Hours With the Mystics a Contribution to the History of Religious Opinion

Robert Alfred Vaughan

John W. Parker and Son West Strand



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Author: Robert Alfred Vaughan

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HOURS WITH THE MYSTICS

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I.

THE SYMBOLISM OF CHURCHES
AND
CHURCH ORNAMENTS

A TRANSLATION OF THE FIRST BOOK
OF THE
RATIONALE DIVINORUM OFFICIORUM
OF WILLIAM DURANDUS

With Introductory Essay and Notes by the

REV. J. M. NEALE AND REV. B. WEBB

II.

SYMBOLISM, OR EXPOSITION
OF THE
DOCTRINAL DIFFERENCES
BETWEEN
CATHOLICS AND PROTESTANTS
As evidenced by their Symbolical Writings

BY JOHN ADAM MOEHLER, D.D.

HOURS WITH THE MYSTICS

A Contribution to the History of Religious Opinion

BY

ROBERT ALFRED VAUGHAN, B.A.

SIXTH EDITION

TWO VOLUMES IN ONE

VOL. I

NEW YORK
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS
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1893

PREFACE TO THE THIRD EDITION.

The work which is now again published was the result of too many years' steady application, and has served too great an intellectual use in the special department of thought of which it treats, to be allowed to fall into oblivion. Certainly the reading which the author thought it necessary to accomplish before he presented his conclusions to the public was vast, and varied. That the fruit of his labours was commensurate may be gathered from the honest admiration which has been expressed by men knowing what hard study really means. The first edition of the 'Hours with the Mystics' appeared in 1856; the second was, to a great extent, revised by the author, but it did not appear until after his death. It was edited by his father, though most of the work of correction and verification was done by the author's widow.

There is no intention of writing a memoir here. That has already been done. But it has been suggested that it might be interesting to trace how Mysticism gradually became the author's favourite study. To do that it may be well to give a very short sketch of his literary career.

From the time he was quite a child he had the fixed idea that he must be a literary man. In his twenty-first year (1844) he published a volume of poems,

entitled ‘The Witch of Endor, and other Poems.’ The poetry in this little volume—long since out of print—was held to give promise of genius. It was, of course, the production of youth, and in after years the author was fully conscious of its defects. But even though some critics (and none could be a harder critic of his own work than himself) might point out an ‘overcrowding of metaphor’ and a ‘want of clearness,’ others could instance evidences of ‘high poetical capability’ and ‘happy versification.’ But at the time it was thought desirable that the young poet should turn his attention to prose composition with the same earnestness. With that object his father proposed to him the study of the writings of Origen, with a view to an article on the subject in the *British Quarterly Review*. When just twenty-two the author finished this task, his first solid contribution to the literature of the day. The article showed signs of diligence and patient research in gaining a thorough knowledge of the opinions of the great thinker with whom it dealt. ‘It is nobly done,’ Judge Talfourd wrote. ‘If there is some exuberance of ornament in the setting forth of his (Origen’s) brilliant theories, it is only akin to the irregular greatness and the Asiatic splendour of the mind that conceived them.’ And the words of the late Sir James Stephen were not less flattering: ‘If I had been told that the writer of it (the article) was a grandfather, I should have wondered only that the old man had retained so much spirit and been able to combine it with a maturity of judgment so well becoming his years.’ We believe it is no presumption to say that the article has not ceased to be useful to those who wish to gain an idea of the character of one whose name has often been the subject of bitter wordy war between Christian men.

In 1846, a dramatic piece by Alfred Vaughan, entitled 'Edwin and Elgiva,' appeared in the *London University Magazine*. The subject was one of a most sensational character, and was treated accordingly. Dunstan and his companions are painted in very black colours, and any doubts as to the reality of the cruelties alleged to have been practised on the unhappy Queen are not entertained. Two poems, the 'Masque of Antony' and 'Disenchantment,' though not published until later, were written about the same date.

At this time, the author was attending the theological course at Lancashire Independent College, of which his father was the president. Having completed his term of residence there, he went over to Halle in order to spend a year in a German University, before entering upon any fixed pastoral work. There he had a good opportunity of studying the state of German religious thought. The following extract from his journal shows the effect produced on his mind:—'If I am spared to return, I will preach more of what is called the Gospel than I did before. *The talk about adapting religion to the times which is prevalent here, even among the religious, appears to me a miserable mistake. It never needed adapting so much as when the apostles preached it, but they made no such effort.*' It was, too, while studying German speculations that the author adopted the system of philosophy, distinct alike from sceptical and mystical, which is apparent in this his chief work.

It is, we believe, impossible for an earnest mind to go through life without periods of sad and painful doubt. The author was no exception to this rule, and while at Halle he seems to have suffered bitterly. But he knew the one refuge for the doubting heart, and

turned to it. In the ‘Dream of Philo,’ written at this time and published in the volumes of ‘Essays and Remains,’ we see some reflection of his own feelings, and the following verses which we venture to quote must, we think, strike a responsive chord in many a heart yearning for peace amidst the turmoil of the world:—

Not a pathway in life’s forest,
  Not a pathway on life’s sea;
Who doth heed me, who doth lead me,
  Ah, woe is me!

Vain the planting and the training,
  For life’s tree on every side
Ever launches useless branches,
  Springs not high but spreadeth wide.

Ah, my days go not together
  In an earnest solemn train,
But go straying for their playing,
  Or are by each other slain.

Listen, listen, thou forgettest
  Thou art one of many more;
All this ranging and this changing
  Has been law to man of yore.

And thou canst not in life’s city
  Rule thy course as in a cell
There are others, all thy brothers,
  Who have work to do as well.

Some events that mar thy purpose
  May light *them* upon their way;
Our sun-shining in declining
  Gives earth’s other side the day.

Every star is drawn and draweth

Mid the orbits of its peers;
And the blending thus unending
Makes the music of the spheres.

If thou doest one work only,
In that one work thou wilt fail;
Use thou many ropes if any
For the shifting of thy sail.

Then will scarce a wind be stirring
But thy canvas it shall fill;
Not the near way as thou thoughtest,
But through tempest as thou oughtest,
Though not straightly, not less greatly,
Thou shalt win the haven still.

These verses have been called 'Alfred Vaughan's Psalm of Life.' The lessons taught may be an encouragement to others, as they have been to the author's son, in times of trial and disappointment.

But it must not be supposed that at this time the author's thoughts were all devoted to painful doubts and yearnings. He determined while in Germany to unite the labours of a literary man to the work of a pastor. His first plan was to take special periods of Church History and lay them before his readers in the form of dramas. He thus describes his idea:—'I shall commence the series with Savonarola. I think it will not be necessary to pay regard to chronological order in the order of composition. I may afterwards take up Chrysostom, perhaps Hildebrand, endeavouring in all not merely to develop the character of the principal personage, but to give an exact picture of the religious and political spirit of the times. They must be dramas on the principles of *King John* or *Henry IV.*, rather than those of *Hamlet* or *Macbeth*.' With this scheme his father did not entirely

agree, and the consequence was a considerable correspondence. Dr. Vaughan never doubted the genius of his son, or that something definite would come of his literary tastes, but he appears to have thought that the dramatic form was not a good way in which to bring the result of genuine hard work before the public. As it happened, none of these dramas saw the light, though the plan of the 'Hours with the Mystics' shows the strong attachment the author felt for that kind of writing, and it also shows the way in which he could overcome any difficulties arising from its peculiarities. The notion of gentlemen discussing the Mystics, over their wine and walnuts, or in the garden with the ladies in the twilight of a summer evening, has had to encounter the sneers of some harsh critics, but we cannot help thinking that advantage is gained by the device of these conversations, because the talking by various speakers affords an easy opportunity of glancing over many varying theories upon any subject at the same time, while the essayist would find it difficult to keep his line of argument clear, and at the same moment state the divergent lines of thought necessary for the right understanding of the position generally.

The author began definite ministerial work at Bath in 1848. The thoroughness with which he performed his pastoral duties did not give him much time for literary work. The articles written during his stay in that city were those on Schleiermacher and Savonarola. The materials for both essays were collected while at Halle. When writing to inform his father of the completion of the first of the articles, he refers to the Mystics in the following way:—

'I shall not begin to write another article at once. But I should like to fix on one to have more-or-less in

view. There are three subjects on which I should like to write some time or other—(1) Savonarola, for which I have much material; (2) on Mysticism, tracing it in the East, in the Greek Church, in the German Mystics of the 14th century, in the French Mystics, and lastly in those most recent; (3) Leo the Great and his stirring times. I should like to do the Savonarola next. But I should also like to know what you think on these subjects, or on any other you would perhaps like better. The first and third would consist largely of interesting narrative. The second would be rather less popular but more novel.'

The 'second' subject was worked up into the two volumes now republished. As it gradually became his favourite study, he felt that the field was expanding before him, and that it would be necessary, if he did justice to his theme, to treat it at a greater length than could be allowed to a magazine article. In the *British Quarterly Review* articles appeared on 'Madame Guyon,' and 'The Mystics and the Reformers,' which were simply the first results of his reading for the great work. It was at Birmingham that most of this writing was done: while there he was an indefatigable student. 'There,' says a writer in the *Eclectic Review*, Nov. 1861, p. 508, 'he made himself familiar with many languages—the old German, the Spanish, even the Dutch, adding these to the Italian, French, Latin, and Greek in the classical and later forms, and all as preparations to the History of Mysticism to which he had pledged himself. The Mystics had thrown a spell upon him. Seldom have they wrought their charms without seducing to their bewildering self-abandonment.... In the case of Alfred Vaughan it was not so; he continued faithful to the high duties of life. He trod the sphere of action and compelled the ghostly band

he visited, or who visited him, to pay tribute to the highest religious teaching of Christian truth and life.' But the body would not keep pace with his mind. In 1855 he was obliged to resign his pastoral charge at Birmingham, and from that time he devoted himself entirely to literature. He wrote several articles and criticisms, chiefly in the *British Quarterly* amongst these, one on Kingsley's 'Hypatia,' which we believe was much appreciated by the future Canon of Westminster. An article on 'Art and History' appeared in *Fraser's Magazine* about the same time. And now we reach the first publication of his greater achievement, the 'Hours with the Mystics.' In August, 1855, the printing of the original edition began, and was completed in the February of the following year. The author lived long enough afterwards to witness its success, and then swiftly came the end. In October, 1857, Alfred Vaughan passed away into another world where he has doubtless found many of those on whose characters he loved to muse. We will not attempt any analysis of *his* character, but we cannot resist the impulse to insert one loving tribute to his memory, which appeared in a Birmingham paper (*Aris' Gazette*, Nov. 27th, 1857). 'It has seemed fit to the All-Wise Disposer of events to withdraw from this world one of its holiest and most gifted inhabitants, one who, had his life been prolonged, bade fair to have taken rank among its brightest lights and most distinguished ornaments.... The strength and sweetness, so happily blended in his character, were apparent in his preaching; he was tender enough for the most womanly heart, he was intellectual enough for the most masculine mind. As a writer he had already attained considerable reputation, and promised to become one of the chief luminaries of the age. As a Christian, he was sound

in faith, benignant in spirit, and most holy in life; a delighter in the doctrine of God, his Saviour, and an eminent adorner of that doctrine.'

Before venturing on any remarks upon the subject-matter of the book itself, we may be allowed to make a slight reference to opinions expressed upon it at the time of its publication. In *Fraser's Magazine* for September, 1856, there was a long review by Canon Kingsley. In this article weak points are shown and sometimes the criticisms are rather severe; but there was too much real sympathy between the two men (though they never knew each other personally) for the reviewer not fully to appreciate the good qualities in the work before him. Now that Charles Kingsley's name is such a household word in England, no apology is needed for quoting two passages from the above-mentioned essay. 'There is not a page,' it says in one place, 'nor a paragraph in which there is not something worth recollecting, and often reflections very wise and weighty indeed, which show that whether or not Mr. Vaughan has thoroughly grasped the subject of Mysticism, he has grasped and made part of his own mind and heart many things far more practically important than Mysticism, or any other form of thought; and no one ought to rise up from the perusal of his book without finding himself, if not a better, at least a more thoughtful man, and perhaps a humbler one also, as he learns how many more struggles and doubts, discoveries, sorrows and joys, the human race has passed through, than are contained in his own private experience.' In another place, while pointing out various improvements which he would like to see in another edition, Mr. Kingsley adds, 'But whether our hope be fulfilled or not, a useful and honourable future is before the man who could write such a

book as this is in spite of all defects.' The reviewer adds later in a reprint of this essay, 'Mr. Vaughan's death does not, I think, render it necessary for me to alter any of the opinions expressed here, and least of all that in the last sentence, fulfilled now more perfectly than I could have foreseen.'

With the mention of Charles Kingsley's name we are reminded of others of the same school of thought, and therefore the following comparison in an article in the *Eclectic Review* (November, 1861) may prove interesting. The reader must judge of its truth. 'While Robertson of Brighton,' says the reviewer, 'was preaching his sermons, and Archer Butler was preparing his Lectures on Philosophy, Alfred Vaughan about the same age, but younger than either, was accumulating material for, and putting into shape, the "Hours with the Mystics." He died within a year or two of their departure, and still nearer to the period of youth than those extraordinary men. His name suggests their names to the mind—all victims to the fatal thirty-four and thirty-seven. He had not the wonderful touch of Robertson's "vanished hand"; he had not the tenacity of muscle and fibre of Archer Butler; but he combined many of the characteristics of both, and added that which gave individuality to his genius. He had not the fine subtle sense of insight possessed by Robertson; he had not the rapid and comprehensive power of Butler. They again had not his large and generous culture.' More of such favourable criticisms and kindly words from men of learning might be quoted, but we forbear. The task of referring to such sentiments is not unnaturally attractive to the son of such a man; but it is simply desired to put forward this book once again on its own merits, in the hope that there are still many who will rightly appreciate

the labour and genius to which it bears witness.

About the work itself it will be necessary to say only a few words.

When the 'Hours with the Mystics' first appeared it traversed ground which was to a great extent untrodden, at any rate in England. Mysticism, though a favourite study of the author, was not then, and can scarcely be said to be now, a popular subject. A matter-of-fact age puts such ideas on one side, as something too weak for serious consideration. The majority indeed have but a very hazy notion as to what Mysticism is; they only have an idea that something is meant which is very inferior, and they pass it by. Well has Mr. Maurice said that such terms (Mediæval Phil. p. 143) 'are the cold formal generalisations of a late period, commenting on men with which it has no sympathy.' In the minds of thoughtful men the name of mystic points to a special and recognisable tendency, and the history given in this book shows that the same tendency has been working in the world for ages;—Hindus and Persians, Neoplatonists and Schoolmen, Anabaptists and Swedenborgians, have all felt its force. The main principle of all their doctrine was the necessity of a closer union with the Deity. Among Christians,—with whom we are chiefly concerned,—this close connection, it was thought, could only be gained after passing through stages of illumination and purification; and progress in the way of perfection was to be made not by labour and study, but by solitude, and asceticism. In these volumes this doctrine is exhibited; especially we trace the influence which the pseudo-Dionysius had in the fourth century; how, under his guidance, these ideas spread in the East, and thence to the West; the

position taken up by Mystics against the Schoolmen, and the condition of Mysticism at the time of the Reformation. These topics are interesting, and to the questions which must be raised in connection with them in every thoughtful mind, it is hoped that the reader will find satisfactory answers in the following pages.

It will be seen that the field over which the reader is taken by the author is very large. It is believed that though there have been during recent years various contributions made to the literature on this subject, no writer has attempted to take in all the various phases which are pictured in this book. In German Mystics some writers have found a congenial theme; others have taught us more about the mysterious religions of the East. It is, we think, to be regretted that more attention has not been paid to the Mystics of the Scholastic period. The position held by Hugo of S. Victor and his followers was by no means insignificant. As a mystic, Hugo showed that it was possible to combine contemplation with common sense and learning. In an age when Scholasticism was submitting religion to cold and exact logic, it was like turning from some dusty road into a quiet grass-grown lane, to hear of devout contemplation leading up to perfect holiness and spiritual knowledge. Most of us are ready to agree with these men when they maintain that there are mysteries of Divine Truth which cannot be analysed by the understanding, but which can be embraced by thoughtful and reverent contemplation. So long as the use of both learning and devotion was admitted, we are able to sympathise with them. But it is a truism to say that the tendency of any movement is to go to extremes. The Mystics of this period appear to have recoiled horror-struck from what seemed to

them rationalistic or materialistic ideas. In that, they might be right enough. But starting from the true standpoint that there are mysteries in the Infinite which we finite creatures cannot fathom with our finite minds, they proceeded to the extreme of putting devotion before knowledge. Next, they thought there was nothing to which they could not attain by devout yearning, even to absorption into the Deity. The logical conclusion of these theories tended to pantheism: those who discarded logic yielded to fanaticism. Into that error fell most of the disciples of the great Scholastic Mystics. And has not the like occurred elsewhere in history? Putting religion out of the question, Wycliffe may have been a socialist, but he was far behind his followers. But as such a falling away on the part of the disciple cannot justly take from the character of the master, so we would still say a word for Hugo of S. Victor. A man whose aim in life was the knowledge of God, and who worked for that end with courage and diligence, is not a character to be neglected. 'His name,' says Mr. Maurice (Mediæval Phil. p. 148), 'has been less remembered in later times than it deserves, because it has been overshadowed by those of other men who met some of the tastes of the age more successfully, though their actual power was not greater than his, perhaps not equal to it.'

In Hugo of S. Victor and his predecessors, Bernard and Anselm, we see the combination of Scholasticism and Mysticism. To some extent they were able to keep a middle course. They would not allow their reason to run riot over sacred mysteries, and their firm hold on the articles of the Catholic faith prevented them from sinking into vague pantheism.

Among the Mystics of Germany who come next in

the hasty survey we are here attempting, there does not appear to have been so much steadiness. We do not mean to say that the Scholastic Mystics were perfect; they were not free from exaggerations, but their extravagances appear to us less dangerous than were those of the old German Mystics. The names of the leading German Mystics are more familiar to most people than are any others. Who has not heard of Tauler? What the influence of his teaching was is shown in the following pages. He may be exonerated from all charge of pantheism, as may, also, be Ruysbroek and Suso; but it is very doubtful whether the writings left by Eckart acquit him of all connection with these errors. He has been claimed as orthodox by churchmen, and as a pantheist by many pantheists; and extracts can be quoted from his works in support of either theory. Eckart's position was difficult. The general temper of the world at the time was restless; the errors and abuses of the Church drove earnest men to look within. They turned their attention to personal holiness, to the neglect of the fact that they had any duties towards the Christian brotherhood at large. To urge his hearers to a closer union with God was a noble subject for a preacher. But must it not be confessed that Eckart had gone too far when he could utter such words as these, 'a truly divine man has been so made one with God that henceforth he does not think of God or look for God outside himself?' His teaching certainly approached often towards the brink of the abyss of pantheism, and as Archbishop Trench says (Med. Ch. Hist., p. 348), 'sometimes it does not stop short of the brink.'

Between these two schools, the Scholastic and the German, many comparisons may be made. The effect of them on the Catholic Church as it then existed was

very different: the teaching of Anselm and Bernard was calculated to strengthen the Church, while that of the later school was not. Anselm and his friends were aware of the necessity for personal holiness, but they were always willing for their disciples to climb the road to perfection by the help of the means of grace held out in the Church, as well as by devout contemplation. The Germans, on the contrary, felt there was something wrong with the existing ecclesiastical arrangements, and through indifference to them drew their disciples away from many practices which were then accounted necessary to salvation. By this disregard for rites and ceremonies, and by their use of the German language in their teaching, they paved the way for the Reformers, and that is a great claim on our respect. At the same time, we cannot help thinking their hazy ideas rather chilling. Surely the highest point in the history of Mysticism had been reached and passed when the struggle to make reason and imagination work together gave way to mere ecstatic rhapsody.

Quietism is discussed in the second volume at considerable length; the familiar names of Madame Guyon, Bossuet and Fénélon are brought before us. The story is a sad one. There may be some who think that Madame Guyon was not worthy of the friendship of such a saint as Fénélon,—that must be a matter of opinion; but on one point all will agree, the conduct of Bossuet under the circumstances was not very creditable. Those who have a high opinion of the piety of Bossuet will confess that he does not appear in the narrative to advantage, even though they may not be able to agree with all the statements the author of this work makes about the Bishop of Meaux. Fénélon was tender, gentle, loving, and Bossuet was firm, stern, and strict, but they both did

their best to serve God in their relative positions, and He, whose servants they were, will judge them.

Glancing, then, through the entire length of this history, we see that the great principle which appears to have actuated all Mystics was a desire for union with God. This they tried to cultivate by seclusion and asceticism. They neglected social duties and fled away into monasteries and deserts; and sometimes their practical life was not equal in holiness to the reported spirituality of their ecstasies. Their excesses of mortification appear almost ludicrous when they themselves alone are concerned, but when their mad conduct is seen affecting others our feelings grow stronger. But let us speak gently of such eccentricities. These good people, for good they certainly were, could not appreciate the fact that God was in the busy town as well as in the lonely desert. They heard no voice within them urging them to treat a beggar kindly for the sake of the Son of God. Some of them were very charitable, but what was the nature of their charity? Was it not simply done for their own advantage? Did they really think of charity as an act done to God, not meritorious, but as being an offering to their Heavenly Father of His own? It is to be feared that that was not the general idea. The more extravagant Mystics appear really to have been horribly selfish. They had yet to learn that the closer union for which they longed is not attained by efforts to ‘faire son salut,’ or by sitting still in the comfortable assurance of an imputed righteousness. Then it must be remembered that all these frantic efforts or dreamy ecstasies were made with a view to union with God. And this ‘union’ was of a novel kind—in many cases there was a notion of an absorption into the Deity, together with other ideas which clearly involved erroneous views of God.

It was the old story of carrying one particular article of faith or pious opinion to extremes, and this to the disregard, more or less complete, of all else. The same thing had happened before in the history of the Christian Church. It is not for us to lay down a definition of what is true union with God; but we may say that the fellowship which all true believers enjoy with the Father through the Son was not enough for the Mystic. He struggled and panted for more. How each one succeeded or failed the individual reader of the work must judge, and decide for himself.

Before going further, it may be well to refer to an attack which was made on the author for his treatment of mediæval saints and of the stories connected with them. Obviously, a man who sympathises with an emotional form of religion would not be inclined to confine these enthusiasts within such narrow limits as would one of a colder temperament. This may explain the feelings of the critics in question. There can be little doubt that the ascetic and the nun, with their mortifications and trances, had not for the author much attraction. Even the style in which the book was written may have led him to write too lightly on some details of this period; but if such were the case, he knew, as well as any critic, that these people were trying to do their duty, even if they failed. The ascetic who thought he had no duty in the world, and therefore ran away and refused to ‘fight a battle for the Lord,’ and the ‘hysterical sister,’ are rather subjects for pity than for jest; and contrary as all the author’s convictions may have been to asceticism, he would rather have wept over their strange acts and mad fancies than scoffed at them. We feel convinced that any harsh remarks should be taken as referring to the system which

brought its victims into such a condition, and not to the victims themselves. Though disapproving of the system, the author would never have withheld his admiration from any individual act of self-sacrifice, when it was done from a right motive and was the offering of a loving heart.

The fact that this book is again published by request is a sign that the author's labours have been appreciated and that his name is not forgotten. 'Some men,' he once wrote in a letter, 'who have died young, have lived far longer than others who have outpassed their three-score years and ten. Life consists not in the abundance of things a man possesseth, nor in the abundance of things a man doeth, but in the abundance of thoughts he thinks leading toward some special result in this world or the next.' So, again, he writes in his diary, 'Reputation—consider it, soul of mine, not as an end, but as a means of sowing right thoughts and feelings among thy fellows. Strive towards power over the thoughts of men—power that may be solemnly used in God's sight as being a faithful steward for His glory. Have I a brain that must be busy, a will in this direction which—with all my vacillation elsewhere—has been and is unconquerable? Let me pray to use it with reverent lowliness of heart as a talent committed to me, fearing to misuse it, to allow any corner of the estate to be waste, or any wain of the harvest to fall into the enemy's hand.'

If it now be asked, what are the uses of this book, we may answer that it has proved helpful as a history of religious thought. Further, it is hoped that it has been, and still will be, useful on account of the moral lessons to be drawn from the historical facts. It may also be used as showing how necessary it is to

associate Christianity with our daily lives; how desirable it is that preachers should avoid confining their hearers' attention to their own individual souls. And then it further teaches that, while we take religion into the world, we may learn also to value more the privileges of quiet and retired communion with God. In these practical modern days the idea of contemplation appears out of place; and yet it was our Divine Master who said, 'Come apart into a desert place and rest awhile.' Perhaps the world would have been better if the hermits had paid more attention to the little word '*awhile*.' But the bustle of the present day is just as likely to make us forget the injunction altogether.

The book's republication now seems to have a special opportuneness, for in much of the more spiritual progress going on around us there is a good deal of Mysticism. As in times past men sought refuge in devout contemplation from Materialism, so now a horror of Rationalism and a sense of injustice are likely to drive many to the same extreme. Whether or not there has been any undue extravagance developed as yet, it is not for us to decide. But this history will show how easy and possible it is to carry a good principle beyond its proper limits.

Before concluding, one further personal word must be permitted. No preface to this book, however short, would be complete without at least a reference to her who helped the author in his labours as only a good wife can, and who has taught his son to love God and reverence his father's memory as only a good mother can. To her, the reappearance of this work causes a ray of light amidst a life darkened by much trouble and suffering.

It need scarcely be added that the writer of these words esteems it an honour to be in any way connected with his father's labours. What the loss of such a father has been to him cannot be described in words. The following remarks of a clerical friend of the author may partly express the writer's present feelings: 'He is gone, young in years—but for him we may not lament the dispensation—since assuredly he was not only mature in intellect but rich in grace. I delight to think of him as one of that "blessed company," the Church above—to the perfect love and friendship of some members of which I love to look forward, if by God's grace I may be found worthy to attain to it.'

This book never had any public dedication. It was the work of the best years of a life offered to God. What was not done for the first edition will not be done now; but let these few lines of the author's son be an offering to the glory of God—to the memory of his father—to the self-devotion of his mother.

In one of the author's poems is the following verse which is strangely appropriate at this place:—

Let us toil on—the work we leave behind us,
  Though incomplete, God's hand will yet embalm,
And use it some way; and the news will find us
  In heaven above, and sweeten endless calm.

WYCLIFFE VAUGHAN.

LITTLEMORE, NEAR OXFORD,

November, 1879.

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION.

The subject of the present work is one which will generally be thought to need some words of explanation, if not of apology. Mysticism is almost everywhere synonymous with what is most visionary in religion and most obscure in speculation. But a *history* of Mysticism—old visions and old obscurities—who is bold enough to expect a hearing for that? Is the hopeful present, struggling toward clear intelligence, to pause and hear how, some hundreds of years ago, men made themselves elaborately unintelligible? Is our straining after action and achievement to be relaxed while you relate the way in which Mystics reduced themselves to utter inactivity? While we are rejoicing in escape from superstitious twilight, is it well to recall from Limbo the phantasms of forgotten dreamers, and to people our sunshine with ghostly shadows? And since Mysticism is confessedly more or less a mistake, were it not better to point out to us, if you can, a something true and wise, rather than offer us your portrait of an exaggeration and a folly?

Such are some of the questions which it will be natural to ask. The answer is at hand. First of all, Mysticism, though an error, has been associated, for the most part, with a measure of truth so considerable, that its good has greatly outweighed its

evil. On this ground alone, its history should be judged of interest. For we grow more hopeful and more charitable as we mark how small a leaven of truth may prove an antidote to error, and how often the genuine fervour of the spirit has all but made good the failures of the intellect.

In the religious history of almost every age and country, we meet with a certain class of minds, impatient of mere ceremonial forms and technical distinctions, who have pleaded the cause of the heart against prescription, and yielded themselves to the most vehement impulses of the soul, in its longing to escape from the sign to the thing signified—from the human to the divine. The story of such an ambition, with its disasters and its glories, will not be deemed, by any thoughtful mind, less worthy of record than the career of a conqueror. Through all the changes of doctrine and the long conflict of creeds, it is interesting to trace the unconscious unity of mystical temperaments in every communion. It can scarcely be without some profit that we essay to gather together and arrange this company of ardent natures; to account for their harmony and their differences, to ascertain the extent of their influence for good and evil, to point out their errors, and to estimate even dreams impossible to cold or meaner spirits.

These Mystics have been men of like passions and in like perplexities with many of ourselves. Within them and without them were temptations, mysteries, aspirations like our own. A change of names, or an interval of time, does not free us from liability to mistakes in their direction, or to worse, it may be, in a direction opposite. To distinguish between the genuine and the spurious in their opinion or their life, is to erect a guide-post on the very road we have

ourselves to tread. It is no idle or pedantic curiosity which would try these spirits by their fruits, and see what mischief and what blessing grew out of their misconceptions and their truth. We learn a lesson for ourselves, as we mark how some of these Mystics found God within them after vainly seeking Him without—hearkened happily to that witness for Him which speaks in our conscience, affections, and desires; and, recognising love by love, finally rejoiced in a faith which was rather the life of their heart than the conclusion of their logic. We learn a lesson for ourselves, as we see one class among them forsaking common duties for the feverish exaltation of a romantic saintship, and another persisting in their conceited rejection of the light without, till they have turned into darkness their light within.

But the interest attaching to Mysticism is by no means merely historic. It is active under various forms in our own time. It will certainly play its part in the future. The earlier portion of this work is occupied, it must be confessed, with modes of thought and life extremely remote from anything with which we are now familiar. But only by such inquiry into those bygone speculations could the character and influence of Christian Mysticism be duly estimated, or even accounted for. Those preliminaries once past, the reader will find himself in contact with opinions and events less removed from present experience.

