Confessions of an Inquiring Spirit and Some Miscellaneous Pieces

by Samuel Taylor Coleridge

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Confessions OF AN Inquiring Spirit.

TO WHICH ARE ADDED MISCELLANEOUS ESSAYS FROM "THE FRIEND."

BY SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE.

Decorative graphic

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INTRODUCTION.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge was born on the 21st of October, 1772, youngest of many children of the Rev. John Coleridge, Vicar of the Parish and Head Master of the Grammar School of Ottery St. Mary, in Devonshire. One of the poet's elder brothers was the grandfather of Lord Chief Justice Coleridge. Coleridge's mother was a notable housewife, as was needful in the mother of ten children, who had three more transmitted to her from her husband's former wife. Coleridge's father was a kindly and learned man, little sophisticated, and distinguishing himself now and then by comical acts of what is called absence of mind. Charles Buller, afterwards a judge, was one of his boys, and, when her husband's life seemed to be failing, had promised what help he could give to the anxious wife. When his father died, Samuel Taylor Coleridge was but eight years old, and Charles Buller obtained for him his presentation to Christ's Hospital. Coleridge's mind delighted in far wandering over the fields of thought; from a boy he took intense delight in dreamy speculation on the mysteries that lie around the life of man. From a boy also he proved his subtleties of thought through what Charles Lamb called the "deep and sweet intonations" of such speech as could come only from a poet.

From the Charterhouse, Coleridge went to Jesus College, Cambridge, where he soon won a gold medal for a Greek ode on the Slave Trade, but through indolence he slipped into a hundred pounds of debt. The stir of the French Revolution was then quickening young minds into bold freedom of speculation, resentment against tyranny of custom, and yearning for a higher life in this world. Old opinions that familiarity had made to the multitude conventional were for that reason distrusted and discarded. Coleridge no longer held his religious faith in the form taught by his father. He could not sign the Thirty-nine Articles, and felt his career closed at the University. His debt also pressed upon him heavily. After a long vacation with a burdened mind, in which one pleasant day of picnic gave occasion to his “Songs of the Pixies,” Coleridge went back to Cambridge. But soon afterwards he threw all up in despair. He resolved to become lost to his friends, and find some place where he could earn in obscurity bare daily bread. He came to London, and then enlisted as a private in the 15th Light Dragoons. After four months he was discovered, his discharge was obtained, and he went back to Cambridge.

But he had no career before him there, for his religious opinions then excluded belief in the doctrine of the Trinity, and the Universities were not then open to Dissenters. A visit to Oxford brought him into relation with Robert Southey and fellow-students of Southey’s who were also touched with revolutionary ardour. Coleridge joined with them in the resolve to leave the Old World and create a better in the New, as founders of a Pantisocracy—an all-equal government—on the banks of the Susquehannah. They would need wives, and Southey knew of three good liberal-minded sisters at Bristol, one of them designed for himself; her two sisters he recommended for as far as they would go. The chief promoters of the Pantisocracy removed to Bristol, and one of the three sisters, Sarah Fricker, was married by Coleridge; Southey marrying another, Edith; while another young Oxford enthusiast married the remaining Miss Fricker; and so they made three pairs of future patriarchs and matriarchs.

Nothing came of the Pantisocracy, for want of money to pay fares to the New World. Coleridge supported himself by giving lectures, and in 1797 published Poems. They included his “Religious Musings,” which contain expression of his fervent revolutionary hopes. Then he planned a weekly paper, the Watchman, that was to carry the lantern of philosophic truth, and call the hour for those who cared about the duties of the day. When only three or four hundred subscribers had been got together in Bristol, Coleridge resolved to travel from town to town in search of subscriptions. Wherever he went his eloquence prevailed; and he came back with a very large subscription list. But the power of close daily work, by which alone Coleridge could carry out such a design, was not in him, and the Watchman only reached to its tenth number.

Then Coleridge settled at Nether Stowey, by the Bristol Channel, partly for convenience of neighbourhood to Thomas Poole, from whom he could borrow at need. He had there also a yearly allowance from the Wedgwoods of Etruria, who had a strong faith in his future. From Nether Stowey, Coleridge walked over to make friends with Wordsworth at Racedown, and the friendship there established caused Wordsworth and his sister to remove to the neighbourhood of Nether Stowey. Out of the relations with Wordsworth thus established came Coleridge’s best achievements as a poet, the “Ancient Mariner” and “Christabel.” The “Ancient Mariner” was finished, and was the chief part of Coleridge’s contribution to the “Lyrical Ballads,” which the two friends published in 1798. “Christabel,” being unfinished, was left unpublished until 1816.

With help from the Wedgwoods, Coleridge went abroad with Wordsworth and his sister, left them at Hamburg, and during fourteen months increased his familiarity with German. He came back in the late summer of 1799, full of enthusiasm for Schiller’s last great work, his Wallenstein, which Coleridge had seen acted. The Camp had been first acted at Weimar on the 18th of October, 1798; the Piccolomini on the 30th of January, 1799; and Wallenstein’s Death on the 10th of the next

following April. Coleridge, under the influence of fresh enthusiasm, rapidly completed for Messrs. Longman his translation of Wallenstein's Death into an English poem of the highest mark.

Then followed a weakening of health. Coleridge earned fitfully as journalist; settled at Keswick; found his tendency to rheumatism increased by the damp of the Lake Country; took a remedy containing opium, and began to acquire that taste for the excitement of opium which ruined the next years of his life. He was invited to Malta, for the benefit of the climate, by his friend, John Stoddart, who was there. At Malta he made the acquaintance of the governor, Sir Alexander Ball, whose worth he celebrates in essays of the Friend, which are included under the title of "A Sailor's Fortune" in this little volume. For a short time he acted as secretary to Sir Alexander, then returned to the Lakes and planned his journal, the Friend, published at Penrith, of which the first number appeared on the 1st of August, 1809, the twenty-eighth and last towards the end of March, 1810.

Next followed six years of struggle to live as journalist and lecturer in London and elsewhere, while the habit of taking opium grew year by year, and at last advanced from two quarts of laudanum a week to a pint a day. Coleridge put himself under voluntary restraint for a time with a Mr. Morgan at Calne. Finally he placed himself, in April, 1816—the year of the publication of "Christabel"—with a surgeon at Highgate, Mr. Gillman, under whose friendly care he was restored to himself, and in whose house he died on the 25th of July, 1834. It was during this calm autumn of his life that Coleridge, turning wholly to the higher speculations on philosophy and religion upon which his mind was chiefly fixed, a revert to the Church, and often actively antagonist to the opinions he had held for a few years, wrote, his "Lay Sermons," and his "Biographia Literaria," and arranged also a volume of Essays of the Friend. He lectured on Shakespeare, wrote "Aids to Reflection," and showed how his doubts were set at rest in these "Confessions of an Inquiring Spirit," which were first published in 1840, after their writer's death.

H. M.

Confessions of an Inquiring Spirit.

LETTERS ON THE INSPIRATION OF THE SCRIPTURES.

LETTER I.

My Dear Friend,

I employed the compelled and most unwelcome leisure of severe indisposition in reading The Confessions of a Fair Saint in Mr. Carlyle's recent translation of the Wilhelm Meister, which might, I think, have been better rendered literally The Confessions of a Beautiful Soul. This, acting in conjunction with the concluding sentences of your letter, threw my thoughts inward on my own religious experience, and gave immediate occasion to the following Confessions of one who is neither fair nor saintly, but who, groaning under a deep sense of infirmity and manifold imperfection, feels the want, the necessity, of religious support; who cannot afford to lose any the smallest buttress, but who not only loves Truth even for itself, and when it reveals itself aloof from all interest, but who loves it with an indescribable awe, which too often withdraws the genial sap of his activity from the columnar trunk, the sheltering leaves, the bright and fragrant flower, and the foodful or medicinal fruitage, to the deep root, ramifying in obscurity and labyrinthine way-winning—

In darkness there to house unknown, Far underground, Pierced by no sound Save such as live in Fancy's ear alone, That listens for the uptorn mandrake's parting groan!

I should, perhaps, be a happier—at all events a more useful—man if my mind were otherwise constituted. But so it is, and even with regard to Christianity itself, like certain plants, I creep towards the light, even though it draw me away from the more

nourishing warmth. Yea, I should do so, even if the light had made its way through a rent in the wall of the Temple. Glad, indeed, and grateful am I, that not in the Temple itself, but only in one or two of the side chapels, not essential to the edifice, and probably not coëval with it, have I found the light absent, and that the rent in the wall has but admitted the free light of the Temple itself.

I shall best communicate the state of my faith by taking the creed, or system of credenda, common to all the Fathers of the Reformation—overlooking, as non-essential, the differences between the several Reformed Churches, according to the five main classes or sections into which the aggregate distributes itself to my apprehension. I have then only to state the effect produced on my mind by each of these, or the quantum of recipiency and coincidence in myself relatively thereto, in order to complete my Confession of Faith.

I. The Absolute; the innominable Αὐτοπάτωρ et Causa Sui, in whose transcendent I Am, as the Ground, is whatever verily is:—the Triune God, by whose Word and Spirit, as the transcendent Cause, exists whatever substantially exists:—God Almighty—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, undivided, unconfounded, co-eternal. This class I designate by the word Στάσις.

II. The Eternal Possibilities; the actuality of which hath not its origin in God: Chaos spirituale:—'Απόστασις.

III. The Creation and Formation of the heaven and earth by the Redemptive Word:—the Apostasy of Man:—the Redemption of Man:—the Incarnation of the Word in the Son of Man:—the Crucifixion and Resurrection of the Son of Man:—the Descent of the Comforter:—Repentance (μετάνοια):—Regeneration:—Faith:—Prayer:—Grace—Communion with the Spirit:—Conflict:—Self-abasement:—Assurance through the righteousness of Christ:—Spiritual Growth:—Love:—Discipline:—Perseverance:—Hope in death:—Μετάστασις—'Ανάστασις.

IV. But these offers, gifts, and graces are not for one, or for a few. They are offered to all. Even when the Gospel is preached to a single individual it is offered to him as to one of a great household. Not only man, but, says St. Paul, the whole creation is included in the consequences of the Fall—τῆς ἀποστάσεως—so also in those of the change at the Redemption—τῆς μεταστάσεως, καὶ τῆς ἀναστάσεως. We too shall be raised in the Body. Christianity is fact no less than truth. It is spiritual, yet so as to be historical; and between these two poles there must likewise be a midpoint, in which the historical and spiritual meet. Christianity must have its history—a history of itself and likewise the history of its introduction, its spread, and its outward-becoming; and, as the midpoint abovementioned, a portion of these facts must be miraculous, that is, phenomena in nature that are beyond nature. Furthermore, the history of all historical nations must in some sense be its history—in other words, all history must be providential, and this a providence, a preparation, and a looking forward to Christ.

Here, then, we have four out of the five classes. And in all these the sky of my belief is serene, unclouded by a doubt. Would to God that my faith, that faith which works on the whole man, confirming and conforming, were but in just proportion to my belief, to the full acquiescence of my intellect, and the deep consent of my conscience! The very difficulties argue the truth of the whole scheme and system for my understanding, since I see plainly that so must the truth appear, if it be the truth.

V. But there is a Book of two parts, each part consisting of several books. The first part (I speak in the character of an uninterested critic or philologist) contains the relics of the literature of the Hebrew people, while the Hebrew was still the living language. The second part comprises the writings, and, with one or two inconsiderable and doubtful exceptions, all the writings of the followers of Christ within the space of ninety years from the date of the Resurrection. I do not myself think that any of these writings were composed as late as A.D. 120; but I wish to preclude all dispute. This Book I resume as read, and yet unread—read and familiar

to my mind in all parts, but which is yet to be perused as a whole, or rather a work, cujus particulas et sententiolas omnes et singulas recogniturus sum, but the component integers of which, and their conspiration, I have yet to study. I take up this work with the purpose to read it for the first time as I should read any other work, as far at least as I can or dare. For I neither can, nor dare, throw off a strong and awful prepossession in its favour—certain as I am that a large part of the light and life, in and by which I see, love, and embrace the truths and the strengths co-organised into a living body of faith and knowledge in the four preceding classes, has been directly or indirectly derived to me from this sacred volume—and unable to determine what I do not owe to its influences. But even on this account, and because it has these inalienable claims on my reverence and gratitude, I will not leave it in the power of unbelievers to say that the Bible is for me only what the Koran is for the deaf Turk, and the Vedas for the feeble and acquiescent Hindoo. No; I will retire up into the mountain, and hold secret commune with my Bible above the contagious blastments of prejudice, and the fog-blight of selfish superstition. For fear hath torment. And what though my reason be to the power and splendour of the Scriptures but as the reflected and secondary shine of the moon compared with the solar radiance; yet the sun endures the occasional co-presence of the unsteady orb, and leaving it visible seems to sanction the comparison. There is a Light higher than all, even the Word that was in the beginning; the Light, of which light itself is but the shechinah and cloudy tabernacle; the Word that is Light for every man, and life for as many as give heed to it. If between this Word and the written letter I shall anywhere seem to myself to find a discrepance, I will not conclude that such there actually is, nor on the other hand will I fall under the condemnation of them that would lie for God, but seek as I may, be thankful for what I have—and wait.

With such purposes, with such feelings, have I perused the books of the Old and New Testaments, each book as a whole, and also as an integral part. And need I say

that I have met everywhere more or less copious sources of truth, and power, and purifying impulses, that I have found words for my inmost thoughts, songs for my joy, utterances for my hidden griefs, and pleadings for my shame and my feebleness? In short, whatever finds me, bears witness for itself that it has proceeded from a Holy Spirit, even from the same Spirit, which remaining in itself, yet regenerateth all other powers, and in all ages entering into holy souls, maketh them friends of God, and prophets. (Wisd. vii.) And here, perhaps, I might have been content to rest, if I had not learned that, as a Christian, I cannot, must not, stand alone; or if I had not known that more than this was holden and required by the Fathers of the Reformation, and by the Churches collectively, since the Council of Nice at latest, the only exceptions being that doubtful one of the corrupt Romish Church implied, though not avowed, in its equalisation of the Apocryphal Books with those of the Hebrew Canon, and the irrelevant one of the few and obscure sects who acknowledge no historical Christianity. This somewhat more, in which Jerome, Augustine, Luther, and Hooker were of one and the same judgment, and less than which not one of them would have tolerated—would it fall within the scope of my present doubts and objections? I hope it would not. Let only their general expressions be interpreted by their treatment of the Scriptures in detail, and I dare confidently trust that it would not. For I can no more reconcile the doctrine which startles my belief with the practice and particular declarations of these great men, than with the convictions of my own understanding and conscience. At all events—and I cannot too early or too earnestly guard against any misapprehension of my meaning and purpose—let it be distinctly understood that my arguments and objections apply exclusively to the following doctrine or dogma. To the opinions which individual divines have advanced in lieu of this doctrine, my only objection, as far as I object, is—that I do not understand them. The precise enunciation of this doctrine I defer to the commencement of the next Letter.

Farewell.

LETTER II.

My Dear Friend,

In my last Letter I said that in the Bible there is more that finds me than I have experienced in all other books put together; that the words of the Bible find me at greater depths of my being; and that whatever finds me brings with it an irresistible evidence of its having proceeded from the Holy Spirit. But the doctrine in question requires me to believe that not only what finds me, but that all that exists in the sacred volume, and which I am bound to find therein, was—not alone inspired by, that is composed by, men under the actuating influence of the Holy Spirit, but likewise—dictated by an Infallible Intelligence; that the writers, each and all, were divinely informed as well as inspired. Now here all evasion, all excuse, is cut off. An infallible intelligence extends to all things, physical no less than spiritual. It may convey the truth in any one of the three possible languages—that of sense, as objects appear to the beholder on this earth; or that of science, which supposes the beholder placed in the centre; or that of philosophy, which resolves both into a supersensual reality. But whichever be chosen—and it is obvious that the incompatibility exists only between the first and second, both of them being indifferent and of equal value to the third—it must be employed consistently; for an infallible intelligence must intend to be intelligible, and not to deceive. And, moreover, whichever of these three languages be chosen, it must be translatable into truth. For this is the very essence of the doctrine, that one and the same intelligence is speaking in the unity of a person; which unity is no more broken by the diversity of the pipes through which it makes itself audible, than is a tune by the different instruments on which it is played by a consummate musician, equally perfect in all. One instrument may be more capacious than another, but as far as its compass extends, and in what it sounds forth, it will be true to the conception of the master. I can conceive no softening here which would not nullify the doctrine, and convert it to a cloud for each man’s fancy to shift and shape at will. And this doctrine, I confess, plants the vineyard of the

Word with thorns for me, and places snares in its pathways. These may be delusions of an evil spirit; but ere I so harshly question the seeming angel of light—my reason, I mean, and moral sense in conjunction with my clearest knowledge—I must inquire on what authority this doctrine rests. And what other authority dares a truly catholic Christian admit as coercive in the final decision, but the declarations of the Book itself—though I should not, without struggles, and a trembling reluctance, gainsay even a universal tradition?

I return to the Book. With a full persuasion of soul respecting all the articles of the Christian Faith, as contained in the first four classes, I receive willingly also the truth of the history, namely, that the Word of the Lord did come to Samuel, to Isaiah, to others; and that the words which gave utterance to the same are faithfully recorded. But though the origin of the words, even as of the miraculous acts, be supernatural, yet the former once uttered, the latter once having taken their place among the phenomena of the senses, the faithful recording of the same does not of itself imply, or seem to require, any supernatural working, other than as all truth and goodness are such. In the books of Moses, and once or twice in the prophecy of Jeremiah, I find it indeed asserted that not only the words were given, but the recording of the same enjoined by the special command of God, and doubtless executed under the special guidance of the Divine Spirit. As to all such passages, therefore, there can be no dispute; and all others in which the words are by the sacred historian declared to have been the Word of the Lord supernaturally communicated, I receive as such with a degree of confidence proportioned to the confidence required of me by the writer himself, and to the claims he himself makes on my belief.

Let us, therefore, remove all such passages, and take each book by itself; and I repeat that I believe the writer in whatever he himself relates of his own authority, and of its origin. But I cannot find any such claim, as the doctrine in question supposes, made by these writers, explicitly or by implication. On the contrary, they

refer to other documents, and in all points express themselves as sober-minded and veracious writers under ordinary circumstances are known to do. But perhaps they bear testimony, the successor to his predecessor? Or some one of the number has left it on record, that by special inspiration he was commanded to declare the plenary inspiration of all the rest? The passages which can without violence be appealed to as substantiating the latter position are so few, and these so incidental—the conclusion drawn from them involving likewise so obviously a petitio principii, namely, the supernatural dictation, word by word, of the book in which the question is found (for, until this is established, the utmost that such a text can prove is the current belief of the writer's age and country concerning the character of the books then called the Scriptures)—that it cannot but seem strange, and assuredly is against all analogy of Gospel revelation, that such a doctrine—which, if true, must be an article of faith, and a most important, yea, essential article of faith—should be left thus faintly, thus obscurely, and, if I may so say, obitaneously, declared and enjoined. The time of the formation and closing of the Canon unknown;—the selectors and compilers unknown, or recorded by known fabulists;—and (more perplexing still) the belief of the Jewish Church—the belief, I mean, common to the Jews of Palestine and their more cultivated brethren in Alexandria (no reprehension of which is to be found in the New Testament)—concerning the nature and import of the θεοπνευστία attributed to the precious remains of their Temple Library;—these circumstances are such, especially the last, as in effect to evacuate the tenet, of which I am speaking, of the only meaning in which it practically means anything at all tangible, steadfast, or obligatory. In infallibility there are no degrees. The power of the High and Holy One is one and the same, whether the sphere which it fills be larger or smaller;—the area traversed by a comet, or the oracle of the house, the holy place beneath the wings of the cherubim;—the Pentateuch of the Legislator, who drew near to the thick darkness where God was, and who spake in the cloud whence the thunderings and lightnings came, and whom God answered by a voice; or but a

letter of thirteen verses from the affectionate Elder to the elect lady and her children, whom he loved in the truth. But at no period was this the judgment of the Jewish Church respecting all the canonical books. To Moses alone—to Moses in the recording no less than in the receiving of the Law—and to all and every part of the five books called the Books of Moses, the Jewish doctors of the generation before, and coëval with, the apostles, assigned that unmodified and absolute theopneusty which our divines, in words at least, attribute to the Canon collectively. In fact it was from the Jewish Rabbis—who, in opposition to the Christian scheme, contended for a perfection in the revelation by Moses, which neither required nor endured any addition, and who strained their fancies in expressing the transcendency of the books of Moses, in aid of their opinion—that the founders of the doctrine borrowed their notions and phrases respecting the Bible throughout. Remove the metaphorical drapery from the doctrine of the Cabbalists, and it will be found to contain the only intelligible and consistent idea of that plenary inspiration, which later divines extend to all the canonical books; as thus:—"The Pentateuch is but one Word, even the Word of God; and the letters and articulate sounds, by which this Word is communicated to our human apprehensions, are likewise divinely communicated."

Now, for 'Pentateuch' substitute 'Old and New Testament,' and then I say that this is the doctrine which I reject as superstitious and unscriptural. And yet as long as the conceptions of the revealing Word and the inspiring Spirit are identified and confounded, I assert that whatever says less than this, says little more than nothing. For how can absolute infallibility be blended with fallibility? Where is the infallible criterion? How can infallible truth be infallibly conveyed in defective and fallible expressions? The Jewish teachers confined this miraculous character to the Pentateuch. Between the Mosaic and the Prophetic inspiration they asserted such a difference as amounts to a diversity; and between both the one and the other, and the remaining books comprised under the tithe of Hagiographa, the interval was still wider, and the inferiority in kind, and not only in degree, was unequivocally

expressed. If we take into account the habit, universal with the Hebrew doctors, of referring all excellent or extraordinary things to the great First Cause, without mention of the proximate and instrumental causes—a striking illustration of which may be obtained by comparing the narratives of the same event in the Psalms and in the historical books; and if we further reflect that the distinction of the providential and the miraculous did not enter into their forms of thinking—at all events not into their mode of conveying their thoughts—the language of the Jews respecting the Hagiographa will be found to differ little, if at all, from that of religious persons among ourselves, when speaking of an author abounding in gifts, stirred up by the Holy Spirit, writing under the influence of special grace, and the like.

But it forms no part of my present purpose to discuss the point historically, or to speculate on the formation of either Canon. Rather, such inquiries are altogether alien from the great object of my pursuits and studies, which is to convince myself and others that the Bible and Christianity are their own sufficient evidence. But it concerns both my character and my peace of mind to satisfy unprejudiced judges that if my present convictions should in all other respects be found consistent with the faith and feelings of a Christian—and if in many and those important points they tend to secure that faith and to deepen those feelings—the words of the Apostle, rightly interpreted, do not require their condemnation. Enough, if what has been stated above respecting the general doctrine of the Hebrew masters, under whom the Apostle was bred, shall remove any misconceptions that might prevent the right interpretation of his words.

Farewell.

LETTER III.

My Dear Friend,

Having in the former two Letters defined the doctrine which I reject, I am now to communicate the views that I would propose to substitute in its place.

Before, however, I attempt to lay down on the theological chart the road-place to which my bark has drifted, and to mark the spot and circumscribe the space within which I swing at anchor, let me first thank you for, and then attempt to answer, the objections—or at least the questions—which you have urged upon me.

"The present Bible is the Canon to which Christ and the Apostles referred?"

Doubtless.

"And in terms which a Christian must tremble to tamper with?"

Yea. The expressions are as direct as strong; and a true believer will neither attempt to divert nor dilute their strength.

"The doctrine which is considered as the orthodox view seems the obvious and most natural interpretation of the text in question?"

Yea, and nay. To those whose minds are prepossessed by the doctrine itself—who from earliest childhood have always meant this doctrine by the very word Bible—the doctrine being but its exposition and paraphrase—Yea. In such minds the words of our Lord and the declarations of St. Paul can awaken no other sense. To those on the other hand who find the doctrine senseless and self-confuting, and who take up the Bible as they do other books, and apply to it the same rules of interpretation—Nay.

