

A 'NOTE' OF INTERROGATION

BY FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE

A NOVEL of genius has appeared. Its writer once put before the world (in a work of fiction too), certainly the most living, probably the most historically truthful, presentment of the great Idealist, Savonarola of Florence. This author now can find no better outlet for the heroine — also an Idealist *because* she cannot be a 'St. Teresa' or an 'Antigone,' than to marry an elderly sort of literary impostor, and, quick after him, his relation, a baby sort of itinerant Cluricaune (see *Irish Fairie*) or inferior Faun (see Hawthorne's matchless *Transformation*).

Yet close at hand, in actual life, was a woman — and Idealist too — and if we mistake not, a connection of the author's, who has managed to make her ideal very real indeed. By taking charge of blocks of buildings in poorest London, while making herself the rent-collector, she found work for those who could not find work for themselves; she organised a system of visitors — real visitors; of referees — real referees; and thus obtaining actual insight into the moral or immoral, industrial or non-industrial conduct of those who seemed almost past helping, except into the workhouse, she brought sympathy and education to bear from individual to individual — not by ruling of committee, but by personal acquaintance, utilizing the committee-relief as never had been done before, and thus initiated a process of depauperisation; so that one might be tempted to say — Were there one such woman with power to direct the flow of volunteer help, nearly everywhere running to waste, in every street of London's East End, almost might the East End be

persuaded to become Christian.

Could not the heroine, the 'sweet sad enthusiast,' have been set to some such work as this? Indeed it is past telling the mischief that is done in thus putting down youthful ideals. There are not too many to begin with. There are few indeed to end with — even without such a gratuitous impulse as this to end them.

Another Ideal has just been published, most powerful, yet lame and impotent in its conclusion, for — if conclusion it has — it is this : That Christ was, or would have been had He now lived, a Red Republican.

Yet in that book is a true embodiment of what will make itself be recognised, and in political storm and social tempest soon, if we refuse to recognise it by shutting our eyes and writing, 'There is happiness enough,' viz. (1) the intense miseries in our one dark London alone ; (2) the undeniable fact that upon the great mass of London poor all existing forms of religion have lost all hold whatever; and that 'Charity Organisation people'¹ are helpless to cope with the former, farther than by preventing mischief being done — which is doubtless a great thing; as helpless as are 'Bishop of London' Funds to cope with the latter.

Another Ideal — really an ideal, though somewhat marred by flippancy on the most serious of all subjects, and by a tendency not to fight like a man, but to scratch like a cat — has also lately appeared, which, while discarding miracle and legend, shows a true and even deep

¹Not one word against 'Charity Organisation people.' They are doing a great work — leading the way to a greater. But they pander (unconsciously) to the prevailing fallacy: that, if we do not give to vagrants, they will find work for themselves. While helping the industrious to help themselves, there is a greater thing still to do yet; — to help the helpless to help themselves.

insight into the character of Christ and the value of Christianity, as teaching us (1) to cherish our own higher, inner self — to ‘find’ our own ‘soul;’ (2) to deny, nay more, to disown our lower, outer self; (3) to be mild and gentle, ‘meek and lowly in heart.’²

On the other side we have a Professor, a real man of science, undoubtedly one of the prime educators of the age, but making a profound mistake when he says to mankind : ‘Objects of sense are more worthy of your attention than your inferences and imaginations. You can’t see the battle of Thermopylae take place. What you can see is more worth your attention.’

We might almost, and more truly say : On the contrary, the finest powers man is gifted with are those which enable him to infer from what he sees what he *can’t* see. They lift him into truth of far higher import than that which he learns from the senses alone.

As our penultimate author speaks a great deal of ‘extra-belief’ (Aberglaube), meaning, not superstition, but belief in things not verified by the senses, so this most able Professor and man of science advocates or succumbs to a sort of *infra*-belief covering, indeed, but small part of the ground man stands upon, less still of the horizon he looks on.

All these are ‘signs of the times.’ They suggest a? — a note of interrogation.

Faint, indeed, is the note of this note, the veriest hint, that will be here sounded.

²Very curious, this difference as to who Christ was — between two contemporaries publishing in the same tongue, in the same year, and almost the same street, or ‘hill’. One says, Christ the Red Republican — the other, Christ the teacher of self-knowledge, self-renunciation, mildness, and lowliness.

