

British industries. In thinking of the sugar refiners he has forgotten the confectioners, the jam-makers, and the manufacturers of cocoa and chocolate, who have all been using bounty-fed sugars for some time, and find them suitable and convenient. A rise in the price of sugar will do more damage to these industries, which are scattered all over the country, than it can possibly do good to London, Bristol, and Glasgow, the centres of the refining trade. Grave apprehensions are being already felt, and we shall not be surprised if a powerful agitation follows. Consumers are all interested in cheap sugar, every household finds the advantage of it, and if the Government is going to make sugar dearer to pacify a few paid agitators and West Indian planters, it will deserve what it is absolutely certain to get.

MR. GLADSTONE IN DEFENCE OF CHRISTIANITY.

A TILT WITH COLONEL INGERSOLL.

The current number of the *North American Review* contains a long article from Mr. Gladstone in reply to one of Colonel Robert Ingersoll's attacks on Christianity. This is how the *New York Truth* puts the matter:—"Col. Bob Ingersoll has succeeded at last in getting one of the most distinguished of living scholars and statesmen to notice him critically. The mere contrast of these opponents is something like the grotesque combats that the Roman emperors got up when all ordinary matches failed. Mr. Gladstone represents the flower of Saxon culture and Saxon statesmanship. Within a fortnight he has delivered six superb speeches, which even the Tories of England are acknowledging to be unsurpassed for breadth of view and for fiery eloquence. This is the man who translates Homer, governs an empire, defends Christianity, finds out in the English reviews the best thoughts on current science and philosophy, and for recreation chops down the oaks in his own forest." At the outset of his article Mr. Gladstone says:—

"The Christian Church has lived long enough in external triumph and prosperity to expose those of whom it is composed to all such perils of error and misfeasance as triumph and prosperity bring with them. Belief in divine guidance is not of necessity belief that such guidance can never be frustrated by the laxity, the infirmity, the perversity of man, alike in the domain of action and in the domain of thought."

DARWIN'S DISCOVERIES AND THE CREEDS.

He then proceeds to notice Colonel Ingersoll's methods. All attempts at contentious argument appear to be deliberately abjured; denunciation, sarcasm, and invective constitute the staple of his work. Instances of the Colonel's "tumultuous method" are given, and Mr. Gladstone goes on to deal with some of his unemonstrated propositions. The system of Mr. Darwin is hurled against Christianity as a dart which cannot be but fatal. Says Ingersoll:—

"His (Darwin's) discoveries carried to their legitimate conclusion destroy the creeds and Scriptures of mankind."

To this Mr. Gladstone replies:—

"On what ground and for what reason is the system of Darwin fatal to Scriptures and to creeds? I do not enter into the question whether it has passed from the stage of working hypothesis into that of demonstration, but I assume, for the purposes of the argument, all that in this respect the reply can desire.

"It is not possible to discover, from the random language of the reply, whether the scheme of Darwin is to sweep away all theism or is to be content with extinguishing revealed religion. If the latter is meant, I should reply that the moral history of man, in its principal stream, has been distinctly an evolution from the first until now, and that the succinct though grand account of the Creation in Genesis is singularly accordant with the same idea, but is wider than Darwinism, since it includes in the grand progression the inanimate world as well as the history of organisms. But as this could not be shown without much detail the reply reduces me to the necessity of following its own unsatisfactory example in the bald form of an assertion, that there is no colourable ground for assuming evolution and revelation to be at variance with one another.

"If, however, the meaning be that theism is swept away by Darwinism, I observe that, as before, we have only an unreasoned dogma or dictum to deal with, and, dealing perforce with the unknown, we are in danger of striking at a will of the wisp. . . . One striking effect of the Darwinian theory of descent is, so far as I understand, to reduce the breadth of all intermediate distinctions in the scale of animated life. It does not bring all creatures into a single lineage, but all diversities are to be traced back, at some point in the scale and by stages indefinitely minute, to a common ancestry. All is done by steps, nothing by strides, leaps, or bounds; all from protoplasm up to Shakespeare, and, again, from primal night and chaos up to protoplasm. I do not ask, and am incompetent to judge, whether this is among the things proven, but I take it so for the sake of argument; and I ask, first, why and whereby does this doctrine eliminate the idea of creation? Does the new philosophy teach that if the passage from pure reptile to pure bird is achieved by a spring (so to speak) over a chasm, this implies and requires creation; but if that reptile passes into bird, and rudimental into finished bird, by a thousand slight and but just discernible modifications, each one of these so small that they are not entitled to a name so lofty, it may be set down to any cause or no cause, as we please? I should have supposed it miserably unphilosophical to treat the distinction between creative and non-creative function as a simply quantitative distinction. As respects the subjective effect on the human mind, creation in small, when closely regarded, awakens reason of admiring wonder, not less than creation in great; and as regards that function itself, to me it appears no less than ridiculous to hold that the broadly outlined and large advances of so-called Moralism are creation, but the refined and stealthy onward steps of Darwinism are only manufacture, and relegate the question of a cause into obscurity, insignificance, or oblivion.

"But does not reason really require us to go further, to turn the tables on the adversary, and to contend that evolution by how much it binds more closely together the myriad ranks of the living—aye, and of all other orders, by so much the more consolidates, enlarges, and enhances the true argument of design, and the entire theistic position? If orders are not mutually related, it is easier to conceive of them as sent at haphazard into the world. We may, indeed, sufficiently draw an argument of design from

each separate structure, but we have no further title to build upon the position which each of them holds as towards any other. But when the connection between these objects has been established, and so established that the points of transition are almost as indiscernible as the passage from day to night, then, indeed, each preceding stage is a prophecy of the following, and each succeeding one is a memorial of the past, and throughout the immeasurable series every single member of it is a witness to all the rest."

