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Ancient and Modern Celebrated Freethinkers

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Содержание

Ancient and Modern Celebrated Freethinkers / Reprinted From an English Work, Entitled «Half-Hours With The Freethinkers.»

EDITORS' PREFACE

In these pages, appearing under the title of "Half-Hours with the Freethinkers," are collected in a readable form an abstract of the lives and doctrines of some of those who have stood foremost in the ranks of Free-thought in all countries and in all ages; and we trust that our efforts to place in the hands of the poorest of our party a knowledge of works and workers – some of which and whom would otherwise be out of their reach – will be received by all in a favorable light. We shall, in the course of our publication, have to deal with many writers whose opinions widely differ from our own, and it shall be our care to deal with them *justly* and in all cases to allow them to utter in their own words their essential thinkings.

We lay no claim to originality in the mode of treatment – we will endeavor to cull the choicest flowers from the garden, and if others can make a brighter or better bouquet, we shall be glad to have their assistance. We have only one object in view, and that is, the presenting of free and manly thoughts to our readers, hoping to induce like thinking in them, and trust-ing that noble work may follow noble thoughts. The Freethinkers we intend treating of have also been Free Workers, endeavoring to raise men's minds from superstition and bigotry, and place before them a knowledge of the real.

We have been the more inclined to issue the "Half-Hours with the Freethinkers" in consequence, not only of the difficulty which many have in obtaining the works of the Old Freethinkers, but also as an effective answer to some remarks which have lately appeared in certain religious publications, implying a dearth of thought and thinkers beyond the pale of the Church. We wish all men to know that great minds and good men *have* sought truth apart from faith for many ages, and that it is because few were prepared to receive them, and many united to *crush* them, their works are so difficult of access to the general mass at the present day.

THOMAS HOBBES

This distinguished Freethinker was born on the 5th of April, 1588, at Malmesbury; hence his cognomen of "the philosopher of Malmesbury." In connection with his birth, we are told that his mother, being a loyal Protestant, was so terrified at the rumored approach of the Spanish Armada, that the birth of her son was hastened in consequence. The subsequent timidity of Hobbes is therefore easily accounted for. The foundation of his education was laid in the grammar school of his native town, where most probably his father (being a clergyman) would officiate as tutor. At the age of fifteen he was sent to Oxford. Five years of assiduous study made him proficient as a tutor; this, combined with his amiability and profound views of society, gained him the respect of the Earl of Devonshire, and he was appointed tutor to the Earl's son, Lord Cavendish. From 1610 to 1628, he was constantly in the society of this nobleman, in the capacity of secretary. In the interval of this time he travelled in France, Germany, and Italy; cultivating in each capital the society of the leading statesmen and philosophers. Lord Herbert, of Cherbury, the first great English Deist, and Ben Jonson, the dramatist, were each his boon companions. In the year 1628, Hobbes again made the tour of the Continent for three years with another pupil, and became acquainted at Pisa with Galileo. In 1631 he was entrusted with the education of another youth of the Devonshire family, and for near five years remained at Paris with his pupil.

Hobbes returned to England in 1636. The troublous politics of this age, with its strong party prejudices, made England the reverse of a pleasant retirement, for either Hobbes or his patrons; so, perceiving the outbreak of the Revolution, he emigrated to Paris. There in the enjoyment of the company of Gassendi and Descartes, with the *elite* of Parisian genius, he was for awhile contented and happy. Here he engaged in a series of mathematical quarrels, which were prolonged throughout the whole of his life, on the quadrature of the circle. Seven years after, he was appointed mathematical tutor to the Prince of Wales, afterwards Charles II. In 1642, Hobbes published the first of his principal works, "De Cive, or Philosophical Rudiments Concerning Government and Society." It was written to curb the spirit of anarchy, then so rampant in England, by exposing the inevitable results which must of necessity spring from the want of a coherent government amongst a people disunited and uneducated. The principles inculcated in this work were reproduced in the year 1651, in the "Leviathan, or the Matter, Form, and Power of a Commonwealth, Ecclesiastical and Civil;" this, along with a "Treatise on Human Nature," and a small work on "The Body Politic," form the groundwork of the "selfish schools" of moral philosophy. As soon as they were published, they were attacked by the clergy of every country in Europe. They were interdicted by the Pontiffs of the Roman and Greek Church, along with the Protestants scattered over Europe, and the Episcopal authorities of England. Indeed, to such an extent did this persecution rise, that even the royalist exiles received warning that there was no chance for their ostracism being removed, unless "the unclean thing (Hobbes) was put away from their midst." The young prince, intimidated by those ebullitions of vengeance against his tutor? was obliged to withdraw his protection from him, and the old man, then near seventy years of age, was compelled to escape from Paris by night, pursued by his enemies, who, according to Lord Clarendon, tracked his footsteps from France. Fortunately for Hobbes, he took refuge with his old protectors, the Devonshire family, who were too powerful to be wantonly insulted. While residing at Chatsworth, he would no doubt acutely feel the loss of Descartes, the Cardinal de Richelieu, and Gassendi; in the place of those men he entered into a warm friendship with Cowley, the poet, Selden, Harvey, the discoverer of the circulation of the blood, Charles Blount, and the witty Sir Thomas Brown.

In 1654, he published a "Letter upon Liberty and Necessity;" this brief tractate is unsurpassed in Free-thought literature for its clear, concise, subtle, and demonstrative proofs of the self-determining power of the will, and the truth of philosophical necessity. All subsequent writers on this question

have largely availed themselves of Hobbes's arguments, particularly the pamphleteers of Socialism. It is a fact no less true than strange, that Communism is derived from the system of Hobbes, which has always been classed along with that of Machiavelli, as an apology for despotism. The grand peculiarity of Hobbes is his method. Instead of taking speculation and reasoning upon theories, he carried out the inductive system of Bacon in its entirety, reasoning from separate generic facts, instead of analogically. By this means he narrowed the compass of knowledge, and made everything demonstrative that was capable of proof. Belief was consequently placed upon its proper basis, and a rigid analysis separated the boundaries of Knowing and Being. Hobbes looked at the great end of existence and embodied it in a double axiom. 1st. The desire for self-preservation. 2nd. To render ourselves happy. From those duplex principles which are inherent in all animals, a modern politician has perpetrated a platitude which represents in a sentence the end and aim of all legislation, "the greatest happiness for the greatest number." This is the *ultimatum* of Hobbes's philosophy. Its method of accomplishment was by treating society as one large family, with the educated and skilled as governors, having under their care the training of the nation. All acting from one impulse (self-preservation,) and by the conjoint experience of all, deriving the greatest amount of happiness from this activity. Hobbes opposed the Revolution, because it degenerated into a faction; and supported Charles Stuart because there were more elements of cohesion within his own party, than amongst his enemies. It was here where the cry of despotism arose; the "Round-heads" seeing they could not detach the ablest men from the King's party, denounced their literary opponents as "lovers of Belial, and of tyranny." This was their most effective answer to the "Leviathan." In after years, when the Episcopal party no longer stood in need of the services of Hobbes, they heaped upon him the stigma of heresy, until his *ci-devant* friends and enemies were united in the condemnation of the man they most feared. Mr. Owen, in his schema of Socialism, took his leading idea on non-responsibility from Hobbes's explanation of necessity, and the freedom of the will. The old divines had inculcated a doctrine to the effect that the "will" was a separate entity of the human mind, which swayed the whole disposition, and was of itself essentially corrupt. Ample testimony from the Bible substantiated this position. But in the method of Hobbes, he lays down the facts that we can have no knowledge without experience, and no experience without sensation. The mind therefore is composed of classified sensations, united together by the law of an association of ideas. This law was first discovered by Hobbes, who makes the human will to consist in the strongest motive which sways the balance on any side. This is the simplest explanation which can be given on a subject more mystified than any other in theology.

A long controversy betwixt Bishop Bramhall, of Londonderry, followed the publication of Hobbes's views on Liberty and Necessity. Charles II. on his restoration, bestowed an annual pension of £100 on Hobbes, but this did not prevent the parliament, in 1666, censuring the "De Cive" and "Leviathan," besides his other works. Hobbes also translated the Greek historian, Thucydides, Homer's Odyssey, and the Illiad. The last years of his life were spent in composing "Behemoth; or, a History of the Civil Wars from 1640 to 1660," which was finished in the year he died, but not published until after his death. At the close of the year 1679, he was taken seriously ill. At the urgent request of some Christians, they were permitted to intrude their opinions upon his dying bed, telling him gravely that his illness would end in death, and unless he repented, he would go straight to hell. Hobbes calmly replied, "I shall be glad then to find a hole to creep out of the world." For seventy years he had been a persecuted man, but during that time his enemies had paid him that tribute of respect which genius always extorts from society. He was a man who was hated and dreaded. He had reached the age of ninety-two when he died. His words were pregnant with meaning; and he never used an unnecessary sentence. A collection of moral apothegms might be gathered from his table-talk. When asked why he did not read every new book which appeared, he said, "If I had read as much as other men, I should have been as ignorant." His habits were simple; he rose early in the morning, took a long walk through the grounds of Chatsworth, and cultivated healthful recreation.

The after part of the day was devoted to study and composition. Like Sir Walter Raleigh, he was a devoted admirer of the "fragrant herb." Charles II.'s constant witticism, styled Hobbes as "a bear against whom the Church played their young dogs, in order to exercise them."

If there had been a few more similar "bears," the priestly "dogs" would long since have been exterminated, for none of them escaped unhurt from their encounters with the "grizzly" of Malmesbury, except it was in the mathematical disputes with Dr. Wallis.

He was naturally of a timid disposition: this was the result of the accident which caused his premature birth, and being besides of a reserved character, he was ill-fitted to meet the physical rebuffs of the world. It is said that he was so afraid of his personal safety, that he objected to be left alone in an empty house; this charge is to some extent true, but we must look to the mitigating circumstances of the case. He was a feeble man, turned the age of three-score and ten, with all the clergy of England hounding on their dupes to murder an old philosopher because he had exposed their dogmas. It was but a few years before, that Protestants and Papists had complimented each other's religion by burning those who were the weakest, and long after Hobbes's death, Protestants murdered, ruined, disgraced, and placed in the pillory Dissenters and Catholics alike, and Thomas Hobbes had positive proof that it was the intention of the Church of England to *burn him alive*, on the stake, a martyr for his opinions. This, then, is a sufficient justification for Hobbes feeling afraid, and instead of it being thrown as a taunt at this illustrious Freethinker, it is a standing stigma on those who would re-enact the tragedy of persecution, if public opinion would allow it.

Sir James Mackintosh says: * "The style of Hobbes is the very perfection of didactic language. Short, clear, precise, pithy, his language never has more than one meaning, which never requires a second thought to find. By the help of his exact method, it takes so firm a hold on the mind, that it will not allow attention to slacken. His little tract on human nature has scarcely an ambiguous or a needless word. He has so great a power of always choosing the most significant term, that he never is reduced to the poor expedient of using many in its stead. He had so thoroughly studied the genius of the language, and knew so well how to steer between pedantry and vulgarity, that two centuries have not superannuated probably more than a dozen of his words."

* Second Dissertation: Encyclopaedia Brit., p. 318.

Lord Clarendon describes the personal character of Hobbes as "one for whom he always had a great esteem as a man, who besides his eminent parts of learning and knowledge, hath been always looked upon as a man of probity, and a life free from scandal."

We now proceed to make a selection of quotations from the works of this writer, commencing with those on the "Necessity of the Will," in reply to Bishop Bramhall.

"The question is not whether a man be a free agent – that is to say, whether he can write, or forbear, speak, or be silent, according to his will; but whether the will to write, and the will to forbear, come upon him according to his will, or according to anything else in his own power. I acknowledge this liberty, that I can *do*, if I *will*, but to say, I can *will* if I *will*, I take to be an absurd speech." Further replying to Bramhall's argument, that we do not learn the "idea of the freedom of the will" from our tutors, but we know it intuitively, Hobbes says, "It is true very few have learned from tutors that a man is not free to will; nor do they find it much in books. That they and in books that which the poets chaunt in the theatres, and the shepherds on the mountains, that which the pastors teach in the churches, and the doctors in the universities; and that which the common people in the markets, and all the people do assent unto, is the same that I assent unto; namely, that a man hath freedom to do if he will; but whether he hath freedom to will, is a question which it seems neither the Bishop nor they ever thought of… A wooden top that is lashed by the boys, and runs about, sometimes to one wall, sometimes to another, sometimes spinning, sometimes hitting men on the shins, if it were sensible of its own motion, would think it proceeded from its own will, unless it felt what lashed it. And is a man any wiser when he runs to one place for a benifice, to another for a bargain, and troubles the world

with writing errors, and requiring answers, because he thinks he does it without other cause than his own will, and seeth not what are the lashings which cause that will?"

Hobbes casually mentions the subject of "praise or dispraise," in reference to the will; those who are old enough will remember this was one of the most frequent subjects of discussion amongst the earlier Socialists. "These depend not at all in the necessity of the action praised or dispraised. For what is it else to praise, but to say *a thing is good?* Good, I say, for me, or for somebody else, or for the State and Commonwealth. And what is it to say an action is good, but to say it is as I would wish, or as another would have it, or according to the will of the State – that is to say, according to the law! Does my lord think that no action could please me, or the commonwealth, that should proceed from necessity! Things may be therefore necessary, and yet praiseworthy, as also necessary, and yet dispraised, and neither of them both in vain; because praise and dispraise, and likewise reward and punishment, do, by example, make and conform the will to good or evil. It was a very great praise, in my opinion, that Vellerius Paterculus gives Cato, where he says that he was good by nature, '*et quia aliter esse non potuit*.'' – 'And because he could not do otherwise.'" This able treatise was reprinted, and extensively read about twenty years ago; but, like many other of our standard works, it is at present out of print.

The "Leviathan" is still readable, a bold masculine book. It treats everything in a cool, analytic style. The knife of the Socialist is sheathed in vain; no rhapsody can overturn its impassioned teachings. Rhetoric is not needed to embellish the truths he has to portray, for the wild flowers of genius but too frequently hide the yawning chasms in the garden of Logic. It is not to be expected that this book will be read now with the interest with which it was perused two centuries ago; then every statement was impugned, every argument denied, and the very tone of the book called forth an interference from parliament to stop the progress of its heresies. Now the case is widely different, and the general tenor of the treatise is the rule in which are illustrated alike the works of the philosophers and the dreams of the sophists (priests.) We give part of the introduction. "Nature (the art whereby God hath made and governs the world) is, by the art of man, as in many other things, so in this also, imitated, that it can make an artificial animal. For seeing life is but a motion of limbs, the beginning whereof is in some principal part within; why may we not say that all automata (engines that move themselves by springs and wheels, as doth a watch) have an artificial life? For what is the heart but a spring; and the nerves but so many strings; and the joints but so many wheels, giving motion to the whole body, such as was intended by the Artificer? Art goes yet further, imitating that rational and most excellent work of nature, man. For by art is created that great leviathan, called a Commonwealth, or State, which is but an artificial man though of greater stature and strength than the natural, for whose protection and defence it was intended, and the sovereignty of which is an artificial soul, as giving life and motion to the whole body. To describe the nature of this artificial man, I will consider,

"1st. The *matter* thereof, and the *artificer*, both which is man.