I

‘Because I am God, and not man,’ said One a few thousands of years ago. Then surely, is it not the most important and at the same time the most neglected point in theology, to determine *what* God is — what His character is like?

Reams of sermons are written on every point but this. And yet this is the foundation of all.

It may seem a, little too familiar an illustration to say that in marriage it is a constant reproach brought against continental nations, that they do not let the woman know what her husband is like, nor the man his wife, before they are married.

A poet who is gone from among us said, that ‘love’ was ‘fellow-service.’ That is just what it is. And how can there be, ‘fellow service’ in the way in which men and women meet now?

And how much more is this the case with regard to Him whom we (some of us) say we serve?

Yet Him we have always with us. And we make no effort to know Him.

Indeed, it does not seem to be included as a part of theology, as a point of enquiry, as a basis of all sermons — the knowledge of, the acquaintance with God.

The same poet writes :

It fortifies my soul to know
That, tho’ I perish, Truth is so ;
That, howsoe’er I stray and range,
Whate’er I do,
Thou dost not change.
I steadier step when I recall
That, if I slip, Thou dost not fall.

Yes: but ‘Truth is so’ that I shall not ‘perish.’

‘Though He slay me,’ says Job, yet will I ‘trust in Him.’ Yes : but I trust in Him because I know that He will not ‘slay’ me

or anyone else.

It always seems to be a fact ignored, or put out of sight, that for no one of our beliefs, religious, physical, moral, scientific, have we any dependence but — the character of God.

It is said that the reason why we believe that the sun will rise tomorrow is that the sun has always done so. But Joshua did not think so. Surely the reason is, our dependence on the invariable character of God.

And this seems to most people to be a very poor dependence. At least few take the pains to find out what is the character of God.

A very great deal of foregone conclusion, of what, as it appears, is untrue to fact and to feeling, is talked, for instance, as to belief in future state — that this is ‘instinctive,’ ‘intuitive,’ the fruit of the natural craving of man, &c. &c. We do not see such ‘craving.’ On the contrary. There is perhaps no one subject interesting himself on which ordinary man thinks so little, cares so little. Of the best men there are, too, many now who would rather not have a future state for themselves. Alas! The highest stamp, of men are oftenest those who feel this — men who have consecrated themselves to the good of their kind. Such men are generally extremely sensitive. And the very strain of constant self-consecration acting on such a temperament produces that condition of mind — so far more common (at least in this age) than any ecstasies of the saints — that longing, not to live for ever, but to die for ever, to be at rest.

But, whether this be so or not, whether there are ‘instincts’ or ‘cravings’ for a future state now or not, surely it is a complete fallacy to reason from them to the existence of a future state.

Surely the ‘presumption’ of an

immortality ‘grounded’ merely on ‘unsatisfied instincts,’ is a fallacy. It is another thing to say ‘A perfect God, whose only design can be to lead every one of us to perfection, put those “instinct” into us. He never leaves any work unfinished, He is invariable, and without a shadow of turning. *Therefore* He will enable each one of us to fulfil. In another state those aspirations after perfection which are necessarily left “unsatisfied” in this — because this world is not perfect, and cannot be made perfect till all mankind agree to make it so.’

Says Coleridge (in a better mood): ‘We must earn earth before we can earn heaven.’ Rather let us say : Mankind must make heaven before we can ‘go to heaven’ (as the phrase is), in this world, or in any other. Is God’s whole scheme to put us in the way to make heaven? ‘We must earn the earth before we can think of learning heaven.’ Yes, but when only a few are hungering and thirsting after righteousness, they *cannot* be ‘filled.’

Why, then, is there a future state?

Because God is.

For no other reason.

And let us drop the word, ‘future state.’

What ‘future state?’

An eternal life which, beginning here, shall lead each and every one of us to finite perfection, and therefore to happiness.

Because there is a God, therefore, there is this eternal life, for each and for all of us.

For no other reason.

And let us also drop the word, ‘a God.’

What God? that is the question. And no one answers it. It is only ‘because God is’ — the *perfect* God — that we shall have eternal life.

It is said of the French soldier of letting him know this, you will not get out of him all he can give.