And, lastly, he who, like myself, recognises in neither of the two the state of his own mind—who cannot rest in the former, and feels, or fears, a presumptuous spirit in the negative dogmatism of the latter—he has his answer to seek. But so far I dare hazard a reply to the question—In what other sense can the words be interpreted?—beseeching you, however, to take what I am about to offer but as an attempt to delineate an arc of oscillation—that the eulogy of St. Paul is in nowise contravened by the opinion to which I incline, who fully believe the Old Testament collectively, both in the composition and in its preservation, a great and precious gift of Providence;—who find in it all that the Apostle describes, and who more than

believe that all which the Apostle spoke of was of Divine inspiration, and a blessing intended for as many as are in communion with the Spirit through all ages. And I freely confess that my whole heart would turn away with an angry impatience from the cold and captious mortal who, the moment I had been pouring out the love and gladness of my soul—while book after book, law, and truth, and example, oracle, and lovely hymn, and choral song of ten thousand thousands, and accepted prayers of saints and prophets, sent back, as it were, from heaven, like doves, to be let loose again with a new freight of spiritual joys and griefs and necessities, were passing across my memory—at the first pause of my voice, and whilst my countenance was still speaking—should ask me whether I was thinking of the Book of Esther, or meant particularly to include the first six chapters of Daniel, or verses 6–20 of the 109th Psalm, or the last verse of the 137th Psalm? Would any conclusion of this sort be drawn in any other analogous case? In the course of my lectures on Dramatic Poetry, I, in half a score instances, referred my auditors to the precious volume before me—Shakespeare—and spoke enthusiastically, both in general and with detail of particular beauties, of the plays of Shakespeare, as in all their kinds, and in relation to the purposes of the writer, excellent. Would it have been fair, or according to the common usage and understanding of men, to have inferred an intention on my part to decide the question respecting Titus Andronicus, or the larger portion of the three parts of Henry VI.? Would not every genial mind understand by Shakespeare that unity or total impression comprising and resulting from the thousandfold several and particular emotions of delight, admiration, gratitude excited by his works? But if it be answered, “Aye! but we must not interpret St. Paul as we may and should interpret any other honest and intelligent writer or speaker,”—then, I say, this is the very petitio principii of which I complain.

Still less do the words of our Lord apply against my view. Have I not declared—do I not begin by declaring—that whatever is referred by the sacred penman to a direct communication from God, and wherever it is recorded that the subject of the history

had asserted himself to have received this or that command, this or that information or assurance, from a superhuman Intelligence, or where the writer in his own person, and in the character of an historian, relates that the word of the Lord came unto priest, prophet, chieftain, or other individual—have I not declared that I receive the same with full belief, and admit its inappellable authority? Who more convinced than I am—who more anxious to impress that conviction on the minds of others—that the Law and the Prophets speak throughout of Christ? That all the intermediate applications and realisations of the words are but types and repetitions—translations, as it were, from the language of letters and articulate sounds into the language of events and symbolical persons?

And here again let me recur to the aid of analogy. Suppose a life of Sir Thomas More by his son-in-law, or a life of Lord Bacon by his chaplain; that a part of the records of the Court of Chancery belonging to these periods were lost; that in Roper's or in Rawley's biographical work there were preserved a series of dicta and judgments attributed to these illustrious Chancellors, many and important specimens of their table discourses, with large extracts from works written by them, and from some that are no longer extant. Let it be supposed, too, that there are no grounds, internal or external, to doubt either the moral, intellectual, or circumstantial competence of the biographers. Suppose, moreover, that wherever the opportunity existed of collating their documents and quotations with the records and works still preserved, the former were found substantially correct and faithful, the few differences in nowise altering or disturbing the spirit and purpose of the paragraphs in which they were found; and that of what was not collatable, and to which no test ab extra could be applied, the far larger part bore witness in itself of the same spirit and origin; and that not only by its characteristic features, but by its surpassing excellence, it rendered the chances of its having had any other author than the giant-mind, to whom the biographer ascribes it, small indeed! Now, from the nature and objects of my pursuits, I have, we will suppose, frequent occasion to refer to one

or other of these works; for example, to Rawley's Dicta et Facta Francisci de Verulam. At one time I might refer to the work in some such words as—"Remember what Francis of Verulam said or judged;" or, "If you believe not me, yet believe Lord Bacon." At another time I might take the running title of the volume, and at another the name of the biographer;—"Turn to your Rawley! He will set you right;" or, "There you will find a depth which no research will ever exhaust;" or whatever other strong expression my sense of Bacon's greatness and of the intrinsic worth and the value of the proofs and specimens of that greatness, contained and preserved in that volume, would excite and justify. But let my expressions be as vivid and unqualified as the most sanguine temperament ever inspired, would any man of sense conclude from them that I meant—and meant to make others believe—that not only each and all of these anecdotes, adages, decisions, extracts, incidents, had been dictated, word by word, by Lord Bacon; and that all Rawley's own observations and inferences, all the connectives and disjunctives, all the recollections of time, place, and circumstance, together with the order and succession of the narrative, were in like manner dictated and revised by the spirit of the deceased Chancellor? The answer will be—must be—No man in his senses! "No man in his senses—in this instance; but in that of the Bible it is quite otherwise; for (I take it as an admitted point that) it is quite otherwise!"

And here I renounce any advantage I might obtain for my argument by restricting the application of our Lord's and the Apostle's words to the Hebrew Canon. I admit the justice—I have long felt the full force—of the remark—"We have all that the occasion allowed." And if the same awful authority does not apply so directly to the Evangelical and Apostolical writings as to the Hebrew Canon, yet the analogy of faith justifies the transfer. If the doctrine be less decisively Scriptural in its application to the New Testament or the Christian Canon, the temptation to doubt it is likewise less. So at least we are led to infer; since in point of fact it is the apparent or imagined contrast, the diversity of spirit which sundry individuals have believed

themselves to find in the Old Testament and in the Gospel, that has given occasion to the doubt;—and, in the heart of thousands who yield a faith of acquiescence to the contrary, and find rest in their humility—supplies fuel to a fearful wish that it were permitted to make a distinction.

But, lastly, you object that—even granting that no coercive, positive reasons for the belief—no direct and not inferred assertions—of the plenary inspiration of the Old and New Testament, in the generally received import of the term, could be adduced, yet—in behalf of a doctrine so catholic, and during so long a succession of ages affirmed and acted on by Jew and Christian, Greek, Romish, and Protestant, you need no other answer than:—"Tell me, first, why it should not be received! Why should I not believe the Scriptures throughout dictated, in word and thought, by an infallible Intelligence?" I admit the fairness of the retort; and eagerly and earnestly do I answer: For every reason that makes me prize and revere these Scriptures;—prize them, love them, revere them, beyond all other books! Why should I not? Because the doctrine in question petrifies at once the whole body of Holy Writ with all its harmonies and symmetrical gradations—the flexile and the rigid—the supporting hard and the clothing soft—the blood which is the life—the intelligencing nerves, and the rudely woven, but soft and springy, cellular substance, in which all are imbedded and lightly bound together. This breathing organism, this glorious panharmonicon which I had seen stand on its feet as a man, and with a man's voice given to it, the doctrine in question turns at once into a colossal Memnon's head, a hollow passage for a voice, a voice that mocks the voices of many men, and speaks in their names, and yet is but one voice, and the same; and no man uttered it, and never in a human heart was it conceived. Why should I not?—Because the doctrine evacuates of all sense and efficacy the sure and constant tradition, that all the several books bound up together in our precious family Bible were composed in different and widely-distant ages, under the greatest diversity of circumstances, and degrees of light and information, and yet that the composers,

whether as uttering or as recording what was uttered and what was done, were all actuated by a pure and holy Spirit, one and the same—(for is there any spirit pure and holy, and yet not proceeding from God—and yet not proceeding in and with the Holy Spirit?)—one Spirit, working diversely, now awakening strength, and now glorifying itself in weakness, now giving power and direction to knowledge, and now taking away the sting from error! Ere the summer and the months of ripening had arrived for the heart of the race; while the whole sap of the tree was crude, and each and every fruit lived in the harsh and bitter principle; even then this Spirit withdrew its chosen ministers from the false and guilt-making centre of Self. It converted the wrath into a form and an organ of love, and on the passing storm-cloud impressed the fair rainbow of promise to all generations. Put the lust of Self in the forked lightning, and would it not be a Spirit of Moloch? But God maketh the lightnings His ministers, fire and hail, vapours and stormy winds fulfilling His word.

Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the Lord; curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof—sang Deborah. Was it that she called to mind any personal wrongs—rapine or insult—that she or the house of Lapidoth had received from Jabin or Sisera? No; she had dwelt under her palm tree in the depth of the mountain. But she was a mother in Israel; and with a mother's heart, and with the vehemency of a mother's and a patriot's love, she had shot the light of love from her eyes, and poured the blessings of love from her lips, on the people that had jeoparded their lives unto the death against the oppressors; and the bitterness, awakened and borne aloft by the same love, she precipitated in curses on the selfish and coward recreants who came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord, against the mighty. As long as I have the image of Deborah before my eyes, and while I throw myself back into the age, country, circumstances, of this Hebrew Bonduca in the not yet tamed chaos of the spiritual creation;—as long as I contemplate the impassioned, high-souled, heroic woman in all the prominence and individuality of will and character,—I feel

as if I were among the first ferments of the great affections—the proplastic waves of the microcosmic chaos, swelling up against—and yet towards—the outspread wings of the dove that lies brooding on the troubled waters. So long all is well,—all replete with instruction and example. In the fierce and inordinate I am made to know and be grateful for the clearer and purer radiance which shines on a Christian's paths, neither blunted by the preparatory veil, nor crimsoned in its struggle through the all-enwrapping mist of the world's ignorance: whilst in the self-oblivion of these heroes of the Old Testament, their elevation above all low and individual interests,—above all, in the entire and vehement devotion of their total being to the service of their divine Master, I find a lesson of humility, a ground of humiliation, and a shaming, yet rousing, example of faith and fealty. But let me once be persuaded that all these heart-awakening utterances of human hearts—of men of like faculties and passions with myself, mourning, rejoicing, suffering, triumphing—are but as a Divina Commedia of a superhuman—O bear with me, if I say—Ventriloquist;—that the royal harper, to whom I have so often submitted myself as a many-stringed instrument for his fire-tipt fingers to traverse, while every several nerve of emotion, passion, thought, that thrids the flesh-and-blood of our common humanity, responded to the touch,—that this sweet Psalmist of Israel was himself as mere an instrument as his harp, an automaton poet, mourner, and supplicant;—all is gone,—all sympathy, at least, and all example. I listen in awe and fear, but likewise in perplexity and confusion of spirit.

Yet one other instance, and let this be the crucial test of the doctrine. Say that the Book of Job throughout was dictated by an infallible intelligence. Then re-peruse the book, and still, as you proceed, try to apply the tenet; try if you can even attach any sense or semblance of meaning to the speeches which you are reading. What! were the hollow truisms, the unsufficing half-truths, the false assumptions and malignant insinuations of the supercilious bigots, who corruptly defended the truth:—were the impressive facts, the piercing outcries, the pathetic appeals, and the close and

powerful reasoning with which the poor sufferer—smarting at once from his wounds, and from the oil of vitriol which the orthodox liars for God were dropping into them—impatiently, but uprightly and holily, controverted this truth, while in will and in spirit he clung to it;—were both dictated by an infallible intelligence?—Alas! if I may judge from the manner in which both indiscriminately are recited, quoted, appealed to, preached upon by the routiniers of desk and pulpit, I cannot doubt that they think so—or rather, without thinking, take for granted that so they are to think;—the more readily, perhaps, because the so thinking supersedes the necessity of all afterthought.

Farewell.

LETTER IV.

My Dear Friend,

You reply to the conclusion of my Letter: “What have we to do with routiniers? Quid mihi cum homunculis putata putide reputantibus? Let nothings count for nothing, and the dead bury the dead! Who but such ever understood the tenet in this sense?”

In what sense then, I rejoin, do others understand it? If, with exception of the passages already excepted, namely, the recorded words of God—concerning which no Christian can have doubt or scruple,—the tenet in this sense be inapplicable to the Scripture, destructive of its noblest purposes, and contradictory to its own express declarations,—again and again I ask:—What am I to substitute? What other sense is conceivable that does not destroy the doctrine which it professes to interpret—that does not convert it into its own negative? As if a geometrician should name a sugar-loaf an ellipse, adding—“By which term I here mean a cone;”—and then justify the misnomer on the pretext that the ellipse is among the conic sections! And yet—notwithstanding the repugnancy of the doctrine, in its unqualified sense, to Scripture, Reason, and Common Sense theoretically, while to all practical uses it

is intractable, unmalleable, and altogether unprofitable—notwithstanding its irrationality, and in the face of your expostulation, grounded on the palpableness of its irrationality,—I must still avow my belief that, however fittingly and unsteadily, as through a mist, it is the doctrine which the generality of our popular divines receive as orthodox, and this the sense which they attach to the words.

For on what other ground can I account for the whimsical subintelligiturs of our numerous harmonists—for the curiously inferred facts, the inventive circumstantial detail, the complemental and supplemental history which, in the utter silence of all historians and absence of all historical documents, they bring to light by mere force of logic? And all to do away some half score apparent discrepancies in the chronicles and memoirs of the Old and New Testaments—discrepancies so analogous to what is found in all other narratives of the same story by several narrators—so analogous to what is found in all other known and trusted histories by contemporary historians, when they are collated with each other (nay, not seldom when either historian is compared with himself), as to form in the eyes of all competent judges a characteristic mark of the genuineness, independency, and (if I may apply the word to a book), the veraciousness of each several document; a mark, the absence of which would warrant a suspicion of collusion, invention, or at best of servile transcription; discrepancies so trifling in circumstance and import, that, although in some instances it is highly probable, and in all instances, perhaps, possible that they are only apparent and reconcilable, no wise man would care a staw whether they were real or apparent, reconciled or left in harmless and friendly variance. What, I ask, could have induced learned and intelligent divines to adopt or sanction subterfuges, which neutralising the ordinary criteria of full or defective evidence in historical documents, would, taken as a general rule, render all collation and cross-examination of written records ineffective, and obliterate the main character by which authentic histories are distinguished from those traditional tales, which each successive reporter enlarges and fashions to his own fancy and purpose,

and every different edition of which more or less contradicts the other? Allow me to create chasms ad libitum, and ad libitum to fill them up with imagined facts and incidents, and I would almost undertake to harmonise Falstaff's account of the rogues in buckram into a coherent and consistent narrative. What, I say, could have tempted grave and pious men thus to disturb the foundation of the Temple, in order to repair a petty breach or rat-hole in the wall, or fasten a loose stone or two in the outer court, if not an assumed necessity arising out of the peculiar character of Bible history?

The substance of the syllogism, by which their procedure was justified to their own minds, can be no other than this. That, without which two assertions—both of which must be alike true and correct—would contradict each other, and consequently be, one or both, false or incorrect, must itself be true. But every word and syllable existing in the original text of the Canonical Books, from the Cherethi and Phelethi of David to the name in the copy of a family register, the site of a town, or the course of a river, were dictated to the sacred amanuensis by an infallible intelligence. Here there can be neither more nor less. Important or unimportant gives no ground of difference; and the number of the writers as little. The secretaries may have been many—the historian was one and the same, and he infallible. This is the minor of the syllogism, and if it could be proved, the conclusion would be at least plausible; and there would be but one objection to the procedure, namely, its uselessness. For if it had been proved already, what need of proving it over again, and by means—the removal, namely, of apparent contradictions—which the infallible Author did not think good to employ? But if it have not been proved, what becomes of the argument which derives its whole force and legitimacy from the assumption?

In fact, it is clear that the harmonists and their admirers held and understood the doctrine literally. And must not that divine likewise have so understood it, who, in answer to a question concerning the transcendant blessedness of Jael, and the

righteousness of the act, in which she inhospitably, treacherously, perfidiously murdered sleep, the confiding sleep, closed the controversy by observing that he wanted no better morality than that of the Bible, and no other proof of an action's being praiseworthy than that the Bible had declared it worthy to be praised?—an observation, as applied in this instance, so slanderous to the morality and moral spirit of the Bible as to be inexplicable, except as a consequence of the doctrine in dispute. But let a man be once fully persuaded that there is no difference between the two positions: "The Bible contains the religion revealed by God," and "Whatever is contained in the Bible is religion, and was revealed by God," and that whatever can be said of the Bible, collectively taken, may and must be said of each and every sentence of the Bible, taken for and by itself, and I no longer wonder at these paradoxes. I only object to the inconsistency of those who profess the same belief, and yet affect to look down with a contemptuous or compassionate smile on John Wesley for rejecting the Copernican system as incompatible therewith; or who exclaim "Wonderful!" when they hear that Sir Matthew Hale sent a crazy old woman to the gallows in honour of the Witch of Endor. In the latter instance it might, I admit, have been an erroneous (though even at this day the all but universally received) interpretation of the word, which we have rendered by witch; but I challenge these divines and their adherents to establish the compatibility of a belief in the modern astronomy and natural philosophy with their and Wesley's doctrine respecting the inspired Scriptures, without reducing the doctrine itself to a plaything of wax; or rather to a half-inflated bladder, which, when the contents are rarefied in the heat of rhetorical generalities, swells out round, and without a crease or wrinkle; but bring it into the cool temperature of particulars, and you may press, and as it were except, what part you like—so it be but one part at a time—between your thumb and finger.

Now, I pray you, which is the more honest, nay, which the more reverential proceeding—to play at fast and loose in this way, or to say at once, "See here, in

these several writings one and the same Holy Spirit, now sanctifying a chosen vessel, and fitting it for the reception of heavenly truths proceeding immediately from the mouth of God, and elsewhere working in frail and fallible men like ourselves, and like ourselves instructed by God's word and laws?" The first Christian martyr had the form and features of an ordinary man, nor are we taught to believe that these features were miraculously transfigured into superhuman symmetry; but he being filled with the Holy Ghost, they that looked steadfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel. Even so has it ever been, and so it ever will be with all who with humble hearts and a rightly disposed spirit scan the sacred volume. And they who read it with an evil heart of unbelief and an alien spirit, what boots for them the assertion that every sentence was miraculously communicated to the nominal author by God himself? Will it not rather present additional temptations to the unhappy scoffers, and furnish them with a pretext of self-justification?

When, in my third letter, I first echoed the question "Why should I not?" the answers came crowding on my mind. I am well content, however, to have merely suggested the main points, in proof of the positive harm which, both historically and spiritually, our religion sustains from this doctrine. Of minor importance, yet not to be overlooked, are the forced and fantastic interpretations, the arbitrary allegories and mystic expansions of proper names, to which this indiscriminate Bibliolatry furnished fuel, spark, and wind. A still greater evil, and less attributable to the visionary humour and weak judgment of the individual expositors, is the literal rendering of Scripture in passages, which the number and variety of images employed in different places to express one and the same verity, plainly mark out for figurative. And lastly, add to all these the strange—in all other writings unexampled—practice of bringing together into logical dependency detached sentences from books composed at the distance of centuries, nay, sometimes a millennium from each other, under different dispensations, and for different objects.

Accommodations of elder Scriptural phrases—that favourite ornament and garnish of Jewish eloquence; incidental allusions to popular notions, traditions, apologues (for example, the dispute between the Devil and the archangel Michael about the body of Moses, Jude 9); fancies and anachronisms imported from the synagogue of Alexandria into Palestine, by or together with the Septuagint version, and applied as mere argumenta ad homines (for example, the delivery of the Law by the disposition of angels, Acts vii. 53, Gal. iii. 19, Heb. ii. 2),—these, detached from their context, and, contrary to the intention of the sacred writer, first raised into independent theses, and then brought together to produce or sanction some new credendum for which neither separately could have furnished a pretence! By this strange mosaic, Scripture texts have been worked up into passable likenesses of purgatory, Popery, the Inquisition, and other monstrous abuses. But would you have a Protestant instance of the superstitious use of Scripture arising out of this dogma? Passing by the Cabbala of the Hutchinsonian School as the dotage of a few weak-minded individuals, I refer you to Bishop Hacket's sermons on the Incarnation. And if you have read the same author's life of Archbishop Williams, and have seen and felt (as every reader of this latter work must see and feel) his talent, learning, acuteness, and robust good sense, you will have no difficulty in determining the quality and character of a dogma which could engraft such fruits on such a tree.

It will perhaps appear a paradox if, after all these reasons, I should avow that they weigh less in my mind against the doctrine, than the motives usually assigned for maintaining and enjoining it. Such, for instance, are the arguments drawn from the anticipated loss and damage that would result from its abandonment; as that it would deprive the Christian world of its only infallible arbiter in questions of faith and duty, suppress the only common and inappellable tribunal; that the Bible is the only religious bond of union and ground of unity among Protestants and the like. For the confutation of this whole reasoning, it might be sufficient to ask: Has it produced these effects? Would not the contrary statement be nearer to the fact? What did the

Churches of the first four centuries hold on this point? To what did they attribute the rise and multiplication of heresies? Can any learned and candid Protestant affirm that there existed and exists no ground for the charges of Bossuet and other eminent Romish divines? It is no easy matter to know how to handle a party maxim, so framed, that with the exception of a single word, it expresses an important truth, but which by means of that word is made to convey a most dangerous error.

The Bible is the appointed conservatory, an indispensable criterion, and a continual source and support of true belief. But that the Bible is the sole source; that it not only contains, but constitutes, the Christian Religion; that it is, in short, a Creed, consisting wholly of articles of Faith; that consequently we need no rule, help, or guide, spiritual or historical, to teach us what parts are and what are not articles of Faith—all being such—and the difference between the Bible and the Creed being this, that the clauses of the latter are all unconditionally necessary to salvation, but those of the former conditionally so, that is, as soon as the words are known to exist in any one of the canonical books; and that, under this limitation, the belief is of the same necessity in both, and not at all affected by the greater or lesser importance of the matter to be believed;—this scheme differs widely from the preceding, though its adherents often make use of the same words in expressing their belief. And this latter scheme, I assert, was brought into currency by and in favour of those by whom the operation of grace, the aids of the Spirit, the necessity of regeneration, the corruption of our nature, in short, all the peculiar and spiritual mysteries of the Gospel were explained and diluted away.

And how have these men treated this very Bible? I, who indeed prize and reverence this sacred library, as of all outward means and conservatives of Christian faith and practice the surest and the most reflective of the inward Word; I, who hold that the Bible contains the religion of Christians, but who dare not say that whatever is contained in the Bible is the Christian religion, and who shrink from all question respecting the comparative worth and efficacy of the written Word as weighed

against the preaching of the Gospel, the discipline of the Churches, the continued succession of the Ministry, and the communion of Saints, lest by comparing them I should seem to detach them; I tremble at the processes which the Grotian divines without scruple carry on in their treatment of the sacred writers, as soon as any texts declaring the peculiar tenets of our Faith are cited against them—even tenets and mysteries which the believer at his baptism receives as the title-writ and bosom-roll of his adoption; and which, according to my scheme, every Christian born in Church-membership ought to bring with him to the study of the sacred Scriptures as the master-key of interpretation. Whatever the doctrine of infallible dictation may be in itself, in their hands it is to the last degree nugatory, and to be paralleled only by the Romish tenet of Infallibility—in the existence of which all agree, but where, and in whom, it exists stat adhuc sub lite. Every sentence found in a canonical Book, rightly interpreted, contains the dictum of an infallible Mind; but what the right interpretation is—or whether the very words now extant are corrupt or genuine—must be determined by the industry and understanding of fallible, and alas! more or less prejudiced theologians.