"2nd. *How*, and by what *covenants* it is made, what are the *rights* and *just* power or authority of a sovereign; and what it is that *preserveth* and dissolveth it.

"3rd. What is a Christian Commonwealth.

"Lastly, what is the kingdom of darkness.

"The first chapter treats of 'Senses.' Concerning the thoughts of man, I will consider them first singly, and afterwards in train, or dependence upon one another. Singly, they are every one a representation, or appearance, of some quality or accident of a body without us, which is commonly called an object. Which object worketh on the eyes, ears, and other parts of a man's body, and by diversity of working, produceth diversity of appearances. The original of them all is that which we call sense, for there is no conception in a man's mind, which hath not at first totally or by parts been begotten upon the organs of sense; the rest are derived from that original."

Speaking of "Imagination," Hobbes says, "That when a thing lies still, unless somewhat else stir it, it will lie still forever, is a truth no one doubts of. But that when a thing is in motion, it will

eternally be in motion, unless somewhat else stay it, though the reason be the same – namely, that nothing can change itself – is not so easily assented to. For men measure not only other men, but all other things, by themselves; and because they find themselves subject after motion to pain and lassitude, think everything else grows weary of motion, and seeks repose of its own accord – little considering whether it be not some other motion, wherein that desire of rest they find in themselves consisteth… When a body is once in motion, it moveth (unless something else hinder it) eternally, and whatsoever hindereth it, cannot in an instant, but in time, and by degrees, quite extinguish it; and as we see in the water, though the wind cease, the waves give not over rolling for a long time after; so also it happeneth in that motion which is made in the internal parts of man, then, when he sees, dreams, etc. For after the object is removed, or the eye shut, we still retain an image of the thing seen, though more obscure than when we see it… The decay of sense in men waking, is not the decay of the motion made in sense, but an obscuring of it, in such manner as the light of the sun obscureth the light of the stars; which stars do no less exercise their virtue, by which they are visible in the day, than in the night. But because amongst many strokes which our eyes, ears and other organs receive from external bodies, the predominant only is sensible; therefore the light of the sun being only predominant, we are not affected with the actions of the stars… This decaying sense, when we would express the thing itself (I mean fancy itself), we call imagination, as I said before, but when we would express the Decay, and signify the sense is fading, old and past, it is called Memory: so that imagination and memory are but one thing, which, for divers considerations, hath divers names." *

Such is the commencement of this celebrated book, it is based upon materialism; every argument must stand this test upon Hobbes's principles, and characteristically are they elaborated. Hobbes ("De Cive") says of the immortality of the soul, "It is a belief grounded upon other men's sayings, that they knew it supernaturally; or that they knew those who knew them, that knew others, that knew it supernaturally." A sparkling sneer, and perhaps the truest answer to so universal an error. Dugald Stewart, in his analysis of the works of Hobbes, says, ** The fundamental doctrines inculcated in the political works of Hobbes, are contained in the following propositions: – All men are by nature equal, and, prior to government, they had all an equal right to enjoy the good things of this world. Man, too, is by nature, a solitary and purely selfish animal; the social union being entirely an interested league, suggested by prudential views of personal advantage. The necessary consequence is, that a state of nature must be a state of perpetual warfare, in which no individual has any other means of safety than his own strength or ingenuity; and in which there is no room for regular industry, because no secure enjoyment of its fruits. In confirmation of this view of the origin of society, Hobbes appeals to facts falling daily within the cycle of our experience. "Does not a man, (he asks) when taking a journey, arm himself, and seek to go well accompanied? When going to sleep, does he not lock his doors? Nay, even in his own house, does he not lock his chests? Does he not there accuse mankind by his action, as I do by my words?" For the sake of peace and security, it is necessary that each individual should surrender a part of his natural right, and be contented with such a share of liberty as he is willing to allow to others; or, to use Hobbes's own language, "every man must divest himself of the right he has to all things by nature; the right of all men to all things, being in effect no better than if no man had a right to anything." In consequence of this transference of natural rights to an individual, or to a body of individuals, the multitude become one person, under the name of a State, or Republic, by which person the common will and power are exercised for the common defence. The ruling power cannot be withdrawn from those to whom it has been committed; nor can they be punished for misgovern-ment. The interpretation of the laws is to be sought, not from the comments of philosophers, but from the authority of the ruler; otherwise society would every moment be in danger of resolving itself into the discordant elements of which it was at first composed. – The will of the magistrate, therefore, is to be regarded as the ultimate standard of right and wrong, and his voice to be listened to by every citizen as the voice of conscience."

* Leviathan. Ed. 1651.

** Dissertation on the Progress of Ethical Science, p. 41.

Such are the words of one of Hobbes's most powerful opponents. Dr. Warburton says, "The philosopher of Malmesbury was the terror of the last age, as Tin-dal and Collins are of this. The press sweats with controversy; and every young churchman militant would try his arms in thundering on Hobbes's steel cap." This is a modest acknowledgment of the power of Hobbes, from the most turbulent divine of the eighteenth century.

Victor Comyin gives the following as his view of the philosophy of Hobbes: – "There is no other certain evidence than that of the senses. The evidence of the senses attests only the existence of bodies; then there is no existence save that of bodies, and philosophy is only the science of bodies.

"There are two sorts of bodies: 1st, Natural bodies, which are the theatre of a multitude of regular phenomena, because they take place by virtue of fixed laws, as the bodies with which physics are occupied; 2nd, Moral and political bodies, societies which constantly change and are subject to variable laws.

"Hobbes's system of physics is that of Democritus, the atomistic and corpuscular of the Ionic school.

"His metaphysics are its corollary; all the phenomena which pass in the consciousness have their source in the organization, of which the consciousness in itself is simply a result. All the ideas come from the senses. To think, is to calculate; and intelligence is nothing else than an arithmetic. As we do not calculate with out signs, we do not think without words; the truth of the thought is in the relation of the words among themselves, and metaphysics are reduced to a perfect language. Hobbes is completely a nominalist. With Hobbes there are no other than contingent ideas; the finite alone can be conceived; the infinite is only a negation of the finite; beyond that it is a mere word invented to honor a being whom faith alone can reach. The idea of good and evil has no other foundation than agreeable or disagreeable sensations; to agreeable or disagreeable sensation it is impossible to apply any. other law than escape from the one and search after the other; hence the morality of Hobbes, which is the foundation of his politics. Man is capable of enjoying and of suffering; his only law is to suffer as little, and enjoy as much, as possible. Since such is his only law, he has all the rights that this law confers upon him; he may do anything for his preservation and his happiness; he has the right to sacrifice everything to himself. Behold? then, men upon this earth, where the objects of desire are not superabundant, all possessing equal rights to whatever may be agreeable or useful to them, by virtue of the same capacity for enjoyment and suffering. This is a state of nature, which is nothing less than a state of war, the anarchy of the passions, a combat in which every man is arrayed against his neighbor. But this state being opposed to the happiness of the majority of individuals who share it, utility, the offspring of egotism itself, demands its exchange for another, to wit, the social state. The social state is the institution of a public power, stronger than all individuals, capable of making peace succeed war, and imposing on all the accomplishment of whatever it shall have judged to be useful, that is, just."

Before we dismiss the father of Freethought from our notice, there remains a tribute of respect to be paid to one whom it is our duty to associate with the author of the "Leviathan," and who has but just passed away – one man amongst the British aristocracy with the disposition of a tribune of the people, coupled with thoughts at once elevated and free, and a position which rendered him of essential service to struggling opinion. This man saw the greatness, the profound depth, the attic style, and the immense importance of the works of Hobbes, along with their systematic depreciation by those whose duty it should be to explain them, especially at a time when those works were not reprinted, and the public were obliged to glean their character from the refutations (so called) by mangled quotations, and a distorted meaning. Impelled by this thought, and anxious to protect the memory of a philosopher, his devoted disciple, at a cost of £10,000, translated the Latin, and edited the English works of Hobbes, in a manner worthy alike of the genius of the author, and the discernment of his editor. For this kindness, a seat in Parliament was lost by the organization of the

clergy in Cornwall. The name of this man was Sir William Molesworth. Let Freethinkers cherish the memory of their benefactor.

We now take our leave of Thomas Hobbes. He had not the chivalry of Herbert; the vivacity of Raleigh; the cumulative power of Bacon; or the winning policy of Locke. If his physical deformities prevented him from being as daring as Vane, he was as bold in thought and expression as either Descartes, or his young friend Blount. He gave birth to the brilliant constellation of genius in the time of Queen Anne. He did not live to see his system extensively promulgated; but his principles moulded the character of the men who formed the revolution of 1688, equally as much as Hume established the Scotch and German schools of philosophy; and Voltaire laid the train by which the French Revolution was proclaimed. Peace to his memory! It was a stormy struggle during his life; its frowns cannot hurt him now. Could we believe in the idea of a future life, we should invoke his blessings on our cause. That cause which for near two hundred years has successfully struggled into birth, to youth, and maturity. Striking down in its onward course superstitions which hath grown with centuries, and where it does not exterminate them, it supplies a purer atmosphere, and extracts the upas-sting which has laid low so many, and which must yet be finally exterminated. The day is rapidly dawning when our only deities will be the works of genius, and our only prayer the remembrance of our most illustrious chiefs.

A.C.

LORD BOLINGBROKE

Henry St. John, Lord Bolingbroke, was born in his family seat at Battersea, on the 1st of October 1672, and died there on November 15th, 1751, in his 79th year. He was educated by a clergyman in an unnatural manner, and speedily developed himself accordingly. When he left Oxford, he was one of the handsomest men of the day – his majestic figure, refined address, dazzling wit, and classic eloquence, made him irresistibly the "first gentleman in Europe." Until his twenty-fourth year, he was renowned more for the graces of his person, and the fascination of his wild exploits, rather than possessing a due regard to his rank and abilities. His conduct, however, was completely changed when he became a Member of Parliament. The hopes of his friends were resuscitated when they discovered the aptitude for business – the ready eloquence, and the sound reasoning of the once wild St. John. He soon became the hardest worker and the leader of the House of Commons. The expectations of the nation rose high when night after night he spoke with the vivacity of a poet, and the profundity of a veteran statesman on public affairs. In 1704, he received the seals as Secretary-of-War, and was mainly instrumental in gaining Marlborough's victories, by the activity with which he supplied the English General with munitions of war. On the ascendency of the Whigs, St. John resigned his office, and retired into privacy for two years, when the Whig administration was destroyed, and St. John re-appeared as Secretary for Foreign Affairs. His greatest work now was the negotiation of the treaty of Utrecht. This treaty was signed by St. John (then Lord Bolingbroke,) he being sent to Paris as the British Plenipotentiary, and was hailed by the Parisians as a guardian angel. To such an extent was this feeling manifested, that when he visited the theatres every one *rose* to welcome him. So long as Queen Anne lived, Bolingbroke's influence was paramount, but associated with him was the Earl of Oxford, in opposition to the Whig party, and serious differences had arisen between the rivals. Oxford-was dismissed four days before the Queen's death, and Bolingbroke officiated in his place, until Oxford's vacancy was filled, which all expected would be given to himself. A stormy debate in the Privy Council so agitated the Queen, that it shortened her life, and the Council recommended the Earl of Shrewsbury as Premier, and with him the Whigs.

With the accession of George, came the impeachment of Bolingbroke by the victorious Whigs. Knowing that it was their intention to sacrifice him to party revenge, and that his accusers would likewise act as his judges, he wisely withdrew himself to France. The Pretender held a mimic court at Avignon, and a debating society at Lorraine, entitled a Parliament. He offered Bolingbroke the office of Secretary of State, which was accepted by him; and it was only at this time that the emanations of the exiled Stuart's cabinet possessed either a solidity of aim, or a definite purpose. If Louis XIV. had lived longer, he might have assisted the Pretender, but with his death expired the hopes of that ill-fated dynasty. Bolingbroke strove to husband the means which the Chevalier's friends had collected, but the advice of the Duke of Ormond was listened to in preference to Bolingbroke's. The results which Bolingbroke foretold – proceeding rashly and failing ignominiously – both occurred. The insurrection broke out, and failed – no other end could have been anticipated. Intrigues were fast coiling themselves around the secretary; he was openly blamed for the reverses in Scotland – but he was alike careless of their wrath or its issue. One morning Ormond waited upon him with two slips of paper from the Pretender, informing him that his services were no longer required. After his dismissal he was impeached by the lackeys of the Pretender under seven heads, which were widely distributed throughout Europe. There is this anomaly in the life of Bolingbroke, witnessed in no other Englishman: In one year he was the most powerful man in England – Secretary of State – an exile – and then in the same year he occupied a similar office to one who aimed at the English throne, and was impeached by both parties.

For several years he occupied himself in France with philosophical pursuits – until the year 1723 – when he received a pardon, which allowed him to return to England, but still his sequestered

estates were not returned, and this apology for a pardon was negotiated by a bribe of £11,000 to the German Duchess of Kendal – one of the king's mistresses.

Alexander Pope was Bolingbroke's constant correspondent. Pope had won the applause of England by his poems, and was then considered the arbiter of genius. Voltaire occupied a similar position in France. Since Pope first laid the copy of his greatest epic at the feet of Bolingbroke, and begged of him to correct its errors, he had gradually won himself that renown which prosperity has endorsed. But what a unity in divergence did those philosophers present! The calm moralism of Pope, his sweet and polished rhyme, contrasted with the fiery wit and hissing sarcasm of the Frenchman, more trenchant than Pope's, yet wanting his sparkling epigrams. The keen discernment of both these men saw in Bolingbroke a master, and they ranked by his side as twin apostles of a new and living faith. It was the penetration of true greatness which discerned in the English peer that sublimity of intellect they possessed themselves, without the egotism of an imbecile rival. Bolingbroke had cherished the ethics of one, and restrained the rancor of the other – and both men yielded to him whose system they worshipped; and this trinity of Deists affords the noblest example which can be evoked to prove the Harmony of Reason amidst the most varied accomplishments. Although Pope's name occurs but seldom in the history of Freethought – while that of Bolingbroke is emblazoned in all its glory, and Voltaire is enshrined as its only Deity – yet we must not forget that what is now known as the only collection of St. John's works (the edition in five volumes by Mallet,) were written for the instruction of Pope – sent to him in letters – discussed and agreed to by him – so that the great essayist is as much implicated in them as the author of the Dictionary. It is said, "In his society these two illustrious men felt and acknowledged a superior genius; and if he had no claim to excellence in poetry – the art in which they were so pre-eminent – he surpassed them both in the philosophy they so much admired."

For ten years after this period, he devoted himself to various political writings, which were widely circulated; but we must waive the pleasure at present of analyzing those, and confine our attention to the alliance between Pope and Bolingbroke, in the new school of philosophy.