The attempt to exhibit the history of a certain phase of religious life through the irregular medium of fiction, dialogue, and essay, may appear to some a plan too fanciful for so grave a theme. But it must be remembered, that any treatment of such a subject which precluded a genial exercise of the imagination

would be necessarily inadequate, and probably unjust. The method adopted appeared also best calculated to afford variety and relief to topics unlikely in themselves to attract general interest. The notes which are appended have been made more copious than was at first designed, in order that no confusion may be possible between fact and fiction, and that every statement of importance might be sustained by its due authority. It is hoped that, in this way, the work may render its service, not only to those who deem secondary information quite sufficient on such subjects, but also to the scholar, who will thus be readily enabled to test for himself my conclusions, and who will possess, in the extracts given, a kind of anthology from the writings of the leading Mystics. To those familiar with such inquiries it may perhaps be scarcely necessary to state that I have in no instance allowed myself to cite as an authority any passage which I have not myself examined, with its context, in the place to which I refer. In the *Chronicle of Adolf Arnstein* the minimum of invention has been employed, and no historical personage there introduced utters any remark bearing upon Mysticism for which ample warrant cannot be brought forward. Wherever, in the conversations at Ashfield, any material difference of opinion is expressed by the speakers, Atherton may be understood as setting forth what we ourselves deem the truth of the matter. Some passages in these volumes, and the substance of the chapters on Quietism, have made their appearance previously in the pages of one of our quarterly periodicals.

It should be borne in mind that my design does not require of me that I should give an account of all who are anywhere known to have entertained mystical speculation, or given themselves to mystical

practice. I have endeavoured to portray and estimate those who have made epochs in the history of Mysticism, those who are fair representatives of its stages or transitions, those whose enthusiasm has been signally benign or notoriously baneful. I have either mentioned by name only, or passed by in silence, the followers or mere imitators of such men, and those Mystics also whose obscure vagaries neither produced any important result nor present any remarkable phænomena. Only by resolute omission on this principle has it been possible to preserve in any measure that historical perspective so essential to the truth of such delineations.

The fact that the ground I traverse lies almost wholly unoccupied, might be pleaded on behalf of my undertaking. The history of Mysticism has been but incidentally touched by English writers. Germany possesses many monographs of unequal value on detached parts of the subject. Only recently has a complete account of Christian Mysticism appeared, at all on a level with the latest results of historical inquiry.[1] This laborious compilation presents the dry bones of doctrinal opinion, carefully separated from actual life—a grave defect in any branch of ecclesiastical history, absolutely fatal to intelligibility and readableness in this. If we except the researches of the Germans into their own mediæval Mysticism, it may be truly said that the little done in England has been better done than the much in Germany. The Mysticism of the Neo-Platonists has found a powerful painter in Mr. Kingsley. The Mysticism of Bernard meets with a wise and kindly critic in Sir James Stephen.

If, then, the subject of this book be neither insignificant in itself, nor exhausted by the labours of

others, my enterprise at least is not unworthy, however questionable its success.

THE AUTHOR.

February 1st, 1856.

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

This work has been some time out of print. It was my hope that the Second Edition might have been brought within a single volume. But that has not been practicable.

The present edition has been revised by the Author, and some fifty pages of new matter have been introduced. This new matter will be found mainly in the Sixth Chapter of the Sixth Book. In that enlarged treatment of the topic of “German Mysticism in the Fourteenth Century” the reader will meet with a slight recurrence of former trains of thought, which the Author might have been inclined to suppress, but with which I have not deemed it well to intermeddle. It will be seen that the design of the supplementary matter is, in part, as a reply to criticisms which seemed to call for some such explanation; and, in part, that points touched upon elsewhere might be given with more fulness.

To see this Second Edition through the press has been the work of one whose intelligent sympathy and patient effort assisted and encouraged the Author, in many ways, in the prosecution of his studies, and who now finds the solace of her loneliness in treasuring up the products of his mind, and in cherishing the dear ones he has left to her wise love and oversight.

If Mysticism be often a dream, it is commonly a dream in the right direction. Its history presents one of the most significant chapters in the story of humanity.

ROBERT VAUGHAN.

September 7th, 1860.

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BOOK THE FIRST
INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER I.

Wie fruchtbar ist der kleinste Kreis,
Wenn man ihn wohl zu pflegen weiss.[2]

GOETHE.

It was on the evening of a November day that three friends sat about their after-dinner table, chatting over their wine and walnuts, while the fire with its huge log crackled and sparkled, and the wind without moaned about the corners of the house.

Everyone is aware that authors have in their studies an unlimited supply of rings of Gyges, coats of darkness, tarn-caps, and other means of invisibility, —that they have the key to every house, and can hear and see words and actions the most remote. Come with me, then, kindly reader, and let us look and listen unseen; we have free leave; and you must know these gentlemen better.

First of all, the host. See him leaning back in his

chair, and looking into the fire, one hand unconsciously smoothing with restless thumb and finger the taper stem of his wineglass, the other playing with the ears of a favourite dog. He appears about thirty years of age, is tall, but loses something of his real height by a student's stoop about the shoulders. Those decided almost shaggy eyebrows he has would lead you to expect quick, piercing eyes,—the eyes of the observant man of action. But now that he looks towards us, you see instead eyes of hazel, large, slow-rolling, often dreamy in their gaze,—such for size and lustre as Homer gives to ox-eyed Juno. The mouth, too, and the nose are delicately cut. Their outline indicates taste rather than energy. Yet that massive jaw, again, gives promise of quiet power,—betokens a strength of that sort, most probably, which can persevere in a course once chosen with indomitable steadiness, but is not an agile combative force, inventive in assaults and rejoicing in adventurous leadership. Men of his species resemble fountains, whose water-column a sudden gust of wind may drive aslant, or scatter in spray across the lawn, but—the violence once past—they play upward as truly and as strong as ever.

Perhaps it is a pity that this Henry Atherton is so rich as he is,—owns his Ashfield House, with its goodly grounds, and has never been forced into active professional life, with its rough collisions and straining anxieties. Abundance of leisure is a trial to which few men are equal. Gray was in the right when he said that something more of genius than common was required to teach a man how to employ himself. My friend became early his own task-master, and labours harder from choice than many from necessity. To high attainment as a classical scholar he has added a critical acquaintance with the

literature and the leading languages of modern Europe. Upstairs is a noble library, rich especially in historical authorities, and there Atherton works, investigating now one historic question, now another, endeavouring out of old, yellow-faced annals to seize the precious passages which suggest the life of a time, and recording the result of all in piles of manuscript.

How often have I and Gower—that youngest of the three, on the other side, with the moustache—urged him to write a book. But he waits, and, with his fastidiousness, will always wait, I am afraid, till he has practically solved this problem;—given a subject in remote history, for which not ten of your friends care a straw; required such a treatment of it as shall at once be relished by the many and accredited as standard by the few. So, thinking it useless to write what scarcely anyone will read, and despairing of being ever erudite and popular at the same time, he is content to enquire and to accumulate in most happy obscurity. Doubtless the world groans under its many books, yet it misses some good ones that would assuredly be written if able men with the ambition were oftener possessed of the time required, or if able men with the time were oftener possessed of the ambition.

You ask me, ‘Who is this Gower?’

An artist. Atherton met with him at Rome, where he was tracing classic sites, and Gower worshipping the old masters. Their pathway chanced on one or two occasions to coincide, and by little and little they grew fast friends. They travelled through Germany together on their way home, and found their friendship robust enough to survive the landing on our British shore. Unquestionably the pictured

Vatican, sunny Forum, brown Campagna, garlanded baths of Caracalla, with quaint, ingenious Nuremberg, and haunted Hartz, made common memories for both. But this was not all. Atherton had found the young painter in a sentimental fever. He raved about Shelley; he was full of adoration for the flimsiest abstractions—enamoured of impersonations the most impalpable; he discoursed in high strain on the dedication of life as a Hymn to Intellectual Beauty. The question of questions with him concerned not Truth or Fable, but the Beautiful or the Not-Beautiful. Whatever charmed his taste was from Ormuzd, the Good: whatever revolted it, from Ahriman, the Evil; and so the universe was summarily parted. He fancied he was making art religious, while, in fact, he made religion a mere branch of art,—and that branch, of all others, the most open to individual caprice.

From these wanderings Atherton reclaimed him, wisely, and therefore almost insensibly. Gower never forgot the service. In his admiration for Atherton, when fully conscious of it, he little suspected that he, too, had conferred a benefit in his turn. Atherton had looked too much within, as Gower too exclusively without. A certain imaginative, even poetical element, dormant in the mind of the former, was resuscitated by this friendship.

Gower rejoices in the distressingly novelish Christian name of Lionel. Why will parents give names to their offspring which are sure to entail ridicule during the most susceptible period of existence? No sooner did young Lionel enter school, with that delicate red-and-white complexion, and long curling hair, than he was nicknamed Nelly. But he fought his way stoutly till he won a title from the first part of his name

rather than the last, and in school traditions figures still as Lion, royally grim and noble. That open countenance and high forehead, with the deep piercing eyes set rather far apart, constitute not merely a promising physiognomy for the artist, they bear faithful witness to mental power and frankness of character, to practical sagacity and force. In one respect only can he be charged with asserting in his person his professional pretensions,—his hair is parted in the middle, falling in natural waves on either side; long enough, as your eye tells you, for grace; too short for affectation.

One quality in Gower I have always especially liked,—his universality. Not that he sets up for Encyclopædism; on the contrary, he laments more than he need the scantiness of his knowledge and his want of time for its enlargement. What I mean is that with every kind of enquiry, every province of culture, he seems to have intuitively the readiest sympathy. Though his notion of the particular art or science may be only cursory and general, his imagination puts him in some way in the place of its exclusive devotees, and he enters into their feelings till their utmost worship appears scarcely excessive to him. I have heard such votaries pour out unreservedly into his ear, as into that of a brother enthusiast, all those delightful details of adventure, of hope and fear, of research and of conjecture, which make the very life of the most minute or the most arid pursuits, and which books impart to us so rarely. And all this (making the world to him such a wide one) without taking aught from his allegiance to painting. Already have his genius and his diligence achieved success—you will find his pictures realizing high prices—and that snug little box of his, only ten minutes' walk from Ashfield, is furnished

much too handsomely to accord with the popular idea of what must be the residence of a young artist, five-and-twenty, but newly started in his profession, and with all his ‘expectations’ gathered up within his brush.

The third member of the trio, Mr. Author, has not certainly the personal advantages of our friend Gower. I suppose you expect me to say ‘our’ now, if only as a compliment. Yet stay—a very expressive face, with a genial hearty look about it;—there! now he is smiling, that rather clumsy mouth is quite pleasant; but he lets too much beard grow for my taste.

Bearded Willoughby, O Reader, is a literary man, a confirmed bachelor, they say; and encrusted with some roughnesses and oddities which conceal from the eyes of strangers his real warmth of heart and delicacy of feeling. His parents destined him for the Church from those tender years wherein the only vocation manifest is that which summons boyhood to peg-top and jam tart. When the time drew near in which he should have taken orders, Willoughby went up to London, brimful of eager philanthropy, of religious doubts, and of literary ambition, to become one of the High-priests of Letters. His first work was a novel to illustrate the mission of the literary Priesthood, a topsy-turvy affair, but dashingly clever —by the way, you can scarcely offend him more than to mention it now;—with this book he succeeded in producing a sensation, and the barrier thus passed, his pen has found full employment ever since. He has now abandoned the extravagances of hero-worship, and I have even heard him intimate a doubt as to whether ‘able editors’ were, after all, the great, divinely-accredited hierophants of the species.

At present Willoughby is occupied, as time allows, with a philosophical romance, in which are to be embodied his views of society as it is and as it should be. This desperate enterprise is quite a secret; even Atherton and Gower know nothing of it; so you will not mention it, if you please, to more than half-a-dozen of your most intimate friends.

Willoughby was first introduced to Atherton as the author of some articles in favour of certain social reforms in which the latter had deeply interested himself. So remarkable were these papers for breadth, discrimination, and vivacity of style, that the admiring Atherton could not rest till he had made the acquaintance of the writer. The new combatant awakened general attention, and Frank Willoughby was on the point of becoming a lion. But his conversational powers were inconsiderable. His best thoughts ran with his ink from the point of the pen. So Atherton, with little difficulty, carried him off from the lion-hunters.

The three friends were agreed that the crowning locality of all for any mortal was a residence a few miles from town, with congenial neighbours close at hand,—a house or two where one might drop in for an evening at any time. As was their theory so was their practice, and the two younger men are often to be found in the evening at Atherton's, sometimes in the library with him, sometimes in the drawing-room, with the additional enjoyment afforded by the society of his fair young wife and her sister.

But while I have been Boswellizing to you about the past history of these friends of mine, you cannot have heard a word they have been saying. Now I will be quiet,—let us listen.

CHAPTER II.

> Philosophy itself
> Smacks of the age it lives in, nor is true
> Save by the apposition of the present.
> And truths of olden time, though truths they be,
> And living through all time eternal truths,
> Yet want the seas'ning and applying hand
> Which Nature sends successive. Else the need
> Of wisdom should wear out and wisdom cease,
> Since needless wisdom were not to be wise.
>
> EDWIN THE FAIR.

ATHERTON. A pleasant little knot to set us, Gower,—to determine the conditions of your art.

WILLOUGHBY. And after dinner, too, of all times.

GOWER. Why not? If the picture-critics would only write their verdicts after dinner, many a poor victim would find his dinner prospects brighter. This is the genial hour; the very time to discuss æsthetics, where geniality is everything.

WILLOUGHBY. Do you remember that passage in one of our old plays (I think it was in Lamb I saw it), where the crazed father asks all sorts of impossible things from the painter. He wants him to make the tree shriek on which his murdered son hangs ghastly in the moonlight.

GOWER. Salvator has plenty of them, splintered with shrieking.

WILLOUGHBY. But this man's frenzy demands more yet:—make me cry, make me mad, make me well again, and in the end leave me in a trance,—and so

forth.

ATHERTON. Fortunate painter—a picture gallery ordered in a breath!

WILLOUGHBY. By no means. Now does this request, when you come to think of it, so enormously violate the conditions of the art? Seriously, I should state the matter thus:—The artist is limited to a moment only, and yet is the greater artist in proportion as he can not only adequately occupy, but even transcend that moment.

GOWER. I agree with you. Painting reaches its highest aim when it carries us beyond painting; when it is not merely itself a creation, but makes the spectator creative, and prompts him with the antecedents and the consequents of the represented action.

ATHERTON. But all are not equal to the reception of such suggestions.

GOWER. And so, with unsusceptible minds, we must be satisfied if they praise us for our imitation merely.

WILLOUGHBY. Yet even they will derive more pleasure, though unable to account for it, from works of this higher order. Those, assuredly, are the masterpieces of art, in any branch, which are, as it were, triumphal arches that lead us out into the domain of some sister art. When poetry pourtrays with the painter,—

GOWER. My favourite, Spenser, to wit.—

WILLOUGHBY. When painting sings its story with the minstrel, and when music paints and sings with both, they are at their height. Take music, for instance. What scenes does some fine overture suggest, even when you know nothing of its design, as you close

your eyes and yield to its influence. The events, or the reading of the previous day, the incidents of history or romance, are wrought up with glorious transfigurations, and you are in the land of dreams at once. Some of them rise before me at this moment, vivid as ever:—now I see the fair damosels of the olden time on their palfreys, prancing on the sward beside a castle gate, while silver trumpets blow; then, as the music changes, I hear cries far off on forlorn and haunted moors; now it is the sea, and there sets the sun, red, through the ribs of a wrecked hull, that cross it like skeleton giant bars. There is one passage in the overture to Fra Diavolo, during which I always emerge, through ocean caves, in some silken palace of the east, where the music rises and rains in the fountains, and ethereally palpitates in their wavering rainbows. But dream-scenery of this sort is familiar to most persons at such times.

GOWER. I have often revelled in it.

WILLOUGHBY. And what is true for so many with regard to music, may sometimes be realized on seeing pictures.

ATHERTON. Only, I think, in a way still more accidental and arbitrary. An instance, however, of the thing you mention did happen to me last week. I had been reading a German writer on mysticism, searching, after many disappointments, for a satisfactory definition of it. Page after page of metaphysical verbiage did I wade through in vain. At last, what swarms of labouring words had left as obscure as ever, a picture seemed to disclose to me in a moment. I saw that evening, at a friend's house, a painting which revealed to me, as I imagined, the very spirit of mysticism in a figure; it was a visible emblem or hieroglyph of that mysterious religious

affection.

WILLOUGHBY. Your own subjectivity forged both lock and key together, I suspect.

GOWER. What in the world did the piece represent?

ATHERTON. I will describe it as well as I can. It was the interior of a Spanish cathedral. The most prominent object in the foreground below was the mighty foot of a staircase, with a balustrade of exceeding richness, which, in its ascent, crosses and recrosses the picture till its highest flight is lost in darkness,—for on that side the cathedral is built against a hill. A half-light slanted down—a sunbeam through the vast misty space—from a window without the range of the picture. At various stages of the mounting stairway figures on pillars, bearing escutcheons, saints and kings in fretted niches, and painted shapes of gules and azure from the lofty window in the east, looked down on those who were ascending, some in brightness, some in shadow. At the foot of the stairs were two couchant griffins of stone, with expanded spiny wings, arched necks fluted with horny armour, and open threatening jaws.

GOWER. Now for the interpretation of your parable in stone.

ATHERTON. It represented to me the mystic's progress—my mind was full of that—his initiation, his ascent, his consummation in self-loss. First of all the aspirant, whether he seeks superhuman knowledge or superhuman love, is confronted at the outset by terrible shapes—the Dwellers of the Threshold, whether the cruelty of asceticism, the temptations of the adversary, or the phantoms of his own feverish brain. This fiery baptism manfully

endured, he begins to mount through alternate glooms and illuminations; now catching a light from some source beyond the grosser organs of ordinary men, again in darkness and barren drought of soul. The saintly memories of adepts and of heroes in these mystic labours are the faithful witnesses that cheer him at each stage, whose far glories beacon him from their place of high degree as he rises step by step. Are not those first trials fairly symbolized by my griffins, those vicissitudes of the soul by such light and shadow, and those exalted spectators by the statues of my stairway and the shining ones of my oriel window? Then for the climax. The aim of the mystic, if of the most abstract contemplative type, is to lose himself in the Divine Dark[3]—to escape from everything definite, everything palpable, everything human, into the Infinite Fulness; which is, at the same time, the 'intense inane.' The profoundest obscurity is his highest glory; he culminates in darkness; for is not the deathlike midnight slumber of the sense, he will ask us, the wakeful noonday of the spirit? So, as I looked on the picture, I seemed to lose sight of him where the summit of the stair was lost among the shadows crouched under the roof of that strange structure.

GOWER. I perceive the analogy. I owe you thanks for enabling me to attach at least some definite idea to the word mysticism. I confess I have generally used the term mystical to designate anything fantastically unintelligible, without giving to it any distinct significance.

WILLOUGHBY. I have always been partial to the mystics, I must say. They appear to me to have been the conservators of the poetry and heart of religion, especially in opposition to the dry prose and

formalism of the schoolmen.

ATHERTON. So they really were in great measure. They did good service, many of them, in their day—their very errors often such as were possible only to great souls. Still their notions concerning special revelation and immediate intuition of God were grievous mistakes.

WILLOUGHBY. Yet without the ardour imparted by such doctrines, they might have lacked the strength requisite to withstand misconceptions far more mischievous.

ATHERTON. Very likely. We should have more mercy on the one-sidedness of men, if we reflected oftener that the evil we condemn may be in fact keeping out some much greater evil on the other side.

WILLOUGHBY. I think one may learn a great deal from such erratic or morbid kinds of religion. Almost all we are in a position to say, concerning spiritual influence, consists of negatives—and what that influence is *not* we can best gather from these abnormal phases of the mind. Certainly an impartial estimate of the good and of the evil wrought by eminent mystics, would prove a very instructive occupation; it would be a trying of the spirits by their fruits.

GOWER. And all the more useful as the mistakes of mysticism, whatever they may be, are mistakes concerning questions which we all feel it so important to have rightly answered; committed, too, by men of like passions with ourselves, so that what was danger to them may be danger also to some of us, in an altered form.

ATHERTON. Unquestionably. Rationalism overrates reason, formalism action, and mysticism feeling—

hence the common attributes of the last, heat and obscurity. But a tendency to excess in each of these three directions must exist in every age among the cognate varieties of mind. You remember how Pindar frequently introduces into an ode two opposite mythical personages, such as a Pelops or a Tantalus, an Ixion or a Perseus, one of whom shall resemble the great man addressed by the poet in his worse, the other in his better characteristics; that thus he may be at once encouraged and deterred. Deeper lessons than were drawn for Hiero from the characters of the heroic age may be learnt by us from the religious struggles of the past. It would be impossible to study the position of the old mystics without being warned and stimulated by a weakness and a strength to which our nature corresponds;—unless, indeed, the enquiry were conducted unsympathizingly; with cold hearts, as far from the faith of the mystics as from their follies.

GOWER. If we are likely to learn in this way from such an investigation, suppose we agree to set about it, and at once.

ATHERTON. With all my heart. I have gone a little way in this direction alone; I should be very glad to have company upon the road.

WILLOUGHBY. An arduous task, when you come to look it in the face,—to determine that narrow line between the genuine ardour of the Christian and the overwrought fervours of the mystical devotee,—to enter into the philosophy of such a question; and that with a terminology so misleading and so defective as the best at our service. It will be like shaping the second hand of a watch with a pair of shears, I promise you. We shall find continually tracts of ground belonging to one of the rival

territories of True and False inlaid upon the regions of the other, like those patches from a distant shire that lie in the middle of some of our counties. Many of the words we must employ to designate a certain cast of mind or opinion are taken from some accidental feature or transitory circumstance,—express no real characteristic of the idea in question. They indicate our ignorance, like the castles with large flags, blazoned with the arms of sovereigns, which the old monkish geographers set down in their maps of Europe to stand instead of the rivers, towns, and mountains of an unknown interior.

ATHERTON. True enough; but we must do the best we can. We should never enter on any investigation a little beneath the surface of things if we consider all the difficulties so gravely. Besides, we are not going to be so ponderously philosophical about the matter. The facts themselves will be our best teachers, as they arise, and as we arrange them when they accumulate.

History fairly questioned is no Sphinx. She tells us what kind of teaching has been fruitful in blessing to humanity, and why; and what has been a mere boastful promise or powerless formula. She is the true test of every system, and the safeguard of her disciples from theoretical or practical extravagance. Were her large lessons learned, from how many foolish hopes and fears would they save men! We should not then see a fanatical confidence placed in pet theories for the summary expulsion of all superstition, wrongfulness, and ill-will,—theories whose prototypes failed ages back: neither would good Christian folk be so frightened as some of them are at the seemingly novel exhibitions of unbelief in our time.

WILLOUGHBY. A great gain—to be above both panic and presumption. I have never heartily given myself to a historic study without realizing some such twofold advantage. It animated and it humbled me. How minute my power; but how momentous to *me* its conscientious exercise! I will hunt this mystical game with you, or any other, right willingly; all the more so, if we can keep true to a historic rather than theoretical treatment of the subject.

GOWER. As to practical details, then:—I propose that we have no rules.

WILLOUGHBY. Certainly not; away with formalities; let us be Thelemites, and do as we like. We can take up this topic as a bye-work, to furnish us with some consecutive pursuit in those intervals of time we are so apt to waste. We can meet—never mind at what intervals, from a week to three months—and throw into the common stock of conversation our several reading on the questions in hand.

ATHERTON. Or one of us may take up some individual or period; write down his thoughts: and we will assemble then to hear and talk the matter over.

GOWER. Very good. And if Mrs. Atherton and Miss Merivale will sometimes deign to honour our evenings with their society, our happiness will be complete.

This mention of the ladies reminds our friends of the time, and they are breaking up to join them.

The essays and dialogues which follow have their origin in the conversation to which we have just listened.

CHAPTER III.

> If we entertain the inward man in the purgative and illuminative way, that is, in actions of repentance, virtue, and precise duty, that is the surest way of uniting us to God, whilst it is done by faith and obedience; and that also is love; and in these peace and safety dwell. And after we have done our work, it is not discretion in a servant to hasten to his meal, and snatch at the refreshment of visions, unions, and abstractions; but first we must gird ourselves, and wait upon the master, and not sit down ourselves, till we all be called at the great supper of the Lamb.—JEREMY TAYLOR.

'So, we are to be etymological to-night,' exclaimed Gower, as he stepped forward to join Willoughby in his inspection of a great folio which Atherton had laid open on a reading desk, ready to entertain his friends.

'What says Suidas about our word mysticism?'

WILLOUGHBY. I see the old lexicographer derives the original word from the root *mu*, to close: the secret rites and lessons of the Greek mysteries were things about which the mouth was to be closed.[4]

GOWER. We have the very same syllable in our language for the same thing—only improved in expressiveness by the addition of another letter,—we say, 'to be *mum*.'

ATHERTON. Well, this settles one whole class of significations at once. The term mystical may be applied in this sense to any secret language or ritual

which is understood only by the initiated. In this way the philosophers borrowed the word figuratively from the priests, and applied it to their inner esoteric doctrines. The disciple admitted to these was a philosophical ‘myst,’ or mystic.

WILLOUGHBY. The next step is very obvious. The family of words relating to mystery, initiation, &c., are adopted into the ecclesiastical phraseology of the early Christian world,—not in the modified use of them occasionally observable in St. Paul, but with their old Pagan significance.

GOWER. So that the exclusive and aristocratic spirit of Greek culture re-appears in Christianity?

ATHERTON. Just so. Thus you see the church doors shutting out the catechumens from beholding ‘the mystery’ (as they came to call the Eucharist, *par excellence*) quite as rigidly as the brazen gates of Eleusis excluded the profane many. You hear Theodoret and Ambrose speaking freely before the uninitiated on moral subjects, but concerning the rites they deemed of mysterious, almost magical efficacy, they will deliver only obscure utterances to such auditors; their language is purposely dark and figurative,—suggestive to the initiated, unintelligible to the neophyte. How often on approaching the subject of the sacrament, does Chrysostom stop short in his sermon, and break off abruptly with the formula,—‘the initiated will understand what I mean.’ So Christianity, corrupted by Gentile philosophy, has in like manner its privileged and its inferior order of votaries,—becomes a respecter of persons, with arbitrary distinction makes two kinds of religion out of one, and begins to nourish with fatal treachery its doctrine of reserve.[5]

WILLOUGHBY. But Suidas has here, I perceive, a

second meaning in store for us. This latter, I suspect, is most to our purpose,—it is simply an extension of the former. He refers the word to the practice of closing as completely as possible every avenue of perception by the senses, for the purpose of withdrawing the mind from everything external into itself, so as to fit it (raised above every sensuous representation) for receiving divine illumination immediately from above.

GOWER. Platonic abstraction, in fact.

ATHERTON. So it seems. The Neo-Platonist was accustomed to call every other branch of science the 'lesser mysteries:' this inward contemplation, the climax of Platonism, is the *great* mystery, the inmost, highest initiation. Withdraw into thyself, he will say, and the adytum of thine own soul will reveal to thee profounder secrets than the cave of Mithras. So that his *mysticus* is emphatically the enclosed, self-withdrawn, introverted man.[6] This is an initiation which does not merely, like that of Isis or of Ceres, close the lips in silence, but the eye, the ear, every faculty of perception, in inward contemplation or in the ecstatic abstraction of the trance.

WILLOUGHBY. So then it is an effort man is to make —in harmony with the matter-hating principles of this school—to strip off the material and sensuous integuments of his being, and to reduce himself to a purely spiritual element. And in thus ignoring the follies and the phantasms of Appearance—as they call the actual world—the worshipper of pure Being believed himself to enjoy at least a transitory oneness with the object of his adoration?

ATHERTON. So Plotinus would say, if not Plato. And now we come to the transmission of the idea and the expression to the Church. A writer, going by the

name of Dionysius the Areopagite, ferries this shade over into the darkness visible of the ecclesiastical world in the fifth century. The system of mystical theology introduced by him was eminently adapted to the monastic and hierarchical tendencies of the time. His '*Mystic*' is not merely a sacred personage, acquainted with the doctrines and participator in the rites called mysteries, but one also who (exactly after the Neo-Platonist pattern) by mortifying the body, closing the senses to everything external, and ignoring every 'intellectual apprehension,'[7] attains in passivity a divine union, and in ignorance a wisdom transcending all knowledge.

GOWER. Prepared to say, I suppose, with one of old George Chapman's characters—

> I'll build all inward—not a light shall ope
> The common out-way.—
> I'll therefore live in dark; and all my light,
> Like ancient temples, let in at my top.

WILLOUGHBY. Not much light either. The mystic, as such, was not to *know* anything about the Infinite, he was 'to gaze with closed eyes,' passively to receive impressions, lost in the silent, boundless 'Dark' of the Divine Subsistence.

