

tion, but it may fall with it. It is unaffected by local agitation or by local legislation in the Province, though it may be, and has been, amended at the instance of the proper authorities. Being a law for a "denomination," to use the word of the statute, no government would proceed to enact any amendment to it unless at the request of the heads of that denomination. This secures the law from any hasty or ill-considered changes, and leaves to the ecclesiastical authorities the proper guidance in educational affairs.

THE SO-CALLED PROBLEM OF EVIL—A PROTEST.

"It is a most salutary thing, under this temptation to self-conceit, to be reminded that in all the highest qualifications of human excellence we have been far outdone by men who lived centuries ago."—CARD. NEWMAN.

"Vielen gefallen ist schlimm."—SCHILLER.

IT may sound a little cruel, but there is no answer more effective and oftentimes more truly kind than to beg a too voluble questioner to state his difficulty. It is a veritable red rag to him. Has he not been stating his difficulty for the last half hour? and now he is coolly requested, not to restate it—that might be construed as a compliment—but simply to make himself intelligible. "Where's your difficulty?" is one of the most exasperating things that can be said, especially when accompanied with a certain inflection of voice. For the moment the position of the person consulted is forgotten in the greatness of the snub. Resentment blinds us to the reasonableness of his request; and even though light were given us to see this much, it is doubtful whether our will would comply. Some, indeed, try to seem at their ease and laugh it off, but a tell-tale flush overspreads their face, and in the look with which they regard the ancient man, those qualities of reverence and love so much recommended to youth are conspicuously absent. If wise and sufficiently heroic, the young man will pause a moment to rally from the rebuff, but if neither wise nor heroic, his alleged difficulty will be reiterated with the added

to the Governor-General. The difference may be important in one respect, as the parties affected could be heard on the appeal; the disallowance is a ministerial act of the Privy Council of Canada, and is done in the secret way in which all such acts are conducted.

velocity and lessened lucidity due to vexation, and the old man must continue to listen, though still unable to follow.

There is another form of trial to which a youth with difficulties is liable. He may have worked very hard at some problem and come to the conclusion that it is insoluble, a very satisfactory conclusion at times to come to. It is a mistake to suppose that the mind can find gratification only in the discovery of the powers it possesses. Now-a-days at least, men grow almost hilarious over the discovery of their incapacity for truth. They are delighted to prove to themselves and others that all of us are very small indeed. They grow wroth over the old Ptolemaic system, were it only because it unduly exalted man's position in the physical world.¹ In their self-depreciation they turn admiringly to physical law and offer it a place above the thing called mind, which they regard suspiciously and praise grudgingly. They love darkness and the lowest place, and are proud to admit that they are in it. Into the causes of this strange parody of humility we cannot now enter. We only observe in passing the curious fact that never before in the history of the world was man made so much of as the centre of the universe of God.² Our student, then, with the problem is in the above happy frame of mind. He has found the insoluble something that baffles his mind, and therefore the minds of all men, and so far he is satisfied. For such a one there may be a terrible shock in store. If the grave old man of our first parable be consulted, it is just possible that he will remark: "Of course it can be solved. It has been solved scores of times. Let me show you." The words may be spoken innocently, but they rankle deeply. The slightest discoverer, if he be attached to his own opinion, as some discoverers are, will reason somewhat after this fashion: My mind has been given to that problem as no other mind ever was. I have pronounced it to be insoluble. It *is* insoluble, and no one has a right to imagine that he or anybody else has solved it. Don't tell me the thing has been done. It never was and never can be.

This picture may give some idea of the reluctance with which we approach one of the so-called insoluble problems. One is pretty sure to give offence by calling it comparatively easy, or even by hinting that it is in a very great measure solved. Yet with all the good will in the world, we cannot but think that it is so. In the face of the irresistible force of the reasoning of a St. Augustine and a St. Thomas, it would be the merest hypocrisy to acquiesce in the epi-

¹ Man's place in the physical world is treated by St. Thomas in the spirit of the true Rationalist. "Multo plus excedit *Anima Rationalis* corpora cœlestia quam ipsa excedunt corpus humanum. Unde non est inconveniens si corpora cœlestia propter hominem esse facta dicantur, non tamen sicut propter principalem finem." *Suppl. ad Summam, Quest. 91, 3.*