THE MYSTERIES OF PROVIDENTIAL GOVERNMENT.

Again, Ingersoll asks:—

"Why should an infinitely wise and powerful God destroy the good and preserve the vile? Why should He treat all alike here, and in another world make an infinite difference? Why should your God allow His worshippers, His adorers, to be destroyed by His enemies? Why should He allow the honest, the loving, the noble, to perish at the stake?"

Mr. Gladstone, on these points, observes, first, that the upholders of belief or revelation cannot, and do not, seek to deny that the methods of divine government, as they are exhibited by experience, present to us many and varied moral problems insoluble by our understanding. But the assertions carried by implication in the queries are general, and because general untrue. Taking these challenges, however, as they ought to have been given, Mr. Gladstone observes:—

"I admit that great believers, who have been also great masters of wisdom and knowledge, are not able to explain the inequalities of adjustment between human beings and the conditions in which they have been set down to work out their destiny. The climax of these inequalities is perhaps to be found in the fact that, whereas rational belief, viewed at large, founds the providential government of the world upon the hypothesis of free agency, there are so many cases in which the overbearing mastery of circumstance appears to reduce it to extinction or paralysis. . . . As in ordinary conduct, so in considering the basis of belief, we are bound to look at the evidence as a whole. We have no right to demand demonstrative proofs, or the removal of all conflicting elements, either in the one sphere or in the other. What guides us sufficiently in matters of common practice has the very same authority to guide us in matters of speculation; more properly, perhaps, to be called the practice of the soul. By its contempt for authority the reply seems to cut off from us all knowledge that is not at first hand; but then also it seems to assume an original and first hand knowledge of all possible kinds of things. . . . Has the writer really weighed the force and measured the sweep of his own words?"

THE IDEA OF IMMORTALITY.

A number of "inaccuracies of reference" are then dealt with by Mr. Gladstone, and he next quotes Ingersoll on the question of immortality. The idea of immortality, says the champion Atheist, was not born of any book or creed or religion. "It was born of human affection, and will continue as long as love kisses the lips of death." On this point Mr. Gladstone says:—

"If the belief in immortality is not connected with any revelation or religion, but is simply the expression of a subjective want, then plainly we may expect the expression of it to be strong and clear in proportion to the various degrees in which faculty is developed among the various races of the mankind. But how does the matter stand historically? The ancient Greeks were a race of astonishing, perhaps unrivalled, intellectual capacity. But not only did they, in prehistoric ages, derive their scheme of a future world from Egypt; we find also that, with the lapse of time and the advance of the Hellenic civilization, the constructive ideas of the system lost all life and definite outline, and the most powerful mind of the Greek philosophy, that of Aristotle, had no clear conception whatever of a personal existence in a future state."

BELIEF AND THE WILL.

Mr. Gladstone proceeds to deal with a favourite doctrine of Colonel Ingersoll's—the immunity of all error in belief from moral responsibility. The Colonel's statement that belief is as a universal law independent of the will Mr. Gladstone remarks is a plausibility of the shallowest kind:—

"Even in arithmetic, if a boy, through dislike of his employment, and consequent lack of attention, brings out a wrong result for his sum, it can hardly be said that his conclusion is absolutely and in all respects independent of his will. . . . But the truth is that, if we set aside matters of trivial import, the enormous majority of human judgments are those into which the biasing power of likes and dislikes more or less largely enters."

Proceeding to develop this thought, Mr. Gladstone says:—

"A large part of the world have held that the root of civil power is not in the community, but in its head. In opposition to this doctrine, the American written Constitution and the entire American tradition teach the right of a nation to self-government. And these propositions, which have divided, and still divide, the world, open out respectively into vast systems of irreconcilable ideas and laws, practices, and habits of mind. Will any rational man—above all, will any American—contend that these conflicting systems have been adopted, upheld, and enforced on one side and the other, in the daylight of pure reasoning only, and that moral, or immoral, causes have had nothing to do with their adoption? That the intellect has worked impartially, like a steam engine, and that selfishness, love of fame, love of money, love of power, envy, wrath, and malice, or, again, bias, in its least noxious form, have never had anything to do with generating the opposing movements, or the frightful collisions in which they have resulted? If we say that they have not, we contradict the universal judgment of mankind. If we say they have, then mental processes are not automatic, but may be influenced by the will and by the passions, affections, habits, fancies, that sway the will; and this writer will not have advanced a step towards proving the universal innocence of error until he has shown that propositions of religion are essentially unlike almost all other propositions, and that no man ever has been, or from the nature of the case can be, affected in their acceptance or rejection by moral causes."

CONCLUSION.

Mr. Gladstone concludes his article as follows:—

"Whereas we are placed in an atmosphere of mystery, relieved only by a little sphere of light round each of us, like a clearing in an American forest, and rarely can see farther than is necessary for the direction of our own conduct from day to day, we find here, assumed by a particular person, the character of a universal judge without appeal. And whereas the highest self-restraint is necessary in these dark but, therefore, all the more exciting inquiries, in order to maintain the ever quivering balance of our faculties, this rider chooses to ride an unbroken horse, and to throw the reins upon his neck. I have endeavoured to give a sample of the results."