perceive the panorama itself, with all its varied sights and sounds; who could see, underneath all this strange, conflicting play of thoughts and passions, God's goodness gradually working out the problem of human happiness. Fanciful and visionary as this may seem to you, my friends, I cannot forego the glorious thought. I cannot see why we ourselves may not yet, in God's good time, be the recipients of just such powers and experiences, as these. What is there more strange or incredible in it, than that we should be here on earth, to-day, with these faculties of mind and body, that we have, and the manifold uses and enjoyments unto which they minister? But enough of this. I have already, I fear, taxed your patience quite too far.

C. Not at all, not at all. These are, indeed, far-off regions, my friend, into which you have been wandering; speculations far better suited to angelic natures, than to poor, mortal wits. I have no great faith in them myself, I confess, or in any profit to be derived from pursuing them. We had far better be minding our own proper business here below, it seems to me, than be making these fanciful excursions, through the realms of space. It *may* be, nevertheless, as you say, that these experiences are in reserve for us; nay, that all these marvellous gifts and privileges are yet to be the portion of every child of Adam, however humble or worthless. Far

sooner would I believe this, than cherish the gloomy and incredulous spirit of our brother here; but as usual, my friend, in this fanciful picture of yours, you seem most carefully to exclude all the terrors, while you expatiate on the splendors of the future. Pray, what right have you to infer, as you do, this final and universal victory of good over evil, to turn all these stars about us into palaces of light, these fiends into angels, nay, to transform Beelzebub himself, into a loyal, obedient son of God? What warrant have you for all this? I find no such expectations held forth in my Bible. I hear no such doctrine from Christ's lips. On the contrary, he tells me of lost souls, and of regions set apart for endless sufferings; of progress unto perfection in evil as well as good. He paints no such brilliant and fanciful universe as yours; promises no such all-pervading love and light; but preaches of horrors as well as joys ineffable, of desolate, accursed realms, where no cheerful ray, no happy thought ever enters. How can you reconcile these things, my friend? How can you escape the imputation of heresy, in setting forth such notions as yours?

A. Well, if it be heresy, to receive with reluctance the doctrine of eternal punishments, I must plead guilty to the charge. I know the difficulties of the case, my friend. There *are* texts, certainly, that seem to proclaim that doctrine, with terrible clearness; but I confess, I gladly run away from

them, and take refuge in others, that speak a language far more comfortable and encouraging, and far more in accordance, as it appears to me, both with the Creator's omnipotence and goodness. No, no; I cannot believe that God has doomed any creature of his, in any part of his dominions, to endless misery. That every sin must have its attendant sorrow; that the penalty of every transgression must be paid to the full; that no sophistry or ingenuity can evade that payment; that guilt and wretchedness still abound on earth, and in other worlds, and that they will long continue to impair their beauty and happiness, all these things who will presume to question? But that this sad history is to remain so forever, or that any star in the universe is destined to be the theatre of eternal suffering, or that any being exists in any part of it, so steeped in guilt and anguish (no, not Satan himself), as to be beyond the redeeming love or healing power of the Creator, I no more believe it than I do that there is any intellect that can baffle God's wisdom, or any force that can resist his supremacy. Oh, no; on the contrary, I believe that in this mysterious, but divinely ordained conflict of good and evil, the powers of light are, everywhere, slowly but surely gaining the ascendancy over the powers of darkness, and that it will continue to be so, even unto the perfect day; yes, that perfect day, wherein all these blessed victories over sin and ignorance

shall have been consummated, these transformations completed, and no solitary stain of folly, guilt, or grief, be left to mar the lustre of the Universe. But, my friends, I will no farther tax your kindness. Let me then, in conclusion, once more declare my faith in this same doctrine of perfection, unshaken as it is, by all that you have urged against it; alike in that perfection appropriate to earth, to be won and kept by man, in this, the first stage of his schooling, and in that other and inconceivably glorious perfection, that is to be developed in the blessed worlds to come.

VALUABLE BOOKS

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OPINIONS OF THE PRESS.

"FUN AND EARNEST." By the author of "Musings of an Invalid," "Fancies of a Whimsical Man," etc., etc.

If, with all the nameless species of books extant, it is any merit to write one *sui generis*, the author of Fun and Earnest starts fairly in the race for popularity. He is indebted to no model for the fashion of his fancies or his reflections, but weaves them, if not from wholly original materials—which may be an impossibility—at least in styles exclusively his own. The work before us, like the two preceding from the same rapid hand, defies classification. It is neither tale nor essay; announces no proposition, and avows no aim; affects neither didactics nor sentimentalism. And yet it is a compound of fancy and philosophy, blending with light humor grave views of life and science—satire sweetened with cheerful trust in the future of humanity.

The book opens with a plunge into the year 2076, and through the long spy-glass of the author's imagination, we see our posterity at the distance of more than two centuries. It is nothing new in this age of great changes and rapid progress to guess at

the world unborn; but here we have the forms of things unseen bodied forth with so familiar an air, that we half believe the divination already verified. Here and there a dash of wilful extravagance, so far from correcting the illusion, only sets us to thinking that all things short of tunneling the globe, or building a bridge to the moon, will be possible to the science and art of future ages. Another part of *Fun and Earnest* is entitled "Extracts from the Epistles of Whimsiculo the Elder,"—the themes and drift of which are quite too various for our present notation. All prove the writer, however quaintly he may dress his ideas, to be a clear and close observer and thinker.