And yet I am told that this doctrine must not be resisted or called in question, because of its fitness to preserve unity of faith, and for the prevention of schism and sectarian byways! Let the man who holds this language trace the history of Protestantism, and the growth of sectarian divisions, ending with Dr. Hawker's ultra-Calvinistic Tracts, and Mr. Belsham's New Version of the Testament. And then let him tell me that for the prevention of an evil which already exists, and which the boasted preventive itself might rather seem to have occasioned, I must submit to be silenced by the first learned infidel, who throws in my face the blessing of Deborah, or the cursings of David, or the Grecisms and heavier difficulties in the biographical chapters of the Book of Daniel, or the hydrography and natural philosophy of the Patriarchal ages. I must forego the means of silencing, and the prospect of convincing, an alienated brother, because I must not thus answer "My

Brother! What has all this to do with the truth and the worth of Christianity? If you reject à priori all communion with the Holy Spirit, there is indeed a chasm between us, over which we cannot even make our voices intelligible to each other. But if—though but with the faith of a Seneca or an Antonine—you admit the co-operation of a Divine Spirit in souls desirous of good, even as the breath of heaven works variously in each several plant according to its kind, character, period of growth, and circumstance of soil, clime, and aspect; on what ground can you assume that its presence is incompatible with all imperfection in the subject—even with such imperfection as is the natural accompaniment of the unripe season? If you call your gardener or husbandman to account for the plants or crops he is raising, would you not regard the special purpose in each, and judge of each by that which it was tending to? Thorns are not flowers, nor is the husk serviceable. But it was not for its thorns, but for its sweet and medicinal flowers that the rose was cultivated; and he who cannot separate the husk from the grain, wants the power because sloth or malice has prevented the will. I demand for the Bible only the justice which you grant to other books of grave authority, and to other proved and acknowledged benefactors of mankind. Will you deny a spirit of wisdom in Lord Bacon, because in particular facts he did not possess perfect science, or an entire immunity from the positive errors which result from imperfect insight? A Davy will not so judge his great predecessor; for he recognises the spirit that is now working in himself, and which under similar defects of light and obstacles of error had been his guide and guardian in the morning twilight of his own genius. Must not the kindly warmth awaken and vivify the seed, in order that the stem may spring up and rejoice in the light? As the genial warmth to the informing light, even so is the predisposing Spirit to the revealing Word."

If I should reason thus—but why do I say if? I have reasoned thus with more than one serious and well-disposed sceptic; and what was the answer?—"You speak rationally, but seem to forget the subject. I have frequently attended meetings of the

British and Foreign Bible Society, where I have heard speakers of every denomination, Calvinist and Arminian, Quaker and Methodist, Dissenting Ministers and Clergymen, nay, dignitaries of the Established Church, and still have I heard the same doctrine—that the Bible was not to be regarded or reasoned about in the way that other good books are or may be—that the Bible was different in kind, and stood by itself. By some indeed this doctrine was rather implied than expressed, but yet evidently implied. But by far the greater number of the speakers it was asserted in the strongest and most unqualified words that language could supply. What is more, their principal arguments were grounded on the position, that the Bible throughout was dictated by Omniscience, and therefore in all its parts infallibly true and obligatory, and that the men whose names are prefixed to the several books or chapters were in fact but as different pens in the hand of one and the same Writer, and the words the words of God Himself: and that on this account all notes and comments were superfluous, nay, presumptuous—a profane mixing of human with divine, the notions of fallible creatures with the oracles of Infallibility—as if God's meaning could be so clearly or fitly expressed in man's as in God's own words! But how often you yourself must have heard the same language from the pulpit!"

What could I reply to this? I could neither deny the fact, nor evade the conclusion—namely, that such is at present the popular belief. Yes—I at length rejoined—I have heard this language from the pulpit, and more than once from men who in any other place would explain it away into something so very different from the literal sense of their words as closely to resemble the contrary. And this, indeed, is the peculiar character of the doctrine, that you cannot diminish or qualify but you reverse it. I have heard this language from men who knew as well as myself that the best and most orthodox divines have in effect disclaimed the doctrine, inasmuch as they confess it cannot be extended to the words of the sacred writers, or the particular import—that therefore the doctrine does not mean all that the usual wording of it expresses, though what it does mean, and why they continue to

sanction this hyperbolical wording, I have sought to learn from them in vain. But let a thousand orators blazon it at public meetings, and let as many pulpits echo it, surely it behoves you to inquire whether you cannot be a Christian on your own faith; and it cannot but be beneath a wise man to be an Infidel on the score of what other men think fit to include in their Christianity!

Now suppose—and, believe me, the supposition will vary little from the fact—that in consequence of these views the sceptic's mind had gradually opened to the reception of all the truths enumerated in my first Letter. Suppose that the Scriptures themselves from this time had continued to rise in his esteem and affection—the better understood, the more dear; as in the countenance of one, whom through a cloud of prejudices we have at least learned to love and value above all others, new beauties dawn on us from day to day, till at length we wonder how we could at any time have thought it other than most beautiful. Studying the sacred volume in the light and in the freedom of a faith already secured, at every fresh meeting my sceptic friend has to tell me of some new passage, formerly viewed by him as a dry stick on a rotten branch, which has budded and, like the rod of Aaron, brought forth buds and bloomed blossoms, and yielded almonds. Let these results, I say, be supposed—and shall I still be told that my friend is nevertheless an alien in the household of Faith? Scrupulously orthodox as I know you to be, will you tell me that I ought to have left this sceptic as I found him, rather than attempt his conversion by such means; or that I was deceiving him, when I said to him:—

"Friend! The truth revealed through Christ has its evidence in itself, and the proof of its divine authority in its fitness to our nature and needs; the clearness and cogency of this proof being proportionate to the degree of self-knowledge in each individual hearer. Christianity has likewise its historical evidences, and these as strong as is compatible with the nature of history, and with the aims and objects of a religious dispensation. And to all these Christianity itself, as an existing power in the world, and Christendom as an existing fact, with the no less evident fact of a progressive

expansion, give a force of moral demonstration that almost supersedes particular testimony. These proofs and evidences would remain unshaken, even though the sum of our religion were to be drawn from the theologians of each successive century, on the principle of receiving that only as divine which should be found in all—quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus. Be only, my friend! as orthodox a believer as you would have abundant reason to be, though from some accident of birth, country, or education, the precious boon of the Bible, with its additional evidence, had up to this moment been concealed from you;—and then read its contents with only the same piety which you freely accord on other occasions to the writings of men, considered the best and wisest of their several ages! What you find therein coincident with your pre-established convictions, you will of course recognise as the Revealed Word, while, as you read the recorded workings of the Word and the Spirit in the minds, lives, and hearts of spiritual men, the influence of the same Spirit on your own being, and the conflicts of grace and infirmity in your own soul, will enable you to discern and to know in and by what spirit they spake and acted—as far at least as shall be needful for you, and in the times of your need.

"Thenceforward, therefore, your doubts will be confined to such parts or passages of the received Canon as seem to you irreconcilable with known truths, and at variance with the tests given in the Scriptures themselves, and as shall continue so to appear after you have examined each in reference to the circumstances of the writer or speaker, the dispensation under which he lived, the purpose of the particular passage, and the intent and object of the Scriptures at large. Respecting these, decide for yourself: and fear not for the result. I venture to tell it you beforehand. The result will be, a confidence in the judgment and fidelity of the compilers of the Canon increased by the apparent exceptions. For they will be found neither more nor greater than may well be supposed requisite, on the one hand, to prevent us from sinking into a habit of slothful, undiscriminating acquiescence, and on the other to provide a check against those presumptuous fanatics who would rend the Urim and

Thummim from the breastplate of judgment, and frame oracles by private divination from each letter of each disjointed gem, uninterpreted by the Priest, and deserted by the Spirit, which shines in the parts only as it pervades and irradiates the whole."

Such is the language in which I have addressed a halting friend—halting, yet with his face toward the right path. If I have erred, enable me to see my error. Correct me, or confirm me.

Farewell.

LETTER V.

Yes, my dear friend, it is my conviction that in all ordinary cases the knowledge and belief of the Christian Religion should precede the study of the Hebrew Canon. Indeed, with regard to both Testaments, I consider oral and catechismal instruction as the preparative provided by Christ himself in the establishment of a visible Church. And to make the Bible, apart from the truths, doctrines, and spiritual experiences contained therein, the subject of a special article of faith, I hold an unnecessary and useless abstraction, which in too many instances has the effect of substituting a barren acquiescence in the letter for the lively faith that cometh by hearing; even as the hearing is productive of this faith, because it is the Word of God that is heard and preached. (Rom. x. 8, 17.) And here I mean the written Word preserved in the armoury of the Church to be the sword of faith out of the mouth of the preacher, as Christ's ambassador and representative (Rev. i. 16), and out of the heart of the believer from generation to generation. Who shall dare dissolve or loosen this holy bond, this divine reciprocality, of Faith and Scripture? Who shall dare enjoin aught else as an object of saving faith, beside the truths that appertain to salvation? The imposers take on themselves a heavy responsibility, however defensible the opinion itself, as an opinion, may be. For by imposing it, they counteract their own purposes. They antedate questions, and thus, in all cases, aggravate the difficulty of answering them satisfactorily. And not seldom they create

difficulties that might never have occurred. But, worst of all, they convert things trifling or indifferent into mischievous pretexts for the wanton, fearful difficulties for the weak, and formidable objections for the inquiring. For what man fearing God dares think any the least point indifferent, which he is required to receive as God's own immediate Word miraculously infused, miraculously recorded, and by a succession of miracles preserved unblended and without change?—Through all the pages of a large and multifold volume, at each successive period, at every sentence, must the question recur:—"Dare I believe—do I in my heart believe—these words to have been dictated by an infallible reason, and the immediate utterance of Almighty God?"—No! It is due to Christian charity that a question so awful should not be put unnecessarily, and should not be put out of time. The necessity I deny. And out of time the question must be put, if after enumerating the several articles of the Catholic Faith I am bound to add:—"and further you are to believe with equal faith, as having the same immediate and miraculous derivation from God, whatever else you shall hereafter read in any of the sixty-six books collected in the Old and New Testaments."

I would never say this. Yet let me not be misjudged as if I treated the Scriptures as a matter of indifference. I would not say this, but where I saw a desire to believe, and a beginning love of Christ, I would there say:—"There are likewise sacred writings, which, taken in connection with the institution and perpetuity of a visible Church, all believers revere as the most precious boon of God, next to Christianity itself, and attribute both their communication and preservation to an especial Providence. In them you will find all the revealed truths, which have been set forth and offered to you, clearly and circumstantially recorded; and, in addition to these, examples of obedience and disobedience both in states and individuals, the lives and actions of men eminent under each dispensation, their sentiments, maxims, hymns, and prayers—their affections, emotions, and conflicts;—in all which you will recognise the influence of the Holy Spirit, with a conviction increasing with the growth of

your own faith and spiritual experience."

Farewell.

LETTER VI.

My Dear Friend,

In my last two Letters I have given the state of the argument as it would stand between a Christian, thinking as I do, and a serious well-disposed Deist. I will now endeavour to state the argument, as between the former and the advocates for the popular belief,—such of them, I mean, as are competent to deliver a dispassionate judgment in the cause. And again, more particularly, I mean the learned and reflecting part of them, who are influenced to the retention of the prevailing dogma by the supposed consequences of a different view, and, especially, by their dread of conceding to all alike, simple and learned, the privilege of picking and choosing the Scriptures that are to be received as binding on their consciences. Between these persons and myself the controversy may be reduced to a single question:—

Is it safer for the individual, and more conducive to the interests of the Church of Christ, in its twofold character of pastoral and militant, to conclude thus:—The Bible is the Word of God, and therefore, true, holy, and in all parts unquestionable? Or thus:—The Bible, considered in reference to its declared ends and purposes, is true and holy, and for all who seek truth with humble spirits an unquestionable guide, and therefore it is the Word of God?

In every generation, and wherever the light of Revelation has shone, men of all ranks, conditions, and states of mind have found in this volume a correspondent for every movement toward the better, felt in their own hearts, the needy soul has found supply, the feeble a help, the sorrowful a comfort; yea, be the recipiency the least that can consist with moral life, there is an answering grace ready to enter. The Bible has been found a Spiritual World, spiritual and yet at the same time outward and

common to all. You in one place, I in another, all men somewhere or at some time, meet with an assurance that the hopes and fears, the thoughts and yearnings that proceed from, or tend to, a right spirit in us, are not dreams or fleeting singularities, no voices heard in sleep, or spectres which the eye suffers but not perceives. As if on some dark night a pilgrim, suddenly beholding a bright star moving before him, should stop in fear and perplexity. But lo! traveller after traveller passes by him, and each, being questioned whither he is going, makes answer, “I am following yon guiding star!” The pilgrim quickens his own steps, and presses onward in confidence. More confident still will he be, if, by the wayside, he should find, here and there, ancient monuments, each with its votive lamp, and on each the name of some former pilgrim, and a record that there he had first seen or begun to follow the benignant Star!

No otherwise is it with the varied contents of the Sacred Volume. The hungry have found food, the thirsty a living spring, the feeble a staff, and the victorious warfarer songs of welcome and strains of music; and as long as each man asks on account of his wants, and asks what he wants, no man will discover aught amiss or deficient in the vast and many-chambered storehouse. But if, instead of this, an idler or scoffer should wander through the rooms, peering and peeping, and either detects, or fancies he has detected, here a rusted sword or pointless shaft, there a tool of rude construction, and superseded by later improvements (and preserved, perhaps, to make us more grateful for them);—which of two things will a sober-minded man,—who, from his childhood upward had been fed, clothed, armed, and furnished with the means of instruction from this very magazine,—think the fitter plan? Will he insist that the rust is not rust, or that it is a rust sui generis, intentionally formed on the steel for some mysterious virtue in it, and that the staff and astrolabe of a shepherd-astronomer are identical with, or equivalent to, the quadrant and telescope of Newton or Herschel? Or will he not rather give the curious inquisitor joy of his mighty discoveries, and the credit of them for his reward?

Or lastly, put the matter thus: For more than a thousand years the Bible, collectively taken, has gone hand in hand with civilisation, science, law—in short, with the moral and intellectual cultivation of the species, always supporting, and often leading, the way. Its very presence, as a believed Book, has rendered the nations emphatically a chosen race, and this too in exact proportion as it is more or less generally known and studied. Of those nations which in the highest degree enjoy its influences it is not too much to affirm, that the differences, public and private, physical, moral and intellectual, are only less than what might be expected from a diversity in species. Good and holy men, and the best and wisest of mankind, the kingly spirits of history, enthroned in the hearts of mighty nations, have borne witness to its influences, have declared it to be beyond compare the most perfect instrument, the only adequate organ, of Humanity; the organ and instrument of all the gifts, powers, and tendencies, by which the individual is privileged to rise above himself—to leave behind, and lose his individual phantom self, in order to find his true self in that Distinctness where no division can be—in the Eternal I AM, the Ever-living Word, of whom all the elect from the archangel before time throne to the poor wrestler with the Spirit until the breaking of day are but the fainter and still fainter echoes. And are all these testimonies and lights of experience to lose their value and efficiency because I feel no warrant of history, or Holy Writ, or of my own heart for denying, that in the framework and outward case of this instrument a few parts may be discovered of less costly materials and of meaner workmanship? Is it not a fact that the Books of the New Testament were tried by their consonance with the rule, and according to the analogy, of faith? Does not the universally admitted canon—that each part of Scripture must be interpreted by the spirit of the whole—lead to the same practical conclusion as that for which I am now contending—namely, that it is the spirit of the Bible, and not the detached words and sentences, that is infallible and absolute? Practical, I say, and spiritual too; and what knowledge not practical or spiritual are we entitled to seek in our Bibles? Is the

grace of God so confined—are the evidences of the present and actuating Spirit so dim and doubtful—that to be assured of the same we must first take for granted that all the life and co-agency of our humanity is miraculously suspended?

Whatever is spiritual, is eo nomine supernatural; but must it be always and of necessity miraculous? Miracles could open the eyes of the body; and he that was born blind beheld his Redeemer. But miracles, even those of the Redeemer himself, could not open the eyes of the self-blinded, of the Sadducean sensualist, or the self-righteous Pharisee—while to have said, I saw thee under the fig-tree, sufficed to make a Nathanael believe.

To assert and to demand miracles without necessity was the vice of the unbelieving Jews of old; and from the Rabbis and Talmudists the infection has spread. And would I could say that the symptoms of the disease are confined to the Churches of the Apostasy! But all the miracles, which the legends of Monk or Rabbi contain, can scarcely be put in competition, on the score of complication, inexplicableness, the absence of all intelligible use or purpose, and of circuitous self-frustration, with those that must be assumed by the maintainers of this doctrine, in order to give effect to the series of miracles, by which all the nominal composers of the Hebrew nation before the time of Ezra, of whom there are any remains, were successively transformed into automaton compositors—so that the original text should be in sentiment, image, word, syntax, and composition an exact impression of the divine copy! In common consistency the theologians, who impose this belief on their fellow Christians, ought to insist equally on the superhuman origin and authority of the Masora, and to use more respectful terms, than has been their wont of late, in speaking of the false Aristeas's legend concerning the Septuagint. And why the miracle should stop at the Greek Version, and not include the Vulgate, I can discover no ground in reason. Or if it be an objection to the latter, that this belief is actually enjoined by the Papal Church, yet the number of Christians who road the Lutheran, the Genevan, or our own authorised, Bible, and are ignorant of the dead

languages, greatly exceeds the number of those who have access to the Septuagint. Why refuse the writ of consecration to these, or to the one at least appointed by the assertors' own Church? I find much more consistency in the opposition made under pretext of this doctrine to the proposals and publications of Kennicot, Mill, Bentley, and Archbishop Newcome.

But I am weary of discussing a tenet which the generality of divines and the leaders of the religious public have ceased to defend, and yet continue to assert or imply. The tendency manifested in this conduct, the spirit of this and the preceding century, on which, not indeed the tenet itself, but the obstinate adherence to it against the clearest light of reason and experience, is grounded—this it is which, according to my conviction, gives the venom to the error, and justifies the attempt to substitute a juster view. As long as it was the common and effective belief of all the Reformed Churches (and by none was it more sedulously or more emphatically enjoined than by the great Reformers of our Church), that by the good Spirit were the spirits tried, and that the light, which beams forth from the written Word, was its own evidence for the children of light; as long as Christians considered their Bible as a plenteous entertainment, where every guest, duly called and attired, found the food needful and fitting for him, and where each—instead of troubling himself about the covers not within his reach—beholding all around him glad and satisfied, praised the banquet and thankfully glorified the Master of the feast—so long did the tenet—that the Scriptures were written under the special impulse of the Holy Ghost remain safe and profitable. Nay, in the sense, and with the feelings, in which it was asserted, it was a truth—a truth to which every spiritual believer now and in all times will bear witness by virtue of his own experience. And if in the overflow of love and gratitude they confounded the power and presence of the Holy Spirit, working alike in weakness and in strength, in the morning mists and in the clearness of the full day; if they confounded this communion and co-agency of divine grace, attributable to the Scripture generally, with those express, and expressly recorded, communications

and messages of the Most High which form so large and prominent a portion of the same Scriptures; if, in short, they did not always duly distinguish the inspiration, the imbreathment, of the predisposing and assisting Spirit from the revelation of the informing Word, it was at worst a harmless hyperbole. It was holden by all, that if the power of the Spirit from without furnished the text, the grace of the same Spirit from within must supply the comment.

In the sacred Volume they saw and reverenced the bounden wheat-sheaf that stood upright and had obeisance from all the other sheaves (the writings, I mean, of the Fathers and Doctors of the Church), sheaves depreciated indeed, more or less, with tares,

"and furrow-weeds, Darnel and many an idle flower that grew Mid the sustaining corn;"

yet sheaves of the same harvest, the sheaves of brethren! Nor did it occur to them, that, in yielding the more full and absolute honour to the sheaf of the highly favoured of their Father, they should be supposed to attribute the same worth and quality to the straw-bands which held it together. The bread of life was there. And this in an especial sense was bread from Heaven; for no where had the same been found wild; no soil or climate dared claim it for its natural growth. In simplicity of heart they received the Bible as the precious gift of God, providential alike in origin, preservation, and distribution, without asking the nice question whether all and every part were likewise miraculous. The distinction between the providential and the miraculous, between the Divine Will working with the agency of natural causes, and the same Will supplying their place by a special fiat—this distinction has, I doubt not, many uses in speculative divinity. But its weightiest practical application is shown, when it is employed to free the souls of the unwary and weak in faith from the nets and snares, the insidious queries and captious objections, of the Infidel by calming the flutter of their spirits. They must be quieted, before we can commence

the means necessary for their disentanglement. And in no way can this be better effected than when the frightened captives are made to see in how many points the disentangling itself is a work of expedience rather than of necessity; so easily and at so little loss might the web be cut or brushed away.

First, let their attention be fixed on the history of Christianity as learnt from universal tradition, and the writers of each successive generation. Draw their minds to the fact of the progressive and still continuing fulfilment of the assurance of a few fishermen, that both their own religion, though of Divine origin, and the religion of their conquerors, which included or recognised all other religious of the known world, should be superseded by the faith in a man recently and ignominiously executed. Then induce them to meditate on the universals of Christian Faith—on Christianity taken as the sum of belief common to Greek and Latin, to Romanist and Protestant. Show them that this and only this is the ordo traditionis, quam tradiderunt Apostoli iis quibus committebant ecclesias, and which we should have been bound to follow, says Irenæus, si neque Apostoli quidem Scripturas reliquissent. This is that regula fidei, that sacramentum symboli memoriæ mandatum, of which St. Augustine says:—noveritis hoc esse Fidei Catholicæ fundamentum super quod edificium surrexit Ecclesiæ. This is the norma Catholici et Ecclesiastici sensus, determined and explicated, but not augmented, by the Nicene Fathers, as Waterland has irrefragably shown; a norm or model of Faith grounded on the solemn affirmations of the Bishops collected from all parts of the Roman Empire, that this was the essential and unalterable Gospel received by them from their predecessors in all the churches as the παράδοσις ἐκκλησιαστικὴ cui, says Irenæus, assentiunt multæ gentes eorum qui in Christum credunt sine charta et atramento, scriptam habentes per Spiritum in cordibus suis salutem, et veterum traditionem diligenter custodientes. Let the attention of such as have been shaken by the assaults of infidelity be thus directed, and then tell me wherein a spiritual physician would be blameworthy, if he carried on the cure by addressing his patient

in this manner:—

"All men of learning, even learned unbelievers, admit that the greater part of the objections, urged in the popular works of infidelity, to this or that verse or chapter of the Bible, prove only the ignorance or dishonesty of the objectors. But let it be supposed for a moment that a few remain hitherto unanswered—nay, that to your judgment and feelings they appear unanswerable. What follows? That the Apostles' and Nicene Creed is not credible, the Ten Commandments not to be obeyed, the clauses of the Lord's Prayer not to be desired, or the Sermon on the Mount not to be practised? See how the logic would look. David cruelly tortured the inhabitants of Rabbah (2 Sam. xii. 31; 1 Chron. xx. 3), and in several of the Psalms he invokes the bitterest curses on his enemies: therefore it is not to be believed that the love of God toward us was manifested in sending His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him (1 John iv. 9). Or, Abijah is said to have collected an army of 400,000 men, and Jeroboam to have met him with an army of 800,000 men, each army consisting of chosen men (2 Chron. xiii. 3), and making together a host of 1,200,000, and Abijah to have slain 500,000 out of the 800,000: therefore, the words which admonish us that if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another (1 John iv. 11), even our enemies, yea, to bless them that curse us, and to do good to them that hate us (Matt. v. 44), cannot proceed from the Holy Spirit. Or: The first six chapters of the book of Daniel contain several words and phrases irreconcilable with the commonly received dates, and those chapters and the Book of Esther have a traditional and legendary character unlike that of the other historical books of the Old Testament; therefore those other books, by contrast with which the former appear suspicious, and the historical document (1 Cor. xv. 1–8), are not to be credited!"