And if any can justly be called an

expeditionary force, it is surely the expedition of mankind sent by God to conquer earth, to conquer perfection, to create heaven!

And how can man give his best unless he knows, unless you will try to find out for yourselves and for him, what is God's plan for him in this world and in the next (as it is truly called) — why there are such sufferings in this world — who is this God who has put him here, and why He has put him here, and put him here to suffer so much? In short, he wants to know why he is here, where he is going, what he is doing, why he is suffering.

Is it not a simple impertinence for preachers and schoolmasters, literally *ex cathedra*, to be always inculcating and laying down what they call the commands of God, and never telling us what the God is who commands, often indeed representing Him as worse than a devil? 'Because I am God, and not man.' But you represent Him as something far below man, worse than the worst man, the worst Eastern tyrant that ever was heard of.

'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with, all thy strength.' Ah, from the mouth of Him who said those words, they are indeed 'the first and greatest commandment.' He who went about doing good, who called all of us who are weary and heavy laden to come to Him — who towards His cruel torturers and murderers felt nothing but, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do' — *He* might well say, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God,' for He needed not to explain to us His character.

But — and what a descent is here — for us to lay it down as a *command* to love the Lord God! Alas! Poor mankind might easily answer: 'I can't love because I am ordered — least of all can I love One who

seems only make me miserable here to torture me hereafter. Show me that He is good, that He is lovable, and I shall love Him without being told.'

But does any preacher show us this? He may *say* that God is good, but he shows Him to be very bad. He may say that God is 'Love,' but he shows him to be *hate*, worse than any hate of man. As the Persian poet says: 'If God punishes me for doing evil by doing me evil, how is He better than I?' And it is hard to answer. For certainly the worst man would hardly torture his enemy, if he could, for ever. And unless God has a scheme that every man is to be saved for ever, it is hard to say in what He is not worse than man. For all good men would save others if they could.

A poor man, dying in a workhouse, said to his nurse after having seen his clergyman: 'It does seem hard to have suffered so much here, only to go to everlasting torments hereafter.' Seldom has the feeling, which must be that of half the world, been so simply expressed.

How, then, is it possible to teach either that God is 'Love' or that God commands any duty — unless God has a plan for bringing each and all of us to perfection? How can we work at all if there be not such a plan? It is not enough that God should not be willing to punish everlastingly — to show that He is good. He must be accomplishing a *design*, 'invariable and without a shadow of turning,' the design to save every one of us everlastingly. There must be no giving the go-by to searching out, as the very first condition or religion, whether there be such a plan.

Sermons sometimes start from a knowledge (or would-be knowledge) of human character. But none start from a knowledge of, or even an enquiry into, God's character.

And yet, one would. Think, if this is really His world, if He governs by His laws, which are the effluence of His character, not only the universe, but every, the minutest, circumstance in it — it must be of paramount importance to find out what His character is. Else how do we know where we are going?

Indeed, it may be said that the greatest, the most world-wide, and the most fatal mistakes, extending through all time, which have been made in this world, have arisen from not understanding His character.

It is not that men have not been absorbed, throughout the history of man, in religion. Probably no subject, not even how to procure food, has absorbed man more. But scarcely any study has received less attention than that of the character of God. Men have been content to take it upon authority, upon sympathy, antipathy, blind 'intuition,' or association — they, have been content to give this study not even the serious enquiry which is given to the anatomy of a pigeon or the construction of a bivalve shell — they have even written their passing thoughts on religion. What wonder if there is no subject in the world on which man *has* such 'passing' thoughts such crude, as religion? And this the most important, the most *surpassing*, the most difficult subject of all.

How would it be possible to construct any other science without knowing its fundamental law? to construct the physical science of astronomy without knowing whether the sun or the earth moved round the other? to construct moral science without knowing man? 'Know thyself,' said the Greek wisdom which we have scarcely surpassed. 'Know God,' has indeed been said — and that to know God is eternal life — as indeed it would be. But has one step been made in knowing Him

since that time? Have not indeed the most awful retrograde steps, the most astonishing mistakes been made, upon which whole polities have been founded, from not knowing the character of God?

Take, e.g., some of the most familiar instances of mistakes arising from not understanding the character of God.

That God regards suffering as good in itself, that He pays well those who inflict it on themselves, is the basis on which was founded a very large polity in the Roman Catholic Church.