Bolingbroke's principal friends were Pope, Swift, Mallet, Wyndam, and Atterbury. The first three were most in his confidence in regard to religion: and although Pope was educated a Roman Catholic, and occasionally conformed to that hierarchy (and like Voltaire, for peace, died in it,) yet the philosophical letters which passed between Pope and St. John, fully established him as a consistent Deist – an honor to which Swift also attained, although being a dignitary of the Church: but if doubts arise on the subject, they can easily be dispelled. General Grimouard, in his "Essai sur Bolingbroke," says that "he was intimate with the widow of Mallet, the poet, who was a lady of much talent and learning, and had lived upon terms of friendship with Bolingbroke, Swift, Pope, and many other distinguished characters of the day, who frequently met at her house." The General adds, that the lady has been frequently heard to declare, that these men were all equally deistical in their sentiments (*que c'était une société de purs déistes*;) that Swift from his clerical character was a little more reserved than the others, but he was evidently of the same sentiments at bottom.

There is a remarkable passage in one of Pope's letters to Swift, which seems rather corroborative of the General's. He is inviting Swift to come and visit him. "The day is come," he says, "which I have often wished, but never thought to see, when every mortal I esteem is of the same sentiments in politics and religion." Dr. Warton remarks upon this paragraph "At this time therefore (1733) he (Pope and Bolingbroke were of the same sentiment in religion as well as politics);" * and Pope writing to Swift is proof sufficient that Bolingbroke, Swift, and himself, were united in opinions. Wherever Swift's name is known, it is associated with his spleen on account of his not being elevated to the Episcopal Bench, when he was promised a vacancy, which was reserved for him; but Queen Anne absolutely refused to confer such a dignity upon the author of "Gulliver's Travels" – that profound satire upon society and religion; and this occurring at a time when his energetic services were so much needed in defence of the government he so assisted by pamphleteering, satire, and wholesale lampoons. Mr. Cooke says, "The Earl of Nottingham, in the debate upon the Dissenters' Bill, chiefly

founded his objection to the provision that the Bishops should have the only power of licensing tutors, upon the likelihood there was that a man who was in a fair way for becoming a Bishop, was hardly suspected of being a Christian." This pointed allusion to Swift passed without comment or reply in a public assembly, composed in a great measure of his private friends and associates. This seems to intimate that the opinion of his contemporaries was not very strong in favor of Swift's religious principles. This may suffice to prove the unanimity of sentiment existing among this brilliant coterie – one a political Churchman – another the greatest poet of his age – the third, the most accomplished statesman of his country. Although they were united in religious conviction, it would have been certain ruin to any of the confederates if the extent of their thoughts had reached the public ear. The Dean wrote for the present – the poet for his age – and the peer for the immediate benefit of his friends and a record for the future. But they were all agreed that some code of ethics should be promulgated, which should embody the positive speculations of Bolingbroke, with the easy grace of Pope – the elaborate research of the philosopher with the rhetoric of the poet. Swift coalesced in this idea, but was, to a certain extent, ignorant of its subsequent history. It was not thought prudent to trust Mallet and others with the secret. For this purpose the "Essay of Man" was designed on the principles elaborated by Bolingbroke in his private letters to Pope. It was Bolingbroke who drew up the scheme, mapped out the arguments, and sketched the similes – it was Pope who embellished its beauties, and turned it into rhyme. Doctor Warton, the editor of Pope, also proves this: – "Lord Bathurst told the Doctor that he had read the whole of the 'Essay on Man' in *the handwriting of Bolingbroke*, and drawn up in a series of propositions which Pope was to amplify, versify, and to illustrate." If further proofs are required, that Bolingbroke was not only a co-partner but coadjutor with Pope, it is found in the opening of the poem, where the poet uses the plural in speaking of Bolingbroke —

"Awake, my St. John, leave all meaner things
To low ambition, and the pride of kings.
Laugh when we must, be candid when you can,
And vindicate the ways of God to man."

* Cook's Life of Bolingbroke, 2nd vol., p. 97..

This is sufficient to prove the partnership in the poem, and from the generally acknowledged fact of his connection, we have no hesitation in declaring that this poem is the grand epic of Deism, and is as much the offspring of Bolingbroke, as his own ideas when enunciated by others. There is not a single argument in the Essay but what is much more elaborated in the works of Bolingbroke, while every positive argument is reduced to a few poetic maxims in the Essay. We may as well look here for Bolingbroke's creed, rather than amongst his prose works. There is, however, this difference, that in the Essay there is laid down an ethical scheme of positivism —*i. e.*, of everything in morals which can be duly tested and nothing more: while in the prose writings of Bolingbroke, the negative side of theology is discussed with an amount of erudition which has never been surpassed by any of the great leaders of Freethought. The first proposition of the Essay is based on a postulate, upon which the whole reasoning is built. Overthrow this substratum, and the philosophy of the Essay is overturned – admit it, and its truth is evident; it is —

"What can we reason but from what we know?"

This is equivalent to saying that we can only reason concerning man as a finite part of an infinite existence, and we can only predicate respecting what comes under the *category of positive knowledge*; we are therefore disabled from speculating in any theories which have for a basis opposition to the collected experience of mankind. This was a position laid down by Bolingbroke to escape all the historical arguments which some men deduce from alleged miraculous agency in the past, or problematical prophecy in the future. It *likewise* shows the untenable nature of all analogy, which

presumes to trace an hypothetical first cause or personal intelligence, to account for a supposed origin of primeval existence, by which nature was caused, or forms of being first evolved. Although it may be deemed inconsistent with the philosophy of Bolingbroke to admit a God in the same argument as the above, we must not forget that in all speculative reasoning there must be an assumption of some kind, which ought to be demonstrated by proof, or a suitable equivalent in the form of universal consent. Yet in the case of the God of the Essay, we look in vain for the attributes with which Theists love to clothe their God, and we can but perceive inexorable necessity in the shape of rigid and unswerving laws, collected in one focus by Pope, and dignified with the name of God; so that the difference betwixt a Deist of the old, and an Atheist of the modern school, is one of mere words – they both commence with an assumption, the Atheist only defining his terms more strictly, the subject-matter in both instances being the same. The only difference being, the one deceives himself with a meaningless word, the other is speechless on what he cannot comprehend. The Essay shows a scheme of universal gradation, composed of a series of links, which are one entwined within the other – every rock being placed in its necessitated position – every plant amidst its growth bearing an exoteric similitude to itself – every animal, from the lowest quadruped to the highest race of man, occupying a range of climate adapted to its requirements. The Essay here is scientifically correct, and agrees with the ablest writers on necessity. A German philosopher renowned alike for rigid analysis and transcendent abilities as a successful theorist, observes, "When I contemplate all things as a whole, I perceive one *nature* one *force*: when I regard them as individuals, many forces which develop themselves according to their inward laws, and pass through all the forms of which they are capable, and all the objects in nature are but those forces under certain limitations. Every manifestation of every individual power of nature is determined partly by itself, partly by its own preceding manifestations, and partly by the manifestations of all other powers of nature with which it is connected; but it is connected with all, for nature is one connected whole. Its manifestations are, therefore, strictly necessary, and it is absolutely impossible to be other than as it is. In every moment of her duration nature is one connected whole, in every moment must every individual be what it is because all others are what they are, and a single grain of sand could not be moved from its place, without, however imperceptibly to us, changing something throughout all parts of the immeasurable whole. Every moment of duration is determined by all past moments, and will determine all future movements, and even the position of a grain of sand cannot be conceived other than it is, without supposing other changes to an indefinite extent. Let us imagine that grain of sand to be lying some few feet further inland than it actually does; then must the storm-wind that drove it in from the sea-shore have been stronger than it actually was; then must the preceding state of the atmosphere, by which this wind was occasioned, and its degree of strength being determined, have been different from what it actually was, and the preceding changes which gave rise to this particular weather, and so on. We must suppose a different temperature from that which really existed – a different constitution of bodies which influenced that temperature. How can we know that in such a state of weather we have been supposing, in order to carry this grain of sand a few yards further, some ancestors of yours might not have perished from hunger, cold, or heat, long before the birth of that son from whom you are descended, and thus you might never have been at all, and all that you have done, and all that you ever hope to do, must have been hindered, in order that a grain of sand might lie in a different place." * The whole of the first book is devoted to the necessitated condition of man in relation to the universe. In one portion there is a succession of beautiful similes, portraying the blissful state we are in, instead of being gifted with finer sensibilities, or a prescience, which would be a curse.

* Fichte's "Destination of Man," pp. 8, 9

Pope, although an ardent disciple of Bolingbroke, did not entirely forsake the prejudices of childhood; he still indulged in a bare hope of a future life, which his master, with more consistency, suppressed. So that when the poet rhymed the propositions of St. John, he pointed them with "hope"

in an eternal future; for that speculation which was still *probability* in his day, is now nearly silenced by modern science. But we must not confound the ideas of futurity, which some of the Deists expressed, with those of Christianity. They were as different as the dreams of Christ and Plato were dissimilar. Pope "hoped" for a future life of intellectual enjoyment devoid of evil, but the heaven of the gospel is equally as necessary to be counterbalanced by a hell, as the existence of a God requires the balancing support of a devil. We therefore can sympathise with the description of a heaven, the poor Indian looked for: —

"Some safer world in depths of woods embraced,
Some happier island in the watery waste;
Where slaves once more their native land behold,
Nor fiends torment, nor *Christians thirst for gold.*
To be– contents his natural desires,
He asks no angels' wings, no seraphs' fires,
But thinks, admitted to that equal sky,
His faithful dog should bear him company."

Pope durst not emphatically deny the future-life theory, so he attacked it by elaborating a physical instead of a spiritual heaven. So heterodox a notion of the Indian's future sports, is not to be found in theology, especially as he pictures the Indian's sports with his dog. Here was a double blow aimed at Christianity by evolving a "positive" idea of future pleasures, and the promulgation of sentiments anti-Christian. – Again he attacks them for unwarrantable speculation in theology, when he says —

"In pride, in reasoning pride our error lies."

This is a corollary to the first proposition, "What can we reason but from what we know?" The only predicate we can draw from this is, the undoubted fact we have no right to profess to hold opinions of that, upon which we cannot have any positive proof. The last line of the first book has been generally thought open to attack. It relates to necessity – "Whatever is, is right" – and is not to be viewed in relation to society as at present constituted, but to the physical universe.

The second book deals with man in relation to himself as an individual; the third as a member of society, and the last in respect to happiness. Throughout the whole Essay the distinctions arising from nature and instinct are defined and defended with vigor and acuteness. Both are proved to be equally great in degree, in spite of the hints constantly thrown out in reference to "God-like Reason *versus* Blind Instinct." We confess our inability to discern the vaunted superiority of the powers of reason over those of its blinder sister. We see in the one matchless wisdom – profound decision – unfailing resource – a happy contentment as unfeigned as it is natural. On the other hand, we see temerity allied with cowardice – a man seeking wisdom on a watery plank, when every footmark may serve him for a funeral effigy; political duplicity arising from his confined generalization of facts; a desire to do right, but checked by accident and cunning – everywhere uneasy – always fatal. If the Christians' fables were true, we might say that Adam and Eve were originally in possession of Instinct and Reason, and fell by listening to the promptings of volition, instead of the unswerving powers of the brutes, and for a hereditary punishment was cursed with a superabundance of reason. For with all our intellectual prerogatives, we have yet failed to arrive at a definite course of action which should influence our conduct. The Essay, speaking of Government by Christianity, says: —

"Force first made conquest, and that conquest law,
Till superstition taught the tyrant awe.

•••

She taught the weak to bend, the proud to pray,
To power unseen, and mightier far than they:
She, from the rending earth and bursting skies,
Saw Gods descend and fiends infernal rise.
Here *fixed* the dreadful, there the blessed abodes,
Here *made her* devils, and weak hope her Gods.
Gods partial, changeful, passionate, *unjust*,
Whose *attributes were rage, revenge, or lust.*
Such as the souls of cowards might conceive,
And formed like tyrants; tyrants would believe.
Zeal then, not charity, became the guide,
And Hell was *built in spite*, and Heaven in pride."

And again —

"For modes of faith let graceless zealots fight,
His can't be wrong whose life is in the right."

The Essay concludes with an invocation to Bolingbroke – whom Pope styles, "my guide, philosopher, and friend." Such is the conclusion of the most remarkable ethical poem in any language. It is the Iliad of English Deism. Not a single allusion to Christ – a future state of existence given only as a faint probability – the whole artificial state of society satirized – prayer ridiculed, and government of every kind denounced which does not bring happiness to the people. The first principle laid down is the corner-stone of materialism – "What can we reason but from what we know?" – which is stated, explained, and defended with an axiomatic brevity rarely equalled, never surpassed – with a number of illustrations comprising the *chef d'oeuvre* of poetic grace, and synthical melody combined with arguments as cogent as the examples are perfect.

It stands alone in its impregnability – a pile of literary architecture like the "Novum Organan" of Bacon, the "Principia" of Newton, or the Essay of Locke. The facades of its noble colonnades are seen extending their wings through the whole sweep of history, constituting a pantheon of morals, where every nation sends its devotees to admire and worship.

Let us now turn to the philosophical works of Bolingbroke. By the will of Bolingbroke he devised this portion of his manuscripts to David Mallet, the poet, for publication. The noble Lord's choice is open to censure here. He knew the character of Mallet, and could expect little justice from him who should have been his biographer. The MSS. were all prepared for the press long before Bolingbroke died. In this original state, they were addressed to Pope. When published they appeared as "Letters or Essays addressed to Alexander Pope, Esq." The political friends of St. John wished their suppression, fearing that they would injure his reputation by being anti-Christian. A large bribe was offered by Lord Cornbur if Mallet would destroy the works. He, no doubt, thinking more money could be made by their publication, issued them to the world in 1754, but without giving a biography or notes to the books, his work being simply correcting the errors of the press. True, there existed no stipulation that he should write the Life of Bolingbroke, but no one can doubt that such was the intention of the statesman, when he bequeathed to him property which realized £10,000 in value. Every one knows the huge witticism of Dr. Johnson, who accused Bolingbroke of cowardice, under the simile of loading a blunderbuss, and then leaving a Scotchman half-a-crown to fire it when he was

out of the way. When those posthumous works appeared, the grand jury of Westminster presented them to the judicial authorities as subversive of religion, morality, and government. They were burnt by the common hangman.

With difficulty we give a quotation from Boling-broke's ideas of a Future Life. In vol. IV., p. 348, he says, "I do not say, that to believe in a future state is to believe in a vulgar error; but this I say, it cannot be demonstrated by reason: it is not in the nature of it capable of demonstration, and no one ever returned that irremediable way to give us an assurance of the fact."

Again, he speaks personally in reference to himself, Pope, and Wollaston, whom he had been opposing: —

"He alone is happy, and he 'is truly so, who can say,
Welcome life whatever it brings!
Welcome death whatever it is!
If the former, – we change our state.