We assuredly believe that the Bible contains all truths necessary to salvation, and that therein is preserved the undoubted Word of God. We assert likewise that, besides these express oracles and immediate revelations, there are Scriptures which

to the soul and conscience of every Christian man bear irresistible evidence of the Divine Spirit assisting and actuating the authors; and that both these and the former are such as to render it morally impossible that any passage of the small inconsiderable portion, not included in one or other of these, can supply either ground or occasion of any error in faith, practice, or affection, except to those who wickedly and wilfully seek a pretext for their unbelief. And if in that small portion of the Bible which stands in no necessary connection with the known and especial ends and purposes of the Scriptures, there should be a few apparent errors resulting from the state of knowledge then existing—errors which the best and holiest men might entertain uninjured, and which without a miracle those men must have entertained; if I find no such miraculous prevention asserted, and see no reason for supposing it—may I not, to ease the scruples of a perplexed inquirer, venture to say to him; "Be it so. What then? The absolute infallibility even of the inspired writers in matters altogether incidental and foreign to the objects and purposes of their inspiration is no part of my creed: and even if a professed divine should follow the doctrine of the Jewish Church so far as not to attribute to the Hagiographa, in every word and sentence, the same height and fulness of inspiration as to the Law and the Prophets, I feel no warrant to brand him as a heretic for an opinion, the admission of which disarms the infidel without endangering a single article of the Catholic Faith."—If to an unlearned but earnest and thoughtful neighbour I give the advice;—"Use the Old Testament to express the affections excited, and to confirm the faith and morals taught you, in the New, and leave all the rest to the students and professors of theology and Church history! You profess only to be a Christian:"—am I misleading my brother in Christ?

This I believe by my own dear experience—that the more tranquilly an inquirer takes up the Bible as he would any other body of ancient writings, the livelier and steadier will be his impressions of its superiority to all other books, till at length all other books and all other knowledge will be valuable in his eyes in proportion as

they help him to a better understanding of his Bible. Difficulty after difficulty has been overcome from the time that I began to study the Scriptures with free and unboding spirit, under the conviction that my faith in the Incarnate Word and His Gospel was secure, whatever the result might be;—the difficulties that still remain being so few and insignificant in my own estimation, that I have less personal interest in the question than many of those who will most dogmatically condemn me for presuming to make a question of it.

So much for scholars—for men of like education and pursuits as myself. With respect to Christians generally, I object to the consequence drawn from the doctrine rather than to the doctrine itself;—a consequence not only deducible from the premises, but actually and imperiously deduced; according to which every man that can but read is to sit down to the consecutive and connected perusal of the Bible under the expectation and assurance that the whole is within his comprehension, and that, unaided by note or comment, catechism or liturgical preparation, he is to find out for himself what he is bound to believe and practise, and that whatever he conscientiously understands by what he reads is to be his religion. For he has found it in his Bible, and the Bible is the Religion of Protestants!

Would I then withhold the Bible from the cottager and the artisan?—Heaven forfend! The fairest flower that ever clomb up a cottage window is not so fair a sight to my eyes as the Bible gleaming through the lower panes. Let it but be read as by such men it used to be read; when they came to it as to a ground covered with manna, even the bread which the Lord had given for his people to eat; where he that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack. They gathered every man according to his eating. They came to it as to a treasure-house of Scriptures; each visitant taking what was precious and leaving as precious for others;—Yea, more, says our worthy old Church-historian, Fuller, where “the same man at several times may in his apprehension prefer several Scriptures as best, formerly most affected with one place, for the present more delighted with another,

and afterwards, conceiving comfort therein not so clear, choose other places as more pregnant and pertinent to his purpose. Thus God orders it, that divers men (and perhaps the same man at divers times), make use of all His gifts, gleaning and gathering comfort as it is scattered through the whole field of the Scripture."

Farewell.

LETTER VII.

You are now, my dear friend, in possession of my whole mind on this point—one thing only excepted which has weighed with me more than all the rest, and which I have therefore reserved for my concluding letter. This is the impelling principle or way of thinking, which I have in most instances noticed in the assertors of what I have ventured to call Bibliolatry, and which I believe to be the main ground of its prevalence at this time, and among men whose religious views are anything rather than enthusiastic. And I here take occasion to declare, that my conviction of the danger and injury of this principle was and is my chief motive for bringing the doctrine itself into question; the main error of which consists in the confounding of two distinct conceptions—revelation by the Eternal Word, and actuation of the Holy Spirit. The former indeed is not always or necessarily united with the latter—the prophecy of Balaam is an instance of the contrary,—but yet being ordinarily, and only not always, so united, the term, "Inspiration," has acquired a double sense.

First, the term is used in the sense of Information miraculously communicated by voice or vision; and secondly, where without any sensible addition or infusion, the writer or speaker uses and applies his existing gifts of power and knowledge under the predisposing, aiding, and directing actuation of God's Holy Spirit. Now, between the first sense, that is, inspired revelation, and the highest degree of that grace and communion with the Spirit which the Church under all circumstances, and every regenerate member of the Church of Christ, is permitted to hope and instructed to pray for, there is a positive difference of kind—a chasm, the pretended

overleaping of which constitutes imposture, or betrays insanity. Of the first kind are the Law and the Prophets, no jot or tittle of which can pass unfulfilled, and the substance and last interpretation of which passes not away; for they wrote of Christ, and shadowed out the everlasting Gospel. But with regard to the second, neither the holy writers—the so-called Hagiographi—themselves, nor any fair interpretations of Scripture, assert any such absolute diversity, or enjoin the belief of any greater difference of degree, than the experience of the Christian World, grounded on and growing with the comparison of these Scriptures with other works holden in honour by the Churches, has established. And this difference I admit, and doubt not that it has in every generation been rendered evident to as many as read these Scriptures under the gracious influence of the spirit in which they were written.

But alas! this is not sufficient; this cannot but be vague and unsufficing to those with whom the Christian religion is wholly objective, to the exclusion of all its correspondent subjective. It must appear vague, I say, to those whose Christianity as matter of belief is wholly external, and like the objects of sense, common to all alike; altogether historical, an opus operatum—its existing and present operancy in no respect differing from any other fact of history, and not at all modified by the supernatural principle in which it had its origin in time. Divines of this persuasion are actually, though without their own knowledge, in a state not dissimilar to that into which the Latin Church sank deeper amid deeper from the sixth to the fourteenth century; during which time religion was likewise merely objective and superstitious—a letter proudly emblazoned and illuminated, but yet a dead letter that was to be read by its own outward glories without the light of the Spirit in the mind of the believer. The consequence was too glaring not to be anticipated, and, if possible, prevented. Without that spirit in each true believer, whereby we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error in all things appertaining to salvation, the consequence must be—so many men, so many minds! And what was the antidote which the Priests and Rabbis of this purely objective Faith opposed to this peril?

Why, an objective, outward Infallibility, concerning which, however, the differences were scarcely less or fewer than those which it was to heal; an Infallibility which taken literally and unqualified, became the source of perplexity to the well-disposed, of unbelief to the wavering, and of scoff and triumph to the common enemy, and which was, therefore, to be qualified and limited, and then it meant so munch and so little that to men of plain understandings and single hearts it meant nothing at all. It resided here. No! there. No! but in a third subject. Nay! neither here, nor there, nor in the third, but in all three conjointly!

But even this failed to satisfy; and what was the final resource—the doctrine of those who would not be called a Protestant Church, but in which doctrine the Fathers of Protestantism in England would have found little other fault, than that it might be affirmed as truly of the decisions of any other bishop as of the Bishop of Rome? The final resource was to restore what ought never to have been removed—the correspondent subjective, that is, the assent and confirmation of the Spirit promised to all true believers, as proved and manifested in the reception of such decision by the Church Universal in all its rightful members.

I comprise and conclude the sum of my conviction in this one sentence. Revealed religion (and I know of no religion not revealed) is in its highest contemplation the unity, that is, the identity or co-inherence, of subjective and objective. It is in itself, and irrelatively at once inward life and truth, and outward fact and luminary. But as all power manifests itself in the harmony of correspondent opposites, each supposing and supporting the other; so has religion its objective, or historic and ecclesiastical pole and its subjective, or spiritual and individual pole. In the miracles and miraculous parts of religion—both in the first communication of Divine truths, and in the promulgation of the truths thus communicated—we have the union of the two, that is, the subjective and supernatural displayed objectively—outwardly and phenomenally—as subjective and supernatural.

Lastly, in the Scriptures, as far as they are not included in the above as miracles, and in the mind of the believing and regenerate reader and meditater, there is proved to us the reciprocity or reciprocation of the spirit as subjective and objective, which in conformity with the scheme proposed by me, in aid of distinct conception and easy recollection, I have named the Indifference. What I mean by this, a familiar acquaintance with the more popular parts of Luther's works, especially his "Commentaries," and the delightful volume of his "Table Talk," would interpret for me better than I can do for myself. But I do my best, when I say that no Christian probationer, who is earnestly working out his salvation, and experiences the conflict of the spirit with the evil and the infirmity within him and around him, can find his own state brought before him, and, as it were, antedated, in writings reverend even for their antiquity and enduring permanence, and far more and more abundantly consecrated by the reverence, love, and grateful testimonies of good men, through the long succession of ages, in every generation, and under all states of minds and circumstances of fortune, that no man, I say, can recognise his own inward experiences in such writings, and not find an objectiveness, a confirming and assuring outwardness, and all the main characters of reality reflected therefrom on the spirit, working in himself and in his own thoughts, emotions, and aspirations, warring against sin and the motions of sin. The unsubstantial, insulated self passes away as a stream; but these are the shadows and reflections of the Rock of Ages, and of the Tree of Life that starts forth from its side.

On the other hand, as much of reality, as much of objective truth, as the Scriptures communicate to the subjective experiences of the believer, so much of present life, of living and effective import, do these experiences give to the letter of these Scriptures. In the one the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we have received the spirit of adoption; in the other our spirit bears witness to the power of the Word, that it is indeed the Spirit that proceedeth from God. If in the holy men thus actuated all imperfection of knowledge, all participation in the mistakes and

limits of their several ages had been excluded, how could these writings be or become the history and example, the echo and more lustrous image of the work and warfare of the sanctifying principle in us? If after all this, and in spite of all this, some captious litigator should lay hold of a text here or there—St. Paul's cloak left at Troas with Carpus, or a verse from the Canticles, and ask, "Of what spiritual use is this?"—the answer is ready:—It proves to us that nothing can be so trifling, as not to supply an evil heart with a pretext for unbelief.

Archbishop Leighton has observed that the Church has its extensive and intensive states, and that they seldom fall together. Certain it is, that since kings have been her nursing fathers, and queens her nursing mothers, our theologians seem to act in the spirit of fear rather than in that of faith; and too often, instead of inquiring after the truth in the confidence that whatever is truth must be fruitful of good to all who are in Him that is true, they seek with vain precautions to guard against the possible inferences which perverse and distempered minds may pretend, whose whole Christianity—do what we will—is and will remain nothing but a pretence.

You have now my entire mind on this momentous question, the grounds on which it rests, and the motives which induce me to make it known; and I now conclude by repeating my request: Correct me, or confirm me.

Farewell.

ESSAY ON FAITH.

Faith may be defined as fidelity to our own being, so far as such being is not and cannot become an object of the senses; and hence, by clear inference or implication to being generally, as far as the same is not the object of the senses; and again to whatever is affirmed or understood as the condition, or concomitant, or consequence of the same. This will be best explained by an instance or example. That I am conscious of something within me peremptorily commanding me to do unto others

as I would they should do unto me; in other words a categorical (that is, primary and unconditional) imperative; that the maxim (regula maxima, or supreme rule) of my actions, both inward and outward, should be such as I could, without any contradiction arising therefrom, will to be the law of all moral and rational beings. This, I say, is a fact of which I am no less conscious (though in a different way), nor less assured, than I am of any appearance presented by my outward senses. Nor is this all; but in the very act of being conscious of this in my own nature, I know that it is a fact of which all men either are or ought to be conscious; a fact, the ignorance of which constitutes either the non-personality of the ignorant, or the guilt; in which latter case the ignorance is equivalent to knowledge wilfully darkened. I know that I possess this knowledge as a man, and not as Samuel Taylor Coleridge; hence, knowing that consciousness of this fact is the root of all other consciousness, and the only practical contradistinction of man from the brutes, we name it the conscience, by the natural absence or presumed presence of which the law, both Divine and human, determines whether X Y Z be a thing or a person; the conscience being that which never to have had places the objects in the same order of things as the brutes, for example, idiots, and to have lost which implies either insanity or apostasy. Well, this we have affirmed is a fact of which every honest man is as fully assured as of his seeing, hearing, or smelling. But though the former assurance does not differ from the latter in the degree, it is altogether diverse in the kind; the senses being morally passive, while the conscience is essentially connected with the will, though not always, nor indeed in any case, except after frequent attempts and aversions of will dependent on the choice. Thence we call the presentations of the senses impressions, those of the conscience commands or dictates. In the senses we find our receptivity, and as far as our personal being is concerned, we are passive, but in the fact of the conscience we are not only agents, but it is by this alone that we know ourselves to be such—nay, that our very passiveness in this latter is an act of passiveness, and that we are patient (patientes), not, as in the other case, simply

passive.

The result is the consciousness of responsibility, and the proof is afforded by the inward experience of the diversity between regret and remorse.

If I have sound ears, and my companion speaks to me with a due proportion of voice, I may persuade him that I did not hear, but cannot deceive myself. But when my conscience speaks to me, I can by repeated efforts render myself finally insensible; to which add this other difference, namely, that to make myself deaf is one and the same thing with making my conscience dumb, till at length I became unconscious of my conscience. Frequent are the instances in which it is suspended, and, as it were, drowned in the inundation of the appetites, passions, and imaginations to which I have resigned myself, making use of my will in order to abandon my free-will; and there are not, I fear, examples wanting of the conscience being utterly destroyed, or of the passage of wickedness into madness; that species of madness, namely, in which the reason is lost. For so long as the reason continues, so long must the conscience exist, either as a good conscience or as a bad conscience.

It appears, then, that even the very first step—that the initiation of the process, the becoming conscious of a conscience—partakes of the nature of an act. It is an act in and by which we take upon ourselves an allegiance, and consequently the obligation of fealty; and this fealty or fidelity implying the power of being unfaithful, it is the first and fundamental sense of faith. It is likewise the commencement of experience, and the result of all other experience. In other words, conscience in this its simplest form, must be supposed in order to consciousness, that is, to human consciousness. Brutes may be and are scions, but those beings only who have an I, scire possunt hoc vel illud una cum seipsis; that is, conscire vel scire aliquid mecum, or to know a thing in relation to myself, and in the act of knowing myself as acted upon by that something.

Now the third person could never have been distinguished from the first but by means of the second. There can be no He without a previous Thou. Much less could an I exist for us except as it exists during the suspension of the will, as in dreams; and the nature of brutes may be best understood by considering them as somnambulists. This is a deep meditation, though the position is capable of the strictest proof, namely, that there can be no I without a Thou, and that a Thou is only possible by an equation in which I is taken as equal to Thou, and yet not the same. And this, again, is only possible by putting them in opposition as correspondent opposites, or correlatives. In order to this, a something must be affirmed in the one which is rejected in the other, and this something is the will. I do not will to consider myself as equal to myself, for in the very act of constructing myself I, I take it as the same, and therefore as incapable of comparison, that is, of any application of the will. If, then, I minus the will be the thesis, Thou, plus will, must be the antithesis, but the equation of Thou with I, by means of a free act, negativing the sameness in order to establish the equality, is the true definition of conscience. But as without a Thou there can be no You, so without a You no They, These, or Those; and as all these conjointly form the materials and subjects of consciousness and the conditions of experience, it is evident that conscience is the root of all consciousness—à fortiori, the precondition of all experience—and that the conscience cannot have been in its first revelation deduced from experience.

Soon, however, experience comes into play. We learn that there are other impulses beside the dictates of conscience, that there are powers within us and without us ready to usurp the throne of conscience, and busy in tempting us to transfer our allegiance. We learn that there are many things contrary to conscience, and therefore to be rejected and utterly excluded, and many that can coexist with its supremacy only by being subjugated as beasts of burthen; and others again, as for instance the social tendernesses and affections, and the faculties and excitations of the intellect, which must be at least subordinated. The preservation of our loyalty and fealty under

these trials, and against these rivals, constitutes the second sense of faith; and we shall need but one more point of view to complete its full import. This is the consideration of what is presupposed in the human conscience. The answer is ready. As in the equation of the correlative I and Thou, one of the twin constituents is to be taken as plus will, the other as minus will, so is it here; and it is obvious that the reason or super-individual of each man, whereby he is a man, is the factor we are to take as minus will, and that the individual will or personalising principle of free agency ("arbitrement" is Milton's word) is the factor marked plus will; and again, that as the identity or co-inherence of the absolute will and the reason, is the peculiar character of God, so is the synthesis of the individual will and the common reason, by the subordination of the former to the latter, the only possible likeness or image of the prothesis or identity, and therefore the required proper character of man. Conscience, then, is a witness respecting the identity of the will and the reason, effected by the self-subordination of the will or self to the reason, as equal to or representing the will of God. But the personal will is a factor in other moral synthesis, for example, appetite plus personal will = sensuality; lust of power, plus personal will = ambition, and so on, equally as in the synthesis on which the conscience is grounded. Not this, therefore, but the other synthesis, must supply the specific character of the conscience, and we must enter into an analysis of reason. Such as the nature and objects of the reason are, such must be the functions and objects of the conscience. And the former we shall best learn by recapitulating those constituents of the total man which are either contrary to or disparate from the reason.

I. Reason, and the proper objects of reason, are wholly alien from sensation. Reason is supersensual, and its antagonist is appetite, and the objects of appetite the lust of the flesh.

II. Reason and its objects do not appertain to the world of the senses, inward or outward; that is, they partake not of sense or fancy. Reason is supersensuous, and

here its antagonist is the lust of the eye.

III. Reason and its objects are not things of reflection, association, discursion, discourse in the old sense of the word as opposed to intuition; “discursive or intuitive,” as Milton has it. Reason does not indeed necessarily exclude the finite, either in time or in space, but it includes them eminenter. Thus the prime mover of the material universe is affirmed to contain all motion as its cause, but not to be, or to suffer, motion in itself.

Reason is not the faculty of the finite. But here I must premise the following. The faculty of the finite is that which reduces the confused impressions of sense to their essential forms—quantity, quality, relation, and in these action and reaction, cause and effect, and the like; thus raises the materials furnished by the senses and sensations into objects of reflection, and so makes experience possible. Without it, man’s representative powers would be a delirium, a chaos, a scudding cloudage of shapes; and it is therefore most appropriately called the understanding, or substantiative faculty. Our elder metaphysicians, down to Hobbes inclusively, called this likewise discourse, discuvsus discursio, from its mode of action as not staying at any one object, but running, as it were, to and fro to abstract, generalise, and classify. Now when this faculty is employed in the service of the pure reason, it brings out the necessary and universal truths contained in the infinite into distinct contemplation by the pure act of the sensuous imagination—that is, in the production of the forms of space and time abstracted from all corporeity, and likewise of the inherent forms of the understanding itself abstractedly from the consideration of particulars, as in the case of geometry, numeral mathematics, universal logic, and pure metaphysics. The discursive faculty then becomes what our Shakespeare, with happy precision, calls “discourse of reason.”

We will now take up our reasoning again from the words “motion in itself.”

It is evident, then, that the reason as the irradiative power, and the representative of

the infinite, judges the understanding as the faculty of the finite, and cannot without error be judged by it. When this is attempted, or when the understanding in its synthesis with the personal will, usurps the supremacy of the reason, or affects to supersede the reason, it is then what St. Paul calls the mind of the flesh (φρόνημα σαρκός), or the wisdom of this world. The result is, that the reason is superfinite; and in this relation, its antagonist is the insubordinate understanding, or mind of the flesh.

IV. Reason, as one with the absolute will (In the beginning was the Logos, and the Logos was with God, and the Logos was God), and therefore for man the certain representative of the will of God, is above the will of man as an individual will. We have seen in III. that it stands in antagonism to all mere particulars; but here it stands in antagonism to all mere individual interests as so many selves, to the personal will as seeking its objects in the manifestation of itself for itself—sit pro ratione voluntas;—whether this be realised with adjuncts, as in the lust of the flesh, and in the lust of the eye; or without adjuncts, as in the thirst and pride of power, despotism, egoistic ambition. The fourth antagonist, then, of reason, is the lust of the will.

Corollary. Unlike a million of tigers, a million of men is very different from a million times one man. Each man in a numerous society is not only coexistent with, but virtually organised into, the multitude of which he is an integral part. His idem is modified by the alter. And there arise impulses and objects from this synthesis of the alter et idem, myself and my neighbour. This, again, is strictly analogous to what takes place in the vital organisation of the individual man. The cerebral system of the nerves has its correspondent antithesis in the abdominal system: but hence arises a synthesis of the two in the pectoral system as the intermediate, and, like a drawbridge, at once conductor and boundary. In the latter, as objectised by the former, arise the emotions, the affections, and, in one word, the passions, as distinguished from the cognitions and appetites. Now, the reason has been shown to

be superindividual, generally, and therefore not less so when the form of an individualisation subsists in the alter than when it is confined to the idem; not less when the emotions have their conscious or believed object in another, than when their subject is the individual personal self. For though these emotions, affections, attachments, and the like, are the prepared ladder by which the lower nature is taken up into, and made to partake of, the highest room—as we are taught to give a feeling of reality to the higher per medium commune with the lower, and thus gradually to see the reality of the higher (namely, the objects of reason), and finally to know that the latter are indeed, and pre-eminently real, as if you love your earthly parents whom you see, by these means you will learn to love your Heavenly Father who is invisible;—yet this holds good only so far as the reason is the president, and its objects the ultimate aim; and cases may arise in which the Christ as the Logos, or Redemptive Reason, declares, He that loves father or another more than Me, is not worthy of Me; nay, he that can permit his emotions to rise to an equality with the universal reason, is in enmity with that reason. Here, then, reason appears as the love of God; and its antagonist is the attachment to individuals wherever it exists in diminution of, or in competition with, the love which is reason.

In these five paragraphs I have enumerated and explained the several powers or forces belonging or incidental to human nature, which in all matters of reason the man is bound either to subjugate or subordinate to reason. The application to faith follows of its own accord. The first or most indefinite sense of faith is fidelity: then fidelity under previous contract or particular moral obligation. In this sense faith is fealty to a rightful superior: faith is the duty of a faithful subject to a rightful governor. Then it is allegiance in active service; fidelity to the liege lord under circumstances, and amid the temptations of usurpation, rebellion, and intestine discord. Next we seek for that rightful superior on our duties to whom all our duties to all other superiors, on our faithfulness to whom all our bounden relations to all other objects of fidelity, are founded. We must inquire after that duty in which all

others find their several degrees and dignities, and from which they derive their obligative force. We are to find a superior, whose rights, including our duties, are presented to the mind in the very idea of that Supreme Being, whose sovereign prerogatives are predicates implied in the subjects, as the essential properties of a circle are co-assumed in the first assumption of a circle, consequently underived, unconditional, and as rationally unsusceptible, so probably prohibitive, of all further question. In this sense, then, faith is fidelity, fealty, allegiance of the moral nature to God, in opposition to all usurpation, and in resistance to all temptation to the placing any other claim above or equal with our fidelity to God.

The will of God is the last ground and final aim of all our duties, and to that the whole man is to be harmonised by subordination, subjugation, or suppression alike in commission and omission. But the will of God, which is one with the supreme intelligence, is revealed to man through the conscience. But the conscience, which consists in an inappellable bearing-witness to the truth and reality of our reason, may legitimately be construed with the term reason, so far as the conscience is prescriptive; while as approving or condemning, it is the consciousness of the subordination or insubordination, the harmony or discord, of the personal will of man to and with the representative of the will of God. This brings me to the last and fullest sense of faith, that is, the obedience of the individual will to the reason, in the lust of the flesh as opposed to the supersensual; in the lust of the eye as opposed to the supersensuous; in the pride of the understanding as opposed to the infinite; in the φρόνημα σαρκός in contrariety to the spiritual truth; in the lust of the personal will as opposed to the absolute and universal; and in the love of the creature, as far as it is opposed to the love which is one with the reason, namely, the love of God.

Thus, then, to conclude. Faith subsists in the synthesis of the Reason and the individual Will. By virtue of the latter therefore, it must be an energy, and, inasmuch as it relates to the whole moral man, it must be exerted in each and all of his constituents or incidents, faculties and tendencies;—it must be a total, not a

partial—a continuous, not a desultory or occasional—energy. And by virtue of the former, that is Reason, Faith must be a Light, a form of knowing, a beholding of truth. In the incomparable words of the Evangelist, therefore, Faith must be a Light originating in the Logos, or the substantial Reason, which is co-eternal and one with the Holy Will, and which Light is at the same time the Life of men. Now, as Life is here the sum or collective of all moral and spiritual acts, in suffering, doing, and being, so is Faith the source and the sum, the energy and the principle of the fidelity of man to God, by the subordination of his human Will, in all provinces of his nature, to his Reason, as the sum of spiritual Truth, representing and manifesting the Will Divine.