² For a lamentable proof of this, see Archdeacon Farrar's work, *Eternal Hope.*

thets that are designed to convey the stupendousness and insolubility of the problem. It may be so in a sense not at all contemplated by the users of these big words—this sense we may have to consider later—but in the meaning intended by modern writers it is neither stupendous nor insoluble. What Dr. Martineau says of the youths who, thanks to Darwin, are not going to be caught in the trap of “Final Causes,” and must have their fling at Paley and the Bridgewater treatises, we may be permitted to say in an applied form of most of those who bandy about the phrase, the Problem of Evil. Dr. Martineau writes (“A Study of Religion.” Preface):¹ “It is probable that of those who speak in this way nine out of ten have never read the books with which they deal so flippantly.” We, on the other hand, shall not be far below the mark if we put the proportion of those who have any clear understanding of the real meaning of the hackneyed phrase, problem of evil, at one in a thousand. One book, which will have to be mentioned again, has just been published, bearing that very name. The author, Mr. Greenleaf Thompson, might as well have called it “Problems in Mechanics” for all the relevancy of the argument. Early in the book (p. 26) he says the problem is quite insoluble, and abandons the attempt accordingly. Yet the book goes on for 250 pages more. The two Mills² were too overcome by their aimless indignation against an imaginary God to bequeath us any contributions of value on the subject of evil, physical or moral, and the literary sentimentality of Archdeacon Farrar is equally barren of results.³

¹ Probably nowhere in the whole range of English philosophy will be found such a masterly solution of some modern difficulties concerning evil as in the pages of Dr. Martineau (*Ibid.*, vol. 2, c. 3). We had intended giving some extracts, but it would be difficult to make a selection from a chapter which, for a combination of subtlety of thought, brilliancy of diction and playful fancy, is one of the masterpieces of recent literature. The author unconsciously, it would seem, applies many principles of St. Augustine and St. Thomas, and thus adds vastly to their practical force. A study of these principles, coupled with an application of them under the able guidance of Dr. Martineau, will be found to fortify the true philosophy of evil against any possible attack. We may add that Dr. Martineau strongly deprecates the passionate and foolish spirit in which the problem is so often approached.

Like Dugald Stewart, he is quite ready to admit that the problem is by no means as difficult as it is represented.

One slightly adverse criticism may be offered. The large space devoted by Dr. Martineau to the treatment of animal pain seems altogether disproportionate. However, it may be said that modern Humanitarianism rendered it necessary.

² *Autobiography of J. S. Mill*, p. 41.

³ In *Eternal Hope*, Sermon 3, Archdeacon Farrar, evidently under the influence of excitement, which seems not to have subsided between the preaching of the sermon and the publication of the book, thus expresses himself: “St. Thomas lent his saintly name to what I can only call the abominable fancy,” etc., etc. Neither St. Thomas’s saintliness nor fancy is here in the least concerned, only his logic. His particular

A famous stanza of Tennyson's is perhaps the very best illustration of the wild obscurity with which modern philosophy has surrounded this question as though to make examination impossible. Compressed into four lines by the poet's marvellous power, the very essence of modern thought on a momentous subject stands revealed. Words like these have probably done as much to foster a false philosophy of evil as Shakespeare's plea for the beetle and its pangs has done for a false Humanitarianism :

[He] thought that God was love indeed,
 And love Creation's only law,
 While Nature, red in tooth and claw
 With ravin, shrieked against his creed.

A few remarks on this may be subjoined.

There is a voice heard above the shriek of Lord Tennyson's Nature—for we cannot believe that it is Nature herself, so sweet and stately—and that is the loud protest of the Philosophy of Religion and Common Sense.

Compare the poet of the 103d Psalm and judge, not only whose is the saner philosophy, but whose the truer art. "Thou waterest the hills from thy upper rooms, the earth shall be filled with the fruit of thy words, bringing forth grass for cattle and herb for the service of man, that thou mayest bring bread out of the earth and that wine may cheer the heart of man. . . . Thou hast appointed darkness and it is night; in it shall all the bears of the forest roam, young lions roaring after their prey and *seeking their meat from God.*"

And next hear Common Sense. "The life of the lion," says St. Thomas in his robust way, "could not be preserved but by the killing of the ass" (*Summa*, Pars i., 48, 2); and again: "Some would say that the nature of fire was bad, because it burned the house of some poor man." This strange opinion, as he calls it, he attributes to the "Ancients," "because they did not consider universal causes, but only particular causes of particular events" (*Ibid.*, Pars i., 49, 2).