ATHERTON. This, then, is our result. The philosophical perfection of Alexandria and the monastic perfection of Byzantium belong to the same species. Philosophers and monks alike employ the word mysticism and its cognate terms as involving the idea, not merely of initiation into something hidden, but, beyond this, of an internal manifestation of the Divine to the intuition or in the feeling of the secluded soul. It is in this last and narrower sense, therefore, that the word is to be understood when we

speak of mystical death, mystical illumination, mystical union with God, and, in fact, throughout the phraseology of what is specially termed *Theologia Mystica*.[8]

GOWER. I have often been struck by the surprising variety in the forms of thought and the modes of action in which mysticism has manifested itself among different nations and at different periods. This arises, I should think, from its residing in so central a province of the mind—the feeling. It has been incorporated in theism, atheism, and pantheism. It has given men gods at every step, and it has denied all deity except self. It has appeared in the loftiest speculation and in the grossest idolatry. It has been associated with the wildest licence and with the most pitiless asceticism. It has driven men out into action, it has dissolved them in ecstasy, it has frozen them to torpor.

ATHERTON. Hence the difficulty of definition. I have seen none which quite satisfies me. Some include only a particular phase of it, while others so define its province as to stigmatise as mystical every kind of religiousness which rises above the zero of rationalism.

WILLOUGHBY. The Germans have two words for mysticism—*mystik* and *mysticismus*. The former they use in a favourable, the latter in an unfavourable, sense.—

GOWER. Just as we say piety and pietism, or rationality and rationalism; keeping the first of each pair for the use, the second for the abuse. A convenience, don't you think?

ATHERTON. If the adjective were distinguishable like the nouns—but it is not; and to have a distinction in

the primitive and not in the derivative word is always confusing. But we shall keep to the usage of our own language. I suppose we shall all be agreed in employing the word mysticism in the unfavourable signification, as equivalent generally to *spirituality diseased*, grown unnatural, fantastic, and the like.

GOWER. At the same time admitting the true worth of many mystics, and the real good and truth of which such errors are the exaggeration or caricature.

ATHERTON. I think we may say thus much generally —that mysticism, whether in religion or philosophy, is that form of error which mistakes for a divine manifestation the operations of a merely human faculty.

WILLOUGHBY. There you define, at any rate, the characteristic misconception of the mystics.

GOWER. And include, if I mistake not, enthusiasts, with their visions; pretended prophets, with their claim of inspiration; wonder-workers, trusting to the divine power resident in their theurgic formulas; and the philosophers who believe themselves organs of the world-soul, and their systems an evolution of Deity.

ATHERTON. Yes, so far; but I do not profess to give any definition altogether adequate. Speaking of *Christian* mysticism, I should describe it generally as the exaggeration of that aspect of Christianity which is presented to us by St. John.

GOWER. That answer provokes another question. How should you characterize John's peculiar presentation of the Gospel?

ATHERTON. I refer chiefly to that admixture of the contemplative temperament and the ardent, by

which he is personally distinguished,—the opposition so manifest in his epistles to all religion of mere speculative opinion or outward usage,—the concentration of Christianity, as it were, upon the inward life derived from union with Christ. This would seem to be the province of Christian truth especially occupied by the beloved disciple, and this is the province which mysticism has in so many ways usurped.

GOWER. Truly that unction from the Holy One, of which John speaks, has found some strange claimants!

WILLOUGHBY. Thus much I think is evident from our enquiry—that mysticism, true to its derivation as denoting a *hidden* knowledge, faculty, or life (the exclusive privilege of sage, adept, or recluse), presents itself, in all its phases, as more or less the religion of internal as opposed to external revelation, —of heated feeling, sickly sentiment, or lawless imagination, as opposed to that reasonable belief in which the intellect and the heart, the inward witness and the outward, are alike engaged.

Note to page 21.

Numerous definitions of ‘Mystical Theology’ are supplied by Roman Catholic divines who have written on the subject. With all of them the terms denote the religion of the heart as distinguished from speculation, scholasticism, or ritualism; and, moreover, those higher experiences of the divine life associated, in their belief, with extraordinary gifts and miraculous powers. Such definitions will accordingly comprehend the theopathetic and

theurgic forms of mysticism, but must necessarily exclude the theosophic. Many of them might serve as definitions of genuine religion. These mystical experiences have been always coveted and admired in the Romish Church; and those, therefore, who write concerning them employ the word mysticism in a highly favourable sense. That excess of subjectivity —those visionary raptures and supernatural exaltations, which we regard as the symptoms of spiritual disease, are, in the eyes of these writers, the choice rewards of sufferings and of aspirations the most intense,—they are the vision of God and things celestial enjoyed by the pure in heart,—the dazzling glories wherewith God has crowned the heads of a chosen few, whose example shall give light to all the world.

Two or three specimens will suffice. Gerson gives the two following definitions of the *Theologia Mystica*: —'Est animi extensio in Deum per amoris desiderium.' And again: 'Est motio anagogica in Deum per purum et fervidum amorem.' Elsewhere he is more metaphorical, describing it as the theology which teaches men to escape from the stormy sea of sensuous desires to the safe harbour of Eternity, and shows them how to attain that love which snatches them away to the Beloved, unites them with Him, and secures them rest in Him. Dionysius the Carthusian (associating evidently *mystica* and *mysteriosa*) says,—'Est autem mystica Theologia secretissima mentis cum Deo locutio.' John à Jesu Maria calls it, 'cœlestis quædam Dei notitia per unionem voluntatis Deo adhærentis elicita, vel lumine cœlitus immisso producta.' This mystical theology, observes the Carthusian Dionysius, farther, (commentating on the Areopagite), is no science, properly so called; even regarded as an act, it is

simply the concentration (defixio) of the mind on God—admiration of his majesty—a suspension of the mind in the boundless and eternal light—a most fervid, most peaceful, transforming gaze on Deity, &c.

All alike contrast the mystical with the scholastic and the symbolical theology. The points of dissimilarity are thus summed up by Cardinal Bona:—'Per scholasticam discit homo recte uti intelligibilibus, per symbolicam sensibilibus, per hanc (mysticam) rapitur ad supermentales excessus. Scientiæ humanæ in valle phantasiæ discuntur, hæc in apice mentis. Illæ multis egent discursibus, et erroribus subjectæ sunt: hæc unico et simplici verbo docetur et discitur, et est mere supernaturalis tam in substantiâ quam in modo procedendi.'—*Via Compendii ad Deum*, cap. iii. 1-3.

The definition given by Corderius in his introduction to the mystical theology of Dionysius is modelled on the mysticism of John de la Cruz:—'Theologia Mystica est sapientia experimentalis, Dei affectiva, divinitus infusa, quæ mentem ab omni inordinatione puram, per actus supernaturales fidei, spei, et charitatis, cum Deo intime conjungit.'—*Isagoge*, cap. ii.

The most negative definition of all is that given by Pachymeres, the Greek paraphrast of Dionysius, who has evidently caught his master's mantle, or cloak of darkness. 'Mystical theology is not perception or discourse, not a movement of the mind, not an operation, not a habit, nothing that any other power we may possess will bring to us; but if, in absolute immobility of mind we are illumined concerning it, we shall know that it is beyond everything cognizable by the mind of man.'—*Dion. Opp.* vol. i. p.

722.

In one place the explanations of Corderius give us to understand that the mysticism he extols does at least open a door to theosophy itself, *i.e.* to inspired science. He declares that the mystical theologian not only has revealed to him the hidden sense of Scripture, but that he can understand and pierce the mysteries of any natural science whatsoever, in a way quite different from that possible to other men—in short, by a kind of special revelation.—*Isagoge*, cap. iv.

The reader will gather the most adequate notion of what is meant, or thought to be meant, by mystical theology from the description given by Ludovic Blosius, a high authority on matters mystical, in his *Institutio Spiritualis*. Corderius cites him at length, as 'sublimissimus rerum mysticarum interpres.'

Happy, he exclaims, is that soul which steadfastly follows after purity of heart and holy introversion, renouncing utterly all private affection, all self-will, all self-interest. Such a soul deserves to approach nearer and ever nearer to God. Then at length, when its higher powers have been elevated, purified, and furnished forth by divine grace, it attains to unity and nudity of spirit—to a pure love above representation—to that simplicity of thought which is devoid of all thinkings. Now, therefore, since it hath become receptive of the surpassing and ineffable grace of God, it is led to that living fountain which flows from everlasting, and doth refresh the minds of the saints unto the full and in over-measure. Now do the powers of the soul shine as the stars, and she herself is fit to contemplate the abyss of Divinity with a serene, a simple, and a jubilant intuition, free from imagination and from the smallest admixture of

the intellect. Accordingly, when she lovingly turns herself absolutely unto God, the incomprehensible light shines into her depths, and that radiance blinds the eye of reason and understanding. But the simple eye of the soul itself remains open—that is *thought*, pure, naked, uniform, and raised above the understanding.

Moreover, when the natural light of reason is blinded by so bright a glory, the soul takes cognizance of nothing in time, but is raised above time and space, and assumes as it were a certain attribute of eternity. For the soul which has abandoned symbols and earthly distinctions and processes of thought, now learns experimentally that God far transcends all images—corporeal, spiritual, or divine, and that whatsoever the reason can apprehend, whatsoever can be said or written concerning God, whatsoever can be predicated of Him by words, must manifestly be infinitely remote from the reality of the divine subsistence which is unnameable. The soul knows not, therefore, what that God is she feels. Hence, by a foreknowledge which is exercised without knowledge, she rests in the nude, the simple, the unknown God, who alone is to be loved. For the light is called *dark*, from its excessive brightness. In this darkness the soul receives the hidden word which God utters in the inward silence and secret recess of the mind. This word she receives, and doth happily experience the bond of mystical union. For when, by means of love, she hath transcended reason and all symbols, and is carried away above herself (a favour God alone can procure her), straightway she flows away from herself and flows forth into God (*a se defluens profluit in Deum*), and then is God her peace and her enjoyment. Rightly doth she sing, in such a transport, ‘I will both lay me down in peace and

sleep.' The loving soul flows down, I say, falls away from herself, and, reduced as it were to nothing, melts and glides away altogether into the abyss of eternal love. There, dead to herself, she lives in God, knowing nothing, perceiving nothing, except the love she tastes. For she loses herself in that vastest solitude and darkness of Divinity: but thus to lose is in fact to find herself. There, putting off whatsoever is human, and putting on whatever is divine, she is transformed and transmuted into God, as iron in a furnace takes the form of fire and is transmuted into fire. Nevertheless, the essence of the soul thus deified remains, as the glowing iron does not cease to be iron....

The soul, thus bathed in the essence of God, liquefied by the consuming fire of love, and united to Him without medium, doth, by wise ignorance and by the inmost touch of love, more clearly know God than do our fleshly eyes discern the visible sun....

Though God doth sometimes manifest himself unto the perfect soul in most sublime and wondrous wise, yet he doth not reveal himself *as he is* in his own ineffable glory, but as it is possible for him to be seen in this life.—*Isagoge Cord.* cap. vii.

CHAPTER IV.

The desire of the moth for the star,
  Of the night for the morrow,
The devotion to something afar
  From the sphere of our sorrow.

SHELLEY.

WILLOUGHBY. Here's another definition for you:—Mysticism is *the romance of religion*. What do you say?

GOWER. True to the spirit—not scientific, I fear.

WILLOUGHBY. Science be banished! Is not the history of mysticism bright with stories of dazzling spiritual enterprise, sombre with tragedies of the soul, stored with records of the achievements and the woes of martyrdom and saintship? Has it not reconciled, as by enchantment, the most opposite extremes of theory and practice? See it, in theory, verging repeatedly on pantheism, ego-theism, nihilism. See it, in practice, producing some of the most glorious examples of humility, benevolence, and untiring self-devotion. Has it not commanded, with its indescribable fascination, the most powerful natures and the most feeble—minds lofty with a noble disdain of life, or low with a weak disgust of it? If the self-torture it enacts seems hideous to our sobriety, what an attraction in its reward! It lays waste the soul with purgatorial pains—but it is to leave nothing there on which any fire may kindle after death. What a promise!—a perfect sanctification, a divine calm, fruition of heaven while yet upon the earth!

ATHERTON. Go on, Willoughby, I like your enthusiasm. Think of its adventures, too.

WILLOUGHBY. Aye, its adventures—both persecuted and canonized by kings and pontiffs; one age enrolling the mystic among the saints, another committing him to the inquisitor's torch, or entombing him in the Bastille. And the principle

indestructible after all—some minds always who must be religious mystically or not at all.

ATHERTON. I thought we might this evening enquire into the causes which tend continually to reproduce this religious phenomenon. You have suggested some already. Certain states of society have always fostered it. There have been times when all the real religion existing in a country appears to have been confined to its mystics.

WILLOUGHBY. In such an hour, how mysticism rises and does its deeds of spiritual chivalry——

GOWER. Alas! Quixotic enough, sometimes.

WILLOUGHBY. How conspicuous, then, grows this inward devotion!—even the secular historian is compelled to say a word about it——

ATHERTON. And a sorry, superficial verdict he gives, too often.

WILLOUGHBY. How loud its protest against literalism, formality, scholasticism, human ordinances! what a strenuous reaction against the corruptions of priestcraft!

ATHERTON. But, on the other side, Willoughby—and here comes the pathetic part of its romance—mysticism is heard discoursing concerning things unutterable. It speaks, as one in a dream, of the third heaven, and of celestial experiences, and revelations fitter for angels than for men. Its stammering utterance, confused with excess of rapture labouring with emotions too huge or abstractions too subtile for words, becomes utterly unintelligible. Then it is misrepresented: falls a victim to reaction in its turn; the delirium is dieted by persecution, and it is consigned once more to secrecy and silence.

GOWER. There, good night, and pleasant dreams to it!

WILLOUGHBY. It spins still in its sleep its mingled tissue of good and evil.

ATHERTON. A mixture truly. We must not blindly praise it in our hatred of formalism. We must not vaguely condemn it in our horror of extravagance.

GOWER. What you have both been saying indicates at once three of the causes we are in search of,—indeed, the three chief ones, as I suppose: first of all, the reaction you speak of against the frigid formality of religious torpor; then, heart-weariness, the languishing longing for repose, the charm of mysticism for the selfish or the weak; and, last, the desire, so strong in some minds, to pierce the barriers that hide from man the unseen world—the charm of mysticism for the ardent and the strong.

ATHERTON. That shrinking from conflict, that passionate yearning after inaccessible rest, how universal is it; what wistful utterance it has found in every nation and every age; how it subdues us all, at times, and sinks us into languor.

WILLOUGHBY. Want of patience lies at the root—who was it said that he should have all eternity to rest in?

ATHERTON. Think how the traditions of every people have embellished with their utmost wealth of imagination some hidden spot upon the surface of the earth, which they have pourtrayed as secluded from all the tumult and the pain of time—a serene Eden—an ever-sunny Tempe—a vale of Avalon—a place beyond the sterner laws and rougher visitations of the common world—a fastness of perpetual calm, before which the tempests may blow their challenging horns in vain—they can win no entrance.

Such, to the fancy of the Middle Age, was the famous temple of the Sangreal, with its dome of sapphire, its six-and-thirty towers, its crystal crosses, and its hangings of green samite, guarded by its knights, girded by impenetrable forest, glittering on the onyx summit of Mount Salvage, for ever invisible to every eye impure, inaccessible to every failing or faithless heart. Such, to the Hindoo, was the Cridavana meadow, among the heights of Mount Sitanta, full of flowers, of the song of birds, the hum of bees —'languishing winds and murmuring falls of waters.' Such was the secret mountain Kinkadulle, celebrated by Olaus Magnus, which stood in a region now covered only by moss or snow, but luxuriant once, in less degenerate days, with the spontaneous growth of every pleasant bough and goodly fruit. What places like these have been to the popular mind, even such a refuge for the Ideal from the pursuit of the Actual —that the attainment of Ecstasy, the height of Contemplation, the bliss of Union, has been for the mystic.

GOWER. So those spiritual Lotos-eaters will only

> ——hearken what the inner spirit sings,
> There is no joy but calm;

or, in their 'fugitive and cloistered virtue,' as Milton calls it, say,

> ——let us live and lie reclined
> On the hills like gods together, careless of mankind.

ATHERTON. Some; not all, however. Neither should we suppose that even those who have sunk to such a state——

WILLOUGHBY. They would say—risen—

ATHERTON. Be it by sinking or rising, they have not been brought to that pass without a conflict. From life's battle-field to the hospital of the hermitage has been but a step for a multitude of minds. Hiding themselves wounded from the victor (for the enemy they could not conquer shall not see and mock their sufferings), they call in the aid of an imaginative religionism to people their solitude with its glories. The Prometheus chained to his rock is comforted if the sea nymphs rise from the deep to visit him, and Ocean on his hippogriff draws near. And thus, let the gliding fancies of a life of dreams, and Imagination, the monarch of all their main of thought, visit the sorrow of these recluses, and they think they can forget the ravages of that evil which so vexed them once. Hence the mysticism of the visionary. He learns to crave ecstasies and revelations as at once his solace and his pride.

GOWER. Is it not likely, too, that some of these mystics, in seasons of mental distress of which we have no record, tried Nature as a resource, and found her wanting? Such a disappointment would make that ascetic theory which repudiates the seen and actual, plausible and even welcome to them. After demanding of the natural world what it has not to bestow, they would hurry to the opposite extreme, and deny it any healing influence whatever. Go out into the woods and valleys, when your heart is rather harassed than bruised, and when you suffer from vexation more than grief. Then the trees all hold out their arms to you to relieve you of the burthen of your heavy thoughts; and the streams under the trees glance at you as they run by, and will carry away your trouble along with the fallen leaves; and the sweet-breathing air will draw it off together with the silver multitudes of the dew. But let it be with

anguish or remorse in your heart that you go forth into Nature, and instead of your speaking her language, you make her speak yours. Your distress is then infused through all things, and clothes all things, and Nature only echoes, and seems to authenticate, your self-loathing or your hopelessness. Then you find the device of your sorrow on the argent shield of the moon, and see all the trees of the field weeping and wringing their hands with you, while the hills, seated at your side in sackcloth, look down upon you prostrate, and reprove you like the comforters of Job.

ATHERTON. Doubtless, many of these stricken spirits suffered such disappointment at some early period of their history. Failure was inevitable, and the disease was heightened. How Coleridge felt this when he says so mournfully in his Ode to Dejection,—

> It were a vain endeavour
> Though I should gaze for ever
> On that green light that lingers in the west:
> I may not hope from outward forms to win
> The passion and the life whose fountains are within.

WILLOUGHBY. The feeling of the other class we spoke of—the men of bolder temperament—has been this: 'I am a king and yet a captive; submit I cannot; I care not to dream; I must in some way act.'

GOWER. And, like Rasselas, a prince and yet a prisoner in the narrow valley, such a man, in his impatience, takes counsel of a philosopher, who promises to construct a pair of wings wherewith he shall overfly the summits that frown around him. The mystagogue is a philosopher such as Rasselas found, with a promise as large and a result as vain.

ATHERTON. Hence the mysticism of the theurgist,

who will pass the bounds of the dreaded spirit-world; will dare all its horrors to seize one of its thrones; and aspires—a Manfred or a Zanoni—to lord it among the powers of the air.

WILLOUGHBY. And of the mysticism of the theosophist, too, whose science is an imagined inspiration, who writes about plants and minerals under a divine afflatus, and who will give you from the resources of his special revelation an explanation of every mystery.

GOWER. The explanation, unhappily, the greatest mystery of all.

ATHERTON. Curiously enough, the Bible has been made to support mysticism by an interpretation, at one time too fanciful, at another too literal.

WILLOUGHBY. We may call it, perhaps, the innocent cause of mysticism with one class, its victim with another: the one, running into mysticism because they wrongly interpreted the Bible; the other interpreting it wrongly because they were mystics. The mystical interpreters of school and cloister belong to the latter order, and many a Covenanter and godly trooper of the Commonwealth to the former.

GOWER. Not an unlikely result with the zealous Ironside—his reading limited to his English Bible and a few savoury treatises of divinity—pouring over the warlike story of ancient Israel, and identifying himself with the subjects of miraculous intervention, divine behest, and prophetic dream. How glorious would those days appear to such a man, when angels went and came among men; when, in the midst of his husbandry or handicraft, the servant of the Lord might be called aside to see some ‘great sight:’ when

the fire dropped sudden down from heaven on the accepted altar, like a drop spilt from the lip of an angel's fiery vial full of odours; when the Spirit of the Lord moved men at times, as Samson was moved in the camp of Dan, between Zorah and Eshtaol; and when the Lord sent men hither and thither by an inward impulse, as Elijah was sent from Gilgal to Bethel, and from Bethel back to Jericho, and from Jericho on to Jordan. Imagination would reproduce those marvels in the world within, though miracles could no longer cross his path in the world without. He would believe that to him also words were given to speak, and deeds to do; and that, whether in the house, the council, or the field, he was the Spirit's chosen instrument and messenger.

ATHERTON. This is the practical and active kind of mysticism so prevalent in that age of religious wars, the seventeenth century.

WILLOUGHBY. The monks took the opposite course. While the Parliamentarian soldier was often seen endeavouring to adapt his life to a mistaken application of the Bible, the ascetic endeavoured to adapt the Bible to his mistaken life.

GOWER. The New Testament not authorising the austerities of a Macarius or a Maximus, tradition must be called in——

WILLOUGHBY. And side by side with tradition, mystical interpretation. The Bible, it was pretended, must not be understood as always meaning what it seems to mean.

ATHERTON. It then becomes the favourite employment of the monk to detect this hidden meaning, and to make Scripture render to tradition the same service which the mask rendered to the

ancient actor, not only disguising the face, but making the words go farther. To be thus busied was to secure two advantages at once; he had occupation for his leisure, and an answer for his adversaries.

CHAPTER V.

> Oh! contemplation palls upon the spirit,
> Like the chill silence of an autumn sun:
> While action, like the roaring south-west wind,
> Sweeps, laden with elixirs, with rich draughts
> Quickening the wombed earth.
>
> *Guta.* And yet what bliss,
> When, dying in the darkness of God's light,
> The soul can pierce these blinding webs of nature,
> And float up to the nothing, which is all things—
> The ground of being, where self-forgetful silence
> Is emptiness,—emptiness fulness,—fulness God,—
> Till we touch Him, and, like a snow-flake, melt
> Upon his light-sphere's keen circumference!
>
> THE SAINT'S TRAGEDY.

GOWER. Thanks, if you please, not reproaches. I was calling help for you, I was summoning the fay to your assistance, to determine the best possible order of your mystics.

WILLOUGHBY. The fay?

GOWER. The fay. Down with you in that arm-chair, and sit quietly. Know that I was this morning reading Andersen's Märchen—all about Ole-Luk-Oie, his

ways and works—the queer little elf. Upstairs he creeps, in houses where children are, softly, softly, in the dusk of the evening, with what do you think under his arm?—two umbrellas, one plain, the other covered with gay colours and quaint figures. He makes the eyes of the children heavy, and when they are put to bed, holds over the heads of the good children the painted umbrella, which causes them to dream the sweetest and most wonderful dreams imaginable; but over the naughty children he holds the other, and they do not dream at all. Now, thought I, let me emulate the profundity of a German critic. Is this to be treated as a simple child's tale? Far from it. There is a depth of philosophic meaning in it. Have not the mystics been mostly childlike natures? Have not their lives been full of dreams, manifold and strange—and they therefore, if any, especial favourites of Ole-Luk-Oie? They have accounted their dreams their pride and their reward. They have looked on the sobriety of dreamlessness as the appropriate deprivation of privilege consequent on carnality and ignorance; in other words, the non-dreamers have been with them the naughty children. To learn life's lessons well is, according to them, to enjoy as a recompence the faculty of seeing visions and of dreaming dreams. Here then is the *idea* of mysticism. You have its myth, its legend. Ole-Luk-Oie is its presiding genius. Now, Atherton, if you could but get hold of his umbrella, the segments of that silken hemisphere, with its painted constellations, would give you your divisions in a twinkling. That was why I wanted him. But I do not see him letting himself down the bellrope, or hear his tap at the door. I am afraid we must set to work without him.

WILLOUGHBY. So be it. A local or historical

classification of the mystics is out of the question. I scarcely think you can find a metaphysical one that will bear the test of application and be practically serviceable. Then the division some adopt, of heterodox and orthodox, saves trouble indeed, but it is so arbitrary. The Church of Rome, from whom many of these mystics called heretical, dared to differ, is no church at all in the true sense, and assuredly no standard of orthodoxy. In addition to this I have a nervous antipathy to the terms themselves; for, as I have a liking for becoming the champion of any cause which appears to be borne down by numbers, I find my friends who are somewhat heterodox, frequently charging me with what is called orthodoxy, and those again who are orthodox as often suspecting me of heterodoxy.

ATHERTON. Hear my proposed division. There are three kinds of mysticism, *theopathetic*, *theosophic*, and *theurgic*. The first of these three classes I will subdivide, if needful, into *transitive* and *intransitive*.

GOWER. Your alliteration is grateful to my ear; I hope you have not strained a point to secure us the luxury.

ATHERTON. Not a hair's breadth, I assure you.

WILLOUGHBY. Etymologically such a division has the advantage of showing that all the forms of mysticism are developments of the *religious* sentiment; that in all its varieties the relationship, real or imaginary, which mysticism sustains to the Divine, is its primary element;—that its widely differing aspects are all phases it presents in its eccentric orbit about the central luminary of the Infinite.

GOWER. Your theopathetic mysticism must include a very wide range. By the term theopathetic you

denote, of course, that mysticism which resigns itself, in a passivity more or less absolute, to an imagined divine manifestation. Now, one man may regard himself as overshadowed, another as impelled by Deity. One mystic of this order may do nothing, another may display an unceasing activity. Whether he believes himself a mirror in whose quiescence the Divinity 'glasses himself;' or, as it were, a leaf, driven by the mighty rushing wind of the Spirit, and thus the tongue by which the Spirit speaks, the organ by which God works—the principle of passivity is the same.

ATHERTON. Hence my subdivision of this class of mystics into those whose mysticism assumes a transitive character, and those with whom mysticism consists principally in contemplation, in Quietism, in negation, and so is properly called intransitive.

WILLOUGHBY. Yet some of those whose mysticism has been pre-eminently negative, who have hated the very name of speculation, and placed perfection in repose and mystical death, have mingled much in active life. They appear to defy our arrangement.

ATHERTON. It is only in appearance. They have shrunk from carrying out their theory to its logical consequences. Their activity has been a bye-work. The diversities of character observable in the mysticism which is essentially intransitive arise, not from a difference in the principle at the root, but from varieties of natural temperament, of external circumstances, and from the dissimilar nature or proportion of the foreign elements incorporated.

GOWER. It is clear that we must be guided by the rule rather than the exception, and determine, according to the predominant element in the mysticism of individuals, the position to be assigned

them. If we were to classify only those who were perfectly consistent with themselves, we could include scarcely half-a-dozen names, and those, by the way, the least rational of all, for the most thorough-going are the madmen.

ATHERTON. The mysticism of St. Bernard, for example, in spite of his preaching, his travels, his diplomacy, is altogether contemplative—the intransitive mysticism of the cloister. His active labours were a work apart.

GOWER. Such men have been serviceable as members of society in proportion to their inconsistency as devotees of mysticism. A heavy charge this against their principle.

WILLOUGHBY. In the intransitive division of the theopathetic mysticism you will have three such names as Suso, Ruysbrook, Molinos, and all the Quietists, whether French or Indian.

ATHERTON. And in the transitive theopathy all turbulent prophets and crazy fanatics. This species of mysticism usurps the will more than the emotional part of our nature. The subject of it suffers under the Divine, as he believes, but the result of the manifestation is not confined to himself, it passes on to his fellows.

GOWER. If you believe Plato in the Ion, you must range here all the poets, for they sing well, he tells us, only as they are carried out of themselves by a divine madness, and mastered by an influence which their verse communicates to others in succession.

WILLOUGHBY. We must admit here also, according to ancient superstition, the Pythoness on her tripod, and the Sibyl in her cave at Cumæ, as she struggles beneath the might of the god:—

Phœbi nondum patiens immanis in antro
Bacchatur vates, magnum si pectore possit
Excussisse Deum: tanto magis ille fatigat
Os rabidum, fera corda domans, fingitque premendo.

ATHERTON. I have no objection. According to Virgil's description, the poor Sibyl has earned painfully enough a place within the pale of mysticism. But those with whom we have more especially to do in this province are enthusiasts such as Tanchelm, who appeared in the twelfth century, and announced himself as the residence of Deity; as Gichtel, who believed himself appointed to expiate by his prayers and penance the sins of all mankind; or as Kuhlmann, who traversed Europe, the imagined head of the Fifth monarchy, summoning kings and nobles to submission.

GOWER. Some of these cases we may dismiss in a summary manner. The poor brainsick creatures were cast on evil times indeed. What we should now call derangement was then exalted into heresy, and honoured with martyrdom. We should have taken care that Kuhlmann was sent to an asylum, but the Russian patriarch burned him, poor fellow.

ATHERTON. We must not forget, however, that this species of mysticism has sometimes been found associated with the announcement of vital truths. Look at George Fox and the early Quakers.

WILLOUGHBY. And I would refer also to this class some of the milder forms of mysticism, in which it is seen rather as a single morbid element than as a principle avowed and carried out. Jung Stilling is an instance of what I mean. You see him, fervent, earnest, and yet weak; without forethought, without perseverance; vain and irresolute, he changes his

course incessantly, seeing in every variation of feeling and of circumstance a special revelation of the Divine will.

ATHERTON. Add to this modification a kindred error, the doctrine of a '*particular faith*' in prayer, so much in vogue in Cromwell's court at Whitehall. Howe boldly preached against it before the Protector himself.

WILLOUGHBY. Now, Atherton, for your second division, theosophic mysticism. Whom do you call theosophists?

ATHERTON. Among the Germans I find mysticism generally called theosophy when applied to natural science. Too narrow a use of the word, I think. We should have in that case scarcely any theosophy in Europe till after the Reformation. The word itself was first employed by the school of Porphyry. The Neo-Platonist would say that the priest might have his traditional *discourse* concerning God (theology), but he alone, with his intuition, the highest *wisdom* concerning him.