That God has so let go man as to become essentially wicked, for which He has instituted no other system of help except letting another pay the penalty for man, was the foundation of another theory of religion sometimes called 'Evangelical.'

That this barbarising doctrine does not make man barbarous, at least not very, can only be because men are so much better than their God.

That God has made a scheme of salvation and damnation by which a certain number of His creatures are saved 'everlastingly', a certain number 'damned' everlastingly, is considered by all the orthodox millions of the Church which calls itself 'Christian,' whether Roman Catholic, Greek or Protestant, as the fundamental doctrine or one of the fundamental doctrines of their faith.

Then the (so-called) 'Liberal' steps in and says, 'No, God would not be so ill-natured.' But if you ask the 'Liberal' you will find that he does not suppose God has made any other plan, any plan for conducting each and all of us to perfection; he simply supposes that God has no plan at all; or that, if He has, we can't find it out.

In that case, it is difficult to see how his God is better than the others. Indeed, in point of intellect, He is worse. But what is

the use of working on at all, what is the use of sermons at all, if we do not begin at the beginning — if we do not know who God is? Why should I be told to serve Him if I do not know whom it is I serve? To please God, I am justly told, is the end of my being; but I must know what God is like, in order to know what is pleasing to Him. The most frightful crimes which this world has ever seen have been perpetrated ‘to please God.’ So strange and fatal have been the mistakes as to what He is and what does please Him. Is it not, therefore, the beginning of all knowledge to know Him? the very first step in theology, in education, in every line and moment of our conduct, to find out what is God’s character? But we do not even make it the last. ‘I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending,’ the first letter and the last and every intermediate one of all this life-alphabet of man. How true those words are! ‘I am the beginning and the end.’ And how little they are attended to! E.g. we are told that God looks only at our ‘intentions.’ It would seem indeed as if we thought God Himself had only intentions. For, as to crediting Him with a plan within which we have to work, without which we can do nothing, we never so much as believe that He has any.

It is strange how, *a priori*, and in direct opposition to every testimony, every positive experience since the world began, we lay down or take for granted that God has such and such qualities.

Take, e.g., this dictum, that God looks only at our intentions — a cloak, by the way, for every laziness, every unwisdom of man, an excuse for not taking the means of success which we must take for every walk of life — for not cultivating judgment, obtaining experience, watching results, as we do in every other profession, science, and business.

And yet we say, and say truly, that He visits the sins of the fathers upon the third and fourth generation; that is, so far from ‘looking only at the intentions,’ the race, the place, the climate, the conditions (sanitary or otherwise), the education, the moral influences and associations, all that goes to make up that vast item which we call by the little word ‘circumstances,’ all this tells on the next generation, and the next, and the next, and makes the world. Mankind is to create mankind. Mankind has to create the circumstances which make mankind. Mankind has even to find out from experience what is virtue and what is vice. No instinct, shows him this, no conscience. All that conscience tells him is to do what is right and not to do what is wrong. But *what* is the right and what is the wrong mankind has to find out.

Yet we see that inexorable consequences are visited upon the ‘third and fourth generation.’ Consequences of what? Of ignorance. Why? Because this is the very plan of God to teach man through inexorable consequences. To teach him what? That suffering is to be the inexorable, the interminable consequence of error. *Not so:* for under this and through this all is the river deeply flowing (the imperishable, never interrupted Nile), the warp upon which all this suffering is the woof, the ‘still small voice’ — which is the plan of God to bring each and all of us to perfection through mankind learning to create mankind by experience, learning by means of the invariable, the inexorable nature of these consequences.

It is said that, in Japan, every one in whose house a fire originates, whether accidentally or not, is beheaded without appeal; that is, no one looks at his ‘intentions.’

Is not this something like the government of God? If one has not had

the wisdom to prevent the fire, does He then permit the fire to burn us and our children? *Does* He 'forgive' us the consequences? But there seems in almost all present teaching of Christianity an ineradicable prepossession that 'forgiveness' means the removal of future eternal punishment, that God has nothing to do with laws regulating or registering³ results in this world, but that He keeps, as it were, a rod in pickle for us in the next; which rod in pickle is to be averted, it really seems to be taught, by a certain number of ceremonial observances.