•••

That you, or I, or even Wollaston himself, should return to the earth from whence we came, to the dirt under our feet, or be mingled with the ashes of those herbs and plants from which we drew nutrition whilst we lived, does not seem any indignity offered to our nature, since it is common to all the animal kind: and he who complains of it as such, does not seem to have been set, by his reasoning faculties, so far above them in life; as to deserve not to be levelled with them at death. We were like them before our birth, that is nothing. So we shall be on this hypothesis, like them too after our death, that is nothing. What hardship is done us? Unless it be a hardship, that we are not immortal because we wish to be so, and flatter ourselves with that expectation.

"If this hypothesis were true, which I am far from assuming, I should have no reason to complain, though having tasted existence, I might abhor non-entity. Since, then, the first cannot be demonstrated by reason, nor the second be reconciled to my inward sentiment, let me take refuge in resignation at the last, as in every other act of my life: let others be solicitous about their future state, and frighten or flatter themselves as prejudice, imaginative bad health – nay, a lowering day, or a clear sunshine shall inspire them to do: let the tranquillity of my mind rest on this immovable rock, that my future, as well as my present state, are ordered by an Almighty Creator, and that they are equally foolish, and presumptuous, who make imaginary excursions into futurity, and who complain of the present."

Lord Bolingbroke died in the year 1751, after a long and painful illness, occasioned by the ignorance of a quack. While lying on his death-bed he composed a discourse, entitled "Considerations on the State of the Nation." He died in peace – in the knowledge of the truth of the principles he had advocated, and with that calm serenity of mind, which no one can more fully experience than the honest Freethinker. He was buried in the church at Battersea. He was a man of the highest rank of genius, far from being immaculate in his youth, brave, sincere, a true friend, possessed of rich learning, a clear and sparkling style, a great wit, and the most powerful Freethinker of his age.

A. C.

CONDORCET

In the history of the French Revolution, we read of a multitude of sections, each ruled by a man, and each man representing a philosophy. Not that each man was the contriver of a system, but the effervescence of one. As true as Robespierre was the advocate of Rousseau, as Marat was the Wilkes of Paris, as Danton was the Paine, and Mirabeau the expediency-politician of reflex England, so true is it that Condorcet was the type of the philosophic Girondists, the offspring of Voltaire.

The two great schools of metaphysics fought out the battle on the theatre of the Constituent Assembly, in a spirit as bitterly uncompromising as when under different phraseological terms, they met in the arguments of the School-men, or further in the womb of history, on the forum of Athens. It is a fact no less true than singular, that after each mental excitement amongst the *savons*, whether in ancient or in modern times, after the literary shock has passed away, the people are innoculated with the strife, and, destitute of the moderation of their leaders, fight for that doctrine which they conceive oppresses their rights. The French Revolution was one of those struggles. It gave rise to epoch-men. Not men who originated a doctrine, but those who attempted to carry it out. Condorcet was one of those men. He was the successor of Voltaire in the Encyclopædic warfare. The philosopher amongst the orators. Destitute of the amazing versatility of the sage of Ferney, he imbibed the prophet's antipathy to superstition, and after a brilliant career, fell in the wild onslaught of passion. The Revolution was the arena on which was fought the battle involving the question whether Europe was to be ruled for a century by Christianity or Infidelity. The irresolution of Robespierre lost to us the victory of the first passage of arms, equally as decisive as Lafayette in 1830, and Lamartine in 1848, being Liberals, lost in each case the social Republic by their vacillating policy. The true Freethinkers of that age were the Girondists. With their heroic death, the last barrier to despotism disappeared; the Consulate became the only logical path for gilded chains and empire. With the ostracism of the Republicans by Napoleon the Little, a Parallel is completed between the two eras of French history.

The family name of Condorcet was Caritat. His father was a scion of an aristocratic family, and an officer in the army. The son who gave honor to the family, was born in the year 1743, at Ribemont, in Picardy. His father dying early, left his son to be educated with his wife, under the guardianship of his brother, the Bishop of Lisieux, a celebrated Jesuit. The mother of Condorcet was extremely superstitious, and in one of her fanatic ecstasies, offered up her son at the shrine of the Virgin Mary. How this act was performed we cannot relate; but it is a notorious fact that until his twelfth year, the embryo philosopher was clothed in female attire, and had young ladies for companions, which, M. Arago says, "accounts for many peculiarities in the *physique* and the *morale* of his manhood." The abstinence from all rude, boyish sports, checked the proper muscular development of his limbs; the head and trunk were on a large scale, but the legs were so meagre that they seemed unfit to carry what was above them; and, in fact, he never could partake in any strong exercises, or undergo the bodily fatigues to which healthy men willingly expose themselves. On the other hand, he had imbibed the tenderness of a delicate damsel, retaining to the last a deep horror for affliction pain on the inferior animals.

In 1775, he entered the Jesuit Academy at Rheiras. Three years afterwards, he was transferred to the College of Navarre, in Paris, and soon made himself the most distinguished scholar there. His friends wished him to enter the priesthood, not knowing that even in his seventeenth year he had embraced the Deism of the age.

At the age of nineteen he left college, and immediate-ly published a series of mathematical works, which established his fame. Shortly after this, the Academy of Sciences chose Condorcet for their assistant secretary. In the year 1770 he accompanied D'Alembert in a tour through Italy, making a call for some weeks at Ferney, where he was delighted with the company of Voltaire, and was duly

recognised as one of the Encylopædists; and, on his return to Paris, became the literary agent of his great leader.

A Quarterly Reviewer, writing on Voltaire and Condercet, says of the former, "When he himself, in these latter days, was resolved to issue anything that he knew and felt to be pregnant with combustion, he never dreamt of Paris – he had agents enough in other quarters: and the anonymous or pseudonymous mischief was printed at London, Amsterdam, or Hamburgh, from a fifth or sixth copy in the handwriting of some Dutch or English clerk – thence, by cautious steps, smuggled into France – and then, disavowed and denounced by himself, and, for him, by his numberless agents, with an intrepid assurance which, down to the last, confounded and baffled all official inquisitors, until, in each separate case, the scent had got cold. Therefore, he sympathized not at all with any of these, his subalterns, when they, in their own proper matters, allowed themselves a less guarded style of movement."

On one occasion, Condorcet's imprudence extorts a whole series of passionate remonstrants from him and his probable complaints – but the burden is always the same – "Tolerate the whispers of age! How often shall I have to tell you all that no one but a fool will publish such things unless he has 200,000 bayonets at his back? Each Encyclopædist was apt to forget that, though he corresponded familiarly with Frederick, he was not a King of Prussia; and, by-and-by, not one of them more frequently made this mistake than Condorcet – for that gentleman's saintlike tranquillity of demeanor, though it might indicate a naturally languid pulse, covered copious elements of vital passion. The slow wheel could not resist the long attrition of controversy; and when it once blazed, the flame was all the fiercer for its unseen nursing. 'You mistake Condorcet,' said D'Alembert, 'he is a volcano covered with snow.'"

When Turgot became Minister of Marine, he gave Condorcet a post as Inspector of Canals; from this he was subsequently promoted to the Inspector of the Mint. When Turgot was replaced by Necker, Condorcet resigned his office.

In 1782 he was elected one of the forty of the Academy of Sciences, beating the Astronomer, Bailly, by *one* vote. In the next year, D'Alembert, his faithful friend, died, leaving him the whole of his wealth; his uncle, the bishop, likewise died in the same year, from whom he would receive a fresh accession of property. Shortly after this, time, Condorcet married Madame de Grouchy – also celebrated as a lady of great beauty, good fortune, and an educated Atheist. The marriage was a happy one. The only offspring was a girl, who married General Arthur O'Connor, uncle to the late Feargus O'Connor, an Irish refugee who was connected with Emmett's rebellion.

During the excitement of the American War of Independence, Condorcet took an active part in urging the French Government to bestow assistance in arms and money, upon the United States; after the war was concluded, he corresponded with Thomas Paine, who gradually converted him to the extreme Republican views the "illustrious needleman" himself possessed, which, in this case, rapidly led to the *denouement* of 1791, when he was elected a member of the Legislative Assembly by the department of Paris. In the next year he was raised to the rank of President by a majority of near one hundred votes. While in the Assembly, he brought forward and supported the economical doctrines of Adam Smith, proposed the abolition of indirect taxation, and levying a national revenue upon derivable wealth in amount according to the individual, passing over all who gained a livelihood by manual labor. He made a motion for the public burning of all documents relating to nobility – himself being a Marquis. He took a conspicuous place in the trial of the king; he voted him guilty, but refused to vote for his death, as the punishment of death was against his principles. The speech he made on this occasion is fully equal to that of Paine's on the same occasion.

When the divergence took place between the Jacobins and Girondists, Condorcet strove to unite them; but every day brought fresh troubles, and the position of the Seneca of the Revolution was too prominent to escape the opposition of the more violent taction.

Robespierre triumphed; and in his success could be traced the doom of his enemies. An intercepted letter was the means of Condorcet's impeachment. Deprived of the support of Isnard, Brissot, and Vergniaud, the Jacobins proscribed without difficulty the hero whose writings had mainly assisted in producing the Revolution. His friends provided means for his escape. They applied to a lodging-house keeper, a Madame Vernet, if she would conceal him for a time; she asked was he a virtuous man – yes, replied his friend, he is the – stay, you say he is a good man, I do not wish to pry into his secrets or his name. Once safe in this asylum, he was unvisited by either wife or friends; morover, such was the hurry of his flight, that he was without money, and nearly without books.

While in this forced confinement, he wrote the "*Esquisse d'un Tableau Historique des Progrès de l'Esprit Humain*," and several other fragmentary essays. In this work he lays down a scheme of society similar to the "New Moral World," of Robert Owen. Opposing the idea of a God, he shows the dominion of science in education, political economy, chemistry, and applies mathematical principles to a series of moral problems. Along with the progress of man he combined the progress of arts – estimating the sanatory arrangements of our time, he prophecied on the gradual extension of longevity, amongst the human race; and with it, enjoyments increased by better discipline in gustatorial duties. He has similar views on the softer sex to M. Proudhomme (his immediate disciple,) and, in the close of the work, Condorcet announced the possibility of an universal language, which is daily becoming more assimilated to modern ideas.

The guillotine had not been idle during the few weeks of Condorcet's retreat. Fancying that (if discovered) he might be the means of injuring his benefactress, he resolved to escape from the house of Madame Vernet. Previous to doing this, he made his will. M. Arago, describing this epoch in his closing days, says: —

"When he at last paused, and the feverish excitement of authorship was at an end, our colleague rested all his thoughts anew on the danger incurred by his hostess. He resolved then (I employ his own words) to quit the retreat which the boundless devotion of his tutelar angel had transformed into a paradise. He so little deceived himself as to the probable consequences of the step he meditated – the chances of safety after his evasion appeared so feeble – that before he put his plan into execution he made his last dispositions. In the pages then written, I behold everywhere the lively reflection of an elevated mind, a feeling heart, and a beautiful soul. I will venture to say, that there exists in no language anything better thought, more tender, more touching, more sweetly expressed, than the '*Avis d'un Proscrit a sa Fill*.' Those lines, so limpid, so full of unaffected delicacy, were written on that very day when he was about to encounter voluntarily an immense danger. The presentiment of a violent end almost inevitably did not disturb him – his hand traced those terrible words, *Ma mort, ma mort prochaîne!* with a firmness which the Stoics of antiquity might have envied. Sensibility, on the contrary, obtained the mastery when the illustrious proscribed was drawn into the anticipation that Madame de Condorcet also might be involved in the bloody catastrophe that threatened him. *Should my daughter be destined to lose all*– this is the most explicit allusion that the husband can insert in his last writing."

"The Testament is short. It was written on the fly-leaf of a 'History of Spain.' In it Condorcet directs that his daughter, in case of his wife's death, shall be brought up by Madame Vernet, whom she is to call her second mother, and who is to see her so educated as to have means of independent support either from painting or engraving. 'Should it be necessary for my child to quit France, she may count on protection in England from my Lord Stanhope and my Lord Daer. In America, reliance may be placed on Jefferson and Bache, the grandson of Franklin. She is, therefore, to make the English language her first study.'"

Such was the last epistle ever written by Condorcet. Notwithstanding the precautions taken by his friends, he escaped into the streets – from thence having appealed in vain to friends for assistance, he visited some quarries. Here he remained from the 5th to the evening of the 7th of April, 1794. Hunger drove him to the village of Clamait, when he applied at an hostelry for refreshment. He

described himself as a carpenter out of employment, and ordered an omelet. This was an age of suspicion, and the landlord of the house soon discovered that the wanderer's hands were white and undisfigured with labor, while his conversation bore no resemblance to that of a common artificer. The good dame of the house inquired how many eggs he would have in his dish. Twelve, was the answer. Twelve eggs for a joiner's supper! This was heresy against the equality of man. They demanded his passport – he had not got one – the only appearance of anything of the sort was a scrap of paper, scrawled over with Latin epigrams. This was conclusive evidence to the village Dogberries that he was a traitor and an aristocrat. The authorities signed the warrant for his removal to Paris. Ironed to two officers they started on the march. The first evening they arrived at Bourg-la-Reine, where they deposited their prisoner in the gaol of that town. In the morning the gaoler found him a corpse. He had taken a poison of great force, which he habitually carried in a ring. Thus ended the life of the great Encyclopædist – a man great by his many virtues – who reflected honor on France by his science, his literary triumphs, and his moral heroism. He had not the towering energy of Marat, nor the gushing eloquence of Danton, neither had he the superstitious devotion to abstract ideas which characterized the whole course of Robespierre's life. The oratory of Danton, like that of Marat, only excited the people to dissatisfaction; they struck down effete institutions, but they were not the men to inaugurate a new society. It is seldom we find the pioneers of civilization the best mechanics. They strike down the forest – they turn the undergrowth – they throw a log over the stream, but they seldom rear factories, or invent tubular bridges.

Amongst the whole of the heroes of the French Revolution, we must admire the Girondists, as being the most daring, and, at the same time, the most constructive of all who met either in the Constituent Assembly or the Convention. The Jacobin faction dealt simply with politics through the abstract notions of Rousseau: but of what use are "human rights" if we have to begin *de novo* to put into operation? – rather let us unite the conservative educationalism of Socialism with the wild democracy of ignorance. Politics never can be successful unless married to Socialism.