The whirligig of time, indeed, brings round its revenges, and Lord Tennyson, the representative of our highly-evolved selves, must be classed under the now slightly opprobrious name of "Ancients."

conclusion about lost souls is infallibly deduced from premises which Archdeacon Farrar himself must grant.

Mr. Leckey's mode of attack on the same passage is—

(1) To quote only two lines.

(2) To mutilate these two lines.

(3) To print five words of these two mutilated lines in capitals of horror (*Hist. Rationalism*, 2d ed., vol. i., p. 350).

Another, perhaps it might be called a lower, form of common sense has still to make its reckoning with Lord Tennyson. It asks: Do you or do you not do wrong in ordering a red-handed butcher to kill your meat? Do you not make Nature shriek? We think that nature (with a small n) would shriek louder if the "bleeding business" were *not* done.

But it is not from writers of books or poetry that the modern spirit is best caught. The heterogeneous mass of literature that is ever falling from a glutted press on a glutted world is better for the purpose. It is from newspapers and periodicals, supplemented by the information gained from odds and ends of discussion, shakes of the head, smiles of disbelief and sighs over life, that we come to form a very true estimate of popular views of evil. Judging by these criteria, the demand for articles that can in some way or another be called problems, with a dash of evil in them, is going briskly on. To minds capable of anything like ultimate analysis, they are reducible to a very few—witness the ceaseless and wholly unnecessary multiplication of so-called religious problems—but the multifarious ways of describing them, and the colors in which modern literature revels, give them an air of reality to which they have no intrinsic title.

All the metaphorical resources of the English language—that most untruthful instrument of the most truthful race under the sun—are exhausted in the attempt to portray the strange manners and customs of problems. We have Problems Religious, Philosophical, Scientific, Social, Economic, and, dreadful to say, Comic or Comical Problems; Problems that confront us like sturdy beggars—Problems that demand solution, that menace, that haunt, that bewilder, that overpower, that make life unendurable (so it is said), that assume every shape and form and monstrous feature, perplexing, importunate, complicated, hopeless, insoluble Problems—and the greatest of them all is Evil.

There is a language of problems growing up apace, and lamentations over the "hideous enigmas" of life bid fair to generate a literary screaminess and philosophical slang. After all, apart from shams and phrases, the world is luminous still, with the simplicity and symmetry of God's handiwork. The darkness over it is but necessary and bountiful; it is necessary as the consequence of our limited being. Were the world all light to us, the world were miserably little. And the darkness is bountiful as the occasion of the nobility of self-surrender, the heroism of suffering and the divinity of compassion. Hideousness there is, but this is not part of the darkness; it is part of the very distinct and palpable reality of human sin. Wild invective confounds this harmless darkness with this hideous sin, until the world begins to think

itself grievously ill-used at the hands of God. At this point undisciplined speculation and unchastened language rush blindly in, and thrust aside the realities of life, and the world becomes far more unhappy because of its man-made theories than because of its God-made facts.

After such a Babel, no wonder that the tones from the past are welcome, for they are low and mellow and sweet to the jangling that vexes ear and spirit, but they are too gentle to drown it, and Shakespeare may sing and St. Thomas teach unheard:

“There is a soul of goodness in things evil,
Would man observingly distil it out.”

“Respondeo dicendum quod malum non potest esse nisi in bono. . . . Respondeo dicendum quod causa mali est bonum. . . . Respondeo dicendum quod Deus causando bonum ordinis universi, ex consequenti et quasi per accidens¹ causat corruptiones rerum.”²