NOTES ON THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER.

Prayer.

A man may pray night and day, and yet deceive himself; but no man can be assured of his sincerity who does not pray. Prayer is faith passing into act; a union of the will and the intellect realising in an intellectual act. It is the whole man that prays. Less than this is wishing, or lip-work; a charm or a mummery. Pray always, says the apostle: that is, have the habit of prayer, turning your thoughts into acts by connecting them with the idea of the redeeming God, and even so reconverting your actions into thoughts.

The Sacrament of the Eucharist.

The best preparation for taking this sacrament, better than any or all of the books or tracts composed for this end, is to read over and over again, and often on your knees—at all events with a kneeling and praying heart—the Gospel according to St. John, till your mind is familiarised to the contemplation of Christ, the Redeemer and Mediator of mankind, yea, of every creature, as the living and self-subsisting Word,

the very truth of all true being, and the very being of all enduring truth; the reality, which is the substance and unity of all reality; the light which lighteth every man, so that what we call reason is itself a light from that light, lumen a luce, as the Latin more distinctly expresses this fact. But it is not merely light, but therein is life; and it is the life of Christ, the co-eternal Son of God, that is the only true life-giving light of men. We are assured, and we believe, that Christ is God; God manifested in the flesh. As God, he must be present entire in every creature;—(for how can God, or indeed any spirit, exist in parts?)—but he is said to dwell in the regenerate, to come to them who receive him by faith in his name, that is, in his power and influence; for this is the meaning of the word "name" in Scripture when applied to God or his Christ. Where true belief exists, Christ is not only present with or among us;—for so he is in every man, even the most wicked;—but to us and for us. That was the true light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe in his name; which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. John i. 9–14. Again—We will come unto him, and make our abode with him. John xiv. 23. As truly and as really as your soul resides constitutively in your living body, personally and substantially does Christ dwell in every regenerate man.

After this course of study, you may then take up and peruse sentence by sentence the communion service, the best of all comments on the Scriptures appertaining to this mystery. And this is the preparation which will prove, with God's grace, the surest preventive of, or antidote against, the freezing poison, the lethargising hemlock, of the doctrine of the Sacramentaries, according to whom the Eucharist is a mere practical metaphor, in which things are employed instead of articulated sounds for the exclusive purpose of recalling to our minds the historical fact of our Lord's crucifixion; in short—(the profaneness is with them, not with me)—just the same as

when Protestants drink a glass of wine to the glorious memory of William III.! True it is that the remembrance is one end of the sacrament; but it is, Do this in remembrance of me,—of all that Christ was and is, hath done and is still doing for fallen mankind, and, of course, of his crucifixion inclusively, but not of his crucifixion alone. 14 December, 1827.

Companion to the Altar.

First, then, that we may come to this heavenly feast holy, and adorned with the wedding garment, Matt. xxii. ii, we must search our hearts, and examine our consciences, not only till we see our sins, but until we hate them.

But what if a man, seeing his sin, earnestly desire to hate it? Shall he not at the altar offer up at once his desire, and the yet lingering sin, and seek for strength? Is not this sacrament medicine as well as food? Is it an end only, and not likewise the means? Is it merely the triumphal feast; or is it not even more truly a blessed refreshment for and during the conflict?

This confession of sins must not be in general terms only, that we are sinners with the rest of mankind, but it must be a special declaration to God of all our most heinous sins in thought, word, and deed.

Luther was of a different judgment. He would have us feel and groan under our sinfulness and utter incapability of redeeming ourselves from the bondage, rather than hazard the pollution of our imaginations by a recapitulation and renewing of sins and their images in detail. Do not, he says, stand picking the flaws out one by one, but plunge into the river and drown them!—I venture to be of Luther’s doctrine.

Communion Service.

In the first Exhortation, before the words “meritorious Cross and Passion,” I should propose to insert “his assumption of humanity, his incarnation, and.” Likewise, a little lower down, after the word “sustenance,” I would insert “as.” For not in that

sacrament exclusively, but in all the acts of assimilative faith, of which the Eucharist is a solemn, eminent, and representative instance, an instance and the symbol, Christ is our spiritual food and sustenance.

Marriage Service.

Marriage, simply as marriage, is not the means "for the procreation of children," but for the humanisation of the offspring procreated. Therefore, in the Declaration at the beginning, after the words "procreation of children," I would insert, "and as the means of securing to the children procreated enduring care, and that they may be," &c.

Communion of the Sick.

Third rubric at the end.

But if a man, either by reason of extremity of sickness, &c.

I think this rubric, in what I conceive to be its true meaning, a precious doctrine, as fully acquitting our Church of all Romish superstition, respecting the nature of the Eucharist, in relation to the whole scheme of man's redemption. But the latter part of it—"he doth eat and drink the Body and Blood of our Saviour Christ profitably to his soul's health, although he do not receive the sacrament with his mouth"—seems to me very incautiously expressed, and scarcely to be reconciled with the Church's own definition of a sacrament in general. For in such a case, where is "the outward and visible sign of the inward and spiritual grace given?"

XI. Sunday after Trinity.

Epistle.—l Cor. xv. 1.

Brethren, I declare unto you the Gospel which I preached unto you.

Why should the obsolete, though faithful, Saxon translation of εὐαγγέλιον be retained? Why not "good tidings?" Why thus change a most appropriate and

intelligible designation of the matter into a mere conventional name of a particular book?

Ib.

—how that Christ died for our sins.

But the meaning of ὑπὲρ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν is, that Christ died through the sins, and for the sinners. He died through our sins, and we live through his righteousness.

Gospel—Luke xviii. 14.

This man went down to his house justified rather than the other.

Not simply justified, observe; but justified rather than the other, ἢ ἐκεῖνος,—that is, less remote from salvation.

XXV. SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Collect.

—that they, plenteously bringing forth the fruit of good works, may of thee be plenteously rewarded.

Rather—"that with that enlarged capacity, which without thee we cannot acquire, there may likewise be an increase of the gift, which from thee alone we can wholly receive."

Ps. VIII.

V. 2. Out of the mouth of very babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength, because of thine enemies; that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger.

To the dispensations of the twilight dawn, to the first messengers of the redeeming word, the yet lisping utterers of light and life, a strength and power were given because of the enemies, greater and of more immediate influence, than to the seers and proclaimers of a clearer day: even as the first reappearing crescent of the eclipsed moon shines for men with a keener brilliance than the following larger

segments, previously to its total emersion.

Ib. v. 5.

Thou madest him lower than the angels, to crown him with glory and worship.

Power + idea = angel.

Idea—power = man, or Prometheus.

Ps. LXVIII.

V. 34. Ascribe ye the power to God over Israel: his worship and strength is in the clouds.

The "clouds," in the symbolical language of the Scriptures, mean the events and course of things, seemingly effects of human will or chance, but overruled by Providence.

Ps. LXXII.

This psalm admits no other interpretation but of Christ, as the Jehovah incarnate. In any other sense it would be a specimen of more than Persian or Moghul hyperbole, and bombast, of which there is no other instance in Scripture, and which no Christian would dare to attribute to an inspired writer. We know, too, that the elder Jewish Church ranked it among the Messianic Psalms.—N.B. The word in St. John and the Name of the Most High in the Psalms are equivalent terms.

V. 1. Give the king thy judgments, O God; and thy righteousness unto the king's son.

God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, the only begotten, the Son of God and God, King of Kings, and the Son of the King of Kings!

Ps. LXXIV.

V. 2. O think upon thy congregation, whom thou hast purchased and redeemed of

old.

The Lamb sacrificed from the beginning of the world, the God-Man, the Judge, the self-promised Redeemer to Adam in the garden!

V. 15. Thou smotest the heads of the Leviathan in pieces; and gavest him to be meat for the people in the wilderness.

Does this allude to any real tradition? The Psalms appears to have been composed shortly before the captivity of Judah.

Ps. LXXXII. vv. 6–7.

The reference which our Lord made to these mysterious verses gives them an especial interest. The first apostasy, the fall of the angels, is, perhaps, intimated.

Ps. LXXXVII.

I would fain understand this Psalm; but first I must collate it word by word with the original Hebrew. It seems clearly Messianic.

Ps. LXXXVIII.

Vv. 10–12. Dost thou show wonders among the dead, or shall the dead rise up again and praise thee? &c.

Compare Ezekiel xxxvii.

Ps. CIV.

I think the Bible version might with advantage be substituted for this, which in some parts is scarcely intelligible.

V. 6.—the waters stand in the hills.

No; stood above the mountains. The reference is to the Deluge.

Ps. CV.

V. 3.—Let the heart of them rejoice that seek the Lord.

If even to seek the Lord be joy, what will it be to find him? Seek me, O Lord, that I may be found by thee!

Ps. CX.

V. 2.—The Lord shall send the rod of thy power out of Sion; (saying) Rule, &c.

V. 3. Understand—"Thy people shall offer themselves willingly in the day of conflict in holy clothing, in their best array, in their best arms and accoutrements. As the dew from the womb of the morning, in number and brightness like dew-drops, so shall be thy youth, or the youth of thee, the young volunteer warriors."

V. 5. "He shall shake," concuss, concutiet reges die iræ suæ.

V. 6. For "smite in sunder, or wound the heads;" some word answering to the Latin conquassare.

V. 7. For "therefore," translate "then shall he lift up his head again;" that is, as a man languid and sinking from thirst and fatigue after refreshment.

N.B.—I see no poetic discrepancy between vv. 1 and 5.

Ps. CXVIII.

To be interpreted of Christ's Church.

Ps. CXXVI.

V. 5. As the rivers in the south.

Does this allude to the periodical rains?

As a transparency on some night of public rejoicing, seen by common day, with the lamps from within removed—even such would the Psalms be to me uninterpreted by the Gospel. O honoured Mr. Hurwitz! Could I but make you feel what grandeur, what magnificence, what an everlasting significance and import Christianity gives to

every fact of your national history—to every page of your sacred records!

Articles of Religion.

XX. It is mournful to think how many recent writers have criminated our Church in consequence of their ignorance and inadvertence in not knowing, or not noticing, the contradistinction here meant between power and authority. Rites and ceremonies the Church may ordain jure proprio: on matters of faith her judgment is to be received with reverence, and not gainsayed but after repeated inquiries, and on weighty grounds.

XXXVII. It is lawful for Christian men, at the commandment of the magistrate, to wear weapons, and to serve in wars.

This is a very good instance of an unseemly matter neatly wrapped up. The good men recoiled from the plain words—"It is lawful for Christian men at the Command of a king to slaughter as many Christians as they can!"

Well! I could most sincerely subscribe to all these articles. September, 1831.

A NIGHTLY PRAYER. 1831.

Almighty God, by thy eternal Word my Creator Redeemer and Preserver! who hast in thy free communicative goodness glorified me with the capability of knowing thee, the one only absolute Good, the eternal I Am, as the author of my being, and of desiring and seeking thee as its ultimate end;—who, when I fell from thee into the mystery of the false and evil will, didst not abandon me, poor self-lost creature, but in thy condescending mercy didst provide an access and a return to thyself, even to thee the Holy One, in thine only begotten Son, the way and the truth from everlasting, and who took on himself humanity, yea, became flesh, even the man Christ Jesus, that for man he might be the life and the resurrection!—O Giver of all good gifts, who art thyself the one only absolute Good, from whom I have received

whatever good I have, whatever capability of good there is in me, and from thee good alone,—from myself and my own corrupted will all evil and the consequents of evil,—with inward prostration of will, mind, and affections I adore thy infinite majesty; I aspire to love thy transcendent goodness!—In a deep sense of my unworthiness, and my unfitness to present myself before thee, of eyes too pure to behold iniquity, and whose light, the beautitude of spirits conformed to thy will, is a consuming fire to all vanity and corruption;—but in the name of the Lord Jesus, of the dear Son of thy love, in whose perfect obedience thou deignest to behold as many as have received the seed of Christ into the body of this death;—I offer this, my bounden nightly sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, in humble trust that the fragrance of my Saviour's righteousness may remove from it the taint of my mortal corruption. Thy mercies have followed me through all the hours and moments of my life; and now I lift up my heart in awe and thankfulness for the preservation of my life through the past day, for the alleviation of my bodily sufferings and languors, for the manifold comforts which thou hast reserved for me, yea, in thy fatherly compassion hast rescued from the wreck of my own sins or sinful infirmities;—for the kind and affectionate friends thou hast raised up for me, especially for those of this household, for the mother and mistress of this family, whose love to me hath been great and faithful, and for the dear friend, the supporter and sharer of my studies and researches; but, above all, for the heavenly Friend, the crucified Saviour, the glorified Mediator, Christ Jesus, and for the heavenly Comforter, source of all abiding comforts, thy Holy Spirit! O grant me the aid of thy Spirit, that I may with a deeper faith, a more enkindled love, bless thee, who through thy Son hast privileged me to call thee Abba, Father! O, thou, who hast revealed thyself in thy holy word as a God that hearest prayer; before whose infinitude all differences cease of great and small; who like a tender parent foreknowest all our wants, yet listenest well-pleased to the humble petitions of thy children; who hast not alone permitted, but taught us; to call on thee in all our needs,—earnestly I implore the continuance of thy free

mercy, of thy protecting providence, through the coming night. Thou hearest every prayer offered to thee believingly with a penitent and sincere heart. For thou in withholding grantest, healest in inflicting the wound, yea, turnest all to good for as many as truly seek thee through Christ, the Mediator! Thy will be done! But if it be according to thy wise and righteous ordinances, O shield me this night from the assaults of disease, grant me refreshment of sleep unvexed by evil and distempered dreams; and if the purpose and aspiration of my heart be upright before thee, who alone knowest the heart of man, O in thy mercy vouchsafe me yet in this my decay of life an interval of ease and strength; if so (thy grace disposing and assisting) I may make compensation to thy Church for the unused talents thou hast entrusted to me, for the neglected opportunities which thy loving-kindness had provided. O let me be found a labourer in the vineyard, though of the late hour, when the Lord and Heir of the vintage, Christ Jesus, calleth for his servant.

Our Father, &c.

To thee, great omnipresent Spirit, whose mercy is over all thy works, who now beholdest me, who hearest me, who hast framed my heart to seek and to trust in thee, in the name of my Lord and Saviour Christ Jesus, I humbly commit and commend my body, soul, and spirit.

Glory be to thee, O God!

A SAILOR’S FORTUNE.

ESSAY I.

Fortuna plerumque est veluti Galaxia quarundam obscurarum Virtutum sine nomine.

Bacon.

(Translation.)—Fortune is for the most part but a galaxy or milky way, as it were, of certain obscure virtues without a name.

"Does Fortune favour fools? Or how do you explain the origin of the proverb, which, differently worded, is to be found in all the languages of Europe?"

This proverb admits of various explanations, according to the mood of mind in which it is used. It may arise from pity, and the soothing persuasion that Providence is eminently watchful over the helpless, and extends an especial care to those who are not capable of caring for themselves. So used, it breathes the same feeling as "God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb"—or the more sportive adage, that "the fairies take care of children and tipsy folk." The persuasion itself, in addition to the general religious feeling of mankind, and the scarcely less general love of the marvellous, may be accounted for from our tendency to exaggerate all effects that seem disproportionate to their visible cause, and all circumstances that are in any way strongly contrasted with our notions of the persons under them. Secondly, it arises from the safety and success which an ignorance of danger and difficulty sometimes actually assists in procuring; inasmuch as it precludes the despondence, which might have kept the more foresighted from undertaking the enterprise, the depression which would retard its progress, and those overwhelming influences of terror in cases where the vivid perception of the danger constitutes the greater part of the danger itself. Thus men are said to have swooned and even died at the sight of a narrow bridge, over which they had ridden, the night before, in perfect safety; or at tracing the footmarks along the edge of a precipice which the darkness had concealed from them. A more obscure cause, yet not wholly to be omitted, is afforded by the undoubted fact that the exertion of the reasoning faculties tends to extinguish or bedim those mysterious instincts of skill, which, though for the most part latent, we nevertheless possess in common with other animals.

Or the proverb may be used invidiously; and folly in the vocabulary of envy or baseness may signify courage and magnanimity. Hardihood and fool-hardiness are indeed as different as green and yellow, yet will appear the same to the jaundiced eye. Courage multiplies the chances of success by sometimes making opportunities,

and always availing itself of them: and in this sense Fortune may be said to favour fools by those who, however prudent in their own opinion, are deficient in valour and enterprise. Again: an emiently good and wise man, for whom the praises of the judicious have procured a high reputation even with the world at large, proposes to himself certain objects, and adapting the right means to the right end attains them; but his objects not being what the world calls fortune, neither money nor artificial rank, his admitted inferiors in moral and intellectual worth, but more prosperous in their worldly concerns, are said to have been favoured by Fortune and be slighted; although the fools did the same in their line as the wise man in his; they adapted the appropriate means to the desired end, and so succeeded. In this sense the proverb is current by a misuse, or a catachresis at least, of both the words, fortune and fools.

How seldom, friend, a good great man inherits Honour or wealth with all his worth and pains! It sounds like stories from the land of spirits, If any man obtain that which he merits, Or any merit that which he obtains.

REPLY.

For shame! dear friend, renounce this canting strain; What would’st thou have a good great man obtain? Place? titles? salary? a gilded chain? Or throne of corses which his sword hath slain? Greatness and goodness are not means, but ends! Hath he not always treasures, always friends, The good great man? Three treasures, love, and light, And calm thoughts regular as infant’s breath: And three firm friends, more sure than day and night, Himself, his Maker, and the angel Death.

S. T. C.

But, lastly, there is, doubtless, a true meaning attached to fortune, distinct both from prudence and from courage; and distinct too from that absence of depressing or bewildering passions, which (according to my favourite proverb, “extremes meet,”) the fool not seldom obtains in as great perfection by his ignorance as the wise man by the highest energies of thought and self-discipline. Luck has a real existence in

human affairs, from the infinite number of powers that are in action at the same time, and from the co-existence of things contingent and accidental (such as to us at least are accidental) with the regular appearances and general laws of nature. A familiar instance will make these words intelligible. The moon waxes and wanes according to a necessary law. The clouds likewise, and all the manifold appearances connected with them, are governed by certain laws no less than the phases of the moon. But the laws which determine the latter are known and calculable, while those of the former are hidden from us. At all events, the number and variety of their effects baffle our powers of calculation; and that the sky is clear or obscured at any particular time, we speak of, in common language, as a matter of accident. Well! at the time of the full moon, but when the sky is completely covered with black clouds, I am walking on in the dark, aware of no particular danger: a sudden gust of wind rends the cloud for a moment, and the moon emerging discloses to me a chasm or precipice, to the very brink of which I had advanced my foot. This is what is meant by luck, and according to the more or less serious mood or habit of our mind we exclaim, how lucky! or, how providential! The co-presence of numberless phænomena, which from the complexity or subtlety of their determining causes are called contingencies, and the co-existence of these with any regular or necessary phænomenon (as the clouds with the moon for instance), occasion coincidences, which, when they are attended by any advantage or injury, and are at the same time incapable of being calculated or foreseen by human prudence, form good or ill luck. On a hot sunshiny afternoon came on a sudden storm and spoilt the farmer's hay; and this is called ill luck. We will suppose the same event to take place, when meteorology shall have been perfected into a science, provided with unerring instruments; but which the farmer had neglected to examine. This is no longer ill luck, but imprudence. Now apply this to our proverb. Unforeseen coincidences may have greatly helped a man, yet if they have done for him only what possibly from his own abilities he might have effected for himself, his good luck will excite less

attention and the instances be less remembered. That clever men should attain their objects seems natural, and we neglect the circumstances that perhaps produced that success of themselves without the intervention of skill or foresight; but we dwell on the fact and remember it, as something strange, when the same happens to a weak or ignorant man. So, too, though the latter should fail in his undertakings from concurrences that might have happened to the wisest man, yet his failure being no more than might have been expected and accounted for from his folly, it lays no hold on our attention, but fleets away among the other undistinguished waves, in which the stream of ordinary life murmurs by us, and is forgotten. Had it been as true as it was notoriously false, that those all-embracing discoveries, which have shed a dawn of science on the art of chemistry, and give no obscure promise of some one great constitutive law, in the light of which dwell dominion and the power of prophecy; if these discoveries, instead of having been as they really were, preconcerted by meditation, and evolved out of his own intellect, had occurred by a set of lucky accidents to the illustrious father and founder of philosophic alchemy; if they presented themselves to Sir Humphry Davy exclusively in consequence of his luck in possessing a particular galvanic battery; if this battery, as far as Davy was concerned, had itself been an accident, and not (as in point of fact it was) desired and obtained by him for the purpose of insuring the testimony of experience to his principles, and in order to bind down material nature under the inquisition of reason, and force from her, as by torture, unequivocal answers to prepared and preconceived questions—yet still they would not have been talked of or described, as instances of luck, but as the natural results of his admitted genius and known skill. But should an accident have disclosed similar discoveries to a mechanic at Birmingham or Sheffield, and if the man should grow rich in consequence, and partly by the envy of his neighbours, and partly with good reason, be considered by them as a man below par in the general powers of his understanding; then, “Oh, what a lucky fellow! Well, Fortune does favour fools—that’s certain! It is always so!”—and forthwith the

exclaimer relates half a dozen similar instances. Thus accumulating the one sort of facts and never collecting the other, we do, as poets in their diction, and quacks of all denominations do in their reasoning, put a part for the whole, and at once soothe our envy and gratify our love of the marvellous, by the sweeping proverb, “Fortune favours fools.”

ESSAY II.

Quod me non movet æstimatione: Verum est μνημόστυνον mei sodalis.

Catull. xii.

(Translation.)—It interests not by any conceit of its value; but it is a remembrance of my honoured friend.

The philosophic ruler, who secured the favours of fortune by seeking wisdom and knowledge in preference to them, has pathetically observed—“The heart knoweth its own bitterness; and there is a joy in which the stranger intermeddleth not.” A simple question founded on a trite proverb, with a discursive answer to it, would scarcely suggest to an indifferent person any other notion than that of a mind at ease, amusing itself with its own activity. Once before (I believe about this time last year), I had taken up the old memorandum book, from which I transcribed the preceding essay, and they had then attracted my notice by the name of the illustrious chemist mentioned in the last illustration. Exasperated by the base and cowardly attempt that had been made to detract from the honours due to his astonishing genius, I had slightly altered the concluding sentences, substituting the more recent for his earlier discoveries; and without the most distant intention of publishing what I then wrote, I had expressed my own convictions for the gratification of my own feelings, and finished by tranquilly paraphrasing into a chemical allegory the Homeric adventure of Menelaus with Proteus. Oh! with what different feelings, with what a sharp and sudden emotion did I re-peruse the same question yester-morning, having by accident opened the book at the page upon which it was written. I was moved; for it

was Admiral Sir Alexander Ball who first proposed the question to me, and the particular satisfaction which he expressed had occasioned me to note down the substance of my reply. I was moved; because to this conversation I was indebted for the friendship and confidence with which he afterwards honoured me, and because it recalled the memory of one of the most delightful mornings I ever passed; when, as we were riding together, the same person related to me the principal events of his own life, and introduced them by adverting to this conversation. It recalled too the deep impression left on my mind by that narrative—the impression that I had never known any analogous instance, in which a man so successful had been so little indebted to fortune, or lucky accidents, or so exclusively both the architect and builder of his own success. The sum of his history may be comprised in this one sentence—Hæc, sab numine, nobismet fecimas, sapientia duce, fortune permittente. (i.e. These things under God, we have done for ourselves, through the guidance of wisdom, and with the permission of fortune.) Luck gave him nothing: in her most generous moods, she only worked with him as with a friend, not for him as for a fondling; but more often she simply stood neuter, and suffered him to work for himself. Ah! how could I be otherwise than affected by whatever reminded me of that daily and familiar intercourse with him, which made the fifteen months from May, 1804, to October, 1805, in many respects the most memorable and instructive period of my life? Ah! how could I be otherwise than most deeply affected, when there was still lying on my table the paper which the day before had conveyed to me the unexpected and most awful tidings of this man's death? his death in the fulness of all his powers, in the rich autumn of ripe yet undecaying manhood! I once knew a lady who, after the loss of a lovely child, continued for several days in a state of seeming indifference, the weather at the same time, as if in unison with her, being calm, though gloomy; till one morning a burst of sunshine breaking in upon her, and suddenly lighting up the room where she was sitting, she dissolved at once into tears, and wept passionately. In no very dissimilar manner did the sudden gleam of

recollection at the sight of this memorandum act on myself. I had been stunned by the intelligence, as by an outward blow, till this trifling incident startled and disentranced me; the sudden pang shivered through my whole frame; and if I repressed the outward shows of sorrow, it was by force that I repressed them, and because it is not by tears that I ought to mourn for the loss of Sir Alexander Ball.