It was not long after Condorcet's death, before the Committee of Public Instruction undertook the charge of publishing the whole of his works. For this they have been censured on many grounds. We consider that it was one of the few good things accomplished by that Committee. There is nothing in the works of this writer which have a distinctive peculiarity to us; few great writers who direct opinion at the time they write, appear to posterity in the same light as they did to a public inflamed by passion, and trembling under reiterated wrongs. When we look at the works of D'Holbach, we find a standard treatise, which is a land-mark to the present day; but at the time the "System of Nature" was written, it had not one tithe the popularity which it now enjoys; it did not produce an effect superior to a new sarcasm of Voltaire, or an epigram of Diderot. Condorcet was rather the co-laborer and *literateur* of the party, than the prophet of the new school. Voltaire was the Christ, and Condorcet the St. Paul of the new faith. In political economy, the doctrines of the English and Scotch schools were elaborated to their fullest extent. Retrenchment in pensions and salaries, diminution of armies, equal taxation, the resumption by the State of all the Church lands, the development of the agricultural and mechanical resources, the abolition of the monopolies, total free trade, local government, and national education; such-were the doctrines for which Turgot fought, and Condorcet popularized. If they had been taken in time, France would have escaped a revolution, and Europe would have been ruled by peace and freedom. It may be asked, who brought about the advocacy of those doctrines, for they were not known before the middle of the eighteenth century? They were introduced as a novelty, and defended as a paradox. France had been exhausted by wars, annoyed by *ennui*, brilliant above all by her genius, she was struck with lassitude for her licentious crimes. There was an occasion for a new school. Without it, France, like Carthage, would have bled to death on the hecatomb of her own lust. Her leading men cast their eyes to England; it was then the most progressive nation in existence. The leading men of that country were intimate with the rulers of the French; the books of each land were read with avidity by their neighbors; a difference was observable between the two:

but how that difference was to be reconciled was past the skill of the wisest to unravel. England had liberal institutions, and a people with part of the substance, and many of the forms of Liberalism, along with a degree of education which kept them in comparative ignorance, yet did not offer any obstacles to raising themselves in the social sphere. Before France could compete with England, she had to rid herself of the feudal system, and obtain a Magna Charta. She was above four centuries behind-hand here. She had to win her spurs through revolutions, like those of Cromwell's and that of 1688, and the still greater ones of Parliament. The Freethinkers of England prepared the Whig revolution of William, by advocating the only scheme which was at the time practicable, for of the two – the Protestant and the Catholic religion – the former is far more conducive to the liberties of a people than the latter, and at the time, and we may also say, nearer the present, the people were not prepared for any organic change. This being the case, it is not to be wondered at that the French Revolution was a failure as a constructive effort; it was a success as a grand outbreak of power; showing politicians where (in the future) to rely for success. The men who undertook to bring about this Revolution are not to be censured for its non-success. They wished to copy English institutions, and adapt them to those of the French; for this purpose, the Continental League was formed, each member of which pledged himself to uproot, as far as lay in his power, the Catholic Church in France. A secret name was given to it —*L'Infame*– and an organized attack was speedily commenced. The men at the head of the movement, besides Voltaire and Frederick, were D'Alembert, Diderot, Grim, St. Lambert, Condillac, Helvetius, Jordan, Lalande, Montesquieu, and a host of others of less note. Con-dorcet, being secretary of the Academy, corresponded with, and directed the movements of all, in the absence of his chief. Every new book was criticised – refutations were published to the leading theological works of the age; but by far the roost effective progress was made by the means of poems, essays, romances, epigrams, and scientific papers. The songs of France at this era were written by the philosophers; and this spirit was diffused among the people. In a country so volatile and excitable as the French, it is difficult to estimate too highly the power of a ballad warfare. The morality of Abbots and Nuns were sung in strains as rhapsodical, and couplets as voluptuous as the vagaries of the Songs of Solomon.

Much discretion was required, that no separate species of warfare should be overdone, lest a nausea of sentiment should revert upon the authors, and thus lead to a reaction more sanguinary than the force of the philosophers could control. In all those cases Condorcet was the prime mover and the agent concerned. He communicated with Voltaire on every new theory, and advised him when and how to strike, and when to *rest*. In all those matters Condorcet was obeyed. There was a smaller section of the more serious philosophers who sympathized with, yet did not labor simultaneously for the common cause – those men, the extreme Atheists – clever but cautious – men who risked nothing – Mirabeau and D'Holbach were the types of this class. It is well known that both Frederick, Voltaire, and Condorcet opposed those sections, as likely to be aiming at too much for the time.

When it was considered prudent to take a more decided step, the Encyclopædia was formed. Condorcet had a principal part in this work, which shook priestcraft on its throne; it spread consternation where-ever it appeared, and was one of the main causes of the great outbreak. No one can sufficiently praise a work of such magnitude; nor can any one predicate when its effects will cease.

In the "Life of Condorcet," by Arago, there is a curious extract copied from a collection of anecdotes, said to be compiled from his note-books, and dignified with the title of "Mémoires de Condorcet." It relates to a conversation between the Abbe Galiana and Diderot, in which it is said Condorcet acquiesced. The subject is the fair sex: —

Diderot. – How do you define woman?

Galiana. – An animal naturally feeble and sick.

Diderot. – Feeble? Has she not as much courage as man?

Galiana. – Do you know what courage is? It is the effect of terror. You let your leg be cut off, because you are afraid of dying. Wise people are never courageous – they are prudent – that is to say, poltroons.

Diderot. – Why call you woman naturally sick!

Galiana. – Like all animals, she is sick until she attains her perfect growth. Then she has a peculiar symptom which takes up the fifth part of her time. Then come breeding and nursing, two long and troublesome complaints. In short, they have only intervals of health, until they turn a certain corner, and then *elles ne sont plus de malades peut-être – elles ne sont que des reilles.*

Diderot. – Observe her at a ball, no vigor, then, M. l'Abbe?

Galiana. – Stop the fiddles! put out the lights! she will scarcely crawl to her coach.

Diderot. – See her in love.

Galiana. – It is painful to see anybody in a fever.

Diderot. – M. l'Abbe, have you no faith in education?

Galiana. – Not so much as in instinct. A woman is habitually ill. She is affectionate, engaging, irritable, capricious, easily offended, easily appeased, a trifle amuses her. The imagination is always in play. Fear, hope, joy, despair, and disgust, follow each other more rapidly, are manifested more strongly, effaced more quickly, than with us. They like a plentiful repose, at intervals company; anything for excitement. Ask the doctor if it is not the same with his patients. But ask yourself, do we not all treat them as we do sick people, lavish attention, soothe, flatter, caress, and get tired of them?

Condorcet, in a letter, remarking on the above conversation, says: – "I do not insist upon it as probable that woman will ever be Euler or Voltaire; but I am satisfied that she may one day be Pascal or Rousseau." This very qualification, we consider, is sufficient to absolve Condorcet from, the charge of being a "woman hater." His opponents, when driven from every other source, have fallen back on this, and alleged that he viewed the sexes as unequal, and that the stronger had a right to lord it over the weaker. But which is the weaker? Euler and Voltaire were masculine men. A woman to be masculine, in the true sense of the word, is an anomaly, to be witnessed with pain. She is not in a normal condition. She is a monster. Women should live in society fully educated and developed in their physical frame, and then they would be more feminine in proportion as they approach the character of Mary Wollstonecraft. They have no right to domineer as tyrants, and then fall into the most abject of slaves. In each of the characters of Pascal and Rousseau, was an excess of sensibility, which overbalanced their other qualities, and rendered their otherwise great talents wayward, and, to a certain extent, fruitless. The peculiarity of man is physical power, and intellectual force; that of woman is an acute sensibility. Condorcet, then, was justified in expressing the opinions he avowed upon the subject.

In a paper, in the year 1766, read before the "Academy," on "Ought Popular Errors to be Eradicated!" Condorcet says, "If the people are often tempted to commit crimes in order that they may obtain the necessaries of life, it is the fault of the laws; and, as bad laws are the product of errors, it would be more simple to abolish those errors than to add others for the correction of their natural effects. Error, no doubt, may do some good; it may prevent some crimes, but it will occasion mischiefs greater than these. By putting nonsense into the heads of the people, you make them stupid; and from stupidity to ferocity there is but a step. Consider – if the motives you suggest for being just make but a slight impression on the mind, that will not direct the conduct – if the impressions be lively, they will produce enthusiasm, and enthusiasm for error. Now, the ignorant enthusiast is no longer a man; he is the most terrible of wild beasts. In fact, the number of criminals among the men with prejudices (Christians) is in greater proportion to the total number of our population, than the number of criminals in the class above prejudices (Freethinkers) is to the total of that class. I am not ignorant that, in the actual state of Europe, the people are not, perhaps, at all prepared for a true doctrine of morals; but this degraded obtuseness is the work of social institutions and of superstitions. Men are not born blockheads; they become such. By speaking reason to the people, even in the little time they

give to the cultivation of their intellect, we might easily teach them the little that it is necessary for them to know. Even the idea of the respect that they should have for the property of the rich, is only difficult to be insinuated among them – first, because they look on riches as a sort of usurpation, of theft perpetrated upon them, and unhappily this opinion is in great part true – secondly, because their excessive poverty makes them always consider themselves in the case of absolute necessity – a case in which even very severe moralists have been of their mind – thirdly, because they are as much despised and maltreated for being poor, as they would be after they had lowered themselves by larcenies. It is merely, therefore, because institutions are bad, that the people are so commonly a little thievish upon principle."

We should have much liked to have given some extended quotations from the works of Condorcet; but, owing to their general character, we cannot extract any philosophic formula which would be generally interesting. His "Lettres d'un Théologien" are well deserving of a reprint; they created an astounding sensation when they appeared, being taken for the work of Voltaire – the light, easy, graceful style, with deeply concealed irony, the crushing retort and the fiery sarcasm. They made even priests laugh by their Attic wit and incongruous similes. But it was in the "Academy" where Condorcet's influence was supreme. He immortalized the heroes as they fell, and pushed the cause on by his professional duties. He was always awake to the call of duty, and nobly did he work his battery. He is now in the last grand sleep of man – the flowers of poesy are woven in amarynth wreaths over his tomb.

A.C.

SPINOZA

Baruch Spinoza, or Espinoza, better known under the name of Benedict Spinoza (as rendered by himself in the Latin language,) was born at Amsterdam, in Holland, on the 24th of November, 1632. There is some uncertainty as to this date, as there are several dates fixed by different authors, both for his birth and death, but we have adopted the biography given by Dr. C. H. Bruder, in the preface to his edition of Spinoza's works. His parents were Jews of the middle, or, perhaps, somewhat humbler class. His father was originally a Spanish merchant, who, to escape persecution, had emigrated to Holland. Although the life of our great philosopher is one full of interesting incidents, and deserves to be treated fully, we have but room to give a very brief sketch, referring our readers, who may wish to learn more of Spinoza's life, to Lewes's "Biographical History of Philosophy," *Westminster Review*, No. 77, and "Encyclopædia Brittannica." p. 144. His doctrines we will let speak for themselves in his own words, trusting thereby to give the reader an opportunity of knowing who and what Spinoza really was. One man shrinks with horror from him as an Atheist. Voltaire says, that he was an Atheist, and taught Atheism. Another calls him "a God-intoxicated man." We present him a mighty thinker, a master mind, a noble, fearless utterer of free and noble thoughts, a hard-working, honest, independent man; as one who, two centuries ago, gave forth to the world a series of thinkings which have crushed, with resistless force, the theological shell in the centre of which the priests hide the kernel "truth."

Spinoza appears in his boyhood to have been an apt scholar, and to have rapidly mastered the tasks set him by his teachers. Full of rabbinical lore he won the admiration of the Rabbi Moses Mortira, but the pupil rose higher than his master, and attempted to solve problems which the learned rabbis were content to reverence as mysteries not capable of solution. First they remonstrated, then threatened; still Spinoza persevered in his studies, and in making known the result to those around him. He was threatened with excommunication, and withdrew himself from the synagogue. One more effort was made by the rabbis, who offered Spinoza a pension of about £100 a-year if he would attend the synagogue more frequently, and consent to be silent with regard to his philosophical thinkings. This offer he indignantly refused. Reason failing, threats proving futile, and gold being treated with scorn, one was found sufficiently fanatic to try a further experiment, which resulted in an attempt on Spinoza's life; the knife, however, luckily missed its aim, and our hero escaped. At last, in the year 1660, Spinoza, being then twenty-eight years of age, was solemnly excommunicated from the synagogue. His friends and relations shut their doors against him. An outcast from the home of his youth, he gained a humble livelihood by polishing glasses for microscopes, telescopes, etc., at which he was very expert. While thus acquiring, by his own handiwork, the means of subsistence, he was studying hard, devoting every possible hour to philosophical research. Spinoza became master of the Dutch, Hebrew, German, Spanish, Portuguese, and Latin languages, the latter of which he acquired in the house of one Francis Van den Ende, from whom it is more than probable he received as much instruction in Atheism as in Latin. Spinoza only appears to have once fallen in love, and this was with Van den Ende's daughter, who was herself a good linguist, and who gave Spinoza instruction in Latin. She, however, although willing to be his instructress and companion in a philogical path, declined to accept his love, and thus Spinoza was left to philosophy alone. After his excommunication he retired to Rhynsburg, near the City of Leyden, in Holland, and there studied the works of Descartes. Three years afterwards he published an abridgment of the "Meditations" of the great father of philosophy, which created a profound sensation. In an appendix to this abridgment were contained the germs of those thinkings in which the pupil outdid the master, and the student progressed beyond the philosopher. In the month of June, 1664, Spinoza removed to Woorburg, a small village near the Hague, where he was visited by persons from different parts, attracted by his fame as a philosopher; and at last, after many solicitations he came to the Hague, and resided there altogether. In 1670 he published his "Tractatus Theologico-Politicus." This raised him a host of opponents; many writers rushed eager for the fray,

to tilt with the poor Dutch Jew. His book was officially condemned and forbidden, and a host of refutations (?) were circulated against it. In spite of the condemnation it has outlived the refutations.

Spinoza died on the 21st or 22nd of February, 1677, in his forty-fifth year, and was buried on the 25th of February at the Hague. He was frugal in his habits, subsisting independently on the earnings of his own hands. Honorable in all things, he refused to accept the chair of Professor of Philosophy, offered to him by the Elector, and this because he did not wish to be circumscribed in his thinking, or in the freedom of utterance of his thoughts. He also refused a pension offered to him by Louis XIV, saying that he had no intention of dedicating anything to that monarch. The following is a list of Spinoza's works: – "Principiorum Philosophise Renati Descartes;" "Tractatus Theologico-Politicus;" "Ethica;" "Tractatus Politi-cus;" "De Emandatione Intellectus;" "Epistolæ;" "Grammaticus Hebracæ," etc. There are also several spurious works ascribed to Spinoza. The "Tractatus Politicus" has been translated into English by William Maccall, who seems fully to appreciate the greatness of the philosopher, although he will not admit the usefulness of Spinoza's logic. Maccall does not see the utility of that very logic which compelled him to admit Spinoza's truth. We are not aware of any other translation of Spinoza's works except that of a small portion of his "Ethica," by Lewes. This work, which was originally published in 1677, commenced with eight definitions, which, together with the following axioms and propositions, were reprinted from the *Westminster Review* in the *Library of Reason*: —

DEFINITIONS.

I. By cause of itself I understand that, the essence of which involves existence: or that, the nature of which can only be considered as existent.

II. A thing finite is that which can be limited (terminari potest) by another thing of the same nature —*ergo*, body is said to be finite because it can always be conceived as larger. So thought is limited by other thoughts. But body does not limit thought, nor thought limit body.