We fail, as we said, to sympathize with the language used about this so-called terrible problem. It sounds, in too many cases, loose, extravagant and hollow. The questions, Where is your difficulty? Has it not been in great measure solved? rise to one's lips. We know, of course, the penalty that is attached to the utterance of an opinion somewhat adverse to the age's idea of itself. The gently abusive powers of modern English—one would rather fall under the good old knock-him-on-the-head style of criticism—are put in requisition against the man who cannot feel, as it is said, with the age. He is out of touch with the modern spirit, incapable of seeing two sides to a question, blind to the signs of the times, deaf to the cry of struggling humanity, his altruistic growth stunted, and one side of his nature uncultivated. Alas, alas! Why will not these accusers, replete with these phrases and flouts, “deafened with the clamor of their own dear groans,” remember that we are debtors not only to the generation in which we live, but also to the minds of the thinkers of old? We have obligations to both. We are not free to treat the dead ill because they will not feel it. They indeed are beyond the reach of injustice and the chill of neglect, and it is well; for there where they fought on the sacred battlefield of truth, a noisy crowd of gasconaders and philosophers is swarming, at one moment glorying over their comparatively petty conquests—those over matter—at the next cowering before shadowy armies of mental problems, inviting them to approach, then growing hysterical, turning and flying, contemptuously ignorant of the deeds of those who stood there once, not

¹ Aristotle's *κατὰ συμβεβηκός*. English helpless here. Perhaps *primarily unintentioned* gives something of the idea.

² *Summa*, I. c., and the *Quæstio de Malo* among the *Quæstiones Disputatæ*.

humble or wise enough to go to Augustine's "Confessions," that miracle of thought and tears, and cry out with him, "Quærebam unde malum et male quærebam,"¹ but supremely satisfied with themselves, insensible to the influence and uninspired by the voices of the mighty past. The clear and fearless gaze that in the old days of the combat of thought used to dispel the gloom is growing dim, and the strong grasp that once wrung its worst terrors from mystery is relaxed. "We have lost something in our progress," are the closing words of Mr. Lecky's great work, but they are not sad enough. We have lost the great bulk of the science of life, philosophy.

And there would seem to be little prospect in our days of any general effort to recover lost ground, or of anything like a successful solution of even an ordinary philosophical problem. In a progressive age we make no progress in philosophy.

It will be enough to give only one reason out of many for this rather gloomy view. It may be stated thus: Protracted logical reasoning and deep disciplined thought have become to the modern mind almost a physical impossibility, or at least our repugnance to such processes is almost insuperable.

This reason will seem a matter of rejoicing to those who derive their ideas of the logical characteristics of the old philosophy from writers who, to the delight of the vulgar taste, persist in identifying logic with verbal jugglery. Taken in this sense, logic, of course, connotes a low condition of intellect; and in this same sense many pages out of the old philosophers may be said to be disfigured. But such a state of things never was the rule in the great authors, but the exception. As well might one say that the average of Stoic teaching was fairly represented by a syllogism once discussed in their schools: You have that which you have not lost. But you have not lost horns. Therefore, you have horns. The staple of the great Christian peripatetics was sound and solid thought. The subject-matter of the thought may or may not commend itself to modern ideas, and we are far from saying that it would be desirable for us to devote our thought to exactly the same points. That is not the question. The question is: Was there immense power of thought in these men, and if so, do we bestow on the subject-matter that *we* prefer any thought like it? Do we? For some such thought, it must be borne in mind, is necessary for the attainment of any philosophical truth. To this question it is hardly necessary to say that no answer can be returned, unless the answerer has read something of the two schools which he proposes to compare. With this proviso, there

¹ As a Manichæan. Confessions vii. 5.

can be no manner of doubt as to the result of the contrast. It would be well if, instead of dwelling on the remarkable facility we undoubtedly possess of transporting ourselves to ages long dead and of feeling to a great extent with them, we should sometimes vary the process and call these other ages from the tomb and bid them live with and remark on us. We think, for instance, a resuscitated St. Thomas would soon master many modern problems, and at the sight of our decadence in the reasoning powers that he once found and stimulated in the educational centres of Europe, we doubt not that he would stand aghast. There is no other word for it.

Suppose he were told that eminent men of the nineteenth century expressed in print their doubts as to the sum of $2 + 2$ in another planet, how should he not feel aghast? And in so feeling, would he be right or would he be wrong? Is it by reason of the prejudices of his old-world education, or because of his insight into everlasting truth, that the mediæval philosopher would be thus very literally shocked? The question must be capable of an answer.