GOWER. I can't say that I have any clear conception attached to the word.

ATHERTON. You want examples? Take Plotinus and Behmen.

GOWER. What a conjunction!

ATHERTON. Not so far apart as may appear. Their difference is one of application more than of principle. Had Plotinus thought a metal or a plant worth his attention, he would have maintained that concerning that, even as concerning the infinite, all truth lay stored within the recesses of his own mind. But of course he only cared about ideas. Mystical

philosophy is really a contradiction in terms, is it not?

GOWER. Granted, since philosophy must build only upon reason.

ATHERTON. Very good. Then when philosophy falls into mysticism I give it another name, and call it theosophy. And, on the other side, I call mysticism, trying to be philosophical, theosophy likewise. That is all.

WILLOUGHBY. So that the theosophist is one who gives you a theory of God, or of the works of God, which has not reason, but an inspiration of his own for its basis.

ATHERTON. Yes; he either believes, with Swedenborg and Behmen, that a special revelation has unfolded to him the mystery of the divine dispensations here or hereafter—laid bare the hidden processes of nature, or the secrets of the other world; or else, with Plotinus and Schelling, he believes that his intuitions of those things are infallible because divine—subject and object being identical,—all truth being within him. Thus, while the mystic of the theopathetic species is content to contemplate, to feel, or to act, suffering under Deity in his sublime passivity, the mysticism I term theosophic aspires to know and believes itself in possession of a certain supernatural divine faculty for that purpose.

GOWER. You talk of mysticism trying to be philosophical; it does then sometimes seek to justify itself at the bar of reason?

ATHERTON. I should think so—often: at one time trying to refute the charge of madness and prove itself throughout rational and sober; at another, using the appeal to reason up to a certain point and

as far as serves its purpose, and then disdainfully mocking at demands for proof, and towering above argument, with the pretence of divine illumination.

WILLOUGHBY. Some of these mystics, talking of reason as they do, remind me of Lysander at the feet of Helena, protesting (with the magic juice scarce dry upon his eyelids) that the decision of his spell-bound faculties is the deliberate exercise of manly judgment—

> The mind of man is by his reason swayed,
> And *reason* says you are the worthier maid.

GOWER. Now you come to Shakspeare, I must cap your quotation with another: I fit those mystics Atherton speaks of as using reason up to a certain point and then having done with it, with a motto from the *Winter's Tale*—much at their service. They answer, with young enamoured Florizel, when Reason, like a grave Camillo, bids them 'be advised'—

> I am; and by my fancy: if my reason
> Will thereto be obedient, I have reason;
> If not, my senses better pleased with madness
> Do bid it welcome.

ATHERTON. To classify the mystics adequately, we should have a terminology of dreams rich as that of Homer, and distinguish, as he does, the dream-image of complete illusion from the half-conscious dream between sleeping and waking;—ὄναρ from ὕπαρ. How unanimous, by the way, would the mystics be in deriving ὄνειρον from ὄνειαρ—*dream* from *enjoyment*.

WILLOUGHBY. To return from the poets to business;

was not all the science of the Middle Age theosophic rather than philosophic? Both to mystical schoolmen and scholastic mystics the Bible was a book of symbols and propositions, from which all the knowable was somehow to be deduced.

ATHERTON. Most certainly. The mystical interpretation of Scripture was their measuring-reed for the temple of the universe. The difference, however, between them and Behmen would be this—that, while both essayed to read the book of nature by the light of grace, Behmen claimed a special revelation, a divine mission for unfolding these mysteries in a new fashion; schoolmen, like Richard of St. Victor, professed to do so only by the supernatural aid of the Spirit illuminating the data afforded by the Church. And again, Behmen differs from Schelling and modern theosophy in studying nature through the medium of an external revelation mystically understood, while they interpret it by the unwritten inward revelation of Intellectual Intuition. I speak only of the difference of principle, not of result. But no one will dispute that nearly every scientific enquiry of the Middle Age was conducted on mystical principles, whether as regarded our source of knowing or its method.

WILLOUGHBY. And what wonder? Does not Milton remind us that Julian's edict, forbidding Christians the study of heathen learning, drove the two Apollinarii to 'coin all the seven liberal sciences' out of the Bible? The jealous tyranny of the Papacy virtually perpetuated the persecution of the Apostate. Every lamp must be filled with church oil. Every kind of knowledge must exist only as a decoration of the ecclesiastical structure. Every science must lay its foundation on theology. See a monument attesting

this, a type of the times, in the cathedral of Chartres, covered with thousands of statues and symbols, representing all the history, astronomy, and physics of the age—a sacred encyclopædia transferred from the pages of Vincent of Beauvais to the enduring stone, so to bid all men see in the Church a Mirror of the Universe—a *speculum universale*. Who can be surprised that by the aid of that facile expedient, mystical interpretation, many a work of mortal brain should have been bound and lettered as 'HOLY BIBLE,' or that research should have simulated worship, as some Cantab, pressed for time, may study a problem at morning chapel?

ATHERTON. What interminable lengths of the fine-spun, gay-coloured ribbons of allegory and metaphor has the mountebank ingenuity of that mystical interpretation drawn out of the mouth of Holy Writ!

GOWER. And made religion a toy—a tassel on the silken purse of the spendthrift Fancy.

WILLOUGHBY. Granting, Atherton, your general position that the undue inference of the objective from the subjective produces mysticism, what are we to say of a man like Descartes, for example? You will not surely condemn him as a mystic.

ATHERTON. Certainly, not altogether; reason holds its own with him—is not swept away by the hallucinations of sentiment, or feeling, or special revelation; but none of our powers act quite singly—*nemo omnibus horis sapit*—a mystical element crops out here and there. I think he carried too far the application of a principle based, in great part at least, on truth. In his inference of the objective from the subjective, I think he was so far right that our ability to conceive of a Supreme Perfection affords a strong presumption that such a God must exist. It is

not to be supposed that the conception can transcend the reality. His argument from within is a potent auxiliary of the argument from without, if not by itself so all-sufficient as he supposes. There are, too, I think, certain necessary truths which, by the constitution of our mind, we cannot conceive as possibly other than they are, when once presented to us from without. But we surely should not on this account be justified in saying with the mystic Bernard, that each soul contains an infallible copy of the ideas in the Divine Mind, so that the pure in heart, in proportion as they have cleansed the internal mirror, must in knowing themselves, know also God. It must be no less an exaggeration of the truth to say, with the philosopher Descartes, that certain notions of the laws of Nature are impressed upon our minds, so that we may, after reflecting upon them, discover the secrets of the universe. On the strength of this principle he undertakes to determine exactly how long a time it must have required to reduce chaos to order. The effort made by Descartes to insulate himself completely from the external world and the results of experience, was certainly similar in mode, though very different in its object, from the endeavours after absolute self-seclusion made by many of the mystics. The former sought to detect by abstraction the laws of mind; the latter, to attain the vision of God.

GOWER. There is much more of mysticism discernible in some of the systems which have followed in the path opened by Descartes. What can be more favourable than Schelling's *Identity* principle to the error which confounds, rather than allies, physics and metaphysics, science and theology?

ATHERTON. Behmen himself is no whit more

fantastical in this way than Oken and Franz Baader.

GOWER. These theosophies, old and new, with their self-evolved inexplicable explanations of everything, remind me of the Frenchman's play-bill announcing an exhibition of the Universal Judgment by means of three thousand five hundred puppets. The countless marionette figures in the brain of the theosophist—Elements, Forms, Tinctures, Mothers of Nature, Fountain-spirits, Planetary Potencies, &c., are made to shift and gesticulate unceasingly, through all possible permutations and combinations, and the operator has cried 'Walk in!' so long and loudly, that he actually believes, while pulling the wires in his metaphysical darkness, that the great universe is being turned and twitched after the same manner as his painted dolls.

WILLOUGHBY. I must put in a word for men like Paracelsus and Cornelius Agrippa. They helped science out of the hands of Aristotle, baptized and spoiled by monks. Europe, newly-wakened, follows in search of truth, as the princess in the fairy-tale her lover, changed into a white dove; now and then, at weary intervals, a feather is dropped to give a clue; these aspirants caught once and again a little of the precious snowy down, though often filling their hands with mere dirt, and wounding them among the briars. Forgive them their signatures, their basilisks and homunculi, and all their restless, wrathful arrogance, for the sake of that indomitable hardihood which did life-long battle, single-handed, against enthroned prescription.

ATHERTON. With all my heart. How venial the error of their mysticism (with an aim, at least, so worthy), compared with that of the enervating Romanist theopathy whose 'holy vegetation' the Reformers so

rudely disturbed. On the eve of the Reformation you see hapless Christianity, after vanquishing so many powerful enemies, about to die by the hand of ascetic inventions and superstitions, imaginary sins and imaginary virtues,—the shadowy phantoms of monastic darkness; like the legendary hero Wolf-Dietrich, who, after so many victories over flesh-and-blood antagonists, perishes at last in a night-battle with ghosts.

GOWER. The later mystical saints of the Romish calendar seem to me to exhibit what one may call the degenerate chivalry of religion, rather than its romance. How superior is Bernard to John of the Cross! It is easy to see how, in a rough age of fist-law, the laws of chivalry may inculcate courtesy and ennoble courage. But when afterwards an age of treaties and diplomacy comes in—when no Charles the Bold can be a match for the Italian policy of a Louis XI.—then these laws sink down into a mere fantastic code of honour. For the manly gallantry of Ivanhoe we have the euphuism of a Sir Piercie Shafton. And so a religious enthusiasm, scarcely too fervent for a really noble enterprise (could it only find one), gives birth, when debarred from the air of action and turned back upon itself, to the dreamy extravagances of the recluse, and the morbid ethical punctilios of the Director.

WILLOUGHBY. The only further question is about your third division, Atherton,—theurgic mysticism. We may let the Rabbinical Solomon—mastering the archdæmon Aschmedai and all his host by the divine potency of the Schemhamporasch engraven on his ring, chaining at his will the colossal powers of the air by the tremendous name of Metatron,—stand as an example of theurgy.

GOWER. And Iamblichus, summoning Souls, Heroes, and the Principalities of the upper sphere, by prayer and incense and awful mutterings of adjuration.

ATHERTON. All very good; but hear me a moment. I would use the term theurgic to characterize the mysticism which claims supernatural powers generally,—works marvels, not like the black art, by help from beneath, but as white magic, by the virtue of talisman or cross, demi-god, angel, or saint. Thus theurgic mysticism is not content, like the theopathetic, with either feeling or proselytising; nor, like the theosophic, with knowing; but it must open for itself a converse with the world of spirits, and win as its prerogative the power of miracle. This broad use of the word makes prominent the fact that a common principle of devotional enchantment lies at the root of all the pretences, both of heathen and of Christian miracle-mongers. The celestial hierarchy of Dionysius and the benign dæmons of Proclus, the powers invoked by Pagan or by Christian theurgy, by Platonist, by Cabbalist, or by saint, alike reward the successful aspirant with supernatural endowments; and so far Apollonius of Tyana and Peter of Alcantara, Asclepigenia and St. Theresa, must occupy as religious magicians the same province. The error is in either case the same—a divine efficacy is attributed to rites and formulas, sprinklings or fumigations, relics or incantations, of mortal manufacture.

WILLOUGHBY. It is not difficult to understand how, after a time, both the species of mysticism we have been discussing may pass over into this one. It is the dream of the mystic that he can elaborate from the depth of his own nature the whole promised land of religious truth, and perceive (by special revelation)

rising from within, all its green pastures and still waters,—somewhat as Pindar describes the sun beholding the Isle of Rhodes emerging from the bottom of the ocean, new-born, yet perfect, in all the beauty of glade and fountain, of grassy upland and silver tarn, of marble crag and overhanging wood, sparkling from the brine as after a summer shower. But alas, how tardily arises this new world of inner wonders! It must be accelerated—drawn up by some strong compelling charm. The doctrine of passivity becomes impossible to some temperaments beyond a certain pass. The enjoyments of the vision or the rapture are too few and far between—could they but be produced at will! Whether the mystic seeks the triumph of superhuman knowledge or that intoxication of the feeling which is to translate him to the upper world, after a while he craves a sign. Theurgy is the art which brings it. Its appearance is the symptom of failing faith, whether in philosophy or religion. Its glory is the phosphorescence of decay.

ATHERTON. Generally, I think it is; though it prevailed in the age of the Reformation—borrowed, however, I admit, on the revival of letters, from an age of decline.

BOOK THE SECOND
EARLY ORIENTAL MYSTICISM

CHAPTER I.

From worldly cares himselfe he did esloyne,
And greatly shunned manly exercise;
From everie worke he chalenged essoyne,
For contemplation sake: yet otherwise
His life he led in lawlesse riotise;
By which he grew to grievous maladie:
For in his lustlesse limbs through evill guise,
A shaking fever raignd continually;
Such one was Idlenesse, first of this company.

SPENSER.

Having free access to the Commonplace Book of my friend Atherton, I now extract therefrom a few notes, written after reading Wilkins' translation of the Bagvat-Gita. This episode in a heroic poem of ancient India is considered the best exponent of early oriental mysticism. I give these remarks just as I find them, brief and rough-hewn, but not, I think, hasty.

Observations on Indian mysticism, à propos of the Bagvat-Gita.

This poem consists of a dialogue between the god Crishna and the hero Arjoun. Crishna, though wearing a human form, speaks throughout as Deity. Arjoun is a young chieftain whom he befriends. A great civil war is raging, and the piece opens on the eve of battle. Crishna is driving the chariot of Arjoun, and they are between the lines of the opposing armies. On either side the war-shells are heard to sound—shells to which the Indian warriors gave names as did the paladins of Christendom to their swords. The battle will presently join, but Arjoun appears listless and sad. He looks on either army; in the ranks of each he sees preceptors whom he has been taught to revere, and relatives whom he loves. He knows not for which party to desire a bloody victory: so he lays his bow aside and sits down in the chariot. Crishna remonstrates, reminds him that his hesitation will be attributed to cowardice, and that such scruples are, moreover, most unreasonable. He should learn to act without any regard whatever to the consequences of his actions. At this point commence the instructions of the god concerning faith and practice.

So Arjoun must learn to disregard the consequences of his actions. I find here not a ‘holy indifference,’ as with the French Quietists, but an indifference which is unholy. The *sainte indifférence* of the west essayed to rise above self, to welcome happiness or misery alike as the will of Supreme Love. The odious indifference of these orientals inculcates the supremacy of selfishness as the wisdom of a god. A steep toil, that apathy towards ourselves; a *facilis*

descensus, this apathy toward others. One Quietist will scarcely hold out his hand to receive heaven: another will not raise a finger to succour his fellow.

Mysticism, then, is born armed completely with its worst extravagances. An innocent childhood it never had; for in its very cradle this Hercules destroys, as deadly serpents, Reason and Morality. Crishna, it appears, can invest the actions of his favourites with such divineness that nothing they do is wrong. For the mystical adept of Hindooism the distinction between good and evil is obliterated as often as he pleases. Beyond this point mysticism the most perverted cannot go; since such emancipation from moral law is in practice the worst aim of the worst men. The mysticism of a man who declares himself the Holy Ghost constitutes a stage more startling but less guilty; for responsibility ends where insanity begins.

The orientals know little of a system of forces. They carry a single idea to its consequences. The dark issue of the self-deifying tendency is exhibited among them on a large scale,—the degrees of the enormity are registered and made portentously apparent as by the movement of a huge hand upon its dial. Western mysticism, checked by many better influences, has rarely made so patent the inherent evil even of its most mischievous forms. The European, mystic though he be, will occasionally pause to qualify, and is often willing to allow some scope to facts and principles alien or hostile to a favourite idea.

It should not be forgotten that the doctrine of metempsychosis is largely answerable for Crishna's cold-blooded maxim. He tells Arjoun that the soul puts on many bodies, as many garments, remaining itself unharmed: the death of so many of his

countrymen—a mere transition, therefore—need not distress him.

CHAPTER II.

> Quel diable de jargon entends-je ici? Voici bien du haut style.
>
> MOLIÈRE.

Mysticism has no genealogy. It is no tradition conveyed across frontiers or down the course of generations as a ready-made commodity. It is a state of thinking and feeling, to which minds of a certain temperament are liable at any time or place, in occident and orient, whether Romanist or Protestant, Jew, Turk, or Infidel. It is more or less determined by the positive religion with which it is connected. But though conditioned by circumstance or education, its appearance is ever the spontaneous product of a certain crisis in individual or social history.

A merely imitative mysticism, as exemplified by some Tractarian ecclesiastics, is an artificial expedient, welcome to ambitious minds as an engine, to the frivolous as a devotional diversion, to the weak and servile as a softly-cushioned yoke.

Were mysticism a transmitted principle we should be able to trace it through successive translations to a form which might be termed primitive. We might mark and throw off, as we ascended, the accretions with which it has been invested, till we reached its

origin—the simple idea of mysticism, new-born. The mysticism of India, the earliest we can find, shows us that nothing of this sort is possible. That set of principles which we repeatedly encounter, variously combined, throughout the history of mysticism, exhibits itself in the Bagvat-Gita almost complete. The same round of notions, occurring to minds of similar make under similar circumstances, is common to mystics in ancient India and in modern Christendom. The development of these fundamental ideas is naturally more elevated and benign under the influence of Christianity.

Summarily, I would say, this Hindoo mysticism—

(1.) Lays claim to disinterested love, as opposed to a mercenary religion;

(2.) Reacts against the ceremonial prescription and pedantic literalism of the Vedas;

(3.) Identifies, in its pantheism, subject and object, worshipper and worshipped;

(4.) Aims at ultimate absorption in the Infinite;

(5.) Inculcates, as the way to this dissolution, absolute passivity, withdrawal into the inmost self, cessation of all the powers,—giving recipes for procuring this beatific torpor or trance;

(6.) Believes that eternity may thus be realized in time;

(7.) Has its mythical miraculous pretentions, *i.e.*, its theurgic department;

(8.) And, finally, advises the learner in this kind of religion to submit himself implicitly to a spiritual guide,—his Guru.

With regard to (1), it is to be observed that the disinterestedness of the worship enjoined by Crishna is by no means absolute, as Madame Guyon endeavoured to render hers. The mere ritualist, buying prosperity by temple-gifts, will realise, says Crishna, only a partial enjoyment of heaven. Arjoun, too, is encouraged by the prospect of a recompence, for he is to aspire to far higher things. 'Men who are endowed with true wisdom are unmindful of good or evil in this world,—wise men who have abandoned all thought of the fruit which is produced from their actions are freed from the chains of birth, and go to the regions of eternal happiness.'

In some hands such doctrine might rise above the popular morality; in most it would be so interpreted as to sink below even that ignoble standard.

(3.) 'God,' saith Crishna, 'is the gift of charity; God is the offering; God is in the fire of the altar; by God is the sacrifice performed; and God is to be obtained by him who maketh God alone the object of his works.' Again, 'I am moisture in the water, light in the sun and moon, ... human nature in mankind, ... the understanding of the wise, the glory of the proud, the strength of the strong,' &c.

(4.) This eternal absorption in Brahm is supposed to be in some way consistent with personality, since Crishna promises Arjoun enjoyment. The mystic of the Bagvat-Gita seeks at once the highest aim of the Hindoo religion, the attainment of such a state that when he dies he shall not be born again into any form on earth. Future birth is the Hindoo hell and purgatory.

So with Buddhism, and its Nirwana.

But the final absorption which goes by the name of

Nirwana among the Buddhists is described in terms which can only mean annihilation. According to the Buddhists all sentient existence has within it one spiritual element, homogeneous in the animal and the man,—Thought, which is a divine substance. This 'Thought' exists in its highest degree in man, the summit of creation, and from the best among men it lapses directly out of a particular existence into the universal. Thus the mind of man is divine, but most divine when nearest nothing. Hence the monastic asceticism, inertia, trance, of this kindred oriental superstition. (*See* Spence Hardy's *Eastern Monachism*.)

(5.) 'Divine wisdom is said to be confirmed when a man can restrain his faculties from their wonted use, as the tortoise draws in his limbs.'

The devotees who make it their principal aim to realise the emancipation of the spirit supposed to take place in trance, are called Yogis.

'The Yogi constantly exerciseth the spirit in private. He is recluse, of a subdued mind and spirit, free from hope and free from perception. He planteth his own seat firmly on a spot that is undefiled, neither too high nor too low, and sitteth upon the sacred grass which is called Koos, covered with a skin and a cloth. There he whose business is the restraining of his passions should sit, with his mind fixed on one object alone; in the exercise of his devotion for the purification of his soul, keeping his head, his neck, and body steady, without motion; his eyes fixed on the point of his nose, looking at no other place around.'

The monks of Mount Athos, whose mysticism was also of this most degraded type, substituted, as a gazing-point, the navel for the nose.

Ward, in describing the Yogi practice, tells us that at the latest stage the eyes also are closed, while the fingers and even bandages are employed to obstruct almost completely the avenues of respiration. Then the soul is said to be united to the energy of the body; both mount, and are as it were concentrated in the skull; whence the spirit escapes by the basilar suture, and, the body having been thus abandoned, the incorporeal nature is reunited for a season to the Supreme.[9]

Stupefying drugs were doubtless employed to assist in inducing this state of insensibility.

Crishna teaches that 'the wisely devout' walk in the night of time when all things rest, and sleep in the day of time when all things wake. In other words, the escape from sense is a flight from illusion into the undeceiving condition of trance. So the Code of Menu pronounces the waking state one of deceptive appearances—a life among mere phantasmata; that of sleep a little nearer reality; while that of ecstasy, or trance, presents the truth—reveals a new world, and enables the inner eye (which opens as the outer one is closed) to discern the inmost reality of things.

These are pretensions which mysticism has often repeated. This notion underlies the theory and practice of spiritual clairvoyance.

(6.) 'The learned behold him (Deity) alike in the reverend Brahmin perfected in knowledge; in the ox and in the elephant; in the dog, and in him who eateth the flesh of dogs. Those whose minds are fixed on this equality gain eternity even in this world' (transcend the limitation of time).

(7.) The following passage, given by Ward, exhibits at once the nature of the miraculous powers ascribed

to the highest class of devotees, and the utter lawlessness arrogated by these 'god-intoxicated' men: —

'He (the Yogi) will hear celestial sounds, the songs and conversation of celestial choirs. He will have the perception of their touch in their passage through the air. He is able to trace the progress of intellect through the senses, and the path of the animal spirit through the nerves. He is able to enter a dead or a living body by the path of the senses, and in this body to act as though it were his own.

'He who in the body hath obtained liberation is of no caste, of no sect, of no order; attends to no duties, adheres to no shastras, to no formulas, to no works of merit; he is beyond the reach of speech; he remains at a distance from all secular concerns; he has renounced the love and the knowledge of sensible objects; he is glorious as the autumnal sky; he flatters none, he honours none; he is not worshipped, he worships none; whether he practises and follows the customs of his country or not, this is his character.'

In the fourteenth century, mystics were to be found among the lower orders, whose ignorance and sloth carried negation almost as far as this. They pretended to imitate the divine immutability by absolute inaction. The dregs and refuse of mysticism along the Rhine are equal in quality to its most ambitious produce on the banks of the Ganges.

(8.) The Guru is paralleled by the Pir of the Sufis, the Confessor of the Middle Age, and the Directeur of modern France.[10]

A mysticism which rests ultimately on the doctrine that the human soul is of one substance with God, is

fain to fall down and worship at the feet of a man. Such directorship is, of course, no essential part of mysticism—is, in fact, an inconsistency; but, though no member, or genuine outgrowth, it is an entozoon lamentably prevalent. The mystic, after all his pains to reduce himself to absolute passivity, becomes not theopathetic, but *anthropopathetic*—suffers, not under God, but man.

BOOK THE THIRD
THE MYSTICISM OF THE NEO-PLATONISTS

CHAPTER I.

——a man is not as God,
But then most godlike being most a man.

TENNYSON.

KATE. What a formidable bundle of papers, Henry.

ATHERTON. Don't be alarmed, I shall not read all this to you; only three Neo-Platonist letters I have discovered.

MRS. ATHERTON. We were talking just before you came in, Mr. Willoughby, about Mr. Crossley's sermon yesterday morning.

WILLOUGHBY. Ah, the Tabernacle in the Wilderness; did you not think his remarks on the use and abuse of symbolism in general very good? Brief, too, and suggestive; just what such portions of a sermon should be.

ATHERTON. He overtook me on my walk this

morning, and I alluded to the subject. He said he had been dipping into Philo last week, and that suggested his topic. I told him I had paid that respectable old gentleman a visit or two lately, and we amused ourselves with some of his fancies. Think of the seven branches of the candlestick being the seven planets—the four colours employed, the four elements—the forecourt symbolizing the visible, the two sanctuaries the ideal world—and so on.

GOWER. At this rate the furniture in one of Hoffmann's tales cannot be more alive with spirit than Philo's temple apparatus. An ingenious trifler, was he not?

ATHERTON. Something better, I should say.

GOWER. Not, surely, when his great characteristic is an unsurpassed facility for allegorical interpretation. Is not mystical exegesis an invariable symptom of religious dilettantism?

ATHERTON. With the successors and imitators—yes; not with the more earnest originals,—such names as Philo, Origen, Swedenborg.

GOWER. But, at any rate, if this spiritualizing mania be Philo's great claim to distinction, head a list of mystical commentators with him, and pass on to some one better.

ATHERTON. He need not detain us long. For our enquiry he has importance chiefly as in a sort the intellectual father of Neo-Platonism—the first meeting-place of the waters of the eastern and the western theosophies. This is his great object—to combine the authoritative monotheism of his Hebrew Scriptures with the speculation of Plato.

GOWER. Absurd attempt!—to interpret the full, clear

utterance of Moses, who has found, by the hesitant and conflicting conjectures of Plato, who merely seeks.

WILLOUGHBY. Yet a very natural mistake for a Jew at Alexandria, reared in Greek culture, fascinated by the dazzling abstractions of Greek philosophy. He belonged less to Jerusalem, after all, than to Athens.

ATHERTON. There lies the secret. Philo was proud of his saintly ancestry, yet to his eye the virtues of the Old Testament worthy wore a rude and homely air beside the refinement of the Grecian sage. The good man of Moses and the philosopher of Philo represent two very different ideals. With the former the moral, with the latter the merely intellectual, predominates. So the Hebrew faith takes with Philo the exclusive Gentile type,—despises the body, is horrified by matter, tends to substitute abstraction for personality, turns away, I fear, from the publican and the sinner.

GOWER. So, then, Platonism in Philo does for Judaism what it was soon to do for Christianity,—substitutes an ultra-human standard—an ascetic, unnatural, passively-gazing contemplation—an ambitious, would-be-disembodied intellectualism, for the all-embracing activities of common Christian life, so lowly, yet so great.

WILLOUGHBY. Yet Alexandrian Platonism was the gainer by Philo's accommodation. Judaism enfeebled could yet impart strength to heathendom. The infusion enabled the Neo-Platonists to walk with a firmer step in the religious province; their philosophy assumed an aspect more decisively devout. Numenius learns of Philo, and Plotinus of Numenius, and the ecstasy of Plotinus is the development of Philo's intuition.

GOWER. Let me sum up; and forgive an antithesis. Philo's great mistake lay in supposing that the religion of philosophy was necessarily the philosophy of religion. But we have forgotten your letter, Atherton.

ATHERTON. Here is the precious document—a letter written by Philo from Alexandria, evidently just after his journey to Rome. (*Reads.*)

PHILO TO HEPHÆSTION.

I am beginning to recover myself, after all the anxiety and peril of our embassy to Caligula. Nothing shall tempt me to visit Rome again so long as this Emperor lives. Our divine Plato is doubly dear after so long an absence. Only an imperative sense of duty to my countrymen could again induce me to take so prominent a part in their public affairs. Except when our religion or our trade is concerned, the government has always found us more docile than either the Greeks or the Egyptians, and we enjoy accordingly large privileges. Yet when I saw the ill turn our cause took at Rome, I could not but sigh for another Julius Cæsar.

I am sorry to find you saying that you are not likely to visit Alexandria again. This restless, wicked city can present but few attractions, I grant, to a lover of philosophic quiet. But I cannot commend the extreme to which I see so many hastening. A passion for ascetic seclusion is becoming daily more prevalent among the devout and the thoughtful, whether Jew or Gentile. Yet surely the attempt to combine contemplation and

action should not be so soon abandoned. A man ought at least to have evinced some competency for the discharge of the social duties before he abandons them for the divine. First the less, then the greater.

I have tried the life of the recluse. Solitude brings no escape from spiritual danger. If it closes some avenues of temptation, there are few in whose case it does not open more. Yet the Therapeutæ, a sect similar to the Essenes, with whom you are acquainted, number many among them whose lives are truly exemplary. Their cells are scattered about the region bordering on the farther shore of the Lake Mareotis. The members of either sex live a single and ascetic life, spending their time in fasting and contemplation, in prayer or reading. They believe themselves favoured with divine illumination—an inner light. They assemble on the Sabbath for worship, and listen to mystical discourses on the traditionary lore which they say has been handed down in secret among themselves. They also celebrate solemn dances and processions, of a mystic significance, by moonlight on the shore of the great mere. Sometimes, on an occasion of public rejoicing, the margin of the lake on our side will be lit with a fiery chain of illuminations, and galleys, hung with lights, row to and fro with strains of music sounding over the broad water. Then the Therapeutæ are all hidden in their little hermitages, and these sights and sounds of the world they have abandoned, make them withdraw into themselves and pray.