III. By substance I understand that which is in itself, and is conceived *per se*– that is, the conception of which does not require the conception of anything else as antecedent to it.

IV. By attribute I understand that which the mind perceives as constituting the very essence of substance.

V. By modes I understand the accidents (affectiones) of substance; or that which is in something else, through which also it is conceived.

VI. By God I understand the being absolutely infinite; that is, the substance consisting of infinite attributes, each of which expresses an infinite and eternal essence.

Explication, I say absolutely infinite, but not in *suo genere*; for to whatever is infinite, but not in *suo genere*, we can deny infinite attributes; but that which is absolutely infinite, to its essence pertains everything which implies essence, and involves no negation.

VII. That thing is said to be free which exists by the sole necessity of its nature, and by itself alone is determined to action. But that is necessary, or rather constrained, which owes its existence to another, and acts according to certain and determinate causes.

VIII. By eternity I understand existence itself, in as far as it is conceived necessarily to follow from the sole definition of an eternal thing.

AXIOMS.

I. Everything which is, is in itself, or in some other thing.

II. That which cannot be conceived through another, *per aliud* must be conceived, *per se*.

III. From a given determinate cause the effect necessarily follows, and *vice versa*. If no determinate cause be given, no effect can follow.

IV. The knowledge of an effect depends on the knowledge of the cause, and includes it.

V. Things that have nothing in common with each other cannot be understood by means of each other – that is, the conception of one, does not involve the conception of the other.

VI. A true idea must agree with its original in nature.

VII. Whatever can be clearly conceived as non-existent does not, in its essence, involve existence.

PROPOSITIONS.

I. Substance is prior in nature to its accidents. Demonstration. Per definitions three and five.

II. Two substances, having different attributes, have nothing in common with each other. Dem. This follows from def. three; for each substance must be conceived in itself and through itself; in other words, the conception of one does not involve the conception of the other.

III. Of things which have nothing in common, one cannot be the cause of the other. Dem. If they have nothing in common, then (per axiom five) they cannot be conceived by means of each other; *ergo* (per axiom four,) one cannot be the cause of the other. – Q. E. D.

IV. Two or more distinct things are distinguished among themselves, either through the diversity of their attributes, or through that of their modes. Dem. Everything which is, in itself, or in some other thing (per ax. one) – that is (per def. three and five,) there is nothing out of ourselves (*extra intellectum*, outside the intellect) but substance and its modes. There is nothing out of ourselves whereby things can be distinguished amongst one another, except substances, or (which is the same thing, per def. lour) their attributes and modes.

V. It is impossible that there should be two or more substances of the same nature, or of the same attributes. Dem. If there are many different substances they must be distinguished by the diversity of their attributes or of their modes (per prop. 4.) If only by the diversity of their attributes, it is thereby conceded that there is, nevertheless, only one substance of the same attribute; but if their diversity of modes, then, substance being prior in order of time to its modes, it must be considered independent of them – that is (per def. three and six,) cannot be conceived as distinguished from another – that is (per prop, four,) there cannot be many substances, but only one substance. – Q. E. D.

VI. One substance cannot be created by another substance. Dem. There cannot be two substances with the same attributes (per prop, five) – that is (per prop. two,) that hare anything in common with each other; and, therefore (per prop, three,) one cannot be the cause of the other.

Corollary 1. Hence it follows that substance cannot be created by anything else. For there is nothing in nature except substance and its modes (per axiom one, and def. three and five.) Now, this substance, not being produced by another, is self-caused.

Corollary 2. This proposition is more easily to be demonstrated by the absurdity of its contradiction; for if substance can be produced by anything else, the conception of it would depend on the conception of the cause (per axiom four,) and hence (per def. three,) it would not be substance.

VII. It pertains to the nature of substance to exist. Dem. Substance cannot be produced by anything else (per coroli. prop, six,) and is therefore the cause of itself – that is (per def. one,) its essence necessarily involves existence; or it pertains to the nature of substance to exist. – Q. E. D.

VIII. All substance is necessarily infinite. Dem. There exists but one substance of the same attribute; and it must either exist as infinite or finite. But not finite, for (per def. two) as finite it must be limited by another substance of the same nature, and in that case there would be two substances of the same attributes, which (per prop, five) is absurd. Substance therefore is infinite. – Q. E. D.

"Scholium I. – I do not doubt but that to all who judge confusedly of things, and are not wont to inquire into first causes, it will be difficult to admit the demonstration of prop. 7, because they do not sufficiently distinguish between the modifications of substances, and substances themselves, and are ignorant of the manner in which things are produced. Hence it follows, that the commencement which they see natural things have, they attribute to substances; for he who knows not the true cause of things, confounds all things, and feigns that trees talk like men; that men are formed from stones as well as from seeds, and that all forms can be changed into all other forms. So, also, those who confound the divine nature with the human, naturally attribute human affections to God, especially as they are ignorant of how these affections are produced in the mind. If men attended to the nature of substance, they would not, in the least, doubt proposition seven; nay, this proposition would be

an axiom to all, and would be numbered among common notions. For by substance they would understand that which exists in itself, and is concerned through itself —*i. e.*, the knowledge of which does not require the knowledge of anything as antecedent to it. But by modification they would understand that which is in another thing, the conception of which is formed by the conception of the thing in which it is, or to which it belongs. We can have, therefore, correct ideas of non-existent modifications, because, although out of the understanding they have no reality, yet their essence is so comprehended in that of another, that they can be conceived through this other. The truth of substance (out of the understanding) lies nowhere but in itself, because it is conceived *per se*. If therefore any one says he has a clear idea of substance, and yet doubt whether such substance exist, this would be as much as to say that he has a true idea, and nevertheless doubts whether it be not false (as a little attention sufficiently manifests;) or if any man affirms substance to be created, he at the same time affirms that a true idea has become false, than which nothing can be more absurd. Hence it is necessarily confessed that the existence of substance, as well as its essence, is an eternal truth. And hence we must conclude that there is only one substance possessing the same attribute, which requires here a fuller development. I note therefore – 1. That the correct definition of a thing includes and expresses nothing but the nature of the thing defined. From which follows – 2. That no definition includes or expresses a distinct number of individuals, because it expresses nothing but the nature of the thing defined; *ergo*, the definition of a triangle expresses no more than the nature of a triangle, and not any fixed number of triangles. 3. There must necessarily be a distinct cause for the existence of every existing thing. 4. This cause, by reason of which anything exists, must either be contained in the nature and definition of the existing thing (viz., that it pertains to its nature to exist,) or else must be beyond it – must be something different from it.

"As therefore it pertains to the nature of substance to exist, so must its definition include a necessary existence, and consequently from its sole definition we must conclude its existence. But as from its definition, as already shown in notes two and three, it is not possible to conclude the existence of many substances —*ergo*, it necessarily follows that only one substance of the same nature can exist."

It will be necessary for the reader to remember that Spinoza commenced his philosophical studies at the same point with Descartes. Both recognized existence as the primal fact, self-evident and indisputable.

But while Descartes had, in some manner, fashioned a quality – God and God-created substance – Spinoza only found one, substance, the definition of which included existence. By his fourth proposition ("of things which have nothing in common, one cannot be the cause of the other, ") he destroyed the creation theory, because by that theory God is assumed to be a spirit having nothing in common with matter, yet acting on matter; and Lewes speaks of the fourth proposition in the following terms: – "This fallacy has been one of the most influential corrupters of philosophical speculation. For many years it was undisputed, and most metaphysicians still adhere to it. The assertion is that only like can act upon like; but although it is true that *like* produces (causes) *like*, it is also true that like produces *unlike*; thus fire produces pain when applied to our bodies; *explosion* when applied to gunpowder; *charcoal* when applied to wood; all these effects are unlike the cause." We cannot help thinking that in this instance, the usually thoughtful Lewes has either confused substance with its modes, or, for the sake of producing a temporary effect, has descended to mere sophism. Spinoza's proposition is, that *substances* having nothing in common, cannot act on one another. Lewes deals with several modes of the same substance as though they were different substances. Way, more, to make his argument the more plausible, he entirely ignores in it that *noumenon* of which he speaks as underlying all phenomena, and uses each phenomenon as a separate existence. In each of the instances mentioned, however varied may be the modification, the essence is the same. They are merely examples of one portion of the whole acting upon another portion, and there is that in each mode which is common to the whole, and by means of which the action takes place.

Much has been said of Spinoza's "God" and "Divine Substance," and we must refer the reader to Definition Six, in which God is defined as being "infinite substance." Now, although we should be content to strike the word "God" out of our own tablet of philosophical nomenclature, as being a much misused, misrepresented, and entirely useless word, yet we must be very careful, when we find another man using the word, to get his precise definition, and not to use any-other ourselves while in his company.

Spinoza, when asked "What name do you attach to infinite substance?" says, "God." – If he had said any other word we could not have quarrelled with him so long as he defined the word, and adhered strictly to the terms of his definition, although we might regret that he had not either coined a word for himself, or used one less maltreated by the mass. Spinoza said, "I can only take cognizance of one substance (of which I am part) having infinite attributes of extension and thought. I take cognizance of substance by its modes, and in my consciousness of existence. Every thing is a mode of the attribute of extension, every thought, wish, or feeling, a mode of the attribute of thought. I call this, substance, with infinite attributes, God." Spinoza, like all other thinkers, found himself overpowered by the illimitable vastness of the infinite when attempting to grasp it by his mental powers, but unlike other men he did not endeavor to relieve himself by separating himself from that infinite; but, knowing he was a part of the whole, not divisible from the remainder, he was content to aim at perfecting his knowledge of existence rather than at dogmatising upon an indefinable word, which, if it represented anything, professed to represent an incomprehensible existence far beyond his reach.

We ought not to wonder that in many parts of Spinoza's writings we find the word "God" treated in a less coherent manner than would be possible under the definition given in his "Ethics," and for these reasons: – Spinoza, from his cradle upwards, had been surrounded with books and traditions sanctified by the past, and impressed on his willing mind by his family, his tutors, and the heads of his church; a mind like his gathered all that was given, even more quickly than it was offered, still craving for more – "more light" – "more light" – and at last light came bursting on the young thinker like a lightning flash at dark midnight, revealing his mind in chains, which had been cast round him in his nursery, his school, his college, his synagogue. By a mighty effort he burst these chains, and walked forth a free man, despite the entreaties of his family, the reasonings of the rabbis, the knife of the fanatic, the curse of his church, and the edict of the state. But should it be a matter of surprise to us that some of the links of those broken chains should still hang on the young philosopher, and, seeming to be a part of himself, almost imperceptibly incline to old ways of thinking, and to old modes of utterance of those thoughts! Wonder not that a few links bang about him, but rather that he ever succeeded in breaking those chains at all. Spinoza, after his secession from his synagogue, became logically an Atheist; education and early impressions enlarged this into a less clearly-defined Pantheism; but the logic comes to us naked, disrobed of all by which it might have been surrounded in Spinoza's mind. If that logic be correct, then all the theologies of the world are false. We have presented it to the reader to judge of for himself. Many men have written against it; of these some have misunderstood, some have misrepresented, some have failed, and few have left us a proof that they had endeavored to deal with Spinoza on his own ground. Maccall says, "In the glorious throng of heroic names, there are few nobler than Spinoza's. Apart altogether from the estimate we may form of his philosophy, there is something unspeakably interesting in the life and the character of the man. In his metaphysical system there are two things exceedingly distinct. There is, first, the immense and prodigious, but terrible mathematical skeleton, which his subtle intellect binds up and throws as calmly into space as we drop a pebble into the water, and whose bones, striking against the wreck of all that is sacred in belief, or bold in speculation, rattle a wild response to our wildest phantasies, and drive us almost to think in despair that thinking is madness; and there is, secondly, the divinest vision of the infinite, and the divinest incense which the intuition of the infinite ever yet poured forth at the altar of creation."

The "Treatise on Politics" is not Spinoza's greatest work; it is, in all respects, inferior to the "Ethics," and to the "Theologico-Political Treatise." But there are in politics certain eternal principles, and it is for setting forth and elucidating these that the Treatise of Spinoza is so valuable.

In the second chapter of that Treatise, after defining what he means by nature, etc., he, on the sixth section, proceeds as follows: – "But many believe that the ignorant disturb more than follow the order of nature, and conceive of men in nature as a state within the state. For they assert that the human mind has not been produced by any natural causes, but created immediately by God, and thereby rendered so independent of other things as to have absolute power of determining itself, and of using reason aright. But experience teaches us more than enough, that it is no more in our power to have a sound mind than a sound body. Since, moreover, everything, as far as it is able, strives to conserve its being, we cannot doubt that if it were equally in our power to live according to the prescripts of reason, as to be led by blind desire, all would seek the guidance of reason and live wisely, which is not the case. For every one is the slave of the particular pleasure to which he is most attached. Nor do theologians remove the difficulty when they assert that this inability is a vice, or a sin of human nature, which derives its origin from the fall of the first parent. For if it was in the power of the first man to stand rather than to fall, and if he was sound in faculty, and had perfect control over his own mind, how did it happen that he, the wise and prudent, fell? But they say he was deceived and tempted by the devil. But who was it that led astray and tempted the devil himself? Who, I ask, rendered this the most excellent of intelligent creatures so mad, that he wished to be greater than God? Could he render himself thus mad – he who had a sane mind, and strove as much as in him lay to conserve his being? How, moreover, could it happen that the first man in possession of his entire mental faculties, and master of his will, should be both open to temptation, and suffer himself to be robbed of his mind? For if he had the power of using his reason aright, he could not be deceived; for as far as in him lay, he necessarily sought to conserve his own being, and the sanity of his mind. But it is supposed he had this in his power, therefore he necessarily conserved his sane mind, neither could he be deceived. Which is evidently false from his history; and, consequently, it must be granted that it was not in the power of the first person to use reason aright, but that he, like us, was subject to passions."

Spinoza is scarcely likely to become a great favorite with the "Woman's Rights Convention." In his ninth chapter of the same Treatise, he says, "If by nature women were equal to men, and excelled as much as they in strength of mind and in talent, truly amongst nations, so many and so different, some would be found where both sexes ruled equally, and others where the men were ruled by the women, and so educated as to be inferior to them in talent; but as this has never happened, we are justified in assuming that women, by nature, have not an equal right with men, but that they are necessarily obedient to men, and thus it can never happen that both sexes can equally rule, and still less that men be ruled by women."

Lewes, in his seventh chapter on Modern Philosophy, thus sums up Spinoza's teachings and their result. He says: —

"The doctrine of Spinoza was of great importance, if for nothing more than having brought about the first crisis in modern philosophy. His doctrine was so clearly stated, and so rigorously deduced from admitted premises, that he brought philosophy into this dilemma: —

"'Either my premises are correct; and we must admit that every clear and distinct idea is absolutely true; true not only subjectively, but objectively.

"'If so, my objection is true;

"'Or my premises are false; the voice of consciousness is not the voice of truth;

"'And if so, then is my system false, but all philosophy is impossible; since the only ground of certitude – our consciousness – is pronounced unstable, our only means of knowing the truth is pronounced fallacious.'"