Or let him be informed that the immense progress of science, of which we are justly proud, is stated on many hands to have necessarily impaired belief in the very existence of God—for, stripped of all ambiguities, this *is* the naked assertion of multitudes. He would probably rather disbelieve his informant than imagine for a moment that the educated and cultured human mind could possibly have fallen so low. Even when he came to realize it, how could he, by dint of strict reasoning, argue the world into reason again? He could not, for strict argument, to be efficacious, supposes a considerable amount of pre-existent reasonableness. All he could do would be to suggest some simile or metaphor suited to the tastes and capacities of the age. He might observe, for instance, that though the childish idea was exploded, that the noise in the sea-shell held close to the ear was the distant roar of the sea, still the existence of the sea was not thereby imperilled, nor the necessity of its waters for the life of fish lessened. Neither was God's existence made more doubtful, no matter what the discovery that falsified old unscientific notions on any physical fact in the whole physical word; nor was the necessity of His existence as the ultimate explanation of all life and being diminished.

This is all, perhaps, that even St. Thomas could do.

The higher processes of thought—let us call them by their right name, the metaphysical—are closed against him, owing to the mental conditions of his hearers. For the solution of strictly philosophical problems it seems to me that the modern mind is as ill-fitted as the mind of any previous epoch ever was, while, com-

pared with several ages of the past, which we are ignorant enough to decry or presumptuous enough to patronize, we aptly illustrate on these points the second childhood of the world. Over and over again, we honestly fail to see in pretentious books the veriest sophisms that ever were penned—*φανερώτατα ἀλλ' οὐχ ἡμῖν*.¹ One would think that we were incapable of taking the two or three steps that would often be sufficient to lead us to first principles. Mr. Lecky, for instance, the very highest type we possess of a philosophical historian and masterly writer, has repeatedly stated, both in his *Rationalism* and *European Morals*, that the general disbelief in miracles is not founded on reason, and yet is the right and proper attitude to assume. He does not see the fatal blow he is inflicting on the fundamental truths of true Rationalism. As a more general experiment, take any long chapter in a modern book on philosophy, and having extracted the gist of the reasoning, submit it to that most crucial test, syllogistic form. Two results will be observed. First, the precipitate of reasoning thus obtained will, as a rule, be in infinitesimal proportion to the amount of verbiage that has been evaporated; and, secondly, it will often enough be frail and worthless, incapable of standing the test of light, still less of handling. To exist at all, it must be put back into its wordy and deceptive covering. Let the same experiment be tried, say with Suarez against James I.,² and his one page will yield more solid produce of reason than the whole bulk of the other book. He professes to reason and does reason, and if he reasons falsely, he can be detected; the other professes to reason and does not, but it is hard to discover that he does not.

Yet there would seem to be some hesitation in admitting that we do not excel in reasoning powers. This is due to the fact that we have no standard of reasoning to which we compare ourselves. Hence we do not humble ourselves enough. Worse than this, no one will do it for us. In other words, there is no such thing in our day as philosophical criticism of philosophy—an extraordinary paradox, to be sure, to those who believe that the highly intelligent criticism which marks the literature, science and art of the century extends to the whole field of thought. However, it takes no profound knowledge of ancient and modern philosophy to be able to say that, considering the masterly anatomy practised by the "Schools" on one another and on outsiders, we moderns are utter

¹ Said by Aristotle of certain necessary truths. An agnostic will probably see in the phrase a contradiction in terms. Much in the same way Mill thought that the Aristotelian syllogism involved a *petitio principii*. It is a curious fact quite overlooked by Mill that this objection was met somewhat by Aristotle more than two thousand years ago

² The title of the work is *Defensio Fidei Catholicæ adversus Anglicanæ Sectæ errores*, quoted by Mr. Lecky, apparently at second hand, as Suarez *De Fide*.