This is another of those curious practical mistakes extending through centuries from misunderstanding the character of God the believing Him to be pleased, to be best worshipped, with ceremonial, not moral, service. How could this mistake have originated in Christianity, since Christ may be said to have preached beyond all other things the *spiritual* service of God, the serving Him by serving man? It is a mistake actually more prevalent now in Christianity than it was in some other religions, such as Buddhism.

Mysticism in all ages and in all creeds — as in Oriental religions, so in Western Christianity — seems to have been a reaction against this.

II.

But, as often happens, there has been another reaction besides Mysticism in quite another direction, and this is Positivism.

By Positivists it is thought that, to learn the laws of nature as far as we can, without troubling our heads about Him who made them, if indeed there be One (about whom, they say, we can know nothing), is the only course for man.

³A law is only a register, a register of the will of God — always the same.

Is not this leaving out the most inspiring part of life?

Suppose Plato had said, 'I find certain words, a certain life, on which I mean to base my own; but I do not care as to whether these are the words, the life, of Socrates. I can know nothing really about him. He is indifferent to me.'

The whole inspiration of Plato's life seems to have been his having known Socrates. And shall it be less of an inspiration to us to have known God, to know God?

By Positivists it is said, the aspirations, the 'unsatisfied instincts' of man point not to the development of that particular man, 'to eternal life' for him, as the moralists say, but to the development of 'humanity.' This appears strictly illogical. If one human life is a disappointing fragment, humanity means a mass of disappointing fragments — a crowd of unfinished lives — an accumulation of worthless abortions. *Is* it worth while for me to work either for humanity or myself if this be so?⁴ Above all, is it worth while for me to work if there be no God, or if there be only such a God as this? Unless I am, a fellow-worker with Divine Power, who is working up all our poor little puny efforts into a whole — a whole of which our efforts are only parts, and worth anything only in as much as they *are* parts — shall I work at all?

To be a fellow-worker with God is the highest inspiration of which we can conceive man capable. But how can we be fellow-workers with God if we do not know His plan?

⁴'Collective Humanity' — a term of religion much used by the Positivist, and, indeed, by the 'extremely not so' too. Angels and ministers of grace defend us! — a collection' of abortions — a 'collection' of 'me's. Is this what I am to reverence? this which I am to work for?

The world is God's, not thine : let Him
Work out a change, if change must be,

says the Tempter, in the ballad.

The Tempter says what is (though in a different sense) strictly true. It is God (who made the world and all that is in it) whose plans must, work out its progress and perfection. And we can only be anything or do anything towards it exactly in as far as we are fellow-workers with God exactly in as far as we study, discover, and work in accordance with His laws, His designs.

The Tempter (in the ballad) goes on:

The hand that planted best can trim
And nurse the old unfruitful tree.

Quite true, Tempter but not true in so far as we are not trees. At least, we advance beyond being trees. And then we must help to 'trim' and 'nurse' not only ourselves, but those who have not yet advanced beyond being 'trees.' And at present their name is Legion.

The world is God's, not thine.

Even the Positivist acknowledges this in the sense that there are inexorable laws beyond altogether, not our ken but, our touch. We cannot move them a hair's breadth to the right or the left.

The world is God's, not ours. But God means to make it ours. And how can He make it ours, except by leading us, by His invariable laws, to know how to govern *by them*? It is law which makes us kings. His kingdom is a kingdom of law. Without laws there can be no kingdom. He wants to give us His kingdom. How is He to do this?

III

Into this kingdom we scarcely seem up

to this time to have effected the smallest entrance. And for two reasons :—

(A) That we have but the vaguest and most general acquaintance with the character of its King, restricted indeed only to a few words, to which words mankind attach the most opposite meanings.

(B) That we have not as yet even begun to enquire into any method for ascertaining the laws of the kingdom — moral philosophy, as I believe it is usually called.

And first:

(A) It is of no use saying God is just, unless we define what justice is. In all Christian times, people have said that 'God is just,' and have credited Him with an injustice such as transcends all human injustice that it is possible to conceive, e.g. that He condemns to 'everlasting fire' for not being baptised, little babies who certainly could not get themselves baptised. What is the most horrible and wholesale infanticide compared with this? Not even that of the Frenchwoman farmer of babies who poured vitriol instead of milk down the babies' throats, and dipped their heads in boiling water. For she certainly did not mean to do this for eternity.