He was a man above his age; but for that very reason the age has the more need to have the master-features of his character portrayed and preserved. This I feel it my duty to attempt, and this alone; for having received neither instructions nor permission from the family of the deceased, I cannot think myself allowed to enter into the particulars of his private history, strikingly as many of them would illustrate the elements and composition of his mind. For he was indeed a living confutation of the assertion attributed to the Prince of Condé, that no man appeared great to his valet de chambre—a saying which, I suspect, owes its currency less to its truth than to the envy of mankind, and the misapplication of the word great, to actions unconnected with reason and free will. It will be sufficient for my purpose to observe that the purity and strict propriety of his conduct, which precluded rather than silenced calumny, the evenness of his temper, and his attentive and affectionate manners in private life, greatly aided and increased his public utility; and, if it should please Providence that a portion of his spirit should descend with his mantle, the virtues of Sir Alexander Ball, as a master, a husband, and a parent, will form a no less remarkable epoch in the moral history of the Maltese than his wisdom, as a governor, has made in that of their outward circumstances. That the private and personal qualities of a first magistrate should have political effects will appear strange to no reflecting Englishman, who has attended to the workings of men’s minds during the first ferment of revolutionary principles, and must therefore have witnessed the influence of our own sovereign’s domestic character in counteracting them. But in Malta there were circumstances which rendered such an example peculiarly requisite and beneficent. The very existence for so many generations of

an order of lay celibates in that island, who abandoned even the outward shows of an adherence to their vow of chastity, must have had pernicious effects on the morals of the inhabitants. But when it is considered too that the Knights of Malta had been for the last fifty years or more a set of useless idlers, generally illiterate, for they thought literature no part of a soldier's excellence; and yet effeminate, for they were soldiers in name only; when it is considered that they were, moreover, all of them aliens, who looked upon themselves not merely as of a superior rank to the native nobles, but as beings of a different race (I had almost said species) from the Maltese collectively; and finally, that these men possessed exclusively the government of the island; it may be safely concluded that they were little better than a perpetual influenza, relaxing and diseasing the hearts of all the families within their sphere of influence. Hence the peasantry, who fortunately were below their reach, notwithstanding the more than childish ignorance in which they were kept by their priests, yet compared with the middle and higher classes, were both in mind and body as ordinary men compared with dwarfs. Every respectable family had some one knight for their patron, as a matter of course; and to him the honour of a sister or a daughter was sacrificed, equally as a matter of course. But why should I thus disguise the truth? Alas! in nine instances out of ten, this patron was the common paramour of every female in the family. Were I composing a state memorial I should abstain from all allusion to moral good or evil, as not having now first to learn, that with diplomatists and with practical statesmen of every denomination, it would preclude all attention to its other contents, and have no result but that of securing for its author's name the official private mark of exclusion or dismission, as a weak or suspicions person. But among those for whom I am now writing, there are, I trust, many who will think it not the feeblest reason for rejoicing in our possession of Malta, and not the least worthy motive for wishing its retention, that one source of human misery and corruption has been dried up. Such persons will hear the name of Sir Alexander Ball with additional reverence, as of one who has made the protection

of Great Britain a double blessing to the Maltese, and broken "the bonds of iniquity" as well as unlocked the fetters of political oppression.

When we are praising the departed by our own firesides, we dwell most fondly on those qualities which had won our personal affection, and which sharpen our individual regrets. But when impelled by a loftier and more meditative sorrow, we would raise a public monument to their memory, we praise them appropriately when we relate their actions faithfully; and thus preserving their example for the imitation of the living alleviate the loss, while we demonstrate its magnitude. My funeral eulogy of Sir Alexander Ball must therefore he a narrative of his life; and this friend of mankind will be defrauded of honour in proportion as that narrative is deficient and fragmentary. It shall, however, be as complete as my information enables, and as prudence and a proper respect for the feelings of the living permit me to render it. His fame (I adopt the words of our elder writers) is so great throughout the world that he stands in no need of an encomium; and yet his worth is much greater these his fame. It is impossible not to speak great things of him, and yet it will be very difficult to speak what he deserves. But custom requires that something should be said; it is a duty and a debt which we owe to ourselves and to mankind, not less than to his memory; and I hope his great soul, if it hath any knowledge of what is done here below, will not be offended at the smallness even of my offering.

Ah, how little, when among the subjects of The Friend I promised "Characters met with in Real Life," did I anticipate the sad event, which compels one to weave on a cypress branch those sprays of laurel which I had destined for his bust, not his monument! He lived as we should all live; and, I doubt not, left the world as we should all wish to leave it. Such is the power of dispensing blessings, which Providence has attached to the truly great and good, that they cannot even die without advantage to their fellow-creatures; for death consecrates their example, and the wisdom, which might have been slighted at the council-table, becomes oracular from the shrine. Those rare excellences, which make our grief poignant, make it

likewise profitable; and the tears which wise men shed for the departure of the wise, are among those that are preserved in heaven. It is the fervent aspiration of my spirit, that I may so perform the task which private gratitude and public duty impose on me, that "as God hath cut this tree of paradise down from its seat of earth, the dead trunk may yet support a part of the declining temple, or at least serve to kindle the fire on the altar."

ESSAY III.

Si partem tacuisse velim, quodeumque relinquam, Majus erit. Veteres actus, primamque juventam Prosequar? Ad sese mentem præsentia ducunt. Narrem justitiam? Resplendet gloria Martis. Armati referam vires? Plus egit inermis.

Claudian de laud. stil.

(Translation.)—If I desire to pass over a part in silence, whatever I omit will seem the most worthy to have been recorded. Shall I pursue his old exploits and early youth? His recent merits recall the mind to themselves. Shall I dwelt on his justice? The glory of the warrior rises before me resplendent. Shall I relate his strength in arms? He performed yet greater things unarmed.

"There is something," says Harrington, in the Preliminaries to the Oceana, "first in the making of a commonwealth, then in the governing of it, and last of all in the leading of its armies, which though there be great divines, great lawyers, great men in all ranks of life, seems to be peculiar only to the genius of a gentleman. For so it is in the universal series of history, that if any man has founded a commonwealth, he was first a gentleman." Such also, he adds, as have got any fame as civil governors, have been gentlemen, or persons of known descents. Sir Alexander Ball was a gentleman by birth; a younger brother of an old and respectable family in Gloucestershire. He went into the navy at an early age from his own choice, and, as he himself told me, in consequence of the deep impression and vivid images left on his mind by the perusal of "Robinson Crusoe." It is not my intention to detail the

steps of his promotion, or the services in which he was engaged as a subaltern. I recollect many particulars indeed, but not the dates, with such distinctness as would enable me to state them (as it would be necessary to do if I stated them at all) in the order of time. These dates might perhaps have been procured from the metropolis; but incidents that are neither characteristic nor instructive, even such as would be expected with reason in a regular life, are no part of my plan; while those which are both interesting and illustrative I have been precluded from mentioning, some from motives which have been already explained, and others from still higher considerations. The most important of these may be deduced from a reflection with which he himself once concluded a long and affecting narration: namely, that no body of men can for any length of time be safely treated otherwise than as rational beings; and that, therefore, the education of the lower classes was of the utmost consequence to the permanent security of the empire, even for the sake of our navy. The dangers, apprehended from the education of the lower classes, arose (he said) entirely from its not being universal, and from the unusualness in the lowest classes of those accomplishments which he, like Dr. Bell, regarded as one of the means of education, and not as education itself. If, he observed, the lower classes in general possessed but one eye or one arm, the few who were so fortunate as to possess two would naturally become vain and restless, and consider themselves as entitled to a higher situation. He illustrated this by the faults attributed to learned women, and that the same objections were formerly made to educating women at all; namely, that their knowledge made them vain, affected, and neglectful of their proper duties. Now that all women of condition are well educated, we hear no more of these apprehensions, or observe any instances to justify them. Yet if a lady understood the Greek one-tenth part as well as the whole circle of her acquaintances understood the French language, it would not surprise us to find her less pleasing from the consciousness of her superiority in the possession of an unusual advantage. Sir Alexander Ball quoted the speech of an old admiral, one of whose two great wishes

was to have a ship's crew composed altogether of serious Scotchmen. He spoke with great reprobation of the vulgar notion, the worse man the better sailor. Courage, he said, was the natural product of familiarity with danger, which thoughtlessness would oftentimes turn into fool-hardiness; and that he always found the most usefully brave sailors the gravest and most rational of his crew. The best sailor he had ever had, first attracted his notice by the anxiety which he expressed concerning the means of remitting some money, which he had received in the West Indies, to his sister in England; and this man, without any tinge of Methodism, was never heard to swear an oath, and was remarkable for the firmness with which he devoted a part of every Sunday to the reading of his Bible. I record this with satisfaction as a testimony of great weight, and in all respects unexceptionable; for Sir Alexander Ball's opinions throughout life remained unwarped by zealotry, and were those of a mind seeking after truth, in calmness and complete self-possession. He was much pleased with an unsuspicious testimony furnished by Dampier (vol. ii. part 2, page 89): "I have particularly observed," writes this famous old navigator, "there and in other places, that such as had been well-bred were generally most careful to improve their time, and would be very industrious and frugal where there was any probability of considerable gain; but on the contrary, such as had been bred up in ignorance and hard labour, when they came to have plenty would extravagantly squander away their time and money in drinking and making a bluster." Indeed it is a melancholy proof how strangely power warps the minds of ordinary men, that there can be a doubt on this subject among persons who have been themselves educated. It tempts a suspicion that, unknown to themselves, they find a comfort in the thought, that their inferiors are something less than men; or that they have an uneasy half-consciousness that, if this were not the case, they would themselves have no claim to be their superiors. For a sober education naturally inspires self-respect. But he who respects himself will respect others; and he who respects both himself and others, must of necessity be a brave man. The great importance of this subject, and

the increasing interest which good men of all denominations feel in the bringing about of a national education, must be my excuse for having entered so minutely into Sir Alexander Ball's opinions on this head, in which, however, I am the more excusable, being now on that part of his life which I am obliged to leave almost a blank.

During his lieutenancy, and after he had perfected himself in the knowledge and duties of a practical sailor, he was compelled by the state of his health to remain in England for a considerable length of time. Of this he industriously availed himself to the acquirement of substantial knowledge from books; and during his whole life afterwards, he considered those as his happiest hours, which, without any neglect of official or professional duty, he could devote to reading. He preferred, indeed he almost confined himself to, history, political economy, voyages and travels, natural history, and latterly agricultural works; in short, to such books as contain specific facts or practical principles capable of specific application. His active life, and the particular objects of immediate utility, some one of which he had always in his view, precluded a taste for works of pure speculation and abstract science, though he highly honoured those who were eminent in these respects, and considered them as the benefactors of mankind, no less than those who afterwards discovered the mode of applying their principles, or who realised them in practice. Works of amusement, as novels, plays, etc., did not appear even to amuse him; and the only poetical composition of which I have ever heard him speak, was a manuscript poem written by one of my friends, which I read to his lady in his presence. To my surprise he afterwards spoke of this with warm interest; but it was evident to me that it was not so much the poetic merit of the composition that had interested him, as the truth and psychological insight with which it represented the practicability of reforming the most hardened minds, and the various accidents which may awaken the most brutalised person to a recognition of his nobler being. I will add one remark of his own knowledge acquired from books, which appears to me both just and valuable.

The prejudice against such knowledge, he said, and the custom of opposing it to that which is learnt by practice, originated in those times when books were almost confined to theology, and to logical and metaphysical subtleties; but that at present there is scarcely any practical knowledge which is not to be found in books. The press is the means by which intelligent men now converse with each other, and persons of all classes and all pursuits convey each the contribution of his individual experience. It was, therefore, he said, as absurd to hold book-knowledge at present in contempt, as it would be for a man to avail himself only of his own eyes and ears, and to aim at nothing which could not be performed exclusively by his own arms. The use and necessity of personal experience consisted in the power of choosing and applying what had been read, and of discriminating by the light of analogy the practicable from the impracticable, and probability from mere plausibility. Without a judgment matured and steadied by actual experience, a man would read to little or perhaps to bad purpose; but yet that experience, which in exclusion of all other knowledge has been derived from one man's life, is in the present day scarcely worthy of the name—at least for those who are to act in the higher and wider spheres of duty. An ignorant general, he said, inspired him with terror; for if he were too proud to take advice he would ruin himself by his own blunders, and if he—were not, by adopting the worst that was offered. A great genius may indeed form an exception, but we do not lay down rules in expectation of wonders. A similar remark I remember to have heard from a gallant officer, who to eminence in professional science and the gallantry of a tried soldier, adds all the accomplishments of a sound scholar and the powers of a man of genius.

One incident, which happened at this period of Sir Alexander's life, is so illustrative of his character, and furnishes so strong a presumption, that the thoughtful humanity by which he was distinguished was not wholly the growth of his latter years, that, though it may appear to some trifling in itself, I will insert it in this place with the occasion on which it was communicated to me. In a large party at the Grand

Master's palace, I had observed a naval officer of distinguished merit listening to Sir Alexander Ball, whenever he joined in the conversation, with so marked a pleasure that it seemed as if his very voice, independent of what he said, had been delightful to him; and once, as he fixed his eyes on Sir Alexander Ball, I could not but notice the mixed expressions of awe and affection, which gave a more than common interest to so manly a countenance. During his stay in the island, this officer honoured me not unfrequently with his visits; and at the conclusion of my last conversation with him, in which I had dwelt on the wisdom of the Governor's conduct in a recent and difficult emergency, he told me that he considered himself as indebted to the same excellent person for that which was dearer to him than his life. "Sir Alexander Ball," said he, "has, I dare say, forgotten the circumstance; but when he was Lieutenant Ball, he was the officer whom I accompanied in my first boat expedition, being then a midshipman and only in my fourteenth year. As we were rowing up to the vessel which we were to attack, amid a discharge of musketry, I was overpowered by fear, my knees trembled under me, and I seemed on the point of fainting away. Lieutenant Ball, who saw the condition I was in, placed himself close beside me, and still keeping his countenance directed toward the enemy, took hold of my hand, and pressing it in the most friendly manner, said in a low voice, 'Courage, my dear boy! don't be afraid of yourself! you will recover in a minute or so. I was just the same when I first went out in this way.' Sir," added the officer to me, "it was as if an angel had put a new soul into me. With the feeling that I was not yet dishonoured, the whole burden of agony was removed, and from that moment I was as fearless and forward as the oldest of the boat's crew, and on our return the lieutenant spoke highly of me to our captain. I am scarcely less convinced of my own being than that I should have been what I tremble to think of, if, instead of his humane encouragement, he had at that moment scoffed, threatened, or reviled me. And this was the more kind in him, because, as I afterwards understood, his own conduct in his first trial had evinced to all appearances the greatest fearlessness, and

that he said this, therefore, only to give me heart and restore me to my own good opinion."

This anecdote, I trust, will have some weight with those who may have lent an ear to any of those vague calumnies from which no naval commander can secure his good name, who knowing the paramount necessity of regularity and strict discipline in a ship of war, adopts an appropriate plan for the attainment of these objects, and remains constant and immutable in the execution. To an Athenian, who, in praising a public functionary, had said, that every one either applauded him or left him without censure, a philosopher replied, "How seldom then must he have done his duty!"

Of Sir Alexander Ball's character, as Captain Ball, of his measures as a disciplinarian, and of the wise and dignified principle on which he grounded those measures, I have already spoken in a former part of this work, and must content myself therefore with entreating the reader to re-peruse that passage as belonging to this place, and as a part of the present narration. Ah! little did I expect at the time I wrote that account, that the motives of delicacy, which then impelled me to withhold the name, would so soon be exchanged for the higher duty which now justifies me in adding it! At the thought of such events the language of a tender superstition is the voice of nature itself, and those facts alone presenting themselves to our memory which had left an impression on our hearts, we assent to, and adopt the poet's pathetic complaint:—

O sir! the good die first, And those whose hearts are dry as summer dust Burn to the socket.

Wordsworth.

Thus the humane plan described in the pages now referred to, that a system in pursuance of which the captain of a man-of-war uniformly regarded his sentences not as dependent on his own will, or to be affected by the state of his feelings at the moment, but as the pre-established determinations of known laws, and himself as the

voice of the law in pronouncing the sentence, and its delegate in enforcing the execution, could not but furnish occasional food to the spirit of detraction, must be evident to every reflecting mind. It is indeed little less than impossible, that he, who in order to be effectively humane determines to be inflexibly just, and who is inexorable to his own feelings when they would interrupt the course of justice; who looks at each particular act by the light of all its consequences, and as the representative of ultimate good or evil; should not sometimes be charged with tyranny by weak minds. And it is too certain that the calumny will be willingly believed and eagerly propagated by all those who would shun the presence of an eye keen in the detection of imposture, incapacity, and misconduct, and of a resolution as steady in their exposure. We soon hate the man whose qualities we dread, and thus have a double interest, an interest of passion as well as of policy, in decrying and defaming him. But good men will rest satisfied with the promise made to them by the Divine Comforter, that by her children shall Wisdom be justified.

ESSAY IV.

—the generous spirit, who, when brought Among the tasks of real life, hath wrought Upon the plan that pleased his childish thought: Whose high endeavours are an inward light That makes the path before him always bright; Who, doom’d to go in company with pain, And fear and bloodshed, miserable train! Turns his necessity to glorious gain; By objects, which might force the soul to abate Her feeling, rendered more compassionate.

Wordsworth.

At the close of the American war, Captain Ball was entrusted with the protection and convoying of an immense mercantile fleet to America, and by his great prudence and unexampled attention to the interests of all and each, endeared his name to the American merchants, and laid the foundation of that high respect and predilection which both the Americans and their government ever afterwards

entertained for him. My recollection does not enable me to attempt any accuracy in the date or circumstances, or to add the particulars of his services in the West Indies and on the coast of America, I now therefore merely allude to the fact with a prospective reference to opinions and circumstances, which I shall have to mention hereafter. Shortly after the general peace was established, Captain Ball, who was now a married man, passed some time with his lady in France, and, if I mistake not, at Nantes. At the same time, and in the same town, among the other English visitors, Lord (then Captain) Nelson happened to be one. In consequence of some punctilio, as to whose business it was to pay the compliment of the first call, they never met, and this trifling affair occasioned a coldness between the two naval commanders, or in truth a mutual prejudice against each other. Some years after, both their ships being together close off Minorca and near Port Mahon, a violent storm nearly disabled Lord Nelson's vessel, and in addition to the fury of the wind, it was night time and the thickest darkness. Captain Ball, however, brought his vessel at length to Nelson's assistance, took his ship in tow, and used his best endeavours to bring her and his own vessel into Port Mahon. The difficulties and the dangers increased. Nelson considered the case of his own ship as desperate, and that unless she was immediately left to her own fate, both vessels would inevitably be lost. He, therefore, with the generosity natural to him, repeatedly requested Captain Ball to let him loose; and on Captain Ball's refusal, he became impetuous, and enforced his demand with passionate threats. Captain Ball then himself took the speaking-trumpet, which the fury of the wind and waves rendered necessary, and with great solemnity and without the least disturbance of temper, called out in reply, "I feel confident that I can bring you in safe; I therefore must not, and, by the help of Almighty God, I will not leave you!" What he promised he performed; and after they were safely anchored, Nelson came on board of Ball's ship, and embracing him with all the ardour of acknowledgment, exclaimed, "A friend in need is a friend indeed!" At this time and on this occasion commenced that firm and perfect

friendship between these two great men, which was interrupted only by the death of the former. The pleasing task of dwelling on this mutual attachment I defer to that part of the present sketch which will relate to Sir Alexander Ball's opinions of men and things. It will be sufficient for the present to say, that the two men whom Lord Nelson especially honoured, were Sir Thomas Troubridge and Sir Alexander Ball; and once, when they were both present, on some allusion made to the loss of his arm, he replied, "Who shall dare tell me that I want an arm, when I have three right arms—this (putting forward his own) and Ball and Troubridge?"

In the plan of the battle of the Nile it was Lord Nelson's design, that Captains Troubridge and Ball should have led up the attack. The former was stranded; and the latter, by accident of the wind, could not bring his ship into the line of battle till some time after the engagement had become general. With his characteristic forecast and activity of (which may not improperly be called) practical imagination, he had made arrangements to meet every probable contingency. All the shrouds and sails of the ship not absolutely necessary for its immediate management, were thoroughly wetted, and so rolled up that they were as hard and as little inflammable as so many solid cylinders of wood; every sailor had his appropriate place and function, and a certain number were appointed as the fire-men, whose sole duty it was to be on the watch if any part of the vessel should take fire; and to these men exclusively the charge of extinguishing it was committed. It was already dark when he brought his ship into action, and laid her alongside L'Orient. One particular only I shall add to the known account of the memorable engagement between these ships, and this I received from Sir Alexander Ball himself. He had previously made a combustible preparation, but which, from the nature of the engagement to be expected, he had purposed to reserve for the last emergency. But just at the time when, from several symptoms, he had every reason to believe that the enemy would soon strike to him, one of the lieutenants, without his knowledge, threw in the combustible matter: and this it was that occasioned the tremendous explosion of that vessel, which, with the

deep silence and interruption of the engagement which succeeded to it, has been justly deemed the sublimest war incident recorded in history. Yet the incident which followed, and which has not, I believe, been publicly made known, is scarcely less impressive, though its sublimity is of a different character. At the renewal of the battle, Captain Ball, though his ship was then on fire in three different parts, laid her alongside a French eighty-four; and a second longer obstinate contest began. The firing on the part of the French ship having at length for some time slackened, and then altogether ceased, and yet no sign given of surrender, the senior lieutenant came to Captain Ball and informed him, that the hearts of his men were as good as ever, but that they were so completely exhausted that they were scarcely capable of lifting an arm. He asked, therefore, whether, as the enemy had now ceased firing, the men might be permitted to lie down by their guns for a short time. After some reflection, Sir Alexander acceded to the proposal, taking of course the proper precautions to rouse them again at the moment he thought requisite. Accordingly, with the exception of himself, his officers, and the appointed watch, the ship's crew lay down, each in the place to which he was stationed, and slept for twenty minutes. They were then roused; and started up, as Sir Alexander expressed it, more like men out of an ambush than from sleep, so co-instantaneously did they all obey the summons! They recommenced their fire, and in a few minutes the enemy surrendered; and it was soon after discovered that during that interval, and almost immediately after the French ship had first ceased firing, the crew had sunk down by their guns, and there slept, almost by the side, as it were, of their sleeping enemy.

ESSAY V.

—Whose powers shed round him in the common strife, Or mild concerns of ordinary life, A constant influence, a peculiar grace; But who, if he be call'd upon to face Same awful moment, to which Heaven has join'd Great issues, good or bad for human kind, Is happy as a lover, is attired With sudden brightness like a man

inspired; And through the heat of conflict keeps the law In calmness made, and sees what he foresaw.

Wordsworth.