Their principle at least is true. The soul which is occupied with things above, and is initiated into

the mysteries of the Lord, cannot but account the body evil, and even hostile. The soul of man is divine, and his highest wisdom is to become as much as possible a stranger to the body with its embarrassing appetites. God has breathed into man from heaven a portion of his own divinity. That which is divine is invisible. It may be extended, but it is incapable of separation. Consider how vast is the range of our thought over the past and the future, the heavens and the earth. This alliance with an upper world, of which we are conscious, would be impossible, were not the soul of man an indivisible portion of that divine and blessed Spirit (εἰ μὴ τῆς θείας καὶ εὐδαίμονος ψυχῆς ἐκείνης ἀπόσπασμα ἦν οὐ διαιρετόν). Contemplation of the Divine Essence is the noblest exercise of man; it is the only means of attaining to the highest truth and virtue, and therein to behold God is the consummation of our happiness here.

The confusion of tongues at the building of the tower of Babel should teach us this lesson. The heaven those vain builders sought to reach, signifies symbolically the mind, where dwell divine powers. Their futile attempt represents the presumption of those who place sense above intelligence—who think that they can storm the Intelligible by the Sensible. The structure which such impiety would raise is overthrown by spiritual tranquillity. In calm retirement and contemplation we are taught that we know like only by like, and that the foreign and lower world of the sensuous and the practical may not intrude into the lofty region of divine illumination.

I have written a small treatise on the

> Contemplative Life, giving an account of the Therapeutæ. If you will neither visit me nor them, I will have a copy of it made, and send you.[11] Farewell.

GOWER. How mistaken is Philo in maintaining that the senses cannot aid us in our ascent towards the supersensuous;—as though the maltreatment of the body, the vassal, by the soul, the suzerain, were at once the means and the proof of mastery over it. Duly care for the body, and the thankful creature will not forget its place, and when you wish to meditate, will disturb you by no obtrusive hint of its presence. I find that I can rise above it only by attention to its just claims. If I violate its rights I am sued by it in the high court of nature, and cast with costs.

MRS. ATHERTON. And certainly our most favoured moments of ascent into the ideal world have their origin usually in some suggestion that has reached us through the senses. I remember a little song of Uhland's called *The Passing Minstrel*—a brief parable of melody, like so many of his pieces,—which, as I understood it, was designed to illustrate this very truth. The poet falls asleep on a 'hill of blossoms' near the road, and his soul flutters away in dream to the golden land of Fable. He wakes, as one fallen from the clouds, and sees the minstrel with his harp, who has just passed by, and playing as he goes, is lost to sight among the trees. 'Was it he,' the poet asks, 'that sang into my soul those dreams of wonder?' Another might inform the fancy with another meaning, according to the mood of the hour. It appeared to me an emblem of the way in which we are often indebted to a sunset or a landscape, to a strain of music or a suddenly-remembered verse, for

a voyage into a world of vision of our own, where we cease altogether to be aware of the external cause which first transported us thither.

ATHERTON. That must always be true of imagination. But Platonism discards the visible instead of mounting by it. Considered morally, too, this asceticism sins so grievously. It misuses the iron of the will, given us to forge implements withal for life's husbandry, to fashion of it a bolt for a voluntary prison. At Alexandria, doubtless, Sin was imperious in her shamelessness, at the theatre and at the mart, in the hall of judgment and in the house of feasting, but there was suffering as well as sin among the crowds of that great city, with all their ignorance and care and want, and to have done a something to lessen the suffering would have prepared the way for lessening the sin.

CHAPTER II.

> La philosophie n'est pas philosophie si elle ne touche à l'abîme; mais elle cesse d'être philosophie si elle y tombe.—COUSIN.

GOWER. I hope you are ready, Atherton, to illumine my darkness concerning Neo-Platonism, by taking up that individual instance you were speaking of last Monday.

ATHERTON. I have something ready to inflict; so prepare to listen stoutly. (*Reads.*)

Plato pronounces Love the child of Poverty and Plenty—the Alexandrian philosophy was the offspring of Reverence and Ambition. It combined an adoring homage to the departed genius of the age of Pericles with a passionate, credulous craving after a supernatural elevation. Its literary tastes and religious wants were alike imperative and irreconcilable. In obedience to the former, it disdained Christianity; impelled by the latter, it travestied Plato. But for that proud servility which fettered it to a glorious past, it might have recognised in Christianity the only satisfaction of its higher longings. Rejecting that, it could only establish a philosophic church on the foundation of Plato's school, and, forsaking while it professed to expound him, embrace the hallucinations of intuition and of ecstasy, till it finally vanishes at Athens amid the incense and the hocus-pocus of theurgic incantation. As it degenerates, it presses more audaciously forward through the veil of the unseen. It must see visions, dream dreams, work spells, and call down deities, demi-gods, and dæmons from their dwellings in the upper air. The Alexandrians were eclectics, because such reverence taught them to look back; mystics, because such ambition urged them to look up. They restore philosophy, after all its weary wanderings, to the place of its birth; and, in its second childhood, it is cradled in the arms of those old poetic faiths of the past, from which, in the pride of its youth, it broke away.

The mental history of the founder best illustrates the origin of the school. Plotinus, in A.D. 233, commences the study of philosophy in Alexandria, at the age of twenty-eight. His mental powers are of the concentrative rather than the

comprehensive order. Impatient of negation, he has commenced an earnest search after some truth which, however abstract, shall yet be positive. He pores over the Dialogues of Plato and the Metaphysics of Aristotle, day and night. To promote the growth of his 'soul-wings,' as Plato counsels, he practises austerities his master would never have sanctioned. He attempts to live what he learns to call the 'angelic life;' the 'life of the disembodied in the body.' He reads with admiration the life of Apollonius of Tyana, by Philostratus, which has recently appeared. He can probably credit most of the marvels recorded of that strange thaumaturgist, who, two hundred years ago, had appeared—a revived Pythagoras, to dazzle nation after nation through which he passed, with prophecy and miracle; who had travelled to the Indus and the Ganges, and brought back the supernatural powers of Magi and Gymnosophists, and who was said to have displayed to the world once more the various knowledge, the majestic sanctity, and the superhuman attributes, of the sage of Crotona. This portraiture of a philosophical hierophant—a union of the philosopher and the priest in an inspired hero, fires the imagination of Plotinus. In the New-Pythagoreanism of which Apollonius was a representative, Orientalism and Platonism were alike embraced.[12] Perhaps the thought occurs thus early to Plotinus—could I travel eastward I might drink myself at those fountain-heads of tradition whence Pythagoras and Plato drew so much of their wisdom. Certain it is, that, with this purpose, he accompanied, several years subsequently, the disastrous expedition of Gordian against the Parthians, and narrowly escaped with

life.

At Alexandria, Plotinus doubtless hears from orientals there some fragments of the ancient eastern theosophy—doctrines concerning the principle of evil, the gradual development of the Divine Essence, and creation by intermediate agencies, none of which he finds in his Plato. He cannot be altogether a stranger to the lofty theism which Philo marred, while he attempted to refine, by the help of his 'Attic Moses.' He observes a tendency on the part of philosophy to fall back upon the sanctions of religion, and on the part of the religions of the day to mingle in a Deism or a Pantheism which might claim the sanctions of philosophy. The signs of a growing toleration or indifferentism meet him on every side. Rome has long been a Pantheon for all nations, and gods and provinces together have found in the capitol at once their Olympus and their metropolis. He cannot walk the streets of Alexandria without perceiving that the very architecture tells of an alliance between the religious art of Egypt and of Greece. All, except Jews and Christians, join in the worship of Serapis.[13] Was not the very substance of which the statue of that god was made, an amalgam?—fit symbol of the syncretism which paid him homage. Once Serapis had guarded the shores of the Euxine, now he is the patron of Alexandria, and in him the attributes of Zeus and of Osiris, of Apis and of Pluto, are adored alike by East and West. Men are learning to overlook the external differences of name and ritual, and to reduce all religions to one general sentiment of worship. For now more than fifty years, every educated man has laughed, with Lucian's satire in his hand, at the gods of the

popular superstition. A century before Lucian, Plutarch had shown that some of the doctrines of the barbarians were not irreconcilable with the philosophy in which he gloried as a Greek. Plutarch had been followed by Apuleius, a practical eclectic, a learner in every school, an initiate in every temple, at once sceptical and credulous, a sophist and a devotee.

Plotinus looks around him, and inquires what philosophy is doing in the midst of influences such as these. Peripateticism exists but in slumber under the dry scholarship of Adrastus and Alexander of Aphrodisium, the commentators of the last century.[14] The New Academy and the Stoics attract youth still, but they are neither of them a philosophy so much as a system of ethics. Speculation has given place to morals. Philosophy is taken up as a branch of literature, as an elegant recreation, as a theme for oratorical display. Plotinus is persuaded that philosophy should be worship—speculation, a search after God—no amusement, but a prayer. Scepticism is strong in proportion to the defect or weakness of everything positive around it. The influence of Ænesidemus, who, two centuries ago, proclaimed universal doubt, is still felt in Alexandria. But his scepticism would break up the foundations of morality. What is to be done? Plotinus sees those who are true to speculation surrendering ethics, and those who hold to morality abandoning speculation.

In his perplexity, a friend takes him to hear Ammonius Saccas. He finds him a powerful, broad-shouldered man, as he might naturally be who not long before was to be seen any day in the

sultry streets of Alexandria, a porter, wiping his brow under his burden. Ammonius is speaking of the reconciliation that might be effected between Plato and Aristotle. This eclecticism it is which has given him fame. At another time it might have brought on him only derision; now there is an age ready to give the attempt an enthusiastic welcome.

'What,' he cries, kindling with his theme, 'did Plato leave behind him, what Aristotle, when Greece and philosophy had waned together? The first, a chattering crew of sophists: the second, the lifeless dogmatism of the sensationalist. The self-styled followers of Plato were not brave enough either to believe or to deny. The successors of the Stagyrite did little more than reiterate their denial of the Platonic doctrine of ideas. Between them morality was sinking fast. Then an effort was made for its revival. The attempt at least was good. It sprang out of a just sense of a deep defect. Without morality, what is philosophy worth? But these ethics must rest on speculation for their basis. The Epicureans and the Stoics, I say, came forward to supply that moral want. Each said, we will be practical, intelligible, utilitarian. One school, with its hard lesson of fate and self-denial; the other, with its easier doctrine of pleasure, more or less refined, were rivals in their profession of ability to teach men how to live. In each there was a certain truth, but I will honour neither with the name of a philosophy. They have confined themselves to mere ethical application—they are willing, both of them, to let first principles lie unstirred. Can scepticism fail to take advantage of this? While they wrangle, both are disbelieved. But, sirs, can we abide in

scepticism?—it is death. You ask me what I recommend? I say, travel back across the past. Out of the whole of that by-gone and yet undying world of thought, construct a system greater than any of the sundered parts. Repudiate these partial scholars in the name of their masters. Leave them to their disputes, pass over their systems, already tottering for lack of a foundation, and be it yours to show how their teachers join hands far above them. In such a spirit of reverent enthusiasm you may attain a higher unity, you mount in speculation, and from that height ordain all noble actions for your lower life. So you become untrue neither to experience nor to reason, and the genius of eclecticism will combine, yea, shall I say it, will surpass while it embraces, all the ancient triumphs of philosophy!'[15]

Such was the teaching which attracted Longinus, Herennius, and Origen (not the Father). It makes an epoch in the life of Plotinus. He desires now no other instructor, and is preparing to become himself a leader in the pathway Ammonius has pointed out. He is convinced that Platonism, exalted into an enthusiastic illuminism, and gathering about itself all the scattered truth upon the field of history,—Platonism, mystical and catholic, can alone preserve men from the abyss of scepticism. One of the old traditions of Finland relates how a mother once found her son torn into a thousand fragments at the bottom of the River of Death. She gathered the scattered members to her bosom, and rocking to and fro, sang a magic song, which made him whole again, and restored the departed life. Such a spell the Alexandrian philosophy sought to work—thus to recover and re-unite the relics of antique truth, dispersed and

drowned by time.

Plotinus occupied himself only with the most abstract questions concerning knowledge and being. Detail and method—all the stitching and clipping of eclecticism, he bequeathed as the handicraft of his successors. His fundamental principle is the old *petitio principii* of idealism. Truth, according to him, is not the agreement of our apprehension of an external object with the object itself—it is rather the agreement of the mind with itself. The objects we contemplate and that which contemplates, are identical for the philosopher. Both are thought; only like can know like; all truth is within us. By reducing the soul to its most abstract simplicity, we subtilise it so that it expands into the infinite. In such a state we transcend our finite selves, and are one with the infinite; this is the privileged condition of ecstasy. These blissful intervals, but too evanescent and too rare, were regarded as the reward of philosophic asceticism—the seasons of refreshing, which were to make amends for all the stoical austerities of the steep ascent towards the abstraction of the primal unity.

Thus the Neo-Platonists became ascetics and enthusiasts: Plato was neither. Where Plato acknowledges the services of the earliest philosophers—the imperfect utterances of the world's first thoughts,—Neo-Platonism (in its later period, at least) undertakes to detect, not the similarity merely, but the identity between Pythagoras and Plato, and even to exhibit the Platonism of Orpheus and of Hermes. Where Plato is hesitant or obscure, Neo-Platonism inserts a meaning of its own, and is confident that such,

and no other, was the master's mind. Where Plato indulges in a fancy, or hazards a bold assertion, Neo-Platonism, ignoring the doubts Plato may himself express elsewhere, spins it out into a theory, or bows to it as an infallible revelation.[16] Where Plato has the doctrine of Reminiscence, Neo-Platonism has the doctrine of Ecstasy. In the Reminiscence of Plato, the ideas the mind perceives are without it. Here there is no mysticism, only the mistake incidental to metaphysicians generally, of giving an actual existence to mere mental abstractions. In Ecstasy, the ideas perceived are within the mind. The mystic, according to Plotinus, contemplates the divine perfections in himself; and, in the ecstatic state, individuality (which is so much imperfection), memory, time, space, phenomenal contradictions, and logical distinctions, all vanish. It is not until the rapture is past, and the mind, held in this strange solution, is, as it were, precipitated on reality, that memory is again employed. Plotinus would say that Reminiscence could impart only inferior knowledge, because it implies separation between the subject and the object. Ecstasy is superior—is absolute, being the realization of their identity. True to this doctrine of absorption, the Pantheism of Plotinus teaches him to maintain, alike with the Oriental mystic at one extreme of time, and with the Hegelian at the other, that our individual existence is but phenomenal and transitory. Plotinus, accordingly, does not banish reason, he only subordinates it to ecstasy where the Absolute is in question.[17] It is not till the last that he calls in supernatural aid. The wizard king builds his tower of speculation by the hands of human workmen till he reaches the

top story, and then summons his genii to fashion the battlements of adamant, and crown them with starry fire.

GOWER. Thanks. These Neo-Platonists are evidently no mere dreamers. They are erudite and critical, they study and they reason, they are logicians as well as poets; they are not mystics till they have first been rationalists, and they have recourse at last to mysticism only to carry them whither they find reason cannot mount.

ATHERTON. Now, I have a letter by Plotinus. It is without a date, but from internal evidence must have been written about A.D. 260.

PLOTINUS TO FLACCUS.

I applaud your devotion to philosophy; I rejoice to hear that your soul has set sail, like the returning Ulysses, for its native land—that glorious, that only real country—the world of unseen truth. To follow philosophy, the senator Rogatianus, one of the noblest of my disciples, gave up the other day all but the whole of his patrimony, set free his slaves, and surrendered all the honours of his station.

Tidings have reached us that Valerian has been defeated, and is now in the hands of Sapor. The threats of Franks and Allemanni, of Goths and Persians, are alike terrible by turns to our degenerate Rome. In days like these, crowded with incessant calamities, the inducements to a life of contemplation are more than ever strong. Even my quiet existence seems now to grow somewhat sensible of the advance of years. Age alone I am unable to debar from my retirement. I

am weary already of this prison-house, the body, and calmly await the day when the divine nature within me shall be set free from matter.

The Egyptian priests used to tell me that a single touch with the wing of their holy bird could charm the crocodile into torpor; it is not thus speedily, my dear friend, that the pinions of your soul will have power to still the untamed body. The creature will yield only to watchful, strenuous constancy of habit. Purify your soul from all undue hope and fear about earthly things, mortify the body, deny self,—affections as well as appetites, and the inner eye will begin to exercise its clear and solemn vision.

You ask me to tell you how we know, and what is our criterion of certainty. To write is always irksome to me. But for the continual solicitations of Porphyry, I should not have left a line to survive me. For your own sake and for your father's, my reluctance shall be overcome.

External objects present us only with appearances. Concerning them, therefore, we may be said to possess opinion rather than knowledge. The distinctions in the actual world of appearance are of import only to ordinary and practical men. Our question lies with the ideal reality that exists behind appearance. How does the mind perceive these ideas? Are they without us, and is the reason, like sensation, occupied with objects external to itself? What certainty could we then have, what assurance that our perception was infallible? The object perceived would be a something different from the mind perceiving it. We should have then an image instead of reality. It would be monstrous to believe for a moment

that the mind was unable to perceive ideal truth exactly as it is, and that we had not certainty and real knowledge concerning the world of intelligence. It follows, therefore, that this region of truth is not to be investigated as a thing external to us, and so only imperfectly known. It is *within* us. Here the objects we contemplate and that which contemplates are identical,—both are thought. The subject cannot surely *know* an object different from itself. The world of ideas lies within our intelligence. Truth, therefore, is not the agreement of our apprehension of an external object with the object itself. It is the agreement of the mind with itself. Consciousness, therefore, is the sole basis of certainty. The mind is its own witness. Reason sees in itself that which is above itself as its source; and again, that which is below itself as still itself once more.

Knowledge has three degrees—Opinion, Science, Illumination. The means or instrument of the first is sense; of the second, dialectic; of the third, intuition. To the last I subordinate reason. It is absolute knowledge founded on the identity of the mind knowing with the object known.[18]

There is a raying out of all orders of existence, an external emanation from the ineffable One (πρόοδος). There is again a returning impulse, drawing all upwards and inwards towards the centre from whence all came (ἐπιστροφή). Love, as Plato in the *Banquet* beautifully says, is the child of Poverty and Plenty.[19] In the amorous quest of the soul after the Good, lies the painful sense of fall and deprivation. But that Love is blessing, is salvation, is our guardian genius; without it the centrifugal law would overpower

us, and sweep our souls out far from their source toward the cold extremities of the Material and the Manifold. The wise man recognises the idea of the Good within him. This he develops by withdrawal into the Holy Place of his own soul. He who does not understand how the soul contains the Beautiful within itself, seeks to realize beauty without, by laborious production. His aim should rather be to concentrate and simplify, and so to expand his being; instead of going out into the Manifold, to forsake it for the One, and so to float upwards towards the divine fount of being whose stream flows within him.

You ask, how can we know the Infinite?[20] I answer, not by reason. It is the office of reason to distinguish and define. The Infinite, therefore, cannot be ranked among its objects. You can only apprehend the Infinite by a faculty superior to reason, by entering into a state in which you are your finite self no longer, in which the Divine Essence is communicated to you. This is Ecstasy. It is the liberation of your mind from its finite consciousness. Like only can apprehend like; when you thus cease to be finite, you become one with the Infinite. In the reduction of your soul to its simplest self (ἁπλωσις), its divine essence, you realize this Union, this Identity (ἕνωσιν).

But this sublime condition is not of permanent duration. It is only now and then that we can enjoy this elevation (mercifully made possible for us) above the limits of the body and the world. I myself have realized it but three times as yet, and Porphyry hitherto not once. All that tends to purify and elevate the mind will assist you in this attainment, and facilitate the approach and the

> recurrence of these happy intervals. There are, then, different roads by which this end may be reached. The love of beauty which exalts the poet; that devotion to the One and that ascent of science which makes the ambition of the philosopher; and that love and those prayers by which some devout and ardent soul tends in its moral purity towards perfection. These are the great highways conducting to that height above the actual and the particular, where we stand in the immediate presence of the Infinite, who shines out as from the deeps of the soul.[21]

Note to page 75.

This imaginary fragment from Ammonius Saccas is, I believe, true to what seems fairly inferred concerning his teaching. See *Brucker*, ii. p. 211; and *Jules Simon*, i. 205; ii. 668.

Plotinus appears to have been indebted to Numenius even more than to Ammonius or Potamon for some of the ideas peculiar to his system. The modicum of information concerning Numenius which Eusebius has handed down shows that this Platonist anticipated the characteristic doctrine of Neo-Platonism concerning the Divine Being. Like the Neo-Platonist, he pursued philosophical inquiry in a religious spirit, imploring, as Plotinus does, divine illumination. He endeavoured to harmonize Pythagoras and Plato, to elucidate and confirm the opinions of both by the religious dogmas of the Egyptians, the Magi, and the Brahmins, and, like many of the Christian Fathers, he believed that Plato stood indebted to the Hebrew as well as to the Egyptian theology for much of his wisdom. He was

pressed by the same great difficulty which weighed upon Plotinus. How could the immutable One create the Manifold without self-degradation? He solved it in a manner substantially the same. His answer is—by means of a hypostatic emanation. He posits in the Divine Nature three principles in a descending scale. His order of existence is as follows:—

I. *God*, the Absolute.

II. *The Demiurge*; he is the Artificer, in a sense, the imitator of the former. He contemplates matter, his eye ordains and upholds it, yet he is himself separate from it, since matter contains a concupiscent principle,—is fluctuating, and philosophically non-existent. The Demiurge is the ἄρχὴ γενέσεως, and good; for goodness is the original principle of Being. The second Hypostasis, engaged in the contemplation of matter, does not attain the serene self-contemplation of the First.

III. *Substance* or Essence, of a twofold character, corresponding to the two former.

The Universe is a copy of this third Principle.

This not very intelligible theory, which of course increases instead of lessening the perplexity in which the Platonists were involved, though differing in detail from that of Plotinus, proceeds on the same principle;—the expedient, namely, of appending to the One certain subordinate hypostases to fill the gap between it and the Manifold. (See, on his opinions, *Euseb. Præp. Evang.* lib. viii. p. 411 (ed. Viger); lib. xi. c. 18, p. 537; capp. 21, 22, and lib. xv. c. 17.)

Note to page 81.

Plotinus and his successors are the model of the Pseudo-Dionysius in his language concerning the Deity. Of his abstract primal principle neither being nor life can be predicated; he is above being and above life. *Enn.* iii. lib. 8, c. 9. But man by simplifying his nature to the utmost possible extent may become lost in this Unity. In *Enn.* v. lib. 5, c. 8, the mind of the contemplative philosopher is described as illumined with a divine light. He cannot tell whence it comes, or whither it goes. It is rather he himself who approaches or withdraws. He must not pursue it (οὐ χρὴ διώκειν) but abide (a true Quietist) in patient waiting, as one looking for the rising of the sun out of the ocean. The soul, blind to all beside, gazes intently on the ideal vision of the Beautiful, and is glorified as it contemplates it—ἐκεῖ ἑαυτὸν πᾶς τρέπων καὶ διδοὺς στας δὲ καὶ οἷον πληρωθεὶς μένους, εἶδε μὲν τὰ πρῶτα καλλίω γενόμενον ἑαυτὸν, καὶ ἐπιστίλβοντα ὡς ἐγγὺς ὄντος αὐτοῦ.

But this is only a preliminary stage of exaltation. The Absolute or the One, has no parts; all things partake of him, nothing possesses him; to see impartially is an impossibility, a contradiction,—if we imagine we recognise a portion he is far from us yet,—to see him mediately (δι᾽ ἐτέρων) is to behold his traces, not himself. Ὅταν μὲν ὁρᾷς ὁλον βλέπε. But, asks Plotinus, is not seeing him wholly identity with him? cap. 10.

The mystical aspirant is directed therefore to leave the glorified image of himself, radiant with the transforming effulgence of Beauty, to escape from his individual self by withdrawing into his own unity, wherein he becomes identified with the Infinite One —εἰς ἓν αὐτῷ ἐλθὼυ, καὶ μήκετι σχίσας, ἓν ὁμοῦ

πάντα ἐστὶ μετ᾽ ἐκείνου τοῦ θεοῦ, ἀψοφητὶ παρόντος. Retreating into the inmost recesses of his own being, he there ἔχει πᾶν, καὶ ἀφεὶς τὴν αἴσθησιν εἰς τ᾽ οὐπίσω, τοῦ ἕτερος εἶναι φόβῳ, εἷς ἐστίν ἐκεῖ. No language could more clearly express the doctrine of identity—the object seen and the subject seeing are one. Plotinus triumphantly asks—πῶς οὖν ἔσται τί; ἐν καλῷ, μὴ ὁρμῶν αὐτό· ἥ ὁρῶν αὐτὸ ὡς ἕτερον, οὐδέπω ἐν καλῷ· γενόμενος δὲ αὐτὸ, οὕτω μάλιστα ἐν καλῷ εἰ οὖν ὅρασις τοῦ ἔξο, ὅρασιν μὺν οὐ δεῖ εἶναι, ἢ οὕτως ὡς ταὐτὸν τῷ ὁρατῷ. *Ibid.* pp. 552-3.

CHAPTER III.

Lume è lassù che visibile face
Lo creatore a quella creatura
Che solo in lui vedere ha la sua pace.[22]

DANTE.

MRS. ATHERTON. I confess I cannot understand what that state of mind can be which Plotinus calls ecstasy in the letter you read us last night, and about which most of your mystical fraternity talk so mysteriously.

KATE. I think I shall have myself mesmerised some day to form an idea.

WILLOUGHBY. I suppose the mystic, by remaining for many hours (enfeebled, perhaps, by fast and vigil), absolutely motionless, ceasing to think of anything—except that he *thinks* he is successful in thinking of nothing, and staring pertinaciously at vacancy, throws himself at last into a kind of trance. In this

state he may perceive, even when the eyes are closed, some luminous appearance, perhaps the result of pressure on the optic nerve—I am not anatomist enough to explain; and if his mind be strongly imaginative, or labouring with the ground-swell of recent excitement, this light may shape itself into archetype, dæmon, or what not. In any case, the more distinct the object seen, the more manifestly is it the projection of his own mind—a Brocken-phantom, the enlarged shadow of himself moving on some shifting tapestry of mist.

KATE. Like the woodman described by Coleridge as beholding with such awe an appearance of the kind, when he

> Sees full before him gliding without tread
> An image with a glory round its head,
> This shade he worships for its golden hues,
> And *makes* (not knowing) that which he pursues.

ATHERTON. Such has been the god of many a mystic. He will soar above means, experience, history, external revelation, and ends by mistaking a hazy reflex of his own image for Deity.

GOWER. But we must not forget that, according to Plotinus, all sense of personality is lost during ecstasy, and he would regard any light or form whatever (presented to what one may call his cerebral vision) as a sign that the trance was yet incomplete. He yearns to escape from everything that can be distinguished, bounded, or depicted, into the illimitable inane.

ATHERTON. Very true. And it is this extreme of negation and abstraction for which Plotinus is remarkable, that makes it alone worth our while to talk so much about him. His philosophy and that of

his successors, mistaken for Platonism, was to corrupt the Christian Church. For hundreds of years there will be a succession of prelates, priests, or monks, in whose eyes the frigid refinements of Plotinus will be practically, though not confessedly, regarded as representing God far more worthily than the grand simplicity and the forcible figurativeness of Scripture language. For the Christian's God will be substituted that sublime cypher devised by Plotinus —that blank something, of which you cannot say that it exists, for it is above existence.

Stop a moment—let me tell my beads, and try to count off the doctrines we shall meet with again and again in those forms of Christian mysticism where the Neo-Platonist element prevails—the germs of all lie in Plotinus.

There is, first of all, the principle of negation; that all so-called manifestations and revelations of God do in fact veil him; that no affirmative can be predicated of him, because he is above all our positive conceptions; that all symbols, figures, media, partial representations, must be utterly abandoned because, as finite, they fall infinitely short of the Infinite.

Here we are sunk below humanity—our knowledge consists in ignorance—our vision in darkness.

The next step raises us in an instant from this degrading limitation up to Deity—'sets our feet in a large room,' as the later mystics phrased it—even in infinity, and identifies us for a time with God.

Since the partial finite way of knowing God is so worthless, to know him truly we must escape from the finite, from all processes, all media, from the very gifts of God to God himself, and know him immediately, completely, in the infinite way—by

receiving, or being received into, him directly.

To attain this identity, in which, during a brief space of rapture at least, the subject and object, the knower and the known, are one and the same, we must withdraw into our inmost selves, into that simple oneness of our own essence which by its very rarity is susceptible of blending with that supreme attenuation called the Divine Essence. So doing, we await in passivity the glory, the embrace of Union. Hence the inmost is the highest—introversion is ascension, and *introrsum ascendere* the watchword of all mystics. God is found within, at once radiating from the depths of the soul, and absorbing it as the husk of personality drops away.

WILLOUGHBY. And so the means and faculties God has given us for knowing him are to lie unused.

ATHERTON. Certainly; night must fall on reason, imagination, memory—on our real powers—that an imaginary power may awake. This is what the mystics call the absorption of the powers in God, leaving active within us nothing natural, in order that God may be substituted for ourselves, and all operations within be supernatural, and even divine.

GOWER. Then mysticism is a spiritual art whereby the possible is forsaken for the impossible—the knowable for the unknowable.

WILLOUGHBY. Or a contrivance, say, for reaching Divinity which realizes only torpor.

GOWER. A sorry sight this misdirection and disappointment of spiritual aspiration. Does it not remind you of that ever-suggestive legend of Psyche —how she has to carry the box of celestial beauty to Venus, and by the way covets some of this loveliness for herself. She lifts the lid, and there steals out a

soporific vapour, throwing her into a deep slumber on the edge of a dizzy precipice. There she lies entranced till Eros comes to waken and to rescue her.