"Spinozism or scepticism, choose between them, for you have no other choice.

"Mankind refused, however, to make a choice. If the principles which Descartes had established could have no other result than Spinozism, it was worth while inquiring whether those principles might not themselves be modified.

"The ground of discussion was shifted, psychology took the place of ontology. It was Descartes's theory of knowledge which led to Spinozism; that theory must therefore he examined; that theory becomes the great subject of discussion. Before deciding upon the merits of any system which embraced the great questions of creation, the Deity, immortality, etc., men saw that it was necessary to decide upon the competency of the human mind to solve such problems. All knowledge must be obtained either through experience or independent of experience. Knowledge dependent on experience must necessarily be merely knowledge of *phenomena*. All are agreed that experience can only be experience of ourselves as modified by objects. All are agreed that to know things *per se* – *noumena*– we must know them through some other channel then experience. Have we or have we not that other channel? This is the problem."

"Thus, before we can dogmatize upon on to logical subjects, we must settle this question – Can we transcend the sphere of our consciousness, and know things *per se*?"

"I."

ANTHONY COLLINS

Freethought, as developed in the Deistic straggles of the seventeenth century, had to battle for existence against the Puritanic reaction which took its second rise from the worn-out licentious age of the last of the Stuarts, and that of the no less dangerous (though concealed) libertinism of the Dutch king. A religious rancor also arose which, but for the influence of a new power, would have re-enacted the tragedy of religious persecution. But this rancor became somewhat modified, from the fact that the various parties now were unlike the old schismatics, who were each balanced at the opposite ends of the same pole – extreme Papacy on the one hand, and Fifth-monarchists on the other – when each oscillation from the Protestant centre deranged the balance of enthusiasm, and drove it to the farthest verge of fanaticism, until all religious parties were hurled into one chaos of disunion. Such were the frequent changes of the seventeenth century – but at its close the power of Deism had evolved a platform on which was to be fought the hostilities of creeds. Here, then, could not exist that commingling of sects, which were deducible in all their varied extravagance from the Bible. Theology had no longer to fight with itself, but with philosophy. Metaphysics became the Jehu of opinion, and sought to drive its chariot through the fables of the saints. The old doctrines had to be re-stated to meet new foes. For the Papists, Nonconformists, and Brownists, were excluded to make way for the British Illuminati, who spread as much consternation through England as did the French Encyclopædists across Europe. The new field of action was only planned, for when Catholicism first opposed Protestantism, its leaders little thought what a Pandoric box it was opening – nor did the Divines of the latter sect ever doubt the finality of their own doctrines. They wished to replace one infallibility by another. And the same charge can be substantiated against Deism. When in this Augustan age the Free-thinking leaders, fresh from the trammels of Christism, first took the name of Moral Philosophers, they little knew they were paving the way for an Atheism they so much dreaded – a democracy more unbridled than their most constitutional wishes – a political economy to be tried for half a century, and then to be discarded – a revolutionary fervor which should plough up Europe, and then give place to a Communism, which the first founders of this national agitation would have gazed upon with amazement, and shrunk from with despair. Such is the progress of change. The rise of the Deistic movement may be defined in a sentence. It was the old struggle of speculative opinion shifting its battle-ground from theology to philosophy, prior to the one being discarded, and the other developed into positive science.

Amongst the most distinguished of these reformers, stands the name of Anthony Collins.

Who and what he was, we have little opportunity of knowing, save from the scattered notices of contemporaries; but sufficient is left on record to prove him one of the best of men, and the very Corypheus of Deism. The twin questions of Necessity and Prophecy have been examined by him perhaps more ably than by any other liberal author. There are slight discrepancies in relation to the great events of his life. The Abbe Lodivicat says he was born June 21st, 1676, of a rich and noble family, at Heston, in Middlesex, and was appointed treasurer of the county; but another account says "Hounslow," which we think was the more likely place. He was educated at Eton and Cambridge. He studied for the bar for sometime, but (being wealthy) ultimately renounced jurisprudence, while his youthful studies admirably fitted him for his subsequent magisterial duties. He was clever, honest, learned, and esteemed by all who knew his character. The elder D'Israeli says, "that he was a great lover of literature, and a man of fine genius, while his morals were immaculate, and his personal character independent."

The friendship of Locke alone is sufficient to stamp the character of Collins with honor, and he was one of the most valued friends of this great man. In a volume published by P. Des Maizeaux (a writer we shall have occasion to notice) in the year 1720, containing a collection of the posthumous works of Locke, there are several letters addressed to Collins which fully substantiate our opinion.

Locke was then an old man, residing in the country, and Collins was a young man in London, who took a pleasure in executing the commissions of his illustrious friend. In one of them, dated October 29th, 1703, he says – "If I were now setting out in the world, I should think it my greatest happiness to have such a companion as you, who had a true relish of truth, would in earnest seek it with me, from whom I might receive it undisguised, and to whom I might communicate what I thought true, freely. Believe it my good friend, to love truth for truth's sake, is the principal part of human perfection in this world, and the seed-plot of all other virtue; and, if I mistake not, you have as much of it as ever I met with in anybody. What, then, is there wanting to make you equal to the best – a friend for any one to be proud of?"

During the following year the correspondence of Locke appears in a most interesting light – the affectionate inquiries, the kind advice, and the most grateful acknowledgments are made to Collins. On Sept. 11th, Locke writes: – "He that has anything to do with you, must own that friendship is the natural product of your constitution, and your soul, a noble soil, is enriched with the two most valuable qualities of human nature – truth and friendship. What a treasure have I then in such a friend with whom I can converse, and be enlightened about the highest speculations!" On the 1st of October he wrote Collins on his rapid decay, "But this, I believe, he will assure you, that my infirmities prevail so fast on me, that unless you make haste hither, I may lose the satisfaction of ever seeing again a man that I value in the first rank of those I leave behind me." This was written twenty-seven days before his death. Four days before his decease, he wrote a letter to be given to Collins after his death. This document is one of the most important in relation to the life of the great Freethinker – it irrefragably proves the falsity of everything that may be alleged against the character of Collins: —

"Oates, August 23, 1704. For Anthony Collins, Esq.

"Dear Sir – By my will, you will see that I had some kindness for * * * And I knew no better way to take care of him, than to put him, and what I designed for him, into your hands and management. The knowledge I have of your virtues of all kinds, secures the trust, which, by your permission, I have placed in you; and the peculiar esteem and love I have observed in the young man for you, will dispose him to be ruled and influenced by you, so of that I need say nothing. May you live long and happy, in the enjoyment of health, freedom, content, and all those blessings which Providence has bestowed on, you, and your virtues entitle you to. I know you loved me living, and will preserve my memory now I am dead. * * * I leave my best wishes with you.

"John Locke."

Such is the honorable connection which existed between Locke and Collins. Collins's first publication was a tract, "Several of the London Cases Considered," in the year 1700. In 1707, he published an "Essay Concerning the Use of Reason on Propositions, the evidence whereof depends upon Human Testimony;" "in which," says Dr. Leland, "there are some good observations, mixed with others of a suspicious nature and tendency." It principally turned on the Trinitarian controversy then raging, and is of little interest now. In this year Collins united with Dodwell in the controversy carried on by Dr. Samuel Clarke. One of Clarke's biographers alludes to it thus: "Dr. Clarke's arguments in favor of the immateriality, and consequent immortality of the soul, called out, however, a far more formidable antagonist than Dodwell, in the person of Anthony Collins, an English gentleman of singular intellectual acuteness, but, unhappily, of Infidel principles. The controversy was continued through several short treatises. On the whole, though Clarke, in some instances, laid himself open to the keen and searching dialectics of his gifted antagonist, the victory certainly remained with the Divine." Of course it is only to be expected that such will be the opinion of an opponent – but it is further proof of Collins's ability and character. In 1703 appeared his celebrated "Discourses of Freethinking," which perhaps created the greatest sensation in the religious world (with the exception of the "Age of Reason") of any book published against Christianity. This book is as able a defence of the freedom of the expression of thought without penalty, as was ever published. It is divided into four sections. In the 1st, Freethinking is defined – in five arguments. In the 2nd, That it is

our duty to think freely on those points of which men are denied the right to think freely: such as of the nature and attributes of God, the truth and authority of Scriptures, and of the meaning of Scriptures, in seven arguments and eleven instances. The third section is the consideration of six objections to Freethinking – from the whole of which he concludes (1) That Freethinkers must have more understanding, and that they must necessarily be the most virtuous people. (2) That they have, in fact, been the most understanding and virtuous people in all ages. Here follows the names of a great number of men whom Collins classified as Freethinkers, and of whom we have no reason to be ashamed.

This book was answered by many divines, but none of them emerged from the contest with such Christian honors as the famous Dr. Bentley – considered England's greatest classical scholar. In the same year, the Dr. published his reply under the signature of "Phileleutheros Lipsiensis." The fame of Bentley was considered equal to Collins's; and it has always been represented that this reply completely crushed the Freethinker – nothing could be farther from the truth. Bentley principally attacked the Greek quotations and denounced Collins for his ignorance in not putting his (Bentley's) construction on every disputed word. For this reply, Bentley received the thanks of the University of Cambridge. In condition with this work, Collins is also charged with wilful deception – which has been reproduced in our own lives by devines who perhaps never read a line of Collins. A French edition of the "Discourse" was translated under the personal inspection of Collins: and it is said that he altered the construction of several sentences to evade the charges brought against him by Bentley Dr. Leland is particularly eloquent upon this; and the Rev. Mr. Lorimer, of Glasgow, triumphantly plagiarises the complaint of the men whose defects he can only imitate. There is another charge connected with Bentley and his friends, which it is desirous should be exposed. The elder D'Israeli says: – "Anthony Collins wrote several well-known works, without prefixing his name; but having pushed too far his curious and polemical points, he incurred the odium of a Freethinker – a term which then began to be in vogue, and which the French adopted by translating it, in their way – 'a strong thinker,' or *esprit fort*. Whatever tendency to 'liberalise' the mind from the dogmas and creeds prevails in these works, the talents and learning of Collins were of the first class. His morals were immaculate, and his personal character independent; but the *odium theologicum* of those days combined every means to stab in the dark, till the taste became hereditary with some. I may mention a fact of this cruel bigotry which occurred within my own observation, on one of the most polished men of the age. The late Mr. Cumberland, in the romance entitled his 'Life' gave this extraordinary fact. He said that Dr. Bentley, who so ably replied to Collins's 'Discourse,' when many years after he discovered him fallen into great distress, conceiving that by having ruined Collins's character as a writer for ever, he had been the occasion of his personal misery, he liberally contributed to his maintenance. In vain I mentioned to that elegant writer, who was not curious about facts, that this person could never have been Anthony Collins, who had always a plentiful fortune; and when it was suggested to him that this 'A. Collins' as he printed it, must have been Arthur Collins, the historic compiler, who was often in pecuniary difficulties, still he persisted in sending the lie down to posterity, without alteration, in his second edition, observing to a friend of mine, that 'the story, while it told well, might serve as a striking instance of his great relative's generosity; and that it should stand because it could do no harm to any but to Anthony Collins, whom he considered as little short of an Atheist.'" Such is a specimen of Christian honor and justice.

In 1715, appeared his "Philosophical inquiry into Human Liberty." Dr. Clarke was again his opponent. The publication of this work marked an epoch in metaphysics. Dugald Stewart, in criticising the discussion on Moral Liberty between Clarke and Leibnitz, says, "But soon after this controversy was brought to a conclusion by the death of his antagonist, he (Clarke) had to renew the same argument, in reply to his countryman, Anthony Collins, who, following the footsteps of Hobbes, with logical talents not inferior to his master (and with a weight of personal character in his favor to which his master had no pretensions,) gave to the cause which he so warmly espoused, a degree of

credit amongst sober and inquiring politicians, which it had never before possessed in England." The following are the principal arguments of Collins in reference to Liberty and Necessity: —

First. Though I deny Liberty in a certain meaning of that word, yet I contend for Liberty, as it signifies *a power in man to do as he wills or pleases.*

Secondly. When I affirm *Necessity* I contend only for *moral necessity*; meaning thereby that man, who is an intelligent and sensible being, is determined by his reason and senses; and I deny any man to be subject to such necessity as is in clocks, watches, and such other beings, which, for want of intelligence and sensation, are subject to an absolute, physical or mechanical necessity.

Thirdly, I have undertaken to show, that the notions I advance are so far from being inconsistent with, that they are the sole foundation of morality and laws, and of rewards and punishments in society, and that the notions I explode are subversive of them.

From the above premises, Collins sought to show that man is a necessary agent. (1) From our experience (through consciousness.) (2) From the impossibility of liberty. (3) From the consideration of the divine prescience. (4) From the nature and use of rewards and punishments. (5) From the nature of morality. Such were the principles on which the great question of Necessity has ever been advocated – from Hobbes to Collins, Jonathan Ed wards to Mackintosh and Spencer. In the year 1704 Toland dedicated to him a new translation of Æsop's Fables. There are many anecdotes respecting Collins inserted in religious magazines, most of which are false, and all without proof. One of them, related in a most circumstantial manner, appears to be the favorite. It depicts Collins walking out in the country on a Sunday morning, when he meets a countryman returning from Church.

"Well, Hodge," says Collins, "so you have been enjoying the fresh breezes of nature, this fine morning."

The clown replied that "he had been worshipping nature's God," and proved it by repeating the substance of the Athanasian creed. Upon which Collins questions him as to the residence of his God: and for a reply is told that his God is so large, that he fills the universe; and so small that he dwells in his breast. This sublime fact, we are told, had more effect upon Collins's mind than all the books written against him by the clergy. When will sensible men reject such charlatanism?

The next great work of Collins was his "Discourse on the Grounds and Reasons of the Christian Religion," in two parts. The first containing some considerations on the quotations made from the Old in the New Testament, and particularly on the prophecies cited from the former, and said to be fulfilled in the latter. The second containing an examination of the scheme advanced by Mr. Whiston, in his essay towards restoring the true text of the Old Testament, and for vindicating the citations thence made in the New Testament, to which is prefixed an apology for free debate and liberty of writing. This book took the religious world by storm; it is even thought it struck more dismay amongst divines than his former essay on Freethink-ing. The book proceeds to show that Christianity is not proved by prophecy. That the Apostles relied on the predictions in the Old Testament, and their fulfilment in Jesus as the only sure proof of the truth of their religion; if therefore, the prophecies are not thoroughly literal, and fulfilled distinctly, there can be no proof in Christianity. He then examines the principal prophecies, and dismisses them, as allegorical fables too vague to be of any credit. In less than two years no less than thirty-five books were published in reply to this work, written by the ablest and most influential theologians in England. In 1727 Collins published another large work, "The Scheme of Literal Prophecy Considered," in which he still further defends his view principally against the sophistical reasoning of Whiston, and finally vanquished the whole of his opponents.