An accessibility to the sentiments of others on subjects of importance often accompanies feeble minds, yet it is not the less a true and constituent part of practical greatness, when it exists wholly free from that passiveness to impression which renders counsel itself injurious to certain characters, and from that weakness of heart which, in the literal sense of the word, is always craving advice. Exempt from all such imperfections, say rather in perfect harmony with the excellences that preclude them, this openness to the influxes of good sense and information, from whatever quarter they might come, equally characterised both Lord Nelson and Sir Alexander Ball, though each displayed it in the way best suited to his natural temper. The former with easy hand collected, as it passed by him, whatever could add to his own stores, appropriated what he could assimilate, and levied subsidies of knowledge from all the accidents of social life and familiar intercourse. Even at the jovial board, and in the height of unrestrained merriment, a casual suggestion, that flashed a new light on his mind, changed the boon companion into the hero and the man of genius; and with the most graceful transition he would make his company as serious as himself. When the taper of his genius seemed extinguished, it was still surrounded by an inflammable atmosphere of its own, and rekindled at the first approach of light, and not seldom at a distance which made it seem to flame up self-revived. In Sir Alexander Ball, the same excellence was more an affair of system; and he would listen, even to weak men, with a patience, which, in so careful an economist of time, always demanded my admiration, and not seldom excited my wonder. It was one of his maxims, that a man may suggest what he cannot give; adding, that a wild or silly plan had more than once, from the vivid sense or distinct perception of its folly, occasioned him to see what ought to be done in a new light, or with a clearer insight. There is, indeed, a hopeless sterility, a mere negation of

sense and thought, which, suggesting neither difference nor contrast, cannot even furnish hints for recollection. But on the other hand, there are minds so whimsically constituted, that they may sometimes be profitably interpreted by contraries, a process of which the great Tycho Brahe is said to have availed himself in the case of the little Lackwit, who used to sit and mutter at his feet while he was studying. A mind of this sort we may compare to a magnetic needle, the poles of which have been suddenly reversed by a flash of lightning, or other more obscure accident of nature. It may be safely concluded, that to those whose judgment or information he respected, Sir Alexander Ball did not content himself with giving access and attention. No! he seldom failed of consulting them whenever the subject permitted any disclosure; and where secrecy was necessary, he well knew how to acquire their opinion without exciting even a conjecture concerning his immediate object.

Yet, with all this readiness of attention, and with all this zeal in collecting the sentiments of the well informed, never was a man more completely uninfluenced by authority than Sir Alexander Ball, never one who sought less to tranquillise his own doubts by the mere suffrage and coincidence of others. The ablest suggestions had no conclusive weight with him, till he had abstracted the opinion from its author, till he had reduced it into a part of his own mind. The thoughts of others were always acceptable, as affording him at least a chance of adding to his materials for reflection; but they never directed his judgment, much less superseded it. He even made a point of guarding against additional confidence in the suggestions of his own mind, from finding that a person of talents had formed the same conviction; unless the person, at the same time, furnished some new argument, or had arrived at the same conclusion by a different road. On the latter circumstance he set an especial value, and, I may almost say, courted the company and conversation of those whose pursuits had least resembled his own, if he thought them men of clear and comprehensive faculties. During the period of our intimacy, scarcely a week passed in which he did not desire me to think on some particular subject, and to give him

the result in writing. Most frequently, by the time I had fulfilled his request he would have written down his own thoughts; and then, with the true simplicity of a great mind, as free from ostentation as it was above jealousy, he would collate the two papers in my presence, and never expressed more pleasure than in the few instances in which I had happened to light on all the arguments and points of view which had occurred to himself, with some additional reasons which had escaped him. A single new argument delighted him more than the most perfect coincidence, unless, as before stated, the train of thought had been very different from his own, and yet just and logical. He had one quality of mind, which I have heard attributed to the late Mr. Fox, that of deriving a keen pleasure from clear and powerful reasoning for its own sake—a quality in the intellect which is nearly connected with veracity and a love of justice in the moral character.

Valuing in others merits which he himself possessed, Sir Alexander Ball felt no jealous apprehension of great talent. Unlike those vulgar functionaries, whose place is too big for them, a truth which they attempt to disguise from themselves, and yet feel, he was under no necessity of arming himself against the natural superiority of genius by factitious contempt and an industrious association of extravagance and impracticability, with every deviation from the ordinary routine; as the geographers in the middle ages used to designate on their meagre maps the greater part of the world as deserts or wildernesses, inhabited by griffins and chimæras. Competent to weigh each system or project by its own arguments, he did not need these preventive charms and cautionary amulets against delusion. He endeavoured to make talent instrumental to his purposes in whatever shape it appeared, and with whatever imperfections it might be accompanied; but wherever talent was blended with moral worth, he sought it out, loved and cherished it. If it had pleased Providence to preserve his life, and to place him on the same course on which Nelson ran his race of glory, there are two points in which Sir Alexander Ball would most closely have resembled his illustrious friend. The first is, that in his enterprises and engagements

he would have thought nothing done, till all had been done that was possible:—

Nil actum reputans, si quid superesset agendum.

The second, that he would have called forth all the talent and virtue that existed within his sphere of influence, and created a band of heroes, a gradation of officers, strong in head and strong in heart, worthy to have been his companions and his successors in fame and public usefulness.

Never was greater discernment shown in the selection of a fit agent, than when Sir Alexander Ball was stationed off the coast of Malta to intercept the supplies destined for the French garrison, and to watch the movements of the French commanders, and those of the inhabitants who had been so basely betrayed into their power. Encouraged by the well-timed promises of the English captain, the Maltese rose through all their casals (or country towns) and themselves commenced the work of their emancipation, by storming the citadel at Civita Vecchia, the ancient metropolis of Malta, and the central height of the island. Without discipline, without a military leader, and almost without arms, these brave peasants succeeded, and destroyed the French garrison by throwing them over the battlements into the trench of the citadel. In the course of this blockade, and of the tedious siege of Valetta, Sir Alexander Ball displayed all that strength of character, that variety and versatility of talent, and that sagacity, derived in part from habitual circumspection, but which, when the occasion demanded it, appeared intuitive and like an instinct; at the union of which, in the same man, one of our oldest naval commanders once told me, “he could never exhaust his wonder.” The citizens of Valetta were fond of relating their astonishment, and that of the French, at Captain Ball’s ship wintering at anchor out of the reach of the guns, in a depth of fathom unexampled, on the assured impracticability of which the garrison had rested their main hope of regular supplies. Nor can I forget, or remember without some portion of my original feeling, the solemn enthusiasm with which a venerable old man, belonging to one of the distant

casals, showed me the sea coombe, where their father Ball (for so they commonly called him) first landed, and afterwards pointed out the very place on which he first stepped on their island; while the countenances of his townsmen, who accompanied him, gave lively proofs that the old man's enthusiasm was the representative of the common feeling.

There is no reason to suppose that Sir Alexander Ball was at any time chargeable with that weakness so frequent in Englishmen, and so injurious to our interests abroad, of despising the inhabitants of other countries, of losing all their good qualities in their vices, of making no allowance for those vices, from their religious or political impediments, and still more of mistaking for vices a mere difference of manners and customs. But if ever he had any of this erroneous feeling, he completely freed himself from it by living among the Maltese during their arduous trials, as long as the French continued masters of their capital. He witnessed their virtues, and learnt to understand in what various shapes and even disguises the valuable parts of human nature may exist. In many individuals, whose littleness and meanness in the common intercourse of life would have stamped them at once as contemptible and worthless, with ordinary Englishmen, he had found such virtues of disinterested patriotism, fortitude, and self-denial, as would have done honour to an ancient Roman.

There exists in England a gentlemanly character, a gentlemanly feeling, very different even from that which is the most like it, the character of a well-born Spaniard, and unexampled in the rest of Europe. This feeling probably originated in the fortunate circumstance, that the titles of our English nobility follow the law of their property, and are inherited by the eldest sons only. From this source under the influences of our constitution, and of our astonishing trade, it has diffused itself in different modifications through the whole country. The uniformity of our dress among all classes above that of the day labourer, while it has authorised all classes to assume the appearance of gentlemen, has at the same time inspired the wish to

conform their manners, and still more their ordinary actions in social intercourse, to their notions of the gentlemanly, the most commonly received attribute of which character is a certain generosity in trifles. On the other hand, the encroachments of the lower classes on the higher, occasioned, and favoured by this resemblance in exteriors, by this absence of any cognisable marks of distinction, have rendered each class more reserved and jealous in their general communion, and far more than our climate, or natural temper, have caused that haughtiness and reserve in our outward demeanour, which is so generally complained of among foreigners. Far be it from me to depreciate the value of this gentlemanly feeling: I respect it under all its forms and varieties, from the House of Commons to the gentleman in the shilling gallery. It is always the ornament of virtue, and oftentimes a support; but it is a wretched substitute for it. Its worth, as a moral good, is by no means in proportion to its value, as a social advantage. These observations are not irrelevant; for to the want of reflection, that this diffusion of gentlemanly feeling among us is not the growth of our moral excellence, but the effect of various accidental advantages peculiar to England; to our not considering that it is unreasonable and uncharitable to expect the same consequences, where the same causes have not existed to produce them; and, lastly, to our proneness to regard the absence of this character (which, as I have before said, does, for the greater part, and, in the common apprehension, consist in a certain frankness and generosity in the detail of action) as decisive against the sum total of personal or national worth; we must, I am convinced, attribute a large portion of that conduct, which in many instances has left the inhabitants of countries conquered or appropriated by Great Britain, doubtful whether the various solid advantages which they derived from our protection and just government, were not bought dearly by the wounds inflicted on their feelings and prejudices by the contemptuous and insolent demeanour of the English as individuals. The reader who bears this remark in mind, will meet, in the course of this narration, more than one passage that will serve as its comment and illustration.

It was, I know, a general opinion among the English in the Mediterranean, that Sir Alexander Ball thought too well of the Maltese, and did not share in the enthusiasm of Britons concerning their own superiority. To the former part of the charge I shall only reply at present, that a more venial, and almost desirable fault, can scarcely be attributed to a governor, than that of a strong attachment to the people whom he was sent to govern. The latter part of the charge is false, if we are to understand by it, that he did not think his countrymen superior on the whole to the other nations of Europe; but it is true, as far as relates to his belief, that the English thought themselves still better than they are; that they dwelt on and exaggerated their national virtues, and weighed them by the opposite vices of foreigners, instead of the virtues which those foreigners possessed and they themselves wanted. Above all, as statesmen, we must consider qualities by their practical uses. Thus, he entertained no doubt that the English were superior to all others in the kind and the degree of their courage, which is marked by far greater enthusiasm than the courage of the Germans and northern nations, and by a far greater steadiness and self-subsistency than that of the French. It is more closely connected with the character of the individual. The courage of an English army (he used to say) is the sum total of the courage which the individual soldiers bring with them to it, rather than of that which they derive from it. This remark of Sir Alexander's was forcibly recalled to my mind when I was at Naples. A Russian and an English regiment were drawn up together in the same square: "See," said a Neapolitan to me, who had mistaken me for one of his countrymen, "there is but one face in that whole regiment, while in that" (pointing to the English) "every soldier has a face of his own." On the other hand, there are qualities scarcely less requisite to the completion of the military character, in which Sir A. did not hesitate to think the English inferior to the continental nations; as for instance, both in the power and the disposition to endure privations; in the friendly temper necessary, when troops of different nations are to act in concert; in their obedience to the regulations of their commanding officers, respecting their treatment

of the inhabitants of the countries through which they are marching, as well as in many other points, not immediately connected with their conduct in the field: and, above all, in sobriety and temperance. During the siege of Valetta, especially during the sore distress to which the besiegers were for some time exposed from the failure of provision, Sir Alexander Ball had an ample opportunity of observing and weighing the separate merits and demerits of the native and of the English troops; and surely since the publication of Sir John Moore's campaign, there can be no just offence taken, though I should say, that before the walls of Valetta, as well as in the plains of Galicia, an indignant commander might, with too great propriety, have addressed the English soldiery in the words of an old dramatist—

Will you still owe your virtues to your bellies? And only then think nobly when y'are full? Doth fodder keep you honest? Are you bad When out of flesh? And think you't an excuse Of vile and ignominious actions, that Y' are lean and out of liking?

Cartwright's Love's Convert.

From the first insurrectionary movement to the final departure of the French from the island, though the civil and military powers and the whole of the island, save Valetta, were in the hands of the peasantry, not a single act of excess can be charged against the Maltese, if we except the razing of one house at Civita Vecchia belonging to a notorious and abandoned traitor, the creature and hireling of the French. In no instance did they injure, insult, or plunder, any one of the native nobility, or employ even the appearance of force toward them, except in the collection of the lead and iron from their houses and gardens, in order to supply themselves with bullets; and this very appearance was assumed from the generous wish to shelter the nobles from the resentment of the French, should the patriotic efforts of the peasantry prove unsuccessful. At the dire command of famine the Maltese troops did indeed once force their way to the ovens in which the bread for the British soldiery was baked, and were clamorous that an equal division should be

made. I mention this unpleasant circumstance, because it brought into proof the firmness of Sir Alexander Ball's character, his presence of mind, and generous disregard of danger and personal responsibility, where the slavery or emancipation, the misery or the happiness, of an innocent and patriotic people were involved; and because his conduct in this exigency evinced that his general habits of circumspection and deliberation were the results of wisdom and complete self-possession, and not the easy virtues of a spirit constitutionally timorous and hesitating. He was sitting at table with the principal British officers, when a certain general addressed him in strong and violent terms concerning this outrage of the Maltese, reminding him of the necessity of exerting his commanding influence in the present case, or the consequences must be taken. "What," replied Sir Alexander Ball, "would you have us do? Would you have us threaten death to men dying with famine? Can you suppose that the hazard of being shot will weigh with whole regiments acting under a common necessity? Does not the extremity of hunger take away all difference between men and animals? and is it not as absurd to appeal to the prudence of a body of men starving, as to a herd of famished wolves? No, general, I will not degrade myself or outrage humanity by menacing famine with massacre! More effectual means must be taken." With these words he rose and left the room, and having first consulted with Sir Thomas Troubridge, he determined at his own risk on a step, which the extreme necessity warranted, and which the conduct of the Neapolitan court amply justified. For this court, though terror-stricken by the French, was still actuated by hatred to the English, and a jealousy of their power in the Mediterranean; and in this so strange and senseless a manner, that we must join the extremes of imbecility and treachery in the same cabinet, in order to find it comprehensible. Though the very existence of Naples and Sicily, as a nation, depended wholly and exclusively on British support; though the royal family owed their personal safety to the British fleet; though not only their dominions and their rank, but the liberty and even the lives of Ferdinand and his

family, were interwoven with our success; yet with an infatuation scarcely credible, the most affecting representations of the distress of the besiegers, and of the utter insecurity of Sicily if the French remained possessors of Malta, were treated with neglect; and the urgent remonstrances for the permission of importing corn from Messina, were answered only by sanguinary edicts precluding all supply. Sir Alexander Ball sent for his senior lieutenant, and gave him orders to proceed immediately to the port of Messina, and there to seize and bring with him to Malta the ships laden with corn, of the number of which Sir Alexander had received accurate information. These orders were executed without delay, to the great delight and profit of the shipowners and proprietors; the necessity of raising the siege was removed; and the author of the measure waited in calmness for the consequences that might result to himself personally. But not a complaint, not a murmur, proceeded from the court of Naples. The sole result was, that the governor of Malta became an especial object of its hatred, its fear, and its respect.

The whole of this tedious siege, from its commencement to the signing of the capitulation, called forth into constant activity the rarest and most difficult virtues of a commanding mind; virtues of no show or splendour in the vulgar apprehension, yet more infallible characteristics of true greatness than the most unequivocal displays of enterprise and active daring. Scarcely a day passed in which Sir Alexander Ball's patience, forbearance, and inflexible constancy were not put to the severest trial. He had not only to remove the misunderstandings that arose between the Maltese and their allies, to settle the differences among the Maltese themselves, and to organise their efforts; he was likewise engaged in the more difficult and unthankful task of counteracting the weariness, discontent, and despondency of his own countrymen—a task, however, which he accomplished by management and address, and an alternation of real firmness with apparent yielding. During many months he remained the only Englishman who did not think the siege hopeless, and the object worthless. He often spoke of the time in which he resided at the country

seat of the grand master at St. Antonio, four miles from Valetta, as perhaps the most trying period of his life. For some weeks Captain Vivian was his sole English companion, of whom, as his partner in anxiety, he always expressed himself with affectionate esteem. Sir Alexander Ball's presence was absolutely necessary to the Maltese, who, accustomed to be governed by him, became incapable of acting in concert without his immediate influence. In the outburst of popular emotion, the impulse which produces an insurrection, is for a brief while its sufficient pilot: the attraction constitutes the cohesion, and the common provocation, supplying an immediate object, not only unites, but directs the multitude. But this first impulse had passed away, and Sir Alexander Ball was the one individual who possessed the general confidence. On him they relied with implicit faith; and even after they had long enjoyed the blessings of British government and protection, it was still remarkable with what child-like helplessness they were in the habit of applying to him, even in their private concerns. It seemed as if they thought him made on purpose to think for them all. Yet his situation at St. Antonio was one of great peril; and he attributed his preservation to the dejection which had now begun to prey on the spirits of the French garrison, and which rendered them unenterprising and almost passive, aided by the dread which the nature of the country inspired. For subdivided as it was into small fields, scarcely larger than a cottage garden, and each of these little squares of land inclosed with substantial stone walls; these too from the necessity of having the fields perfectly level, rising in tiers above each other; the whole of the inhabited part of the island was an effective fortification for all the purposes of annoyance and offensive warfare. Sir Alexander Ball exerted himself successfully in procuring information respecting the state and temper of the garrison, and, by the assistance of the clergy and the almost universal fidelity of the Maltese, contrived that the spies in the pay of the French should be in truth his own confidential agents. He had already given splendid proofs that he could outfight them; but here, and in his after diplomatic intercourse previous to the

recommencement of the war, he likewise outwitted them. He once told me with a smile, as we were conversing on the practice of laying wagers, that he was sometimes inclined to think that the final perseverance in the siege was not a little indebted to several valuable bets of his own, he well knowing at the time, and from information which himself alone possessed, that he should certainly lose them. Yet this artifice had a considerable effect in suspending the impatience of the officers, and in supplying topics for dispute and conversation. At length, however, the two French frigates, the sailing of which had been the subject of these wagers, left the great harbour on the 24th of August, 1800, with a part of the garrison: and one of them soon became a prize to the English. Sir Alexander Ball related to me the circumstances which occasioned the escape of the other; but I do not recollect them with sufficient accuracy to dare repeat them in this place. On the 15th of September following, the capitulation was signed, and after a blockade of two years the English obtained possession of Valetta, and remained masters of the whole island and its dependencies.

Anxious not to give offence, but more anxious to communicate the truth, it is not without pain that I find myself under the moral obligation of remonstrating against the silence concerning Sir Alexander Ball's services or the transfer of them to others. More than once has the latter aroused my indignation in the reported speeches of the House of Commons: and as to the former, I need only state that in Rees's Encyclopædia there is an historical article of considerable length under the word Malta, in which Sir Alexander's name does not once occur! During a residence of eighteen months in that island, I possessed and availed myself of the best possible means of information, not only from eye-witnesses, but likewise from the principal agents themselves. And I now thus publicly and unequivocally assert, that to Sir A. Ball pre-eminently—and if I had said, to Sir A. Ball alone, the ordinary use of the word under such circumstances would bear me out—the capture and the preservation of Malta were owing, with every blessing that a powerful mind and a

wise heart could confer on its docile and grateful inhabitants. With a similar pain I proceed to avow my sentiments on this capitulation, by which Malta was delivered up to his Britannic Majesty and his allies, without the least mention made of the Maltese. With a warmth honourable both to his head and his heart, Sir Alexander Ball pleaded, as not less a point of sound policy than of plain justice, that the Maltese, by some representative, should be made a party in the capitulation, and a joint subscriber in the signature. They had never been the slaves or the property of the Knights of St. John, but freemen and the true landed proprietors of the country, the civil and military government of which, under certain restrictions, had been vested in that Order; yet checked by the rights and influences of the clergy and the native nobility, and by the customs and ancient laws of the island. This trust the Knights had, with the blackest treason and the most profligate perjury, betrayed and abandoned. The right of government of course reverted to the landed proprietors and the clergy. Animated by a just sense of this right, the Maltese had risen of their own accord, had contended for it in defiance of death and danger, had fought bravely, and endured patiently. Without undervaluing the military assistance afterwards furnished by Great Britain (though how scanty this was before the arrival of General Pigot is well known), it remains undeniable, that the Maltese had taken the greatest share both in the fatigues and in the privations consequent on the siege; and that had not the greatest virtues and the most exemplary fidelity been uniformly displayed by them, the English troops (they not being more numerous than they had been for the greater part of the two years) could not possibly have remained before the fortifications of Valetta, defended as that city was by a French garrison that greatly outnumbered the British besiegers. Still less could there have been the least hope of ultimate success; as if any part of the Maltese peasantry had been friendly to the French, or even indifferent, if they had not all indeed been most zealous and persevering in their hostility towards them, it would have been impracticable so to blockade that island as to have precluded the arrival of supplies. If the siege had

proved unsuccessful, the Maltese were well aware that they should be exposed to all the horrors which revenge and wounded pride could dictate to an unprincipled, rapacious, and sanguinary soldiery; and now that success has crowned their efforts, is this to be their reward, that their own allies are to bargain for them with the French as for a herd of slaves, whom the French had before purchased from a former proprietor? If it be urged, that there is no established government in Malta, is it not equally true that through the whole population of the island there is not a single dissentient? and thus that the chief inconvenience which an established authority is to obviate is virtually removed by the admitted fact of their unanimity? And have they not a bishop, and a dignified clergy, their judges and municipal magistrates, who were at all times sharers in the power of the government, and now, supported by the unanimous suffrage of the inhabitants, have a rightful claim to be considered as its representatives? Will it not be oftener said than answered, that the main difference between French and English injustice rests in this point alone, that the French seized on the Maltese without any previous pretences of friendship, while the English procured possession of the island by means of their friendly promises, and by the co-operation of the natives afforded in confident reliance on these promises? The impolicy of refusing the signature on the part of the Maltese was equally evident; since such refusal could answer no one purpose but that of alienating their affections by a wanton insult to their feelings. For the Maltese were not only ready but desirous and eager to place themselves at the same time under British protection, to take the oaths of loyalty as subjects of the British Crown, and to acknowledge their island to belong to it. These representations, however, were overruled; and I dare affirm from my own experience in the Mediterranean, that our conduct in this instance, added to the impression which had been made at Corsica, Minorca, and elsewhere, and was often referred to by men of reflection in Sicily, who have more than once said to me, “A connection with Great Britain, with the consequent extension and security of our commerce, are indeed great blessings: but who can

rely on their permanence? or that we shall not be made to pay bitterly for our zeal as partisans of England, whenever it shall suit its plans to deliver us back to our old oppressors?”

ESSAY VI.

“The way of ancient ordinance, though it winds, Is yet no devious way. Straight forward goes The lightning’s path; and straight the fearful path Of the cannon-ball. Direct it flies and rapid, Shattering that it may reach, and shattering what it reaches. My son! the road the human being travels, That, on which blessing comes and goes, doth follow The river’s course, the valley’s playful windings, Curves round the corn-field and the hill of vines, Honouring the holy bounds of property! There exists A higher than the warrior’s excellence.”

Wallenstein.