ATHERTON. I should grow very tiresome if I were now to attempt to indicate the likeness and the difference between ancient and modern speculation on these questions, and where I think the error lies, and why. But you must bear with me, Kate, if I hang some dry remarks on what you said just now.

KATE. I am sure I—

ATHERTON. You quoted Coleridge a minute since. He first, and after him Carlyle, familiarized England with the German distinction between reason and understanding. In fact, what the Epicureans and the Stoics were to Plotinus in his day, that were Priestley and Paley to Coleridge. The spiritualist is the sworn foe of your rationalist and pleasures-of-virtue man. Romance must loathe utilitarianism, enthusiasm scorn expediency. Hence the reaction which gives us Schelling as the Plotinus of Berlin, and Coleridge as the Schelling of Highgate. The understanding had been over-tasked—set to work unanimated and unaided by the conscience and the heart. The result was pitiable—lifeless orthodoxy and sneering scepticism. Christianity was elaborately defended on its external evidences; the internal evidence of its own nature overlooked.

What was needful at such a juncture? Surely that *both* should be employed in healthful alliance—the understanding and the conscience—the faculty which distinguishes and judges, and the faculty which presides over our moral nature, deciding about right and wrong. These are adequate to recognise the claims of Revelation. The intellectual faculty can deal with the historic evidence, the moral can

pronounce concerning the tendency of the book, righteous or unrighteous. In those features of it unexplained and inexplicable to the understanding, if we repose on faith, we do so on grounds which the understanding shows to be sound. Hence the reception given to Christianity is altogether reasonable.

But no such moderate ground as this would satisfy the ardour which essayed reform; the understanding, because it could not do everything—could not be the whole mind, but only a part—because it was proved unequal to accomplish alone the work of all our faculties together, was summarily cashiered. We must have for religion a new, a higher faculty. Instead of reinforcing the old power, a novel nomenclature is devised which seems to endow man with a loftier attribute. This faculty is the intuition of Plotinus, the *Intellectuelle Anschauung* of Schelling; the Intuitive Reason, Source of Ideas and Absolute Truths, the Organ of Philosophy and Theology, as Coleridge styles it. It is a direct beholding, which, according to Plotinus, rises in some moments of exaltation to ecstasy. It is, according to Schelling, a realization of the identity of subject and object in the individual, which blends him with that identity of subject and object called God; so that, carried out of himself, he does, in a manner, think divine thoughts —views all things from their highest point of view— mind and matter from the centre of their identity.[23] He becomes recipient, according to Emerson, of the Soul of the world. He loses, according to Coleridge, the particular in the universal reason; finds that ideas appear within him from an internal source supplied by the Logos or Eternal Word of God—an infallible utterance from the divine original of man's highest nature.[24]

WILLOUGHBY. One aim in all—to escape the surface varieties of our individual (or more properly dividual) being, and penetrate to the universal truth —the absolute certainty everywhere the same:—a shaft-sinking operation—a descent into our original selves—digging down, in one case from a garden, in another from a waste, here from the heart of a town, there from a meadow, but all the miners are to find at the bottom a common ground—the primæval granite—the basis of the eternal truth-pillars. This I take to be the object of the self-simplification Plotinus inculcates—to get beneath the finite superficial accretions of our nature.

ATHERTON. And what comes of it after all? After denuding ourselves of all results of experience, conditioned distinctions, &c., we are landed in a void, we find only hollow silence, if we may accept a whisper or two, saying that ingratitude, treachery, fraud, and similar crimes, are very wrong.

GOWER. And even these dictates are those of our moral sense, not of an intellectual power of insight. For surely to call conscience practical Reason, as Kant does, is only to confound our moral and intellectual nature together.

ATHERTON. Very well, then. Seclude and simplify yourself thoroughly, and you do not find data within you equal to your need—equal to show you what God is, has done, should do, &c.

WILLOUGHBY. But all these intuitionalists profess to evolve from their depths very much more than those simplest ethical perceptions.

ATHERTON. By carrying down with them into those depths the results of the understanding, of experience, of external culture, and then bringing

them up to light again as though they had newly emerged from the recesses of the Infinite. This intuitional metal, in its native state, is mere fluent, formless quicksilver; to make it definite and serviceable you must fix it by an alloy; but then, alas! it is *pure* Reason no longer, and, so far from being universal truth, receives a countless variety of shapes, according to the temperament, culture, or philosophic party, of the individual thinker. So that, in the end, the result is merely a dogmatical investiture of a man's own notions with a sort of divine authority. You dispute with Schelling, and he waves you away as a profane and intuitionless laic. What is this but the sacerdotalism of the philosopher? The fanatical mystic who believes himself called on to enforce the fantasies of his special revelation upon other men, does not more utterly contemn argument than does the theosophist, when he bids you kick your understanding back into its kennel, and hearken in reverend awe to *his* intuitions.

WILLOUGHBY. Telling you, too, that if your inward witness does not agree with his, you are, philosophically speaking, in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity.

ATHERTON. You are catching the approved style of expression so much in vogue with our modern religious infidelity. This is the artifice—to be scriptural in phrase, and anti-scriptural in sense: to parade the secret symbols of Christianity in the van of that motley army which marches to assail it.

GOWER. The expedient reminds me of the device of Cambyses, who, when he drew out his forces against the Egyptians, placed a row of ibises in front of his line, and the Egyptians, it is said, suffered defeat

rather than discharge an arrow which might wound the birds they worshipped.

WILLOUGHBY. To go back to Plotinus.[25] That doctrine of the Epistrophe—the return of all intelligence by a law of nature to the divine centre—must inevitably be associated with the unhealthy morality always attendant on pantheism. It is an organic process godward, ending in loss of personal existence, no moral or spiritual elevation.

GOWER. His abstract Unity has no character, only negation of all conceivable attributes—so will and character can have no place in his theory of assimilation to God. Self-culture is self-reduction. What a plan of the universe!—all intelligence magnetically drawn to the Centre, like the ships to the Mountain of the Loadstone in the *Arabian Nights*—as they approach, the nails which hold them together are withdrawn, they fall apart, and all the fabric is dissolved.

WILLOUGHBY. It is curious to observe how rapidly the mind gives way under the unnatural strain of this super-essential abstraction, and indemnifies itself by imaginative and fantastical excesses for the attempt to sojourn in an atmosphere so rare. At first, ecstasy is an indescribable state—any form or voice would mar and materialize it. The vague boundlessness of this exaltation, in which the soul swoons away, is not to be hinted at by the highest utterance of mortal speech. But a degenerate age or a lower order of mind demands the detail and imagery of a more tangible marvel. The demand creates supply, and the mystic, deceiver or deceived, or both, begins to furnish forth for himself and others a full itinerary of those regions in the unseen world which he has scanned or traversed in his moments of elevation. He

describes the starred baldrics and meteor-swords of the aërial panoply; tells what forlorn shapes have been seen standing dark against a far depth of brightness, like stricken pines on a sunset horizon; what angelic forms, in gracious companies, alight about the haunts of men, thwarting the evil and opening pathways for the good; what genii tend what mortals, and under what astral influences they work weal or woe; what beings of the middle air crowd in embattled rows the mountain side, or fill some vast amphitheatre of silent and inaccessible snow,—how some encamp in the valley, under the pennons of the summer lightning, and others find a tented field where the slow wind unrolls the exhalations along the marsh, and builds a billowy canopy of vapours: all is largely told,—what ethereal heraldry marshals with its blazon the thrones and dominions of the unseen realm; what giant powers and principalities darken with long shadow, or illumine with a winged wake of glory, the forms of following myriads,—their ranks and races, wars and destiny, as minutely registered as the annals of some neighbour province, as confidently recounted as though the seer had nightly slipped his bonds of flesh, and mingled in their council or their battle.

ATHERTON. A true portraiture. Observe how this mysticism pretends to raise man above self into the universal, and issues in giving us only what is personal. It presents us, after all, only with the creations of the fancy, the phenomena of the sensibility peculiar to the individual,—that finite, personal idiosyncrasy which is so despised. Its philosophy of the universe subsides into a morbid psychology. Man is persuaded that he is to traverse the realms of fire and air, where the intelligible essences and archetypes of all things dwell; and, like

the Knight of La Mancha, he never stirs in reality from the little grass-plot of individual temperament on which his wondrous wooden horse stands still. This theosophy professes to make man divine, and it fails at last to keep him even rational. It prevents his becoming what he might be, while it promises to make him what he never can become.

Note to page 90.

M. Simon has shown, with much acuteness, in what way the exigencies of the system of Plotinus compelled him to have recourse to a new faculty, distinct from reason. Plotinus perceived that Plato had not been true to the consequences of his own dialectics. When he had reached the summit of his logical abstraction,—had passed through definition after definition, each more intangible than the last, on his way upward towards the One, he arrived at last at a God who was above Being itself. From this result he shrank, and so ceased to be consistent. How could such a God be a God of Providence, such a shadow of a shade a creator? Plato was not prepared, like Plotinus, to soar so completely above experience and the practical as to accept the utmost consequences of his logical process. So, that his God might be still the God of Providence, he retained him within the sphere of reason, gave him Being, Thought, Power, and called him the Demiurge. When Plotinus, like a true eclectic, carried still farther his survey of what history afforded him, he found Aristotle postulating a Deity so restricted by his own abstraction and immutability as to render it impossible to associate with his nature the idea of superintendence. It was feared that to represent God

as the God of Creation and of Providence would be to dualize him. And yet the world did exist. How were the serene and remote Unity demanded by logic, and that activity and contact with matter no less imperatively demanded for God by experience, to be reconciled with each other? It is scarcely necessary to observe that there was no real difficulty. The whole problem was the result of the notion, so universal, concerning the evil of matter, and of the wrong answer given by ancient philosophy to the vexed question—Does the Supreme work τῷ εἶναι, or τῷ βούλεσθαι? Philosophy maintained the former; the Christian Church the latter. To remove this obstacle which philosophy had itself constructed, Plotinus proposed his theory of these hypostases, in the Divine Nature. Above and beyond a God such as that of Plato, he places another like that of Aristotle, and above him a simple Unity, like the God of the Eleatics. The last was the ultimatum of the process of logical simplification—a something above being. But the hypothesis was destitute of proof—it was, in fact, contrary to reason. Plotinus must therefore either surrender his theory or bid farewell to reason. He chose the latter course. He does not deny the important services of reason, but he professes to transcend its limits. He calls in mysticism to substantiate, by the doctrines of Illumination and Identity, his imaginary God. He affirms a God beyond reason, and then a faculty beyond reason to discern that God withal.

This attempt to solve the problem in question is of course a failure. It is still more open than the system of Plato to Aristotle's objection, that it resembled the expedient of an arithmetician who should endeavour to simplify a calculation he found perplexing by taking still higher figures. Plotinus does not explain

what he means by a Hypostasis. If the Hypostases in his Trinity have reality, the ideal unity he is so anxious to preserve in the Divine Nature is after all destroyed. If they have not, the gap between the One and the Manifold is still without a bridge, and the difficulty they are introduced to remove remains in effect where it was. If this hypothesis had made no part of the system of Plotinus, the great occasion for the doctrine of Ecstasy and the most powerful internal inducement to mysticism would have been wanting. The philosopher escapes from his labyrinth by borrowing the wings of the mystic.—See *Jules Simon*, tom. i. pp. 63, 84; ii. 462.

CHAPTER IV.

> *Stargaze.* 'Tis drawn, I assure you, from the aphorisms of the old Chaldeans, Zoroaster the first and greatest magician; Mercurius Trismegistus, the later Ptolemy, and the everlasting prognosticator, old Erra Pater.—MASSINGER.

WILLOUGHBY. We have now about done, I suppose, with the theosophic branch of the Neo-Platonist school; with its latest leaders it degenerates into theurgic mysticism.

KATE. I hope it is going to degenerate into something one can understand.

GOWER. The great metaphysician, Plotinus, is off the stage, that is some comfort for you, Miss Merivale.

Magic is less wearisome than metaphysics.

ATHERTON. The change is marked, indeed. Plotinus, wrapt in his proud abstraction, cared little for fame. His listening disciples were his world. Porphyry entered his school fresh from the study of Aristotle. At first the daring opponent of the master, he soon became the most devoted of his scholars. With a temperament more active and practical than that of Plotinus, with more various ability and far more facility in adaptation, with an erudition equal to his fidelity, blameless in his life, pre-eminent in the loftiness and purity of his ethics, he was well fitted to do all that could be done towards securing for the doctrines he had espoused that reputation and that wider influence to which Plotinus was so indifferent. His aim was twofold. He engaged in a conflict hand to hand with two antagonists at once, by both of whom he was eventually vanquished. He commenced an assault on Christianity without, and he endeavoured to check the progress of superstitious usage within the pale of Paganism. But Christianity could not be repulsed, and heathendom would not be reformed. In vain did he attempt to substitute a single philosophical religion which should be universal, for the manifold and popular Polytheism of the day. Christian truth repelled his attack on the one side, and idolatrous superstition carried his defences on the other.

WILLOUGHBY. A more false position could scarcely have been assumed. Men like Porphyry constituted themselves the defenders of a Paganism which did but partially acknowledge their advocacy. Often suspected by the Emperors, they were still oftener maligned and persecuted by the jealousy of the priests. They were the unaccredited champions of

Paganism, for they sought to refine while they conserved it. They defended it, not as zealots, but as men of letters.[26] They defended it because the old faith could boast of great names and great achievements in speculation, literature, and art, and because the new appeared novel and barbarian in its origin, and humiliating in its claims. They wrote, they lectured, they disputed, in favour of the temple and against the church, because they dreamed of the days of Pericles under the yoke of the Empire: not because they worshipped idols, but because they worshipped Plato.

MRS. ATHERTON. And must not that very attempt, noticed just now, to recognise all religions, have been as fatal to them as the causes you mention?

ATHERTON. Certainly. Mankind does not require a revelation to give them a religion, but to give them one which shall be altogether true. These Neo-Platonists were confronted by a religion intolerant of all others. They attempted, by keeping open house in their eclectic Pantheon, to excel where they thought their antagonist deficient. They failed to see in that benign intolerance of falsehood, which stood out as so strange a characteristic in the Christian faith, one of the credentials of its divine origin. No theory of the universe manufactured by a school can be a gospel to man's soul. They forgot that lip-homage paid to all religions is the virtual denial of each.

GOWER. Strange position, indeed, maintaining as their cardinal doctrine the unity and immutability of the divine nature, and entering the lists as conservators of polytheism; teaching the most abstract and defending the most gross conceptions of deity; exclaiming against vice, and solicitous to preserve all the incentives to it which swarm in

every heathen mythology. Of a truth, no clean thing could be brought out of that unclean,—the new cloth would not mend the old garment. Men know that they *ought* to worship; the question is, Whom? and How?

WILLOUGHBY. Then, again, their attempt to combine religion and philosophy robbed the last of its only principle, the first of its only power. The religions lost in the process what sanctity and authoritativeness they had to lose, while speculation abandoned all scientific precision, and deserted its sole consistent basis in the reason. This endeavour to philosophise superstition could only issue in the paradoxical product of a philosophy without reason, and a superstition without faith. To make philosophy superstitious was not difficult, and they did that; but they could not—do what they would—make superstition philosophical.

ATHERTON. Add, too, that Greek philosophy, which had always repelled the people, possessed no power to seclude them from the Christianity that sought them out. In vain did it borrow from Christianity a new refinement, and receive some rays of light from the very foe which fronted it——

WILLOUGHBY. As is very visible in the higher moral tone of Porphyry's *Treatise on Abstinence*.

ATHERTON. The struggles of heathendom to escape its doom only the more display its weakness and the justice of the sentence.

GOWER. Like the man in the *Gesta Romanorum*, who came to the gate where every humpbacked, one-eyed, scald-headed passenger had to pay a penny for each infirmity: they were going only to demand toll for his hunch, but he resisted, and in the struggle

was discovered to be amenable for every deformity and disease upon the table. So, no doubt, it must always be with systems, states, men, and dogs, that won't know when they have had their day. The scuffle makes sad work with the patched clothes, false teeth, wig, and cosmetics.

ATHERTON. Life is sweet.

As to Porphyry it was doubtless his more practical temperament that led him to modify the doctrine of Plotinus concerning ecstasy. With Porphyry the mind does not lose, in that state of exaltation, its consciousness of personality. He calls it a dream in which the soul, dead to the world, rises to an activity that partakes of the divine. It is an elevation above reason, above action, above liberty, and yet no annihilation, but an ennobling restoration or transformation of the individual nature.[27]

GOWER. One of Porphyry's notions about the spirits of the air, of which you told me in our walk yesterday, quite haunted me afterwards. It contains a germ of poetry.

KATE. By all means let us have it.

GOWER. Our philosopher believed in a certain order of evil genii who took pleasure in hunting wild beasts,—dæmons, whom men worshipped by the title of Artemis and other names, falsely attributing their cruelty to the calm and guiltless gods, who can never delight in blood. Some of these natures hunted another prey. They were said to chase souls that had escaped from the fetters of a body, and to force them to re-enter some fleshly prison once more. How I wish we could see a design of this by David Scott! Imagine the soul that has just leaped out of the door of that dungeon of ignorance and pain, the body, as

Porphyry would term it, fluttering in its new freedom in the sunshine among the tree-tops, over wild and town—all the fields of air its pleasure-ground for an exulting career on its upward way to join the journeying intelligences in their cars above. But it sees afar off, high in mid-air, a troop of dark shapes; they seem to approach, to grow out of the airy recesses of the distance—they come down the white precipices of the piled clouds, over the long slant of some vapour promontory—forms invisible to man, and, with them, spectre-hounds, whose baying spirits alone can hear. As they approach, the soul recognises its enemies. In a moment it is flying away, away, and after it they sweep—pursuers and pursued, shapes so ethereal that the galleries of the ant are not shaken as hunters and quarry glide into the earth, and not a foam-bell is broken or brushed from the wave when they emerge upon the sea, and with many a winding and double mount the air. At last hemmed in, the soul is forced—spite of that desperate sidelong dart which had all but eluded them—down into a body, the frame of a beggar's babe or of a slave's; and, like some struggling bird, drawn with beating wings beneath the water, it sinks into the clay it must animate through many a miserable year to come.

WILLOUGHBY. I wish you would paint it for us yourself. You might represent, close by that battle of the spirits, a bird singing on a bough, a labourer looking down, with his foot upon his spade, and peasants dancing in their 'sunburnt mirth' and jollity —wholly unconscious, interrupted neither in toil nor pleasure by the conflict close at hand. It might read as a satire on the too common indifference of men to the spiritual realities which are about them every hour.

MRS. ATHERTON. The picture would be as mysterious as an Emblem by Albert Durer.

GOWER. It is that suggestiveness I so admire in the Germans. For the sake of it I can often pardon their fantastic extravagances, their incongruous combinations, their frequent want of grace and symmetry.

ATHERTON. So can I, when an author occupies a province in which such indirectness or irony, such irregularity, confusion, or paradox, are admissible. Take, as a comprehensive example, Jean Paul. But in philosophy it is abominable. There, where transparent order should preside, to find that under the thick and spreading verbiage meaning is often lacking, and, with all the boastful and fire-new nomenclature, if found, is old and common,—that the language is commonly but an array of what one calls

> Rich windows that exclude the light,
> And passages that lead to nothing;—

This puts me out of all patience.

GOWER. The fault you object to reminds me of some Flemish landscape-pieces I have seen; there are trees, so full of grand life, they seem with their outstretched arms to menace the clouds, and as though, if they smote with their many hundred hands, they could beat away the storm instead of being bowed by it; and underneath these great ones of the forest, which should shadow nothing less than a woodland council of Titans or a group of recumbent gods, the painter places only a rustic with a cow or two, an old horse, a beggar, or some other most every-day of figures.

MRS. ATHERTON. And you mean that the German words are large-looking as the trees, and the ideas worn and ordinary as the figures? What will Mr. Willoughby say to that?

ATHERTON. I think Willoughby will agree with me that it is high time that we should go back to our theurgic mysticism and Iamblichus. Here is a letter of his:—

IAMBLICHUS TO AGATHOCLES.

I assure you, my friend, that the efforts of Porphyry, of whom you appear disposed to think so highly, will be altogether in vain. He is not the true philosopher you imagine. He grows cold and sceptical with years. He shrinks with a timid incredulity from reaping in that field of supernatural attainment which theurgy has first opened, and now continually enlarges and enriches. Theurgy, be sure of it, is the grand, I may say, the sole path to the exaltation we covet. It is the heaven-given organum, in the hands of the wise and holy, for obtaining happiness, knowledge, power.

The pomp of emperors becomes as nothing in comparison with the glory that surrounds the hierophant. The priest is a prophet full of deity. The subordinate powers of the upper world are at his bidding, for it is not a man, but a god who speaks the words of power. Such a man lives no longer the life common to other men. He has exchanged the human life for the divine. His nature is the instrument and vehicle of Deity, who fills and impels him (ὄργανον τοῖς ἐπιπνέουσι θεοῖς.) Men of this order do not employ, in the elevation they experience, the waking senses as

do others (οὔτε κατ᾽ αἴσθησιν ἐνεργοῦσιν οὔτε ἐγρηγόρασι). They have no purpose of their own, no mastery over themselves. They speak wisdom they do not understand, and their faculties, absorbed in a divine power, become the utterance of a superior will.

Often, at the moment of inspiration, or when the afflatus has subsided, a fiery Appearance is seen, —the entering or departing Power. Those who are skilled in this wisdom can tell by the character of this glory the rank of the divinity who has seized for the time the reins of the mystic's soul, and guides it as he will. Sometimes the body of the man subject to this influence is violently agitated, sometimes it is rigid and motionless. In some instances sweet music is heard, in others, discordant and fearful sounds. The person of the subject has been known to dilate and tower to a superhuman height; in other cases, it has been lifted up into the air. Frequently, not merely the ordinary exercise of reason, but sensation and animal life would appear to have been suspended; and the subject of the afflatus has not felt the application of fire, has been pierced with spits, cut with knives, and been sensible of no pain. Yea, often, the more the body and the mind have been alike enfeebled by vigil and by fasts, the more ignorant or mentally imbecile a youth may be who is brought under this influence, the more freely and unmixedly will the divine power be made manifest. So clearly are these wonders the work, not of human skill or wisdom, but of supernatural agency! Characteristics such as these I have mentioned, are the marks of the true inspiration.

Now, there are, O Agathocles, four great orders of spiritual existence,—Gods, Dæmons, Heroes or Demi-gods, and Souls. You will naturally be desirous to learn how the apparition of a God or a Dæmon is distinguished from those of Angels, Principalities, or Souls. Know, then, that their appearance to man corresponds to their nature, and that they always manifest themselves to those who invoke them in a manner consonant with their rank in the hierarchy of spiritual natures. The appearances of Gods are uniform (μονοειδῆ), those of Dæmons various (ποικίλα). The Gods shine with a benign aspect. When a God manifests himself, he frequently appears to hide sun or moon, and seems as he descends too vast for earth to contain. Archangels are at once awful and mild; Angels yet more gracious; Dæmons terrible. Below the four leading classes I have mentioned are placed the malignant Dæmons, the Anti-gods (ἀντιθέους).

Each spiritual order has gifts of its own to bestow on the initiated who evoke them. The Gods confer health of body, power and purity of mind, and, in short, elevate and restore our natures to their proper principles. Angels and Archangels have at their command only subordinate bestowments. Dæmons, however, are hostile to the aspirant,—afflict both body and mind, and hinder our escape from the sensuous. Principalities, who govern the sublunary elements, confer temporal advantages. Those of a lower rank, who preside over matter (ὑλικά), display their bounty in material gifts. Souls that are pure are, like Angels, salutary in their influence. Their appearance encourages the soul in its upward efforts. Heroes stimulate to great actions. All these powers depend, in a

descending chain, each species on that immediately above it. Good Dæmons are seen surrounded by the emblems of blessing, Dæmons who execute judgment appear with the instruments of punishment.

There is nothing unworthy of belief in what you have been told concerning the sacred sleep, and divination by dreams. I explain it thus:—

The soul has a twofold life, a lower and a higher. In sleep that soul is freed from the constraint of the body, and enters, as one emancipated, on its divine life of intelligence. Then, as the noble faculty which beholds the objects that truly are—the objects in the world of intelligence—stirs within, and awakens to its power, who can be surprised that the mind, which contains in itself the principles of all that happens, should, in this its state of liberation, discern the future in those antecedent principles which will make that future what it is to be? The nobler part of the soul is thus united by abstraction to higher natures, and becomes a participant in the wisdom and foreknowledge of the Gods.

Recorded examples of this are numerous and well authenticated; instances occur, too, every day. Numbers of sick, by sleeping in the temple of Æsculapius, have had their cure revealed to them in dreams vouchsafed by the god. Would not Alexander's army have perished but for a dream in which Dionysus pointed out the means of safety? Was not the siege of Aphutis raised through a dream sent by Jupiter Ammon to Lysander? The night-time of the body is the day-time of the soul.

What I have now said—with little method, I

> confess—sets before you but a portion of the prerogatives in which the initiated glory. There is much behind for which words are too poor. I have written enough, I am sure, to kindle your ambition, to bid you banish doubt, and persevere in the aspirations which so possessed you when I saw you last.[28] Farewell.

GOWER. That explanation of prophetic dreams and the temple sleep is very curious and characteristic. No doubt the common phenomena of mesmerism may have been among the sacred secrets preserved by the priests of Egypt and of Greece.

KATE. The preference for young and weakly persons, who would possess an organization more susceptible of such influences, makes it look very likely.

ATHERTON. Observe how completely the theurgic element, with Iamblichus, supersedes the theosophic. In the process of time the philosophical principles on which the system of Plotinus rested are virtually surrendered, little by little, while divination and evocations are practised with increasing credulity, and made the foundation of the most arrogant pretensions. Plotinus declared the possibility of an absolute identification of the divine with the human nature. Here was the broadest basis for mysticism possible. Porphyry retired from this position, took up narrower ground, and qualified the great mystical principle of his master. He contended that in the union which takes place in ecstasy, we still retain the consciousness of personality. Iamblichus, the most superstitious of all in practice, diminished the real principle of mysticism still farther in theory. He denied that man has a faculty inaccessible to passion, and eternally active.[29]

WILLOUGHBY. And so the metaphysics and the marvels of mysticism stand in an inverse ratio to each other. But it is not unnatural that as the mystic, from one cause or another, gives up those exaggerated notions of the powers of man and those mistaken views of the relationship between man and God, which went together to make up a mystical system of philosophy, he should endeavour to indemnify himself by the evocations of theurgy, so as to secure, if possible, through a supernatural channel, what speculation had unsuccessfully attempted.

ATHERTON. True; but in this case I should invert the order, and say that as the promise of theurgy exercised an attraction of growing strength on an order of mind less fitted for speculation, such temperaments would readily drop the speculative principle of mysticism in their eagerness to grasp the illusive prize—apparently so practical—which a commerce with superior natures held out.

WILLOUGHBY. And so the intellectual ambition and the poetical spirit, so lofty in Plotinus, subside, among the followers of Iamblichus, into the doggrel of the necromancer's charm.

GOWER. Much such a descent as the glory of Virgil has suffered, whose tomb at Pausilipo is now regarded by the populace of degenerate Naples less with the reverence due to the poet than with the awe which arises from the legendary repute of the mediæval magician.

ATHERTON. So the idealism of strong minds becomes superstition in the weak. In the very shrine where culture paid its homage to art or science, feebleness and ignorance, in an age of decline, set up the image-worship of the merely marvellous.

MRS. ATHERTON. I think you mentioned only one other of these worthies.

ATHERTON. Proclus. He is the last great name among the Neo-Platonists. He was the most eclectic of them all, perhaps because the most learned and the most systematic. He elaborated the trinity of Plotinus into a succession of impalpable Triads, and surpassed Iamblichus in his devotion to the practice of theurgy. Proclus was content to develop the school in that direction which Iamblichus—(successful from his very faults)—had already given it. With Proclus, theurgy was the art which gives man the magical passwords that carry him through barrier after barrier, dividing species from species of the upper existences, till, at the summit of the hierarchy, he arrives at the highest. According to him, God is the Non-Being who is above all being. He is apprehended only by negation. When we are raised out of our weakness, and on a level with God, it seems as though reason were silenced, for then we are above reason. We become intoxicated with God, we are inspired as by the nectar of Olympus. He teaches philosophy as the best preparation for Quietism. For the scientific enquirer, toiling in his research, Proclus has a God to tell of, supreme, almighty, the world-maker and governor of Plato. For him who has passed through this labour, a God known only by ecstasy—a God who is the repose he gives—a God of whom the more you deny the more do you affirm.

WILLOUGHBY. And this is all! After years of austerity and toil, Proclus—the scholar, stored with the opinions of the past, surrounded by the admiration of the present—the astronomer, the geometrician, the philosopher,—learned in the lore of symbols and of oracles, in the rapt utterances of Orpheus and of

Zoroaster—an adept in the ritual of invocations among every people in the world—he, at the close, pronounces Quietism the consummation of the whole, and an unreasoning contemplation, an ecstasy which casts off as an incumbrance all the knowledge so painfully acquired, the bourne of all the journey.

MRS. ATHERTON. As though it were the highest glory of man, forgetting all that his enquiry has achieved, hidden away from the world,—to gaze at vacancy, inactive and infantine;—to be like some peasant's child left in its cradle for a while in the furrow of a field, shut in by the little mound of earth on either side, and having but the blue æther above, dazzling and void, at which to look up with smiles of witless wonder.