strangers to anything like true philosophical criticism of so-called philosophical books. This statement will cease to be matter of surprise if we remember that in every branch of true criticism the learned world exacts certain conditions without which the critic cannot be said to be formed and will not be allowed to have his say. Obviously he must know his subject, but in this knowledge the knowledge of authorities also is rightly supposed to be included. Never was the phrase, "consult authorities," so much in vogue as now, never was public opinion in the good sense so bent on seeing that the student should make himself acquainted with the authorities who have traversed and illuminated the same line of research. Men are on the watch not only to catch him tripping in his statements, but also to discover what authorities he ought to have consulted and did not. Indeed this coercive spirit is sometimes carried to excess. Witness especially the article on Evolution by Mr. Sully in the new edition of the "Encyclopædia Britannica," wherein every Evolutionist who has anything ridiculous to say on or off the subject has to be set down, ticketed, expounded, and thus have justice done him by the meek, long-suffering modern student. Friends, and imperious ones too, are always about to tell the critic in training that he should have taken down his Bede or Pepys or Blackstone, as the case may be. It is much to be regretted, they will say, that Mr. A. overlooked this treatise or that pamphlet, or presumed to sit down without his "Littré" or "Dr. Murray" before him. We are exquisitely sensitive about the honor due to authorities, and we form our critics accordingly. This rule of the republic of letters may be galling enough at times, but it has to be kept, and the republic's police are vigilant. If the great authority is right, he has to be read in order to develop and distance him; if he has gone wrong on a point, he has still to be read in order to be refuted, or some other authority who will refute him has to be appealed to.

Such is a part of the process of manufacture that a sound critic in history, for example, or philosophy, is put through. It is, on the whole, very salutary, and succeeds in fashioning men who in turn become real authorities. It provides that the unscientific element be eliminated and the highest qualities of the critical mind retained! The critic is now in the chair he deserves to fill, and maintains with an able hand the discipline of the department over which he presides. Inferior men will not, as a rule, venture to present him with flimsy and worthless books. Broadly speaking we may say that the high level maintained in our criticism of poetry is most effective in keeping down the growth of extravagantly bad productions in verse. Men are afraid of the critic. His periodical raids into the ranks of the great "unwhipped" are equally dreaded

and beneficial. No one now-a-days will seriously write a book to prove that John Dennis of Dunciad fame was a greater writer than Pope, or Colley Cibber a greater dramatist than Shakespeare. No one dare.

Yet what are we doing to form critics for the protection of philosophy and the terror of the wrongdoers and foolish who may trespass on this domain? Nothing at all. We do not form them, because we do not know how, and because, for all we know, Grote is as good a philosopher as Aristotle, or Mill as St. Thomas. We give no command to study authorities, because we know of none. It is not that we have examined them and found them wanting; we do not know the outside of their books, let alone their qualifications. There is, indeed, a vague notion that they are "discredited," but to be discredited is one of the worst forms of condemnation, and sentence of condemnation is lawful only after a hearing, and we never even professed to have given them a hearing. It is not as if we found in his first volume that Macaulay was untrustworthy as a historian, and then discarded him; it is as if a Frenchman, hearing the name of Chaucer, made no further inquiry, but proceeded to declare *ore rotundo* that there was no early English poet. We recklessly assert, "No first principles of philosophy have ever been established"—when we do not know whether they have ever been discussed. "Free-will has never been proved"—and we could not give a single argument that was ever advanced in its defence by its ablest defenders. "The natural law is a myth"—and we are utterly ignorant that a St. Augustine has thought it out, and that his arguments remain unanswered. If all these and scores of other truths are still regarded as perfectly open and unestablished, it is no wonder that the field of philosophy is invaded by hosts who cannot be more ignorant than the critics in command. They are free to say or do anything and everything ridiculous, because nothing seems ridiculous to those who know no better. If no one knew anything of history, how would it be shocking to maintain in a book that Alfred the Great was identical with Edward the Confessor? Yet it is no whit less absurd to maintain in philosophy, as some do gravely and unblushingly, that intellect is brain-stuff; if profound ignorance as to Shakespeare prevailed, who is to prevent us from saying that Cibber is as good as he? Yet this to one who knows both sides of the parallel would be about the same as to say that Suarez on "God's Providence" is no better than Mill against it. Do the upholders of Mill know the name of Suarez? Not till you tell them. Do they know that he is an authority? No. Do they know that he is *not* an authority? No. Do they know that his arguments have been answered? Yes. Who told them? Some modern authority said

that *all these men* were answered and discredited. Did *he* know Suarez? They don't know, but they suppose he did. Truly, without the check of criticism, men can and will say the most outrageous things, and without the study of the ancient authorities, there can be no criticism. Its absence in philosophy is a great incongruity in this critical age. More; it is a grievous evil to this would-be philosophical age, for philosophy cannot progress when its most rudimentary proofs are travestied or denied, and travestied and denied they ever will be until, acknowledging the impossibility of starting, at this age of the world, a brand-new and quite true system, we go and consult the older philosophers, not to worship, but honestly to examine them, and, according to that examination, to yield or withhold our assent. As it is, our position would be hardly tolerable were it not that our ignorance of our state is profound. Blissfully unconscious of our own inability to praise or censure judiciously, we look on while a company of fellow-blunderers perform in equally blissful unconsciousness the most fantastic tricks that ever made philosophy weep. There are few more extraordinary or more humiliating phenomena in the history of philosophy than the ascendancy over English thought exercised a few years ago by the Benthamite school. That miserable structure could not have stood for a day against the attack of an efficient body of critics, but there was none such.