But would God be the more just, even though He does not damn the little babies, if He does not *save* them — if He has no scheme by which the little babies, who were never asked whether they would come into this world or not, are to be brought to perfect happiness?

Also, there is extraordinary confusion about what happiness is. Whole books have been written to prove that there is a very equal distribution of happiness all over the world in all classes and conditions of men. 'Paupers are accustomed to pauperism, rich people are accustomed to ennui,

savages to savage-dom. All these have their pleasures.' This is the argument. Do people who argue thus ever ask themselves for one moment what happiness is? Or do they really call the excitement of gin, the beastly momentary pleasure of sensuality, which alone diversify the miserable lives of hundreds of thousands of London poor, happiness? Or do they call the deadlock of carriages in Hyde Park, with dogs' heads instead of children's out of window, which is the break to the ennui of the rich, happiness?

As well might they write to prove that every man 'n London, taking the average, has 10,000*l*. As that every man, taking the average, has happiness.⁵

What a poor idea of happiness this is !

Is not the happiness of God, so far as we can conceive it, the only type of what happiness is? And why has God happiness? Not because He can do what He likes.⁶ But because what He likes is good.

It would seem, then, as if we had to define what the very word that we are most in the habit of using, happiness (in moral science) means, before we can go a step farther in determining what the moral kingdom is, what the laws of the kingdom of God (or of moral science) are.

Take another word in common use : 'Love.' It is of no use saying that God is Love, unless we define what love will do. That 'God is Love' has been said for eighteen centuries, while the most hideous cruelties have been perpetrated in the name of this God of 'Love,' cruelties such as the most savage hate of savage life had never invented.

Is all we have to do in theology, all we have to say in moral philosophy, only (as sometimes said) by way of Illustration, or

⁵The great Lecky has actually made this transcendent blunder about happiness.

⁶Is not the usual idea of happiness to be able to do as one likes?

anecdotes, of a few great principles, such as 'God is Love,' 'God is just,' 'God is happy,' &c. &c.?

Rather, have we not first to lay down the very elementary notions and definitions of what these few great principles are — then to extend the application of these principles over the whole of the moral world? They cover the whole domain of moral philosophy — the whole field of human action, since all human action springs from the great principles of the character of God. *Therefore* we must know what that is.

In the very measure of the progress we make in finding out the real facts of moral science, e.g. educational science, or the real facts of physical science, e.g. sanitary science, in that very measure those facts show the perfect God leading man on to perfection.

Take the newspapers of the day for illustrations. (1) Advertisement of a book : '*Fever in London, its Social and Sanitary Lessons.*' Exactly as we find out the real facts, we find that every one of those facts has attached to it just the lesson which will lead us on to social improvement. Were 'contagion' a fact, what would be its lesson? To isolate and to fly from the fever and cholera patient, and leave him to die; to kill the cattle; instead of improving the conditions of either. This is the strictly logical 'lesson' of 'contagion.' If it is not strictly followed, it is only because men are so much better than their God. IF 'contagion' were a fact — this being the lesson which it teaches, can we escape the conclusion that God is a Spirit of Evil, and not of Love?

Now take the real facts of 'infection.' What is their lesson? Exactly the lesson we should teach, if we wanted to stir man up to social improvement. The lesson of 'infection' is, to remove the conditions of

dirt, of over-crowding, of foulness of every kind under which men live. And even were not so-called infectious disease attached to these conditions 'by the unchanging will of God', it would still be inseparable from social improvement that these conditions should be removed. Disease is Elijah's earthquake, which forces us to attend, to listen to the 'still small voice.' May *we* not therefore say that 'infection' (facts and doctrine) shows God to be a God of Love? And this is but one instance.

(2) The facts of what is more strictly called education, though sanitary facts are one of the most powerful means of educating man show, if possible, still more strongly what here has been imperfectly expressed.

Two powerful addresses to the Universities of St. Andrew's and Glasgow take up the subject of education in its true light, viz. That education is to teach men not to know, but to do; that the true end of education is production, that the object of education is not ornamentation, but production — (after man has learnt to produce, then let him ornament himself) — but 'production' in the widest sense of the term. And, to teach man to produce, the educating him to perfect accuracy of thought — and, it might have been added, to accurate habits of observation — and to perfectly accurate habits of expression, is the main, the constant way — what a grand 'lesson' this is.