Note to page 103.

Iamblichus, de Mysteriis, sect. x. cc. 1, 4, 6; iii. 4, 8, 6, 24; i. 5, 6; ii. 3; iii. 31; ii. 4, 6, 7; iii. 1, 3. These passages, in the order given, will be found to correspond with the opinions expressed in the letter as those of Iamblichus.

The genuineness of the treatise *De Mysteriis* has been called in question, but its antiquity is undoubted. It differs only in one or two very trivial statements from the doctrines of Iamblichus as ascertained from other sources, and is admitted by all to be the production, if not of Iamblichus himself, of one of his disciples, probably writing under his direction. *Jules Simon*, ii. 219.

For the opinions ascribed to Porphyry in this letter, see his *Epistola ad Anebonem*, passim. He there proposes a series of difficult questions, and displays

that sceptical disposition, especially concerning the pretensions of Theurgy, which so much scandalized Iamblichus. The *De Mysteriis* is an elaborate reply to that epistle, under the name of Abammon.

In several passages of the *De Mysteriis* (ii. 11; v. 1, 2, 3, 7; vi. 6) Iamblichus displays much anxiety lest his zeal for Theurgy should lead him to maintain any position inconsistent with the reverence due to the gods. He was closely pressed on this weak point by the objections of Porphyry. (*Ep. ad Anebon.* 5, 6.) His explanation in reply is, that the deities are not in reality drawn down by the mere human will of the Theurgist, but that man is raised to a participation in the power of the gods. The approximation is real, but the apparent descent of divinity is in fact the ascent of humanity. By his long course of preparation, by his knowledge of rites and symbols, of potent hymns, and of the mysterious virtues of certain herbs and minerals, the Theurgist is supposed to rise at last to the rank of an associate with celestial powers; their knowledge and their will become his, and he controls inferior natures with the authority of the gods themselves.

Iamblichus supposes, moreover, that there is an order of powers in the world, irrational and undiscerning, who are altogether at the bidding of man when by threats or conjurations he chooses to compel them. *De Myst.* vi. 5.

BOOK THE FOURTH
MYSTICISM IN THE GREEK CHURCH

CHAPTER I.

Questi ordini di su tutti s'ammirano
E di giù vincon si che verso Iddio
Tutti tirati sono e tutti tirano.
  E Dionisio con tanto disio
A contemplar questi ordini si mise,
Che li nomò e distinse com' io.[30]

DANTE.

KATE. I have been looking at the pictures in Mrs. Jameson's *Sacred and Legendary Art*, of those strange creatures, the hermit saints—the Fathers of the desert. Only see this one, what a mane and claws! The two lions digging the grave there are own brothers to the holy men themselves.

ATHERTON. Yet they claimed powers as much above humanity as, to look at them, you would think them beneath it.

GOWER. Religious Nebuchadnezzars.

WILLOUGHBY. No shavelings, at any rate, like the smooth-faced sanctities of the later calendar.

ATHERTON. You will find among these anchorites almost all the wonder-working pretensions of mediæval mysticism in full development, thus early; —the discernment of spirits, gift of prophecy, miraculous powers of various kinds, ecstasy, exorcism, &c. &c. I should take St. Antony as a fair specimen of the whole class.[31]

MRS. ATHERTON. Look, here is his picture; there he stands, with crutch and bell and pig.

ATHERTON. The bell denotes his power over evil spirits, and the pig the vanquished dæmon of sensuality. In his life, by Athanasius, there is a full account of his battle with many dæmons in the shape of lions, bulls, and bears. He passed twenty years in an old castle which he found full of serpents. The power of the saint expelled those unpleasant aborigines. That nose, you see there, was supposed to possess the faculty of detecting by its miraculous keenness of scent the proximity of an evil spirit. There is an odour of iniquity, you must know, as well as an odour of sanctity. This disposition to literalize metaphors gave currency to the monkish stories of after times concerning the refreshing fragrance found to arise from the remains of disinterred saints. In fact, the materialization of the spiritual, or what passes for such, is the characteristic principle of the theurgic mysticism within the Roman Catholic Church. St. Antony, on one occasion, sees his own soul, separated from the body, carried through the air.

GOWER. A striking instance, I should say, of the objectivity of the subject.

ATHERTON. One of his visions is not without grandeur. The brethren had been questioning him one day concerning the state of departed spirits. The following night he heard a voice saying, 'Antony, get up; go out and look!' He obeyed, and saw a gigantic figure, whose head was in the clouds, and whose outstretched arms extended far across the sky. Many souls were fluttering in the air, and endeavouring, as they found opportunity, to fly upward past this dreadful being. Numbers of them he seized in the attempt, and dashed back upon the earth. Some escaped him and exulted above, while he raged at their success. Thus sorrowing and rejoicing were mingled together, as some were defeated and others triumphant. This, he was given to understand, was the rise and fall of souls.

WILLOUGHBY. That picture would be really Dantesque, if only a little more definite. Macarius is another great name, too, among these Christian ascetics and theurgists—the one who retired to the deserts of Nitria in the fourth century.

ATHERTON. He is not only famous for his measure of the supernatural powers ascribed to his brethren, but his homilies have been appealed to by modern theopathetic mystics as an authority for Quietism. He teaches perfectionist doctrine, certainly, but I do not think his words will bear the construction Poiret and others would give them. He was at least innocent of the *sainte indifférence*.[32]

MRS. ATHERTON. You said we were to discuss Dionysius the Areopagite this evening.

KATE. Pray introduce me first. I know nothing about him.

ATHERTON. No one does know who really wrote the

books which passed under that name. It is generally admitted that the forgery could not have been committed earlier than the middle of the fifth century, probably somewhat later. So all I can tell you is, that somewhere or other (it is not unlikely at Constantinople, but there is no certainty), about the time when Theodoric was master of Italy—when the Vandal swarms had not yet been expelled from northern Africa—while Constantinople was in uproar between the greens and the blues, and rival ecclesiastics headed city riots with a rabble of monks, artizans, and bandit soldiery at their heels—while orthodoxy was grappling with the Monophysite and Eutychian heresies on either hand, and the religious world was rocking still with the groundswell that followed those stormy synods in which Palestine and Alexandria, Asia and Constantinople, from opposite quarters, gathered their strength against each other—a monk or priest was busy, in his quiet solitude, with the fabrication of sundry treatises and letters which were to find their way into the Church under the all-but apostolic auspices of that convert made by the Apostle of the Gentiles when he spoke on Mars Hill. The writings would seem to have been first appealed to as genuine in the year 533. As heretics cited them, their authority was disputed at the outset; but being found favourable to the growing claims of the hierarchy, and likely to be useful, they were soon recognised and employed accordingly.[33]

WILLOUGHBY. Proclus could not have been long dead, and his reputation must have been still at its height, when this anonymous—let us call him Dionysius at once—was writing his Platonized theology.

ATHERTON. With the divines of Byzantium Proclus represented the grand old world of Greek thought. Even those who wrote against him as a heathen betray the influence he exercised on their doctrines. The object of Dionysius evidently was to accommodate the theosophy of Proclus to Christianity. Another aim, not less conspicuous, was to strengthen all the pretensions of the priesthood, and to invest with a new traditionary sanction the ascetic virtues of the cloister.

CHAPTER II.

> They that pretend to these heights call them the secrets of the kingdom; but they are such which no man can describe; such which God hath not revealed in the publication of the Gospel; such for the acquiring of which there are no means prescribed, and to which no man is obliged, and which are not in any man's power to obtain; nor such which it is lawful to pray for or desire; nor concerning which we shall ever be called to account.—JEREMY TAYLOR.

'I have here,' said Atherton on the next evening, 'some notes on the doctrine of this pretended Areopagite—a short summary; shall I read it?'

'By all means.'

So the following abstract was listened to—and with creditable patience.[34]

(1.) All things have emanated from God, and the end of all is return to God. Such return—deification, he calls it—is the consummation of the creature, that God may finally be all in all. A process of evolution, a centrifugal movement in the Divine Nature, is substituted in reality for creation. The antithesis of this is the centripetal process, or movement of involution, which draws all existence towards the point of the Divine centre. The degree of real existence possessed by any being is the amount of God in that being—for God is the existence in all things. Yet He himself cannot be said to exist, for he is above existence. The more or less of God which the various creatures possess is determined by the proximity of their order to the centre.

(2.) The chain of being in the upper and invisible world, through which the Divine Power diffuses itself in successive gradations, he calls the Celestial Hierarchy. The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy is a corresponding series in the visible world. The orders of Angelic natures and of priestly functionaries correspond to each other. The highest rank of the former receive illumination immediately from God. The lowest of the heavenly imparts divine light to the highest of the earthly hierarchy. Each order strives perpetually to approximate to that immediately above itself, from which it receives the transmitted influence; so that all, as Dante describes it, draw and are drawn, and tend in common towards the centre—God.

The three triads of angelic existences, to whom answer the ranks of the terrestrial hierarchy, betrays the influence of Proclus, whose hierarchy of ideas corresponds, in a similar manner, to his hierarchy of hypostases.

GOWER. The system reminds one of those old pictures which are divided into two compartments, the upper occupied by angels and cherubs on the clouds, and the lower by human beings on the earth, gazing devoutly upward at their celestial benefactors.

ATHERTON. The work of Christ is thrown into the background to make room for the Church. The Saviour answers, with Dionysius, rather to the Logos of the Platonist than to the Son of God revealed in Scripture. He is allowed to be, as incarnate, the founder of the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy; but, as such, he is removed from men by the long chain of priestly orders, and is less the Redeemer, than remotely the Illuminator, of the species.

Purification, illumination, perfection,—the three great stages of ascent to God (which plays so important a part in almost every succeeding attempt to systematise mysticism) are mystically represented by the three sacraments,—Baptism, the Eucharist, and Unction. The Church is the great Mystagogue: its liturgy and offices a profound and elaborate system of symbolism.

(3.) The Greek theory, with its inadequate conception of the nature of sin, compels Dionysius virtually to deny the existence of evil. Everything that exists is good, the more existence the more goodness, so that evil is a coming short of existence. He hunts sin boldly from place to place throughout the universe, and drives it at last into the obscurity of the limbo he contrives for it, where it lies among things unreal.

All that exists he regards as a symbolical manifestation of the super-existent. What we call creation is the divine allegory. In nature, in Scripture, in tradition, God is revealed only in figure.

This sacred imagery should be studied, but in such study we are still far from any adequate cognizance of the Divine Nature. God is above all negation and affirmation: in Him such contraries are at once identified and transcended. But by negation we approach most nearly to a true apprehension of what He is.

Negation and affirmation, accordingly, constitute the two opposed and yet simultaneous methods he lays down for the knowledge of the Infinite. These two paths, the *Via Negativa* (or Apophatica) and the *Via Affirmativa* (or Cataphatica) constitute the foundation of his mysticism. They are distinguished and elaborated in every part of his writings. The positive is the descending process. In the path downward from God, through inferior existences, the Divine Being may be said to have many names;—the negative method is one of ascent; in that, God is regarded as nameless, the inscrutable Anonymous. The symbolical or visible is thus opposed, in the Platonist style, to the mystical or ideal. To assert anything concerning a God who is above all affirmation is to speak in figure, to veil him. The more you deny concerning Him, the more of such veils do you remove. He compares the negative method of speaking concerning the Supreme to the operation of the sculptor, who strikes off fragment after fragment of the marble, and progresses by diminution.

(4.) Our highest knowledge of God, therefore, is said to consist in mystic ignorance. In omni-nescience we approach Omniscience. This Path of Negation is the highway of mysticism. It is by refraining from any exercise of the intellect or of the imagination—by self-simplification, by withdrawal into the inmost,

the divine essence of our nature—that we surpass the ordinary condition of humanity, and are united in ecstasy with God. Dionysius does not insist so much on Union as the later mystics, but he believes, at all events, that the eminent saint may attain on earth an indescribable condition of soul—an elevation far transcending the reach of our natural faculties—an approach towards the beatific vision of those who are supposed to gaze directly on the Divine Essence in heaven. His disciple is perpetually exhorted to aspire to this climax of abstraction—above sight, and thought, and feeling, as to the highest aim of man.

WILLOUGHBY. What contradictions are here! With one breath he extols ineffable ignorance as the only wisdom; with the next he pretends to elucidate the Trinity, and reads you off a muster-roll of the heavenly hierarchies.

GOWER. And are not these, supplemented by the hierarchy of ecclesiastics, his real objects of worship? No man could make an actual God of that super-essential ultimatum, that blank Next-to-Nothingness which the last Neo-Platonists imagined as their Supreme. Proclus could not; Dionysius could not. What then? A reaction comes, which, after refining polytheism to an impalpable unity, restores men to polytheism once more. Up mounts speculation, rocket-like: men watch it, a single soaring star with its train of fire, and, at the height, it breaks into a scattering shower of many-coloured sparks. From that Abstraction of which nothing can be predicated, nothing can be expected. The figment above being is above benignity. So the objects of invocation are gods, demi-gods, dæmons, heroes; or, when baptized, cherubim, seraphim, thrones, dominions, powers, archangels, angels, saints; in either case, whether at

Athens or at Constantinople, the excessive subtilisation of the One contributes toward the worship of the Manifold.

ATHERTON. The theology of the Neo-Platonists was always in the first instance a mere matter of logic. It so happened that they confounded Universals with causes. The miserable consequence is clear. The Highest becomes with them, as he is with Dionysius, merely the most comprehensive, the universal idea, which includes the world, as genus includes species. [35]

MRS. ATHERTON. The divinity of this old Father must be a bleak affair indeed—Christianity frozen out.

GOWER. I picture him to myself as entering with his philosophy into the theological structure of that day, like Winter into the cathedral of the woods (which an autumn of decline has begun to harm already);—what life yet lingers, he takes away,—he untwines the garlands from the pillars of the trees, extinguishes the many twinkling lights the sunshine hung wavering in the foliage, silences all sounds of singing, and fills the darkened aisles and dome with a coldly-descending mist, whose silence is extolled as above the power of utterance,—its blinding, chill obscureness lauded as clearer than the intelligence and warmer than the fervour of a simple and scriptural devotion.

ATHERTON. You have described my experience in reading him, though I must say he suggested nothing to me about your cathedral of the woods, &c. His verbose and turgid style, too, is destitute of all genuine feeling.[36] He piles epithet on epithet, throws superlative on superlative, hyperbole on hyperbole, and it is but log upon log,—he puts no fire under, neither does any come from elsewhere.

He quotes Scripture—as might be expected—in the worst style, both of the schoolman and the mystic. Fragments are torn from their connexion, and carried away to suffer the most arbitrary interpretation, and strew his pages that they may appear to illustrate or justify his theory.

GOWER. How forlorn do those texts of Scripture look that you discern scattered over the works of such writers, so manifestly transported from a region of vitality and warmth to an expanse of barrenness. They make the context look still more sterile, and while they say there must be life *somewhere*, seem to affirm, no less emphatically, that it is not in the neighbourhood about them. They remind me of those leaves from the chestnut and the birch I once observed upon a glacier. There they lay, foreign manifestly to the treeless world in which they were found; the ice appeared to have shrunk from them, and they from the ice; each isolated leaf had made itself a cup-like cavity, a tiny open sarcophagus of crystal, in which it had lain, perhaps for several winters. Doubtless, a tempest, which had been vexing some pleasant valley far down beneath, and tearing at its trees, must have whirled them up thither. Yet the very presence of the captives reproached the poverty of the Snow-King who detained them, testifying as they did to a genial clime elsewhere, whose products that ice-world could no more put forth, than can such frozen speculations as this of Dionysius, the ripening 'fruits of the Spirit.'

WILLOUGHBY. His lurking fatalism and his pantheism were forgiven him, no doubt, on consideration of his services to priestly assumption. He descends from his most cloudy abstraction to assert the mysterious

significance and divine potency of all the minutiæ of the ecclesiastical apparatus and the sacerdotal etiquette. What a reputation these writings had throughout the middle age!

ATHERTON. Dionysius is the mythical hero of mysticism. You find traces of him everywhere. Go almost where you will through the writings of the mediæval mystics, into their depths of nihilism, up their heights of rapture or of speculation, through their over-growth of fancy, you find his authority cited, his words employed, his opinions more or less fully transmitted, somewhat as the traveller in the Pyrenees discerns the fame of the heroic Roland still preserved in the names and in the legends of the rock, the valley, or the flower. Passages from the Areopagite were culled, as their warrant and their insignia, by the priestly ambassadors of mysticism, with as much care and reverence as the sacred verbenæ that grew within the enclosure of the Capitoline by the Feciales of Rome.

MRS. ATHERTON. 'Oh, sweet Fancy, let her loose,' as Keats says. I think my husband has been learning in Mr. Gower's school. How far he went to fetch that simile!

GOWER. Perhaps he has my excuse in this case, that he could not help it.

WILLOUGHBY. Or he may at once boldly put in the plea of Sterne, who in one place lays claim to the gratitude of his readers for having voyaged to fetch a metaphor all the way to the Guinea coast and back.

ATHERTON. It contributed greatly to the influence of the Areopagite that he became confounded with the Dionysius, or St. Denys, who was adopted as the patron-saint of France.

KATE. A singular fortune, indeed: so that he was two other people besides himself;—like Mrs. Malaprop's Cerberus, three gentlemen at once.

GOWER. I think we have spent time enough upon him. Grievously do I pity the miserable monks his commentators, whose minds, submerged in the *mare tenebrosum* of the cloister, had to pass a term of years in the mazy arborescence of his verbiage,—like so many insects within their cells in the branches of a great coral.[37]

ATHERTON. Don't throw away so much good compassion, I dare say it kept them out of mischief.

WILLOUGHBY. I cannot get that wretched abstraction out of my head which the Neo-Platonists call deity. How such a notion must have dislocated all their ethics from head to foot! The merest anthropomorphism had been better;—yes, Homer and Hesiod are truer, after all.

ATHERTON. I grant the gravity of the mischief. But we must not be too hard on this ecclesiastical Neo-Platonism. It does but follow Aristotle here. You remember he considers the possession of virtues as quite out of the question in the case of the gods.

GOWER. Is it possible? Why, that is as though a man should lame himself to run the faster. Here is a search after God, in which, at starting, all moral qualities are removed from him; so that the testimony of conscience cannot count for anything;—the inward directory is sealed; the clue burnt. Truly the world by wisdom knew not God!

WILLOUGHBY. This unquestionably is the fatal error of Greek speculation—the subordination of morals to the intellectual refinements of an ultra-human spiritualism. Even with Numenius you have to go

down the scale to a subordinate god or hypostasis before you arrive at a deity who condescends to be *good*.

GOWER. How much 'salt' there must still have been in the mediæval Christianity to survive, as far as it did, the reception of these old ethical mistakes into the very heart of its doctrine!

ATHERTON. Aristotle reasons thus: how can the gods exhibit fortitude, who have nothing to fear—justice and honesty, without a business—temperance, without passions? Such insignificant things as moral actions are beneath them. They do not toil, as men. They do not sleep, like Endymion, 'on the Latmian hill.' What remains? They lead a life of contemplation;—in contemplative energy lies their blessedness.[38] So the contemplative sage who *energises* directly toward the central Mind—the intellectual source and ultimatum, is the true imitator of the divine perfections.

GOWER. Transfer this principle to Christianity, and the monk becomes immediately the highest style of man.

WILLOUGHBY. And you have a double morality at once: heroic or superhuman virtues, the graces of contemplation for the saintly few,—glorious in proportion to their uselessness; and ordinary virtues for the many,—social, serviceable, and secondary.

ATHERTON. Not that the schoolman would release his saint altogether from the obligations of ordinary morality; but he would say, this ordinary morality does not fit the contemplatist for heaven—it is but a preliminary exercise—a means to an end, and that end, the transcendence of everything creaturely, a superhuman exaltation, the ceasing from his labours,

and swooning as it were into the divine repose.

WILLOUGHBY. Then I must put in a word for our mystics. It is not they who corrupted Christian morals by devising this divorce between the virtues of daily life and certain other virtues which are *un*human, anti-terrestrial, hypercreaturely—forgive the word—they drive us hard for language. They found the separation already accomplished; they only tilled with ardour the plot of ground freely allotted them by the Church.

ATHERTON. Just so; in this doctrine of moral dualism —the prolific mother of mystics—Aquinas is as far gone as Bernard.

GOWER. The mention of Bernard's name makes one impatient to get away from the Greek Church, westward.

ATHERTON. We may say farewell to Byzantium now. That Greek Church never grew beyond what it was in the eighth and ninth centuries.

GOWER. I have always imagined it a dwarf, watching a Nibelungen hoard, which after all never enriches anybody. Nothing but that tedious counting, and keeping tidy, and standing sentinel, for ages.

ATHERTON. See what good a little fighting does. The Greek Church had its scholastic element—witness John of Damascus; it had its mystical—as we have seen; but neither the one nor the other was ever developed to such vigour as to assert itself against its rival, and struggle for mastery. In the West the two principles have their battles, their armistices, their reconciliations, and both are the better. In the East they are coupled amicably in the leash of antiquity, and dare not so much as snarl.

WILLOUGHBY. I suppose the mysticism of the Greek Church was more objective, as the Germans would say,—dependent on its sacramental media and long trains of angelic and human functionaries, handing down illumination; that of the West, subjective.

ATHERTON. That will be generally true. The eastern mysticism creeps under the sacerdotal vestments, is never known to quit the precincts of church and cloister, clings close to the dalmatica, and lives on whiffs of frankincense. The western is often to be found far from candle, book, and bell, venturing to worship without a priest.

In short, as Gower would antithetically say, the mystic of the East is always a slave, the mystic of the West often a rebel; Symbolism is the badge of the one, Individualism the watch-word of the other.

GOWER. How spiteful you are to-night, Atherton. I propose that we break up, and hear nothing more you may have to say.

Note to Page 121.

Aristotle extols contemplation, because it does not require means and opportunity, as do the social virtues, generosity, courage, &c. Plotinus lays still more stress on his distinction between the mere political virtues—which constitute simply a preparatory, purifying process, and the superior, or exemplary—those divine attainments whereby man is united with God. Aquinas adopts this classification, and distinguishes the virtues as *exemplares*, *purgatoriæ* and *politicæ*. He even goes so far as to give to each of the cardinal virtues a contemplative and ascetic turn; designating Prudence, in its highest

exercise, as contempt for all things worldly; Temperance is abstraction from the sensuous; Fortitude, courage in sustaining ourselves in the aerial regions of contemplation, remote from the objects of sense; Justice, the absolute surrender of the spirit to this law of its aspiration. He argues that, as man's highest blessedness is a beatitude surpassing the limits of human nature, he can be prepared for it only by having added to that nature certain principles from the divine;—such principles are the theological or superhuman virtues, Faith, Hope, and Charity. See Münscher's *Dogmengeschichte*, 2 Abth. 2 Absch. § 136.

In consequence of the separation thus established between the human and the divine, we shall find the mystics of the fourteenth century representing regeneration almost as a process of dehumanization, and as the substitution of a divine nature for the human in the subject of grace. No theologians could have been further removed from Pelagianism; few more forgetful than these ardent contemplatists that divine influence is vouchsafed, not to obliterate and supersede our natural capacities by some almost miraculous faculty, but to restore and elevate man's nature, to realise its lost possibilities, and to consecrate it wholly, in body and soul—not in spirit, merely—to the service of God.

With one voice both schoolmen and mystics would reason thus:—'Is not heaven the extreme opposite of this clouded, vexed, and sensuous life? Then we approach its blessedness most nearly by a life the most contrary possible to the secular,—by contemplation, by withdrawment, by total abstraction from sense.'

This is one view of our best preparation for the

heavenly world. At the opposite pole stands Behmen's doctrine, far less dangerous, and to be preferred if we must have an extreme, *viz.*, that the believer is virtually in the heavenly state already—that eternity should be to us as time, and time as eternity.

Between these two stands the scriptural teaching. St. Paul does not attempt to persuade himself that earth is heaven, that faith is sight, that hope is fruition. He groans here, being burdened; he longs to have done with shortcoming and with conflict; to enter on the vision face to face, on the unhindered service of the state of glory. But he does not deem it the best preparation for heaven to mimic upon earth an imaginary celestial repose,—he will rather labour to-day his utmost at the work to-day may bring,—he will fight the good fight, he will finish his course, and then receive the crown.

BOOK THE FIFTH
MYSTICISM IN THE LATIN CHURCH

CHAPTER I.

Look up, my Ethel!
When on the glances of the upturned eye
The plumed thoughts take travel, and ascend
Through the unfathomable purple mansions,
Threading the golden fires, and ever climbing
As if 'twere homewards winging—at such time
The native soul, distrammelled of dim earth,
Doth know herself immortal, and sits light
Upon her temporal perch.

VIOLENZIA.

The winter had now broken up his encampment, and was already in full retreat. With the approach of spring the mystical conversations of our friends entered on the period of the Middle Ages. The lengthening mornings found Atherton early at his desk, sipping a solitary and preliminary cup of coffee, and reading or writing. Willoughby felt his invention quickened by the season, and a new

elasticity pervade him. His romance advanced with fewer hindrances from that cross-grained dissatisfaction which used so frequently to disfigure his manuscript with the thorny scratches and interlineations of an insatiable correction.

Gower, too, could enter once more on the enjoyment of his favourite walk before breakfast. In wandering through the dewy meadows, in 'the slanting sunlight of the dawn,' he felt, as we all must, that there is truth in what the chorus of mystics have ever said or sung about the inadequacy of words to express the surmise and aspiration of the soul. In a morning solitude there seems to lie about our fields of thought an aerial wealth too plenteous to be completely gathered into the granary of language.

> O who would mar the season with dull speech,
> That must tie up our visionary meanings
> And subtle individual apprehensions
> Into the common tongue of every man?
> And of the swift and scarce detected visitants
> Of our illusive thoughts seek to make prisoners,
> And only grasp their garments.

It is one of the pleasant pastimes of the spring to watch day by day the various ways in which the trees express, by a physiognomy and gesture of their own, their expectation of the summer. Look at those young and delicate ones, alive with impatience to the tip of every one of the thousand sprays that tremble distinct against the sky, swaying uneasily to and fro in the sharp morning breeze. They seem longing to slip their rooted hold upon the earth, and float away to embrace their bridegroom sun in the air. And see those veterans—what a gnarled, imperturbable gravity in those elder citizens of park or wood: they are used to it; let the day bring new weatherstains or

new buds, they can bide their time. And are they not already wrapped, many of them, in hood and habit of dark glossy ivy—woodland senatorial fur—they can afford to wait. Here, look, close beside us, the eyes of the buds are even now peeping through the black lattice of the boughs, and those amber-coloured clouds overhead are looking them promises of kindly showers as they sail by. What is that sparkling on yonder hill? Only the windows of a house with eastern aspect: the sun lights his beacon-fire regularly there, to signal to his children down in the hollow that he is coming, though they cannot see him yet, and will roll away the cloud from the valley mouth, and make the place of their night-sepulchre glorious with his shining raiment.

Amidst these delights of nature, and the occupation of his art, Gower thought sometimes of the mystics who enjoy such things so little. He had even promised to write a short paper on the mystical schoolmen of St. Victor, Hugo and Richard, and was himself surprised to find how soon he warmed to the subject—with what zest he sought for glimpses of cloister-life in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

When next our friends met in the library, Gower expressed his hearty and unceremonious satisfaction at their having done, as he hoped, with that 'old bore,' Dionysius Areopagita. By none was the sentiment echoed with more fervour than by Atherton, whose conscience perhaps smote him for some dry reading he had inflicted on his auditors. But he made no apology, that Gower might not think he took his remark to himself, and return him a compliment.

WILLOUGHBY. To see how this world goes round! Only think of Proclus having his revenge after all,—

he and his fellows ruling from their urns when dead the Christianity which banished them while living.

ATHERTON. Not altogether satisfactory, either, could he have looked in upon the world, and seen the use to which they put him. It was true that, under the name of Dionysius, his ideas were reverenced and expounded by generations of dreaming monks,—that under that name he contributed largely to those influences which kept stagnant the religious world of the East for some nine hundred years. But it was also true that his thoughts were thus conserved only to serve the purpose of his ancient enemies; so that he assisted to confer omnipotence on those Christian priests whom he had cursed daily in his heart while lecturing, sacrificing, and conjuring at Athens.

GOWER. Again I say, let us turn from the stereotyped Greek Church to the West,—I want to hear about St. Bernard.

ATHERTON. Presently. Let us try and apprehend clearly the way in which Neo-Platonism influenced mediæval Europe.

WILLOUGHBY. A trifling preliminary! Atherton means us to stay here all night. You may as well resign yourself, Gower.

ATHERTON. Never fear; I only want to look about me, and see where we are just now. Suppose ourselves sent back to the Middle Age—what will be our notion of Platonism? We can't read a line of Greek. We see Plato only through Plotinus, conserved by Augustine, handed down by Apuleius and Boethius. We reverence Aristotle, but we care only for his dialectics. We only assimilate from antiquity what seems to fall within the province of the Church. Plato appears to us surrounded by that religious halo

with which Neo-Platonism invested philosophy when it grew so devotional. We take Augustine's word for it that Plotinus really enunciated the long-hidden esoteric doctrine of Plato. The reverent, ascetic, ecstatic Platonism of Alexandria seems to us so like Christianity, that we are almost ready to believe Plato a sort of harbinger for Christ. We are devoted Realists; and Realism and Asceticism make the common ground of Platonist and Christian. If scholastic in our tendencies, Aristotle may be oftener on our lips; if mystical, Plato; but we overlook their differences. We believe, on Neo-Platonist authority, that the two great ones were not the adversaries which had been supposed. Aristotle is in the forecourt, and through study of him we pass into that inner shrine where the rapt Plato (all but a monk in our eyes) is supposed to exemplify the contemplative life.