Captain Ball’s services in Malta were honoured with his sovereign’s approbation, transmitted in a letter from the Secretary Dundas, and with a baronetcy. A thousand pounds were at the same time directed to be paid him from the Maltese treasury. The best and most appropriate addition to the applause of his king and his country, Sir Alexander Ball found in the feelings and faithful affection of the Maltese. The enthusiasm manifested in reverential gestures and shouts of triumph whenever their friend and deliverer appeared in public, was the utterance of a deep feeling, and in nowise the mere ebullition of animal sensibility; which is not indeed a part of the Maltese character. The truth of this observation will not be doubted by any person who has witnessed the religious processions in honour of the favourite saints, both at Valetta and at Messina or Palermo, and who must have been struck with the contrast between the apparent apathy, or at least the perfect sobriety of the Maltese, and the fanatical agitations of the Sicilian populace. Among the latter each man’s soul seems hardly containable in his body, like a prisoner whose gaol is on fire, flying madly from one barred outlet to another; while the former might suggest the suspicion that

their bodies were on the point of sinking into the same slumber with their understandings. But their political deliverance was a thing that came home to their hearts, and intertwined with their most impassioned recollections, personal and patriotic. To Sir Alexander Ball exclusively the Maltese themselves attributed their emancipation; on him too they rested their hopes of the future. Whenever he appeared in Valetta, the passengers on each side, through the whole length of the street, stopped, and remained uncovered till he had passed; the very clamours of the market-place were hushed at his entrance, and then exchanged for shouts of joy and welcome. Even after the lapse of years he never appeared in any one of their casals, which did not lie in the direct road between Valetta and St. Antonio, his summer residence, but the women and children, with such of the men who were not at labour in their fields, fell into ranks and followed or preceded him, singing the Maltese song which had been made in his honour, and which was scarcely less familiar to the inhabitants of Malta and Gozo than “God save the King” to Britons. When he went to the gate through the city, the young men refrained talking, and the aged arose and stood up. When the ear heard then it blessed him, and when the eye saw him it gave witness to him, because he delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and those that had none to help them. The blessing of them that were ready to perish came upon him, and he caused the widow’s heart to sing for joy.

These feelings were afterwards amply justified by his administration of the government; and the very excesses of their gratitude on their first deliverance proved, in the end, only to be acknowledgments antedated. For some time after the departure of the French, the distress was so general and so severe, that a large proportion of the lower classes became mendicants, and one of the greatest thoroughfares of Valetta still retains the name of the “Nix mangiare stairs,” from the crowd who used there to assail the ears of the passengers with cries of “nix mangiare,” or “nothing to eat,” the former word nix being the low German pronunciation of nichts, nothing. By what means it was introduced into Malta, I

know not; but it became the common vehicle both of solicitation and refusal, the Maltese thinking it an English word, and the English supposing it to be Maltese. I often felt it as a pleasing remembrancer of the evil day gone by, when a tribe of little children, quite naked, as is the custom of that climate, and each with a pair of gold earrings in its ears, and all fat and beautifully proportioned, would suddenly leave their play, and, looking round to see that their parents were not in sight, change their shouts of merriment for "nix mangiare," awkwardly imitating the plaintive tones of mendicancy; while the white teeth in their little swarthy faces gave a splendour to the happy and confessing laugh with which they received the good-humoured rebuke or refusal, and ran back to their former sport.

In the interim between the capitulation of the French garrison and Sir Alexander Ball's appointment as His Majesty's civil commissioner for Malta, his zeal for the Maltese was neither suspended nor unproductive of important benefits. He was enabled to remove many prejudices and misunderstandings, and to persons of no inconsiderable influence gave juster notions of the true importance of the island to Great Britain. He displayed the magnitude of the trade of the Mediterranean in its existing state; showed the immense extent to which it might be carried, and the hollowness of the opinion that this trade was attached to the south of France by any natural or indissoluble bond of connection. I have some reason for likewise believing that his wise and patriotic representations prevented Malta from being made the seat of and pretext for a numerous civil establishment, in hapless imitation of Corsica, Ceylon, and the Cape of Good Hope. It was at least generally rumoured that it had been in the contemplation of the Ministry to appoint Sir Ralph Abercrombie as governor, with a salary of £10,000 a year, and to reside in England, while one of his countrymen was to be the lieutenant-governor at £5,000 a year, to which were to be added a long etcetera of other offices and places of proportional emolument. This threatened appendix to the State Calendar may have existed only in the imaginations of the reporters, yet inspired some uneasy apprehensions in the

minds of many well-wishers to the Maltese, who knew that—for a foreign settlement at least, and one, too, possessing in all the ranks and functions of society an ample population of its own—such a stately and wide-branching tree of patronage, though delightful to the individuals who are to pluck its golden apples, sheds, like the manchineel, unwholesome and corrosive dews on the multitude who are to rest beneath its shade. It need not, however, be doubted, that Sir Alexander Ball would exert himself to preclude any such intention, by stating and evincing the extreme impolicy and injustice of the plan, as well as its utter inutility in the case of Malta. With the exception of the governor and of the public secretary, both of whom undoubtedly should be natives of Great Britain and appointed by the British Government, there was no civil office that could be of the remotest advantage to the island which was not already filled by the natives, and the functions of which none could perform so well as they. The number of inhabitants (he would state) was prodigious compared with the extent of the island, though from the fear of the Moors one-fourth of its surface remained unpeopled and uncultivated. To deprive, therefore, the middle and lower classes of such places as they had been accustomed to hold, would be cruel; while the places held by the nobility were, for the greater part such as none but natives could perform the duties of. By any innovation we should affront the higher classes and alienate the affections of all, not only without any imaginable advantage but with the certainty of great loss. Were Englishmen to be employed, the salaries must be increased fourfold, and would yet be scarcely worth acceptance; and in higher offices, such as those of the civil and criminal judges, the salaries must be augmented more than tenfold. For, greatly to the credit of their patriotism and moral character, the Maltese gentry sought these places as honourable distinctions, which endeared them to their fellow-countrymen, and at the same time rendered the yoke of the Order somewhat less grievous and galling. With the exception of the Maltese secretary, whose situation was one of incessant labour, and who at the same time performed the duties of law counsellor to the Government,

the highest salaries scarcely exceeded £100 a year, and were barely sufficient to defray the increased expenses of the functionaries for an additional equipage, or one of more imposing appearance. Besides, it was of importance that the person placed at the head of that Government should be looked up to by the natives, and possess the means of distinguishing and rewarding those who had been most faithful and zealous in their attachment to Great Britain, and hostile to their former tyrants. The number of the employments to be conferred would give considerable influence to His Majesty's civil representative, while the trifling amount of the emolument attached to each precluded all temptation of abusing it.

Sir Alexander Ball would likewise, it is probable, urge, that the commercial advantages of Malta, which were most intelligible to the English public, and best fitted to render our retention of the island popular, must necessarily be of very slow growth, though finally they would become great, and of an extent not to be calculated. For this reason, therefore, it was highly desirable that the possession should be, and appear to be, at least inexpensive. After the British Government had made one advance for a stock of corn sufficient to place the island a year beforehand, the sum total drawn from Great Britain need not exceed £25,000, or at most £30,000 annually: excluding of course the expenditure connected with our own military and navy, and the repair of the fortifications, which latter expense ought to be much less than at Gibraltar, from the multitude and low wages of the labourers in Malta, and from the softness and admirable quality of the stone. Indeed much more might safely be promised on the assumption that a wise and generous system of policy were adopted and persevered in. The monopoly of the Maltese corn-trade by the Government formed an exception to a general rule, and by a strange, yet valid anomaly in the operations of political economy, was not more necessary than advantageous to the inhabitants. The chief reason is, that the produce of the island itself barely suffices for one-fourth of its inhabitants, although fruits and vegetables form so large a part of their nourishment. Meantime the harbours of Malta, and its

equidistance from Europe, Asia, and Africa, gave it a vast and unnatural importance in the present relations of the great European powers, and imposed on its government, whether native or dependent, the necessity of considering the whole island as a single garrison, the provisioning of which could not be trusted to the casualties of ordinary commerce. What is actually necessary is seldom injurious. Thus in Malta bread is better and cheaper on an average than in Italy or the coast of Barbary; while a similar interference with the corn-trade in Sicily impoverishes the inhabitants, and keeps the agriculture in a state of barbarism. But the point in question is the expense to Great Britain. Whether the monopoly be good or evil in itself, it remains true, that in this established usage, and in the gradual enclosure of the uncultivated district, such resources exist as without the least oppression might render the civil government in Valetta independent of the Treasury at home, finally taking upon itself even the repair of the fortifications, and thus realise one instance of an important possession that cost the country nothing.

But now the time arrived which threatened to frustrate the patriotism of the Maltese themselves, and all the zealous efforts of their disinterested friend. Soon after the war had for the first time become indisputably just and necessary, the people at large and a majority of independent senators, incapable, as it might seem, of translating their fanatical anti-Jacobinism into a well-grounded, yet equally impassioned, anti-Gallicanism, grew impatient for peace, or rather for a name, under which the most terrific of all wars would be incessantly waged against us. Our conduct was not much wiser than that of the weary traveller, who having proceeded half way on his journey, procured a short rest for himself by getting up behind a chaise which was going the contrary road. In the strange treaty of Amiens, in which we neither recognised our former relations with France nor with the other European powers, nor formed any new ones, the compromise concerning Malta formed the prominent feature; and its nominal re-delivery to the Order of St. John was authorised, in the minds of the people, by Lord Nelson’s opinion of its worthlessness to Great Britain

in a political or naval view. It is a melancholy fact, and one that must often sadden a reflective and philanthropic mind, how little moral considerations weigh even with the noblest nations, how vain are the strongest appeals to justice, humanity, and national honour, unless when the public mind is under the immediate influence of the cheerful or vehement passions, indignation or avaricious hope. In the whole class of human infirmities there is none that make such loud appeals to prudence, and yet so frequently outrages its plainest dictates, as the spirit of fear. The worst cause conducted in hope is an overmatch for the noblest managed by despondency; in both cases, an unnatural conjunction that recalls the old fable of Love and Death, taking each the arrows of the other by mistake. When islands that had courted British protection in reliance upon British honour, are with their inhabitants and proprietors abandoned to the resentment which we had tempted them to provoke, what wonder, if the opinion becomes general, that alike to England as to France, the fates and fortunes of other nations are but the counters, with which the bloody game of war is played; and that notwithstanding the great and acknowledged difference between the two Governments during possession, yet the protection of France is more desirable because it is more likely to endure? for what the French take, they keep. Often both in Sicily and Malta have I heard the case of Minorca referred to, where a considerable portion of the most respectable gentry and merchants (no provision having been made for their protection on the re-delivery of that island to Spain) expiated in dungeons the warmth and forwardness of their predilection for Great Britain.

It has been by some persons imagined, that Lord Nelson was considerably influenced, in his public declaration concerning the value of Malta, by ministerial flattery, and his own sense of the great serviceableness of that opinion to the persons in office. This supposition is, however, wholly false and groundless. His lordship’s opinion was indeed greatly shaken afterwards, if not changed; but at that time he spoke in strictest correspondence with his existing convictions. He said no more

than he had often previously declared to his private friends: it was the point on which, after some amicable controversy, his lordship and Sir Alexander Ball had "agreed to differ." Though the opinion itself may have lost the greatest part of its interest, and except for the historian is, as it were, superannuated; yet the grounds and causes of it, as far as they arose out of Lord Nelson's particular character, and may perhaps tend to re-enliven our recollection of a hero so deeply and justly beloved, will for ever possess an interest of their own. In an essay, too, which purports to be no more than a series of sketches and fragments, the reader, it is hoped, will readily excuse an occasional digression, and a more desultory style of narration than could be tolerated in a work of regular biography.

Lord Nelson was an admiral every inch of him. He looked at everything, not merely in its possible relations to the naval service in general, but in its immediate bearings on his own squadron; to his officers, his men, to the particular ships themselves, his affections were as strong and ardent as those of a lover. Hence, though his temper was constitutionally irritable and uneven, yet never was a commander so enthusiastically loved by men of all ranks, from the captain of the fleet to the youngest ship-boy. Hence, too, the unexampled harmony which reigned in his fleet, year after year, under circumstances that might well have undermined the patience of the best-balanced dispositions, much more of men with the impetuous character of British sailors. Year after year, the same dull duties of a wearisome blockade, of doubtful policy—little, if any, opportunity of making prizes; and the few prizes, which accident might throw in the way, of little or no value; and when at last the occasion presented itself which would have compensated for all, then a disappointment as sudden and unexpected as it was unjust and cruel, and the cup dashed from their lips! Add to these trials the sense of enterprises checked by feebleness and timidity elsewhere, not omitting the tiresomeness of the Mediterranean sea, sky, and climate; and the unjarring and cheerful spirit of affectionate brotherhood, which linked together the hearts of that whole squadron,

will appear not less wonderful to us than admirable and affecting. When the resolution was taken of commencing hostilities against Spain, before any intelligence was sent to Lord Nelson, another admiral, with two or three ships of the line, was sent into the Mediterranean, and stationed before Cadiz, for the express purpose of intercepting the Spanish prizes. The admiral despatched on this lucrative service gave no information to Lord Nelson of his arrival in the same sea, and five weeks elapsed before his lordship became acquainted with the circumstance. The prizes thus taken were immense. A month or two sufficed to enrich the commander and officers of this small and highly-favoured squadron; while to Nelson and his fleet the sense of having done their duty, and the consciousness of the glorious services which they had performed, were considered, it must be presumed, as an abundant remuneration for all their toils and long suffering! It was, indeed, an unexampled circumstance, that a small squadron should be sent to the station which had been long occupied by a large fleet, commanded by the darling of the navy, and the glory of the British empire, to the station where this fleet had for years been wearing away in the most barren, repulsive, and spirit-trying service, in which the navy can be employed! and that this minor squadron should be sent independently of, and without any communication with the commander of the former fleet, for the express and solitary purpose of stepping between it and the Spanish prizes, and as soon as this short and pleasant service was performed, of bringing home the unshared booty with all possible caution and despatch. The substantial advantages of naval service were, perhaps, deemed of too gross a nature for men already rewarded with the grateful affections of their own countrymen, and the admiration of the whole world! They were to be awarded, therefore, on a principle of compensation to a commander less rich in fame, and whose laurels, though not scanty, were not yet sufficiently luxuriant to hide the golden crown which is the appropriate ornament of victory in the bloodless war of commercial capture! Of all the wounds which were ever inflicted on Nelson’s feelings (and there were not a few), this was the

deepest—this rankled most! "I had thought" (said the gallant man, in a letter written on the first feelings of the affront), "I fancied—but nay, it must have been a dream, an idle dream—yet, I confess it, I did fancy, that I had done my country service—and thus they use me. It was not enough to have robbed me once before of my West India harvest—now they have taken away the Spanish—and under what circumstances, and with what pointed aggravations? Yet, if I know my own thoughts, it is not for myself, or on my own account chiefly, that I feel the sting, and the disappointment; no! it is for my brave officers; for my noble-minded friends and comrades—such a gallant set of fellows! such a hand of brothers! My heart swells at the thought of them!"

This strong attachment of the heroic admiral to his fleet, faithfully repaid by an equal attachment on their part to their admiral, had no little influence in attuning their hearts to each other; and when he died, it seemed as if no man was a stranger to another; for all were made acquaintances by the rights of a common anguish. In the fleet itself, many a private quarrel was forgotten, no more to be remembered; many, who had been alienated, became once more good friends; yea, many a one was reconciled to his very enemy, and loved and (as it were) thanked him for the bitterness of his grief, as if it had been an act of consolation to himself in an intercourse of private sympathy. The tidings arrived at Naples on the day that I returned to that city from Calabria; and never can I forget the sorrow and consternation that lay on every countenance. Even to this day there are times when I seem to see, as in a vision, separate groups and individual faces of the picture. Numbers stopped and shook hands with me because they had seen the tears on my cheek, and conjectured that I was an Englishman; and several, as they held my hand, burst themselves into tears. And though it may awake a smile, yet it pleased and affected me, as a proof of the goodness of the human heart struggling to exercise its kindness in spite of prejudices the most obstinate, and eager to carry on its love and honour into the life beyond life, that it was whispered about Naples, that Lord

Nelson had become a good Catholic before his death. The absurdity of the fiction is a sort of measurement of the fond and affectionate esteem which had ripened the pious wish of some kind individual, through all the gradations of possibility and probability, into a confident assertion, believed and affirmed by hundreds. The feelings of Great Britain on this awful event have been described well and worthily by a living poet, who has happily blended the passion and wild transitions of lyric song with the swell and solemnity of epic narration.

"—Thou art fall'n! fall'n, in the lap Of victory. To thy country thou cam'st back, Thou, conqueror, to triumphal Albion cam'st A corse! I saw before thy hearse pass on The comrades of thy perils and renown. The frequent tear upon their dauntless breasts Fell. I beheld the pomp thick gathered round The trophied car that bore thy graced remains Through armed ranks, and a nation gazing on. Bright glowed the sun, and not a cloud distained Heaven's arch of gold, but all was gloom beneath. A holy and unutterable pang Thrilled on the soul. Awe and mute anguish fell On all.—Yet high the public bosom throbbed With triumph. And if one, 'mid that vast pomp, If but the voice of one had shouted forth The name of Nelson, thou hadst past along, Thou in thy hearse to burial past, as oft Before the van of battle, proudly rode Thy prow, down Britain's line, shout after shout Rending the air with triumph, ere thy hand Had lanced the bolt of victory."

Sotheby (Saul, p. 80).

I introduced this digression with an apology, yet have extended it so much further than I had designed, that I must once more request my reader to excuse me. It was to be expected (I have said) that Lord Nelson would appreciate the isle of Malta from its relations to the British fleet on the Mediterranean station. It was the fashion of the day to style Egypt the key of India, and Malta the key of Egypt. Nelson saw the hollowness of this metaphor; or if he only doubted its applicability in the former instance, he was sure that it was false in the latter. Egypt might or might not be the

key of India, but Malta was certainly not the key of Egypt. It was not intended to keep constantly two distinct fleets in that sea; and the largest naval force at Malta would not supersede the necessity of a squadron off Toulon. Malta does not lie in the direct course from Toulon to Alexandria; and from the nature of the winds (taking one time with another) the comparative length of the voyage to the latter port will be found far less than a view of the map would suggest, and in truth of little practical importance. If it were the object of the French fleet to avoid Malta in its passage to Egypt, the port-admiral at Valetta would in all probability receive his first intelligence of its course from Minorca or the squadron off Toulon, instead of communicating it. In what regards the refitting and provisioning of the fleet, either on ordinary or extraordinary occasions, Malta was as inconvenient as Minorca was advantageous, not only from its distance (which yet was sufficient to render it almost useless in cases of the most pressing necessity, as after a severe action or injuries of tempest), but likewise from the extreme difficulty, if not impracticability of leaving the harbour of Valetta with a NW. wind, which often lasts for weeks together. In all these points his lordship's observations were perfectly just; and it must be conceded by all persons acquainted with the situation and circumstances of Malta, that its importance, as a British possession, if not exaggerated on the whole, was unduly magnified in several important particulars. Thus Lord Minto, in a speech delivered at a county meeting, and afterwards published, affirms, that supposing (what no one could consider as unlikely to take place) that the court of Naples should be compelled to act under the influence of France, and that the Barbary powers were unfriendly to us, either in consequence of French intrigues or from their own caprice and insolence, there would not be a single port, harbour, bay, creek, or roadstead in the whole Mediterranean, from which our men-of-war could obtain a single ox or a hogshead of fresh water, unless Great Britain retained possession of Malta. The noble speaker seems not to have been aware, that under the circumstances supposed by him, Odessa too being closed against us by a Russian

war, the island of Malta itself would be no better than a vast almshouse of 75,000 persons, exclusive of the British soldiery, all of whom must be regularly supplied with corn and salt meat from Great Britain or Ireland. The population of Malta and Gozo exceeds 100,000, while the food of all kinds produced on the two islands would barely suffice for one-fourth of that number. The deficit is procured by the growth and spinning of cotton, for which corn could not be substituted from the nature of the soil, or, were it attempted, would produce but a small proportion of the quantity which the cotton raised on the same fields and spun into thread, enables the Maltese to purchase, not to mention that the substitution of grain for cotton would leave half of the inhabitants without employment. As to live stock, it is quite out of the question, if we except the pigs and goats, which perform the office of scavengers in the streets of Valetta and the towns on the other side of the Porto Grande.

Against these arguments Sir A. Ball placed the following considerations. It had been long his conviction that the Mediterranean squadron should be supplied by regular store-ships, the sole business of which should be that of carriers for the fleet. This he recommended as by far the most economic plan in the first instance. Secondly, beyond any other it would secure a system and regularity in the arrival of supplies. And, lastly, it would conduce to the discipline of the navy, and prevent both ships and officers from being out of the way on any sudden emergency. If this system were introduced, the objections to Malta, from its great distance, &c., would have little force. On the other hand, the objections to Minorca he deemed irremovable. The same disadvantages which attended the getting out of the harbour of Valetta, applied to vessels getting into Port Mahon; but while fifteen hundred or two thousand British troops might be safely entrusted with the preservation of Malta, the troops for the defence of Minorca must ever be in proportion to those which the enemy may be supposed likely to send against it. It is so little favoured by nature or by art, that the possessors stood merely on the level with the invaders. Cæteris paribus, if there 12,000 of the enemy landed, there must be an equal number to repel

them; nor could the garrison, or any part of it, be spared for any sudden emergency without risk of losing the island. Previously to the battle of Marengo, the most earnest representations were made to the governor and commander at Minorca by the British admiral, who offered to take on himself the whole responsibility of the measure, if he would permit the troops at Minorca to join our allies. The governor felt himself compelled to refuse his assent. Doubtless, he acted wisely, for responsibility is not transferable. The fact is introduced in proof of the defenceless state of Minorca, and its constant liability to attack. If the Austrian army had stood in the same relation to eight or nine thousand British soldiers at Malta, a single regiment would have precluded all alarms as to the island itself, and the remainder have perhaps changed the destiny of Europe. What might not, almost I would say, what must not eight thousand Britons have accomplished at the battle of Marengo, nicely poised as the fortunes of the two armies are now known to have been? Minorca, too, is alone useful or desirable during a war, and on the supposition of a fleet off Toulon. The advantages of Malta are permanent and national. As a second Gibraltar it must tend to secure Gibraltar itself; for if by the loss of that one place we could be excluded from the Mediterranean, it is difficult to say what sacrifices of blood and treasure the enemy would deem too high a price for its conquest. Whatever Malta may or may not be respecting Egypt, its high importance to the independence of Sicily cannot be doubted, or its advantages as a central station, for any portion of our disposable force. Neither is the influence which it will enable us to exert on the Barbary powers to be wholly neglected. I shall only add, that during the plague at Gibraltar, Lord Nelson himself acknowledged that he began to see the possession of Malta in a different light.

Sir Alexander Ball looked forward to future contingencies as likely to increase the value of Malta to Great Britain. He foresaw that the whole of Italy would become a French province, and he knew that the French Government had been long intriguing on the coast of Barbary. The Dey of Algiers was believed to have accumulated a

treasure of fifteen millions sterling, and Buonaparte had actually duped him into a treaty, by which the French were to be permitted to erect a fort on the very spot where the ancient Hippo stood, the choice between which and the Hellespont, as the site of New Rome, is said to have perplexed the judgment of Constantine. To this he added an additional point of connection with Russia, by means of Odessa, and on the supposition of a war in the Baltic, a still more interesting relation to Turkey, and the Mores, and the Greek islands. It had been repeatedly signified to the British Government, that from the Morea and the countries adjacent, a considerable supply of ship timber and naval stores might be obtained, such as would at least greatly lessen the pressure of a Russian war. The agents of France were in full activity in the Morea and the Greek islands, the possession of which, by that Government, would augment the naval resources of the French to a degree of which few are aware who have not made the present state of commerce of the Greeks an object of particular attention. In short, if the possession of Malta were advantageous to England solely as a convenient watch-tower, as a centre of intelligence, its importance would be undeniable.

Although these suggestions did not prevent the signing away of Malta at the peace of Amiens, they doubtless were not without effect, when the ambition of Buonaparte had given a full and final answer to the grand question: can we remain at peace with France? I have likewise reason to believe that Sir Alexander Ball, baffled, by exposing an insidious proposal of the French Government, during the negotiations that preceded the recommencement of the war—that the fortifications of Malta should be entirely dismantled, and the island left to its inhabitants. Without dwelling on the obvious inhumanity and flagitious injustice of exposing the Maltese to certain pillage and slavery from their old and inveterate enemies, the Moors, he showed that the plan would promote the interests of Buonaparte even more than his actual possession of the island, which France had no possible interest in desiring, except as the means of keeping it out of the hands of Great Britain.

But Sir Alexander Ball is no more. The writer still clings to the hope that he may yet be able to record his good deeds more fully and regularly; that then, with a sense of comfort, not without a subdued exultation, he may raise heavenward from his honoured tomb the glistening eye of an humble, but ever grateful Friend.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK CONFESSIONS OF AN INQUIRING SPIRIT AND SOME MISCELLANEOUS PIECES ***

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