Perhaps no Freethinker, with the single exception of Hobbes, was so attacked during his life as Collins. Toland and Woolston were persecuted and driven into prison and poverty; but Collins, with his profusion of wealth, could oppose Christianity with applause – mingle in the gaiety of the Court – occupy a seat on the magisterial bench – be the welcome guest of the most liberal of the aristocracy, contemporary with others who even languished in prison for the propagation of similar sentiments. Since his day the clergy have grown wiser; then the most trivial pamphlet on the Deistic

side created a consternation amongst the saints, and they strove who should be the first to answer it – indeed, it was considered a test of honor amongst the clergy to be eager in the exposure of Deism: but this style of warfare was discontinued after the lapse of a few years. The most discerning observers discovered that in proportion to the answers published against liberal works, the influence of the most powerful side decreased. Force, then, gradually interfered, and acts of Parliament were considered the only logical refutation of a philosophical heresy. The anomaly of our laws interfered again. Collins was rich, and so must escape the fangs of the law. Thomas Woolston was poor, so his vitals were pierced by laws which Collins escaped – yet both committed the same offence. In later times Gibbon traced the rise of Christianity, and about the same time Paine accomplished another portion of the same risk – and the Government which prosecuted the plebeian, flattered the patrician. But Collins's time was rapidly drawing nigh. On the 13th of December, 1729, he expired, aged fifty-three years; and to show the esteem in which his character was held, the following notice was inserted in the newspapers of the day – all hostile to his views, yet striving to make it appear that he was, after all, not so great an Infidel as his reputation honored him with: – "On Saturday last, died at his house in Harley Square, Anthony Collins, Esq. He was a remarkably active, up right, and impartial magistrate, the tender husband the kind parent, the good master, and the true friend He was a great promoter of literature in all its branch es; and an immoveable asserter of universal liberty in all civil and religious matters. Whatever his sentiments were on certain points, this is what he declared at the time of his death – viz., that he had always endeavored, to the best of his ability, to serve God, his king, and his country, so he was persuaded he was going to that place which God hath prepared for them that serve him, and presently afterwards he said, the Catholic religion is to serve God and roan. He was an eminent example of temperance and sobriety, and one that had the true art of living. His worst enemies could never charge him with any vice or immorality." With this character the Freethinkers have no right to be dissatisfied. The Abbe Lodivicat says, "His library was curious and valuable; always open to the learned, even to his opponents, whom he furnished with pleasure, both with books and arguments, which were employed in confuting him." Mr. D'Israeli says he has seen a catalogue of Collins's library, elaborately drawn up in his own handwriting, and it must have contained a splendid selection of books. This is proved by the correspondence with Locke, and the extensive number of quotations spread throughout his published works.

By the death of Collins, and the defalcation of one who abused the name of a Deist, the cause of Free-thought was impeded at the time when it most needed assistance. Collins had written a great number of tracts and larger works, intending them to be published after his death: one collection of eight octavo volumes of manuscript containing the attacks upon Christianity, by which he intended his name to be transmitted to posterity, were all arranged ready for publication as his posthumous works. To ensure their credit-able appearance, and to reward a man whom he had thought worthy of confidence, and one who professed to be a disciple of Collins, he bequeathed them to Des Maizeaux, then a popular author and editor. He had edited the correspondence of Locke and Collins, written the lite of Bayle, and subsequently edited Toland. The idea of Collins was to give his work to Des Maizeaux for a recompense for the trouble of publishing them, while he would derive the whole profits of their sale, which no doubt would be very large. It appears that the widow of Collins was much younger than himself – in league with the Church of England; and was in rather a suspicious friendship with more than one clerical antagonist of her late husband. Des Maizeaux being worked upon conjointly by Mrs. Collins and a person named Tomlinson, was induced to accept a present of fifty guineas, and relinquished the possession of the manuscripts. It was not long, however, before his conscience accused him of the great wrong done to the memory of his benefactor, and to the Free-thinking cause. His regret was turned into the most profound compunction for his crime; and in this state of mind he wrote a long letter to one who had been a mutual friend to Collins and himself, acknowledging that he had done "a most wicked thing," saying – "I am convinced that I have acted contrary to the will and intention of my dear deceased friend; showed a disregard to the particular

mark of esteem he gave me on that occasion; in short, that I have forfeited what is dearer to me than my own life – honor and reputation… I send you the fifty guineas I received, which I do now look upon as the wages of iniquity, and I desire you to return them to Mrs. Collins, who, as I hope it of her justice, equity, and regard to Mr. Collinses intentions, will be pleased to cancel my paper."

This appeal (which proved that Des Maizeaux, if he was weak-minded, was not absolutely dishonest) had no effect on Mrs. Collins. The manuscripts were never returned. What their contents were, no one now can inform us. We are justified, however, in supposing that as those eight volumes were the crowning efforts of a mind which in its youth was brilliant in no common degree, must have been even superior to those books which roused England from its dreamy lethargy, and brought about a revolution in controversy. Whether they touched upon miracles, or the external evidences, or the morals of Christism, is unknown. The curtain was drawn over the scene of demolition. Seven years after this time the controversy was reopened by Mrs. Collins, in the year 1737, on account of a report being current that Mrs. C. had permitted transcripts of those manuscripts to get abroad. The widow wrote some very sharp letters to Des Maizeaux, and he replied in a tone which speaks faithfully of the affection he still bore to Collins's memory. He concludes thus: – "Mr. Collins loved me and esteemed me for my integrity and sincerity, of which he had several proofs. How I have been drawn in to injure him, to forfeit the good opinion he had of me, and which, were he now alive, would deservedly expose me to his utmost contempt, is a grief which I shall carry to the grave. It would be a sort of comfort to me if those who have consented I should be drawn in, were in some measure sensible of the guilt towards so good, kind, generous a man."

Such is an epitome of the secret history of the MSS. of Anthony Collins. If we look at the fate of the MSS. of other Deists, we shall have good reasons for believing that some of the ablest writings, meant to give a posthumous reputation to their authors, have disappeared into the hands of either ignorant or designing persons. Five volumes, at least, of Toland's works, meant for publication, were, by his death, irretrievably lost. Blount's MSS. never appeared. Two volumes of Tindall's were seized by the Bishop of London, and destroyed. Woolston's MSS. met with no better fate. Chubb carefully prepared his works, and published them in his lifetime. Bolingbroke made Mallet his confidant, as Collins did by Des Maizeaux. The name of St. John produced £10,000 to Mallet; but those works were left with the tacit acknowledge ment that the Scotch poet should write a suitable life of the peer. The letter of Mallet to Lord Cornbury can only be compared to an invitation for a bid for the suppression of the "Philosophical Works" of St. John; and if this was not sufficient, we need only instance the apparent solicitation with which he stopped a well-known influential dignitary of the church on the day when the works were to appear, by pulling out his watch, and saying, "My Lord, Christianity will tremble at a quarter to twelve." We may be thankful to the pecuniary poverty of our opponents even for the possession of the first philosophy. Some of Hume's and Gibbon's works have not yet appeared. The MSS. of most of the minor Freethinkers disappeared with their authors. There is no doubt but what Robert Taylor left some valuable writings which cannot be recovered. Such is the feeble chance of great men's writings being published when they are no longer alive.

With regard to the literary claims of Collins. His works are logically composed and explicitly worded. He invariably commences by stating the groundwork of his opponent's theories, and from them deduces a great number of facts and axioms of a contrary character, and upon those builds his whole chain of argument. He is seldom witty – never uses the flowers of rhetoric, combining a most rigid analysis with a synthetic scheme, admitting but of one unswerving end. He was characteristically great in purpose. He avoided carrying forward his arguments beyond the basis of his facts. Whether in treating the tangled intricacies of necessity, or the theological quagmires of prophecy, he invariably explained without confusing, and refuted without involving other subjects than those legitimately belonging to the controversy. His style of writing was serious, plain, and without an undue levity, yet withal perfectly readable. Men studied Collins who shrunk from contact with the lion-hearted Woolston, whose brusque pen too often shocked those it failed to convince. There was a timidity in

many of the letters of Blount, and a craving wish to rely more on the witticisms of Brown, than was to be found in the free and manly spirit of our hero. To the general public, the abstruse speculations of the persecuted Toland were a barrier which his many classical allusions only heightened; and the musical syllables of Shaftesbury, with his style, at once so elevated, so pompous, and so quaint; or the political economic doctrines of Mandeville, all tended to exalt the name of Collins above those of his contemporaries and immediate successors; and posterity cannot fail to place his bust in that historic niche betwixt Hobbes – his master on one hand – and Bolingbroke, his successor on the other. From the great St. John has descended in the true apostolical descent the mantle of Free-thought upon Hume, Gibbon, Paine, Godwin, Carlile, Taylor, and Owen. And amongst this brilliant galaxy of genius, no name is more deserving of respect than that of Anthony Collins.

A. C.

DES CARTES

Rene des Cartes Duperron, better known as Des Cartes, the father of modern philosophy, was born at La Haye, in Touraine, of Breton parents, near the close of the sixteenth century, at a time when Bacon was like the morning sun, rising to shed new rays of bright light over the then dark world of philosophy. The mother of Des Cartes died while he was but a few days old, and himself a sickly child, he began to take part in the battle of life with but little appearance of ever possessing the capability for action on the minds of his fellows, which he afterwards so fully exercised. Debarred, however, by his physical weakness from many boyish pursuits, he devoted himself to study in his earliest years, and during his youth gained the title of the young philosopher, from his eagerness to learn, and from his earnest endeavors by inquiry and experiment to solve every problem presented to his notice. He was educated in the Jesuits' College of La Flèche; and the monument erected to him at Stockholm informs us, "That having mastered all the learning of the schools, which proved short of his expectations, he betook himself to the army in Germany and Hungary, and there spent his vacant winter hours in comparing the mysteries and phenomena of nature with the laws of mathematics, daring to hope that the one might serve as a key to the other. Quitting, therefore, all other pursuits, he retired to a little village near Egmont, in Holland, where spending twenty-five years in continual reading and meditation, he effected his design."

In his celebrated "Discourse on Method," he says, – "As soon as my age permitted me to leave my preceptors, I entirely gave up the study of letters; and, resolving to seek no other science than that which I could find in myself, or else in the great book of the world, I employed the remainder of my youth in travel – in seeing courts and camps – in frequenting people of diverse humors and conditions – in collecting various experiences; and, above all, in endeavoring to draw some profitable reflection from what I saw. For it seemed to me that I should meet with more truth in the reasonings which each man makes in his own affairs, and which, if wrong, would be speedily punished by failure, than in those reasonings which the philosopher makes in his study upon speculations which produce no effect, and which are of no consequence to him, except perhaps that he will be the more vain of them, the more remote they are from common sense, because he would then have been forced to employ more ingenuity and subtlety to render them plausible."

At the age of thirty-three Des Cartes retired from the world for a period of eight years, and his seclusion was so effectual during that time, that his place of residence was unknown to his friends. He there prepared the "Meditations," and "Discourse on Method," which have since caused so much pen-and-ink warfare amongst those who have aspired to be ranked as philosophical thinkers. He became European in fame; and, invited by Christina of Sweden, he visited her kingdom, but the rudeness of the climate proved too much for his delicate frame, and he died at Stockholm in the year 1650, from inflammation of the lungs, being fifty-four years of age at the time of his death.

Des Cartes was perhaps the most original thinker that France had up to that date produced; and, contemporary with Bacon, he exercised a powerful influence or the progress of thought in Europe; but although a great thinker, he was not a brave man, and the fear of giving offence to the church and government, has certainly prevented him from making public some of his writings, and perhaps has toned down some of these thoughts which, when first uttered, took a higher flight, and struck full home to the truth itself.

The father and founder of the deductive method, Des Cartes still proudly reigns to the present day, although some of his conclusions have been over-turned, and others of his thinkings have been carried to conclusions which he never dared to dream of. He gave a strong aid to the tendency of advancing civilization, to separate philosophy from theology, thereby striking a blow, slow in its effect, and effectual in its destructive operation, on all priestcraft. In his dedication ol the "Meditations," he says, – "I have always thought that the two questions of the existence of God and the nature of the

soul, were the chief of those which ought to be demonstrated rather by philosophy than by theology; for although it is sufficient for us, the faithful, to believe in God, and that the soul does not perish with the body, it does not seem possible ever to persuade the Infidels to any religion, unless we first prove to them these two things by natural reason."

Having relinquished faith, he found that he must choose an entirely new faith in which to march with reason; the old ways were so cumbered with priests and Bibles, that progression would have been impossible. This gave us his method. He wanted a starting point from which to reason, some indisputable fact upon which to found future thinkings.

"He has given us the detailed history of his doubts. He has told us how he found that he could, plausibly enough, doubt of everything except his own existence. He pushed his scepticism to the verge of self-annihilation. There he stopped: there in self, there in his consciousness, he found at last an irresistible fact, an irreversible certainty. Firm ground was discovered. He could doubt the existence of the external world, and treat it as a phantasm. He could doubt the existence of God, and treat the belief as a superstition. But of the existence of his own thinking, doubting mind, no sort of doubt was possible. He, the doubter, existed if nothing else existed. The existence that was revealed to him in his own consciousness, was the primary fact, the first indubitable certainty. Hence his famous *Cogito ergo Sum*: I think, therefore I am." (*Lewes's Bio. Hist. Phil.*)

Proceeding from the certainty of his existence, Des Cartes endeavors to rind other equally certain tacts, and for that purpose presents the following doctrine and rules for our guidance: – The basis of all certitude is consciousness, consciousness is the sole foundation of absolute certainty, whatever it distinctly proclaims must be true. The process is, therefore, rendered clear and simple: examine your consciousness – each distinct reply will be a fact.

He tells us further that all clear ideas are true – that whatever is clearly and distinctly conceived is true – and in these lie the vitality of his system, the cause of the truth or error of his thinkings.

The following are the rules he gave us for the detection and separation of true ideas from false, (*i. e.*, imperfect or complex): —

"1. Never to accept anything as true but what is evidently so; to admit nothing but what so clearly and distinctly presents itself as true, that there can be no reason to doubt it.

"2. To divide every question into as many separate parts as possible, that each part being more easily conceived, the whole may be more intelligible.

"3. To conduct the examination with order, beginning by that of objects the most simple, and therefore the easiest to be known, and ascending little by little up to knowledge of the most complex.

"4. To make such exact calculations, and such circumspections as to be confident that nothing essential has been omitted. Consciousness being the basis of all certitude, everything of which you are clearly and distinctly conscious must be true: everything which you clearly and distinctly conceive, exists, if the idea of it involve existence."

In these four rules we have the essential part of one half of Des Cartes's system, the other, which is equally important, is the attempt to solve metaphysical problems by mathematical aid. To mathematics he had devoted much of his time. He it was who, at the age of twenty three, made the grand discovery of the applicability of algebra to geometry. While deeply engaged in mathematical studies and investigations, he came to the conclusion that mathematics were capable of a still further simplification, and of much more extended application. Impressed with the certainty of the conclusions arrived at by the aid of mathematical reasoning, he began to apply mathematics to metaphysics.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.