The author, in this and his preceding essays, gives ample evidence of faculties which we should wish to see exercised in some systematic production—something, the form as well as the substance of which would be memorable. He clearly belongs to the new order of mental workers, who have no notion of pulling in the traces with old school plodders, or being hitched to the common vehicles of sentiment, satire, or philosophy. The fun of *Fun and Earnest* is but the light, bright froth, capping a well-brewed and wholesome beverage. The earnest of it we accept, as an earnest of still better draughts by the same ready and ingenious compounder.—*Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*.

FUN AND EARNEST. By the Author of *Musings of an Invalid*, *Fancies of a Whimsical Man*, &c.

This is the third of a series of very peculiar books, the predecessors of which we have already noticed favorably. The author, a humorist and a scholar, evidently mixing little with the world he observes, has yet the keenest sympathy with the life of the times, the nicest observation of all the tendencies of society, but with an irresistible proclivity to measure them all by the foregone history of our kind, and the universal laws of our nature. An ingrained moralist and natural preacher, he tries to hide his wig

and bands, his table of commandments and moral philosophy, under the robe of a harlequin, or the mask of a mummer. Nothing would frighten him so much as to be suspected of a wish to teach, and yet he is as busy as a Yankee schoolmaster with his lessons; nothing disgusts him more than a charge of sanctimoniousness, while it takes all his wildest pranks and funniest grimaces, to hide his sober and chastening lineaments. We have read his three books—the very titles of which oil the risibles for immediate use, and which are full of extravaganza, wit, satire, fun—without one hearty laugh, nay, with as serious a heart as we read many of the best chapters in *Don Quixote*, or the queerest papers in *Elia*—with such a sense of the deep earnest, the sad or bitter truth under the jokes, that the medicine outsavors the syrup, and compels our thoughtfulness instead of moving our mirth. When we see what a burden of weighty thought and feeling the author carries, we cannot help wishing that the rich scholarship, cunning wit, and felicitous phraseology he possesses were employed in a more direct manner, to adorn and point and urge his wisdom.

Fun and Earnest is own brother to the two preceding volumes, but we confess we like him better than the other members of the family. The same protest against the follies and falsities of society; the same plea for charity towards human frailties; the same lash for cant and excess; the same plucking off of the disguises of pseudo-philanthropy; the same check-rein on too ardent hopes, we observe in all the volumes. But we seem to find a finer felicity of phrase, a richer freight of thought, a more careful scholarship in "*Fun and Earnest*," than in the "*Musings*," or the "*Fancies*."

The imaginary conversations of Walter Savage Landor are unapproachable in the serious line; but we never saw anything so good in the comic way as our author's classical dialogues, and Athenian and Roman billet-doux! Among all his various papers, we select from the three volumes all of a classical sort, as of the first order of excellence in their kind, and sincerely wish the author had given us one volume exclusively of this matter.

It surprises us that it did not occur to the writer to make and entitle his last volumes "Two Thousand Years Ago and to Come," for he clearly has a decided penchant for keeping at about that distance on either side of the present, in his satires on the life of the nineteenth century. This would have given a missing unity to his volume.

With all our abatements, we shall not have conveyed our real mind or purpose in this notice, if our readers are not curious to see "Fun and Earnest" and its older brothers. We promise them no common banquet. Whatever faults these works have, they are "alive and kicking;" they excite strong feelings; they do not make us laugh, but they make us think and admire; they may bring the broadest grins from faces differently constituted from ours; and they cannot fail to amuse, instruct, and reward all their readers.—*N. Y. Christian Inquirer.*

FUN AND EARNEST.—This is the good title of a good book, recently published in New York, by John S. Taylor, and having no other mark of parentage save that it is by the author of *Musings of an Invalid, Fancies of a Whimsical Man*, etc.

Fun and Earnest is full of vigorous and most original thinking, and the reader has no difficulty in determining when the writer is in earnest, or when the playful humor of his satiric and versatile pen deals with the comic muse. The Boston Letter, for instance, beginning at page 38, must be regarded as a specimen of chaste and elevated writing, that would do no discredit to the clear and lofty mind of Edmund Burke, or even to the presupposed advancement of American taste and knowledge at the period at which our author has fictitiously assumed to be writing. His ambition and aim are high ones, and we are disposed to predict that, ere he has exercised his strong and classic intellect a few years more, his productions will have earned all the fame his best friends can desire for them. Criticism cannot do justice to the varied and endless wit, good sense, and sound re-

buke that find utterance through the unbeaten track of our author, and we do not here attempt to enumerate his subjects, or describe the manner in which they are handled. We have thus briefly called attention to these volumes, as having afforded us great pleasure, as well as useful instruction; and we recognize in much of their pungent satire—whether of fun or earnest—the best caustic for removing the unhealthy excrescences that grow upon our morals and our manners.—*Philadelphia North American.*

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There is more truth than poetry in this, and it's not all of the same sort in the book, either. It is full of fun and wit, and *earnest* enough, we hope, to attract the attention of the "Christian Banker," as well as others less given to "whimsicalities."—*Chicago Daily Journal.*

FUN AND EARNEST.—Such is the title of a volume lately published by John S. Taylor, 17 Ann-street. It was written by the author of *Musings of an Invalid, Fancies of a Whimsical Man*, etc., and shows a continuance of the pungent and racy humor