But to hasten on. The modern Positivists have told us till we are sick and tired of hearing it : the moral world as the physical world is entirely governed by laws. This is an undeniable truth. But we have never gained one step farther — they have

not told us what one of these laws is.⁷

Perhaps the only one we know is that acts of the moral nature, acts of the intellectual nature, become easier by habit, i.e. vicious habits as well as virtuous ones become more powerful by repetition. A man, any more than a nation, cannot will himself free all at once — cannot will himself good (in any one sense) all at once.

But, otherwise, this, the most practical study of all, the study of man, since man we have always with us — God and man we have always with us — is almost entirely neglected for want of a method to begin it.

But may it not be found that — as mankind has in the last thirty years gone at a pace hitherto unknown in all kinds of discoveries in physical science, discoveries in chemistry, discoveries in mechanical forces in light and electricity, discoveries by sea and discoveries by land' If mankind would but set to work on the moral laws as they have done on the physical laws, equal discoveries would be achieved?

Could we not, e.g., discover how to redeem man from pauperism, how to teach every man, not infirm or incapable, to produce? Scarcely a single step has been made in this direction in England — among us, the most practical nation of the earth. Could we not discover how to redeem men from habitual crime? Though our ears are dinned by Habitual Criminals Bills and the like, crime is actually increasing instead of diminishing, it is sometimes said.

In the worst years of the worst Pope, 300 years ago, a Roman bandit refused a pardon on the ground that robbing was

⁷One of the greatest of American writers, and a 'Transcendentalist', has written that the discovery of how Law rules the moral world is like setting us down to a feast.' It is a feast of empty dishes, then.

more lucrative and the robber's life more pleasant and secure than the honest man's in Rome. What is this but the state of London now?

Is it possible to believe if, instead of calling injustice justice in God, and imitating it, mankind were to join their heads together in order to find out what *are* the ways for bringing man to perfection what *are* the laws that govern the moral world — is it possible to believe that just as great strides might not be made during the next thirty years in this almost untrodden field as have been made in the field of natural science? — that mankind might not be redeemed from habitual pauperism, from habitual crime, and that the face of this world of men might not be transformed on its way to perfection after a manner that 'eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the mind of man to conceive'? Could man have conceived the electric telegraph half a century ago, or even travelling by steam?

(B) But secondly, the very foundation of moral science has to be laid, the method by which we have to arrive at it.

Bacon and Newton laid the foundation for physical science in England; that is, they discovered the method by which all enquiry into physical science must be conducted in order to be successful.

Has not this now to be done for moral science?

As Macaulay says, what would Socrates have thought of us had he known that, since he was here, we have measured the diameters, and distances of bodies millions of millions of miles off? Yet of the nature, the metaphysics of man, we know hardly more than he did.

Of God perhaps we know less; in one sense, the conception of a *perfect* God was perhaps clearer in Plato's mind than in ours. We are not speaking here of

practical, real Christianity.

Who is to be the founder, who the Bacon, of a method of enquiry into moral science?

But is it wonderful that no steps in moral science are made, if no one has ever yet discovered or even thought of discovering a method of enquiry?

Observation, careful observation, in moral science is almost unknown.

A priori reasoning upon 'facts' which are not facts, begging the question upon foregone conclusions, is all the art or method we know.

The preacher, the legislator, the statesman, the poor law administrator, the criminal law administrator, the legal world, the politician, the educator, the moral philosopher, all these have the moral nature of man for their subject, their field of work. Yet the moral nature of man is the only subject they do not know, do not even investigate, do not treat of — the only field they do not work in; or, if they do, it is only by a sort of rule of thumb.

If, then, moral science, the science of the social and political improvement of man, the science of educating or administering the world by discovering the laws which govern man's motives, his moral nature, is synonymous with the study of the character of God, because the laws of the moral world are the expressions and solely the expressions of the character of God, shall we not undertake now, with all our minds, and with all our souls, and with all our hearts, and with all our strength, this study, which is the oldest, the newest, the most important, the most untouched, the most Christ-like, the most philosophical, the most practical, the most human, the most divine, of all the work that God has given us to do?

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