Any kind of trick may be played with impunity on modern philosophers. Mr. Hallam ("History of Literature") gravely asserts: "The Fathers, with the exception, perhaps the single one, of St. Augustine, had taught the corporeity of the thinking substance." Mr. Lecky repeats the statement in perfect innocence. Professor Max Müller, with that blatant expression of general disbelief which is so unspeakably distressing to the higher type of the scientific character, lays it down in his "Science of Thought" that "there is no such thing as intellect, understanding, mind or reason." Mr. Jevons ("Principles of Science") fears that the existence of evil may be pushed to something like a demonstration against the existence of God. Mr. Daniel Greenleaf Thompson¹ in his "Problem of Evil" assures us that the free-will controversy has closed forever in the utter discomfiture of the upholders of freedom. If, he adds, we are not prepared to take his word for this, he must refer us to men of science; if we are disposed to suspect bias in this body, he has only to hand us over to the good Christian man—he does not say he was also a Calvinist—Jonathan Edwards. None of these men, be it observed, are in the least ashamed of

¹ "Of New York City," as we are told in the advertisement of another work of his.

themselves. Why should they be? They have usually acted up to their lights. They consulted no authorities, for no one pointed them out. They evolved all things from their own minds, because they were not told of any minds that were better. Then they played before critics, and the critics applauded because they were no true critics.

As are the critics, so are the books which they are incompetent to criticise. With the exception of mathematical treatises and some few scientific ones, we may say that books wholly occupied with rigorous demonstration and close reasoning are absolutely unknown to us. The dearth of such works is not recognized as deplorable because, on the principle of the relativity of knowledge, the lower intellectual functions which we see exhibited in the books we have, are not known to us *as* the lower, but as the only ones.

Let us not be unjust to ourselves. We can do far more feats than are enumerated in Matthew Arnold's meagre catalogue of Philistine achievements: "Doors that open, windows that shut, locks that turn, razors that shave, coats that wear, watches that go." In scientific and historical research and philological criticism, to mention only three things out of many, we stand immeasurably above all the progress of all the ages gone before. But it must be borne in mind that philosophy is wider than all this, and that there are in it vast recesses which we know nothing of, and to which we cannot possibly penetrate without an equipment which, as a matter of fact, we have not got. How does the able historical work show that we are possessed of great reasoning powers as such? It shows nothing of the sort. It proves undoubtedly our possession of extended knowledge, large sympathies and impartial judgment; and bristling foot-notes will probably evidence our inexhaustible patience in the examination of original records. But, valuable as these qualities are, they are but a small fraction of the capacities of the human mind. If Aristotle and Albertus Magnus were great naturalists in their day, and employed many scientific methods, and displayed some of the highest qualities of the scientific mind, they were also something more. They were deep thinkers about the soul, and truth, and happiness, and virtue, and good, and evil, all of them matters of import to men, and many of them, in the long run, of vast practical consequence. That "something more," which these philosophers had, we have not, whatever else we may have. We neither excel ourselves, nor respect those who excel in what is, after all, a higher sphere of thought. Our spirit of toleration has, indeed, softened the asperities of our language in regard to that unhappy class of men, but it may be doubted whether

the feelings with which Thomas Hobbes regarded them are more charitable now.¹

If the above contention be at all correct, if the accuracy of thought essential to true philosophy be replaced in modern days by lame analysis and questionable logic, a corresponding loss in the clearness of our philosophical language may be looked for.

A word on this point may be added. If the charge of obscurity of expression is to be proved against modern philosophy, we cannot fairly be required to put on our charge-sheet anything except those metaphysical or purely psychological subjects wherein alone obscurity is possible; that is to say, all the clearness, for example, of Dr. Bain on the physiological parts of psychology, on nerves and muscles and organs, where there is no room for the crimes of unintelligibility, cannot be adduced as rebutting evidence.

Only one extract can here be given. It is not affected by its context, it is anything but a solitary instance, and it is typical of the language of Mr. Spencer as a professed metaphysician. So regarded, it would seem to indicate, on the part of English expression, an approximation to the rapidity of descent with which much German philosophy has gone down into the depths of the unintelligible.²

“The conception of a rhythmically-moving mass of sensible matter is a synthesis of certain states of consciousness that stand related in a certain succession. The concept of a rhythmically-moving molecule is one in which these states and their relations have been reduced to the extremest limits of dimension representable to the mind, and are then assumed to be further reduced far beyond the limits of representation. So that this rhythmically-moving molecule which is our unit of composition of external phenomena, is mental in a three-fold sense. Our experiences of a rhythmically-moving mass, whence the conception of it is derived, are states of mind having objective counterparts that are unknown; the derived conception of a rhythmically-moving molecule is formed

¹ Quoting Luther with approval, Hobbes says (“Questions concerning Liberty, etc.”): “Aquinas set up the kingdom of Aristotle, the destroyer of godly doctrine.” This from Hobbes, who was himself a violent opponent of Free Will! Again, in the treatise “Of Man,” cap. 8, speaking of Suarez and other schoolmen, he remarks: “This kind of absurdity may rightly be numbered among the many sorts of madness, and all the time that guided by clear thoughts of their worldly lust they forbear disputing or writing thus, but lucid intervals.” Most of the great scholastics, as we know, were furnished by the Franciscan, Dominican and Jesuit Orders, all of which once wrote and fought so hard that they really had no time for “worldly lust,” which, by the way, in Hobbes’s mind seems to be a hopeful sign of mental sanity.

² See one of the most intelligible of German works, Lotze’s “Microcosm.” Even in the admirable translation of the late Miss Hamilton and Miss Jones, Lotze is not too clear.

of states of mind that have no directly-presented objective counterparts at all, and when we try to think of the rhythmically-moving molecule as we suppose it to exist, we do so by imagining that we have re-represented these representative states on an infinitely reduced scale. So that the unit out of which we build our interpretation of material phenomena is triply ideal."—(*Principles of Psychology*, 2d edition, stereotyped, vol. i. p. 625.)

Neither Aristotle nor St. Thomas has anything to show to equal this.

We are painfully aware of the danger one runs in quoting passages like the foregoing, with the intention avowed above. Even to the politest of readers the obvious retort is open. "It may be to *him* unintelligible, but who is he?" etc. A personal reference is thus forced on me. We confess that at first we did feel in duty bound to be ashamed of the incapacity which failed to apprehend a great writer's meaning. Then we read and re-read. A comfortable suspicion at last dawned, which gradually ripened into the conviction that it was not wholly our stupidity that was to blame, but that the writer was, essentially and intrinsically, unintelligible. There are, of course, some who say that they can understand all or nearly all of such writing, but we must not be rudely skeptical.¹ To us, at least, less gifted mortals, much, very much of it, seems nothing short of glorified rubbish.

One thing is certain, that works like Mr. Spencer's mark an epoch in philosophical expression. It is impossible to conceive that a committee, composed of certain great names in English philosophy, say, Bacon, Locke, Hobbes and Paley, and appointed to report on Mr. Spencer, could do their work properly; the language of the 16th, 17th and 18th century philosophy is so essentially different from ours, that is, from Mr. Spencer's. It may be doubted whether they would understand one page of his metaphysical style. The presumption is that there must be something wrong, at least in his language.

Starting from one of the so-called problems of the day, we were led to dwell on a difficulty or disqualification which we thought existed in regard to the profitable discussion of any such matters at all.

Briefly, our reasoning and logical powers are not equal to the task.

This evil, we are confident, would be remedied in great measure by a studious and judicious reading of the great reasoners of the old philosophy, especially St. Thomas Aquinas.

But here our protest tends to become a plea, and this must not be.

¹ One can better say strong things in Greek, and not seem too severe; *οὐδ' ἔστι ἀναλχαίον ἂν τις λέγει ταῦτα ὑπολαμ βάνειν.*—"Arist. *Metaphys.*, iii. 3.