Dionysius in the East, then, is soporific. Mysticism, there, has nothing to do save drowsily to label all the Church gear with symbolic meanings of wondrous smallness.

Dionysius in the West has come into a young world where vigorous minds have been long accustomed to do battle on the grandest questions; grace and free-will—how they work together; sin and redemption—what they really are; faith and reason—what may be their limits.

GOWER. Compare those great controversies with that miserable Monophysite and Monothelite dispute for which one can never get up an interest. How much we owe still to that large-souled Augustine.[39]

ATHERTON. Well, for this very reason, they might worship Dionysius as a patron saint to their hearts' content at St. Denis, but he could never be in France

the master mystagogue they made him at Byzantium. His name, and some elements in his system, became indeed an authority and rallying point for the mystical tendency of the West, but the system as a whole was never appropriated. He was reverentially dismembered, and so mixed up with doctrines and questions foreign to him, by a different order of minds, with another culture, and often with another purpose, that I would defy his ghost to recognise his own legacy to the Church.

GOWER. Good Hugo of St. Victor, in his *Commentary on the Hierarchies*, does certainly wonderfully soften down the pantheism of his original. Dionysius comes out from under his hands almost rational, quite a decent Christian.

ATHERTON. And before Hugo, if you remember, John Scotus Erigena translated him, and elaborated on his basis a daring system of his own, pantheistic I fear, but a marvel of intellectual power—at least two or three centuries in advance of his age. And these ideas of Erigena's, apparently forgotten, filter through, and reappear once more at Paris in the free-thinking philosophy of such men as David of Dinant and Amalric of Bena.[40]

WILLOUGHBY. Strange enough: so that, could Dionysius have returned to the world in the thirteenth century, he, the worshipper of the priesthood, would have found sundry of his own principles in a new livery, doing service in the ranks of the laity against the clergy, and strengthening the hands of that succession of heretics so long a thorn in the side of the corrupt hierarchy of France.

ATHERTON. In Germany, a century later, many of the mystics put Platonist doctrine to a similar use. In fact, I think we may say generally that the Neo-

Platonist element, which acted as a mortal opiate in the East, became a vivifying principle in the West. There the Alexandrian doctrine of Emanation was abandoned, its pantheism nullified or rejected, but its allegorical interpretation, its exaltation, true or false, of the spirit above the letter,—all this was retained, and Platonism and mysticism together created a party in the Church the sworn foes of mere scholastic quibbling, of an arid and lifeless orthodoxy, and at last of the more glaring abuses which had grown up with ecclesiastical pretension.

GOWER. Now for Bernard. I see the name there on that open page of your note-book. Read away—no excuses.

ATHERTON. Some old notes. But before I read them, look at this rough plan of the valley of Clairvaux, with its famous abbey. I made it after reading the *Descriptio Monasterii Clarœ-Vallensis*, inserted in the Benedictine edition of Bernard's works. It will assist us to realize the locality in which this great church-father of the twelfth century passed most of his days. It was once called the Valley of Wormwood—was the ill-omened covert of banditti; Bernard and his monks come clearing and chanting, praying and planting; and lo! the absinthial reputation vanishes—the valley smiles—is called, and made, Clairvaux, or Brightdale.

KATE. Transformed, in short, into 'a serious paradise,' as Mr. Thackeray would say.

ATHERTON. Yes, you puss. Here, you see, I have marked two ranges of hills which, parting company, enclose the broad sweep of our Brightdale, or Fairvalley. Where the hills are nearest together you see the one eminence covered with vines, the other with fruit trees; and on the sides and tops dusky groups of monks have had many a hard day's work,

getting rid of brambles and underwood, chopping and binding faggots, and preparing either slope to yield them wherewithal to drink, from the right hand, and to eat, from the left. Not far from this entrance to the valley stands the huge pile of the abbey itself, with its towers and crosses, its loop-hole windows and numerous outbuildings. That is the river Aube (Alba) running down between the heights; here, you see, is a winding channel the monks have dug, that a branch of it may flow in under the convent walls. Good river! how hard it works for them. No sooner under the archway than it turns the great wheel that grinds their corn, fills their caldarium, toils in the tannery, sets the fulling-mill agoing. Hark to the hollow booming sound, and the regular tramp, tramp of those giant wooden feet; and there, at last, out rushes the stream at the other side of the building, all in a fume, as if it had been ground itself into so much snowy foam. On this other side, you see it cross, and join the main course of its river again. Proceeding now along the valley, with your back to the monastery, you pass through the groves of the orchard, watered by crossing runnels from the river, overlooked by the infirmary windows —a delightful spot for contemplative invalids. Then you enter the great meadow—what a busy scene in hay-making time, all the monks out there, helped by the additional hands of *donati* and *conductitii*, and the country folk from all the region round about,—they have been working since sunrise, and will work till vespers; when the belfry sounds for prayers at the fourth hour after sunrise, they will sing their psalms in the open air to save time, and doubtless dine there too—a monastic pic-nic. On one side of the meadow is a small lake, well stored with fish. See some of the brethren angling on its bank, where those osiers have

been planted to preserve the margin; and two others have put off in a boat and are throwing their net, with edifying talk at whiles perhaps, on the parallel simplicity of fish and sinners. At the extremity of the meadow are two large farm-houses, one on each side the river; you might mistake them for monasteries from their size and structure, but for the ploughs and yokes of oxen you see about.

MRS. ATHERTON. Thank you; so much for the place; and the man—his personal appearance—is anything known about that?

ATHERTON. You must imagine him somewhat above the middle height, very thin, with a clear, transparent, red-and-white complexion; always retaining some colour on his hollow cheeks; his hair light; his beard inclining to red—in his later years, mixed with white; his whole aspect noble and persuasive, and when he speaks under excitement losing every trace of physical feebleness in the lofty transformation of a benign enthusiasm.[41]

Now I shall trouble you with some of my remarks, on his mysticism principally. You will conceive what a world of business he must have had upon his shoulders, even when at home at Clairvaux, and acting as simple abbot; so much detail to attend to,—so many difficulties to smooth, and quarrels to settle, and people to advise, in connexion with his own numerous charge and throughout all the surrounding neighbourhood; while to all this was added the care of so many infant monasteries, springing up at the rate of about four a year, in every part of Europe, founded on the pattern of Clairvaux, and looking to him for counsel and for men. I scarcely need remind you how struggling Christendom sent incessant monks and priests, couriers and men-at-arms, to

knock and blow horn at the gate of Clairvaux Abbey; for Bernard, and none but he, must come out and fight that audacious Abelard; Bernard must decide between rival Popes, and cross the Alps time after time to quiet tossing Italy; Bernard alone is the hope of fugitive Pope and trembling Church; he only can win back turbulent nobles, alienated people, recreant priests, when Arnold of Brescia is in arms at Rome, and when Catharists, Petrobrusians, Waldenses, and heretics of every shade, threaten the hierarchy on either side the Alps; and at the preaching of Bernard the Christian world pours out to meet the disaster of a new crusade.

GOWER. And accomplishing a work like this with that emaciated, wretchedly dyspeptic frame of his!—first of all exerting his extraordinary will to the utmost to unbuild his body; and then putting forth the same self-control to make the ruins do the work of a sound structure.

ATHERTON. Could we have seen him at home at Clairvaux, after one of those famous Italian journeys, no look or word would have betrayed a taint of spiritual pride, though every rank in church and state united to do him honour—though great cities would have made him almost by force their spiritual king—though the blessings of the people and the plaudits of the council followed the steps of the peacemaker—and though, in the belief of all, a dazzling chain of miracles had made his pathway glorious. We should have found him in the kitchen, rebuking by his example some monk who grumbled at having to wash the pots and pans; on the hill-side, cutting his tale and bearing his burthen with the meanest novice; or seen him oiling his own boots, as they say the arch-tempter did one day; we should

have interrupted him in the midst of his tender counsel to some distressed soul of his cloistered flock, or just as he had sat down to write a sermon on a passage in Canticles against the next church-festival.[42] But now to my notes. (*Atherton reads.*)

> In considering the religious position of Bernard, I find it not at all remarkable that he should have been a mystic,—very remarkable that he should not have been much more the mystic than he was. This moderation may be attributed partly to his constant habit of searching the Scriptures—studying them devotionally for himself, unencumbered with the commentaries reverenced by tradition.[43] Rigid exemplar and zealous propagator of monasticism as he was, these hours with the Bible proved a corrective not unblessed, and imparted even to the devotion of the cloister a healthier tone. Add to this his excellent natural judgment, and the combination, in his case, of the active with the contemplative life. He knew the world and men; he stood with his fellows in the breach, and the shock of conflict spoiled him for a dreamer. The distractions over which he expended so much complaint were his best friends. They were a hindrance in the way to the monastic ideal of virtue—a help toward the Christian. They prevented his attaining that pitch of uselessness to which the conventual life aspires, and brought him down a little nearer to the meaner level of apostolic labour. They made him the worse monk, and by so much the better man.
>
> With Bernard the monastic life is the one thing needful. He began life by drawing after him into the convent all his kindred; sweeping them one by one from the high seas of the world with the

irresistible vortex of his own religious fervour. His incessant cry for Europe is—Better monasteries, and more of them. Let these ecclesiastical castles multiply; let them cover and command the land, well garrisoned with men of God, and then, despite all heresy and schism, theocracy will flourish, the earth shall yield her increase, and all people praise the Lord. Who so wise as Bernard to win souls for Christ—that is to say, recruits for the cloister? With what eloquence he paints the raptures of contemplation, the vanity and sin of earthly ambition or of earthly love! Wherever in his travels Bernard may have preached, there, presently, exultant monks must open wide their doors to admit new converts. Wherever he goes he bereaves mothers of their children, the aged of their last solace and last support; praising those the most who leave most misery behind them. How sternly does he rebuke those Rachels who mourn and will not be comforted for children dead to them for ever! What vitriol does he pour into the wounds when he asks if they will drag their son down to perdition with themselves by resisting the vocation of heaven! whether it was not enough that they brought him forth sinful to a world of sin, and will they now, in their insane affection, cast him into the fires of hell?[44] Yet Bernard is not hard-hearted by nature. He can pity this disgraceful weakness of the flesh. He makes such amends as superstition may. I will be a father to him, he says. Alas! cold comfort. You, their hearts will answer, whose flocks are countless, would nothing content you but our ewe lamb? Perhaps some cloister will be, for them too, the last resource of their desolation. They will fly for ease in their pain to the system which caused

it. Bernard hopes so. So inhuman is the humanity of asceticism; cruel its tender mercies; thus does it depopulate the world of its best in order to improve it.

To measure, then, the greatness of Bernard, let me clearly apprehend the main purpose of his life. It was even this convent-founding, convent-ruling business. This is his proper praise, that, though devoted body and soul, to a system so false, he himself should have retained and practised so much of truth.

The task of history is a process of selection. The farther we recede from a period, the more do we eliminate of what interests us no longer. A few leading events stand clearly out as characteristic of the time, and about them all our details are clustered. But when dealing with an individual, or with the private life of any age, the method must be reversed, and we must encumber ourselves again with all the cast-off baggage that strews the wayside of time's march.

So with Bernard. The Abelard controversy, the schism, the quarrels of pope and emperor, the crusade, are seen by us—who know what happened afterwards—in their true importance. These facts make the epoch, and throw all else into shade. But we could not so have viewed them in the press and confusion of the times that saw them born. Bernard and his monks were not always thinking of Abelard or Anaclet, of Arnold of Brescia, Roger of Sicily, or Lothaire. In the great conflicts which these names recal to our minds, Bernard bore his manful part as a means to an end. Many a sleepless night must they have cost him, many a journey full of anxiety and

hardship, many an agonizing prayer, on the eve of a crisis calling for all his skill and all his courage. But these were difficulties which he was summoned to encounter on his road to the great object of his life—the establishment of ecclesiastical supremacy by means of the conventual institute. The quarrels within the Church, and between the Church and the State, must be in some sort settled before his panacea could be applied to the sick body of the time. In the midst of such controversies a host of minor matters would demand his care,—to him of scarcely less moment, to us indifferent. There would be the drawing out of convent charters and convent rules, the securing of land, of money, of armed protection for the rapidly increasing family of monasteries; election of abbots and of bishops; guidance of the same in perplexity; holding of synods and councils, with the business thereto pertaining; delinquencies and spiritual distresses of individuals; jealous squabbles to be soothed between his Cistercian order and them of Cluny; suppression of clerical luxury and repression of lay encroachment, &c. &c. Thus the year 1118 would be memorable to Bernard and his monks, not so much because in it Gelasius ascended the chair of St. Peter, and the Emperor Henry gave him a rival, or even because then the order of Knights Templars took its rise, so much as from their joy and labour about the founding of two new monasteries,—because that year saw the establishment of the first daughter of Clairvaux, the Abbey of Fontaines, in the diocese of Chalons; and of a sister, Fontenay, beside the Yonne;—the one a growth northward, among the dull plains of Champagne, with their lazy streams and

monotonous poplars; the other a southern colony, among the luscious slopes of vine-clad Burgundy. [45]

Bernard had his wish. He made Clairvaux the cynosure of all contemplative eyes. For any one who could exist at all as a monk, with any satisfaction to himself, that was the place above all others. Brother Godfrey, sent out to be first abbot of Fontenay,—as soon as he has set all things in order there, returns, only too gladly, from that rich and lovely region, to re-enter his old cell, to walk around, delightedly revisiting the well-remembered spots, among the trees or by the waterside, marking how the fields and gardens have come on, and relating to the eager brethren (for even Bernard's monks have curiosity) all that befel him in his work. He would sooner be third prior at Clairvaux than abbot of Fontenay. So, too, with brother Humbert, commissioned in like manner to regulate Igny Abbey (fourth daughter of Clairvaux). He soon comes back, weary of the labour and sick for home, to look on the Aube once more, to hear the old mills go drumming and droning, with that monotony of muffled sound—the associate of his pious reveries—often heard in his dreams when far away; to set his feet on the very same flagstone in the choir where he used to stand, and to be happy. But Bernard, though away in Italy, toiling in the matter of the schism, gets to hear of his return, and finds time to send him across the Alps a letter of rebuke for this criminal self-pleasing, whose terrible sharpness must have darkened the poor man's meditations for many a day.[46]

Bernard had farther the satisfaction of improving and extending monasticism to the utmost; of

sewing together, with tolerable success, the rended vesture of the papacy; of suppressing a more popular and more scriptural Christianity, for the benefit of his despotic order; of quenching for a time, by the extinction of Abelard, the spirit of free inquiry; and of seeing his ascetic and superhuman ideal of religion everywhere accepted as the genuine type of Christian virtue.

At the same time the principles advocated by Bernard were deprived, in his hands, of their most noxious elements. His sincere piety, his large heart, his excellent judgment, always qualify, and seem sometimes to redeem, his errors. But the well-earned glory and the influence of a name achieved by an ardour and a toil almost passing human measure, were thrown into the wrong scale. The mischiefs latent in the teaching of Bernard become ruinously apparent in those who entered into his labours. His successes proved eventually the disasters of Christendom. One of the best of men made plain the way for some of the worst. Bernard, while a covert for the fugitive pontiff, hunted out by insurgent people or by wrathful emperor, would yet impose some rational limitations on the papal authority.[47] But the chair upheld by Bernard was to be filled by an Innocent III., whose merciless arrogance should know no bounds. Bernard pleaded nobly for the Jews, decimated in the crusading fury.[48] Yet the atrocities of Dominic were but the enkindling of fuel which Bernard had amassed. Disciple of tradition as he was, he would allow the intellect its range; zealous as he might be for monastic rule, the spontaneous inner life of devotion was with him the end—all else the means. Ere long, the end was completely forgotten in the means. In

succeeding centuries, the Church of Rome retained what life it could by repeating incessantly the remedy of Bernard. As corruption grew flagrant, new orders were devised. Bernard saw not, nor those who followed in his steps, that the evil lay, not in the defect or abuse of vows and rules, but in the introduction of vows and rules at all,—that these unnatural restraints must always produce unnatural excesses.

What is true concerning the kind of religious impulse imparted to Europe by the great endeavour of Bernard's life is no less so as regards the character of his mysticism.

In the theology of Bernard reason has a place, but not the right one. His error in this respect is the primary source of that mystical bias so conspicuous in his religious teaching. Like Anselm, he bids you believe first, and understand, if possible, afterwards. He is not prepared to admit the great truth that if Reason yields to Faith, and assigns itself anywhere a limit, it must be on grounds satisfactory to Reason. To any measure of Anselm's remarkable speculative ability, Bernard could lay no claim. He was at home only in the province of practical religion. But to enquiries and reasonings such as those in which Anselm delighted, he was ready to award, not blame, but admiration. Faith, with Bernard, receives the treasure of divine truth, as it were, wrapped up (*involutum*); Understanding may afterwards cautiously unfold the envelope, and peep at the prize, but may never examine the contents first, to determine whether it shall be received or not.[49] If the chase be so dear to that mighty hunter, Intellect, he shall have his sport,

on certain conditions. Let him admit that the Church has caught and killed the quarry of truth, and brought it to his door. That granted, he may, if he will, cry boot and saddle, ride out to see where the game broke cover, or gallop with hounds, and halloo over hill and dale, pursuing an imaginary object, and learning how truth *might* have been run down. Great, accordingly, was Bernard's horror when he beheld Abelard throwing open to discussion the dogmas of the Church; when he saw the alacrity with which such questions were taken up all over France, and learnt that not the scholars of Paris merely, but an ignorant and stripling laity were discussing every day, at street corners, in hall, in cottage, the mysteries of the Trinity and the Immaculate Conception. Faith, he cried, believes; does not discuss; Abelard holds God in suspicion, and will not believe even Him without reason given.[50] At the same time, the *credo ut intelligam* of Bernard is no indolent or constrained reception of a formula. Faith is the divine persuasion of the pure in heart and life. Bernard would grant that different minds will apprehend the same truth in different aspects; that an absolute uniformity is impossible. But when faith is made to depend so entirely on the state of the heart, such concessions are soon withdrawn. A difference in opinion from the acknowledged standard of piety is regarded as a sure sign of a depraved heart. A divine illumination as to doctrine is assumed for those whose practical holiness caused them to shine as lights in the Church.[51]

Thus, on the elementary question of faith, the mystical tendency of Bernard is apparent; the subjective and even the merely emotional element

assumes undue prominence; and a way is opened for the error incident to all mysticism—the unwarrantable identification of our own thoughts with the mind of God. But if, in his starting-point, Bernard be a mystic, much more so is he in the goal he strains every power to reach.

The design of Christianity is, in his idea, not to sanctify and elevate all our powers, to raise us to our truest manhood, accomplishing in every excellence all our faculties both of mind and body, but to teach us to nullify our corporeal part, to seclude ourselves, by abstraction, from its demands, and to raise us, while on earth, to a super-human exaltation above the flesh,—a vision and a glory approaching that of the angelic state. Thus he commences his analysis of meditation by describing the felicity of angels. They have not to study the Creator in his works, slowly ascending by the media of sense. They behold all things in the Word—more perfect there, by far, than in themselves. Their knowledge is immediate—a direct intuition of the primal ideas of things in the mind of the Creator. To such measure of this immediate intuition as mortals may attain he exhorts the devout mind to aspire. They do well who piously employ their senses among the things of sense for the divine glory and the good of others. Happier yet are they who, with a true philosophy, survey and explore things visible, that they may rise through them to a knowledge of the Invisible. But most of all does he extol the state of those who, not by gradual stages of ascent, but by a sudden rapture, are elevated at times, like St. Paul, to the immediate vision of heavenly things. Such favoured ones are adepts in the third and highest species of meditation. Totally withdrawn

into themselves, they are not only, like other good men, dead to the body and the world, and raised above the grosser hindrances of sense, but even beyond those images and similitudes drawn from visible objects which colour and obscure our ordinary conceptions of spiritual truths.[52]

But if, so far, Bernard betrays the mystic, in this ambition to transcend humanity and to anticipate the sight and fruition of the celestial state, let him have full credit for the moderation which preserved him from going farther. Compared with that of many subsequent mystics, the mysticism of Bernard is sobriety itself. From the practical vice of mysticism in his Church,—its tendency to supersede by extraordinary attainments the humbler and more arduous Christian virtues—Bernard was as free as any one could be in those times. Against the self-indulgence which would sacrifice every active external obligation to a life of contemplative sloth he protested all his days, by word and by example. He is equally removed from the pantheistic extreme of Eckart and the imaginative extravagances of St. Theresa. His doctrine of Union with God does not surrender our personality or substitute God for the soul in man. When he has occasion to speak, with much hesitation and genuine humility, of the highest point of his own experience, he has no wonderful visions to relate. The visit of the Saviour to his soul was unattended by visible glory, by voices, tastes, or odours; it vindicated its reality only by the joy which possessed him, and the new facility with which he brought forth the practical fruits of the Spirit.[53] He prays God for peace and joy and charity to all men, and leaves other exaltations of devotion to apostles and apostolic men,—‘the

high hills to the harts and the climbing goats.' The fourth and highest stage of love in his scale,—that transformation and utter self-loss in which we love ourselves only for the sake of God, he believes unattainable in this life,—certainly beyond his own reach. To the mystical death, self-annihilation, and holy indifference of the Quietists, he is altogether a stranger.[54]

It is worth while at least to skim and dip among his sermons on the Canticles. The *Song of Solomon* is a trying book for a man like Bernard, and those expositions do contain much sad stuff, interspersed, however, with many fine reaches of thought and passages of consummate eloquence. Mystical interpretation runs riot. Everything is symbolized. Metaphors are elaborated into allegories, similitudes broken up into divers branches, and about each ramification a new set of fancies clustered. The sensuous imagery borrowed from love and wine—the kisses, bedchambers, and winecellars of the soul, remind us at every page of that luscious poetry in which the Persian Sufis are said to veil the aspirations of the spirit of man after its Maker. Yet, with all the faults of a taste so vicious there is no affectation, no sentimentality, nothing intentionally profane. It was with Bernard a duty and a delight to draw as much meaning as possible from the sacred text, by the aid of an inexhaustible fancy and an inventive ingenuity in that way, which only Swedenborg has surpassed. Even in his letters on comparatively ordinary topics, he always gives a certain largeness to his subject by his lofty imaginative style of handling it. He seldom confines himself to the simple point in hand, but starts off to fetch for it adornments, illustrations,

or sanctions from quarters the most remote, or heights the most awful. Always in earnest, yet always the rhetorician, he seems to write as though viewing, not the subject itself, but some vast reflection of it projected on the sky. In those sermons on *Solomon's Song*, it is generally rather the glowing and unseemly diction, than the thought, we have to blame. With such allowance, it is not difficult to discern, under that luxuriance of flowers and weeds, many a sentiment true and dear to the Christian heart in every age.

Bernard appears to have believed himself invested on some occasions with miraculous powers. So far he has a place in the province of theurgic mysticism. Perhaps the worst thing of this sort to be laid to his charge is his going so far as he did towards endorsing the prophecies of the Abbess Hildegard.[55]

Note to page 131.

The writings of Augustine handed Neo-Platonism down to posterity as the original and esoteric doctrine of the first followers of Plato. He enumerates the causes which led, in his opinion, to the negative position assumed by the Academics, and to the concealment of their real opinions. He describes Plotinus as a resuscitated Plato. *Contra Academ.* iii. 17-20.

He commends Porphyry for his measure of scepticism as regards Theurgy, and bestows more than due praise on the doctrine of Illumination held by Plotinus, for its similarity to the Christian truth concerning divine grace. *De Civitate Dei*, x. 10; x. 2.

He gives a scale of the spiritual degrees of ascent to God, formed after the Platonist model (the ἐπαναβαθμοὶ of the Symposium), and so furnished a precedent for all the attempts of a similar kind in which scholastic mysticism delighted to exercise its ingenuity. *De Quantitate Animæ,* c. 35.

He enumerates three kinds of perception,—corporeal, intellectual (*scientia*) and spiritual (*sapientia*); and in describing the last uses the words *introrsum ascendere* (*De Trin.* xii. 15; and comp. *De Lib. Arbit.* ii. 12). But this phrase does not appear to have carried, with Augustine, the sense it bore when gladly adopted by mystical divines of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. He says elsewhere that man, like the prodigal, must come to himself before he can arise and go to his Father. (*Retract.* i. 8.) Here what the wanderer finds within is the voice of conscience, and in this sense it is quite true that the step inward is a step upward. But it is not true that the inmost is the highest in the sense that man is able by abstraction and introspection to discover within himself a light which shall supersede, or supplement, or even supply the place of external Revelation.

Note to page 131.

JOHN SCOTUS ERIGENA.—This remarkable man began to teach in the 'School of the Palace,' under Charles the Bald, about the middle of the ninth century. He translated Dionysius, took part in the Gottschalk controversy, and, at last, when persecuted for the freedom of his opinions, found a refuge with Alfred the Great.

Erigena idolizes Dionysius and his commentator

Maximus. He believes in their hierarchies, their divine Dark, and supreme Nothing. He declares, with them, that God is the essence of all things. Ipse namque omnium essentia est qui solus vere est, ut ait Dionysius Areopagita. *Esse*, inquit, *omnium est Superesse Divinitatis*.—*De Div. Nat.* i. 3, p. 443. (*Jo. Scoti Opp.*, Paris, 1853.)

But though much of the language is retained, the doctrine of Dionysius has assumed a form altogether new in the brain of the Scotchman. The phraseology of the emanation theory is, henceforth, only metaphor. What men call creation is, with Erigena, a necessary and eternal self-unfolding (*analysis*, he calls it) of the divine nature. As all things are now God, self-unfolded, so, in the final restitution, all things will be resolved into God, self-withdrawn. Not the mind of man merely, as the Greek thought, but matter and all creatures will be reduced to their primordial causes, and God be manifested as all in all. *De Div. Nat.* i. 72. Postremo universalis creatura Creatori adunabitur, et erit in ipso et cum ipso unum. Et hic est finis omnium visibilium et invisibilium, quoniam omnia visibilia in intelligibilia, et intelligibilia in ipsum Deum transibunt, mirabili et ineffabili adunatione, non autem, ut sæpe diximus, essentiarum aut substantiarum confusione aut interitu—v. 20, p. 894. In this restitution, the elect are united to God with a degree of intimacy peculiar to themselves—v. 39. The agent of this restoration, both for beings above and below mankind, is the Incarnate Word—v. 25, p. 913. Erigena regards our incarceration in the body, and the distinction of sex, as the consequence of sin. He abandons the idea of a sensuous hell. What is termed the fire of hell is with him a principle of law to which both the good and evil are subject, which wickedness assimilates and

makes a torment; goodness a blessing. So, he says, the light is grateful to the sound eye, painful to the diseased; and the food which is welcome to health is loathed by sickness. *De Predestinatione*, cap. xvii. p. 428. This idea, in which there lies assuredly an element of truth, became a favourite one with the mystics, and re-appears in many varieties of mysticism. Erigena, farther, anticipates Kant in regarding time and space as mere modes of conception peculiar to our present state. He himself is much more rationalist than mystic (except in the fanciful interpretations of Scripture to which he is compelled to resort); but his system was developed, three centuries later, into an extreme and revolutionary mysticism.

The combination of Platonism and Christianity, so often attempted, abandoned, and renewed, assumes five distinct phases.

I. In the East, with Dionysius; dualistic, with real and ideal worlds apart, removing man far from God by an intervening chain of hierarchic emanations.

II. In the West, with Scotus Erigena; abandoning emanation for ever, and taking up instead the idea to which the Germans give the name of *Immanence*. God regarded more as the inner life and vital *substratum* of the universe, than as radiating it from a far-off point of abstraction.

III. In the thirteenth century, at Paris, with Amalric of Bena and David of Dinant. They pronounce God the material, essential cause of all things,—not the *efficient* cause merely. The Platonic identification of the *velle* and the *esse* in God. David and his sect blend with their pantheism the doctrine that under the coming new dispensation—that of the Holy Ghost—all believers are to regard themselves as incarnations

of God, and to dispense (as men filled with the Spirit) with all sacraments and external rites. They carry the spiritualizing tendency of Erigena to a monstrous extreme, claim special revelation, declare the real resurrection accomplished in themselves, and that they are already in heaven, which they regard as a state and not a place. They maintain that the good are sufficiently rewarded and the bad adequately punished by the blessedness or the privation they inwardly experience in time,—in short, that retribution is complete on this side the grave, and heavy woes, accordingly, will visit corrupt Christendom. The practical extravagance of this pantheism was repeated, in the fourteenth century, by fanatical mystics among the lower orders.

IV. With Eckart, who reminds us of Plotinus. The 'Intuition' of Plotinus is Eckart's 'Spark of the Soul,' the power whereby we can transcend the sensible, the manifold, the temporal, and merge ourselves in the changeless One. At the height of this attainment, the mystic of Plotinus and the mystic of Eckart find the same God,—that is, the same blank abstraction, above being and above attributes. But with Plotinus such escape from finite consciousness is possible only in certain favoured intervals of ecstasy. Eckart, however (whose very pantheism is the exaggeration of a Christian truth beyond the range of Plotinus), will have man realize habitually his oneness with the Infinite. According to him, if a man by self-abandonment attains this consciousness, God has realized Himself within him—has brought forth his Son—has evolved his Spirit. Such a man's knowledge of God is God's knowledge of Himself. For all spirit is one. To distinguish between the divine ground of the soul and the Divinity is to disintegrate the indivisible

Universal Spirit—is to be far from God—is to stand on the lower ground of finite misconception, within the limits of transitory Appearance. The true child of God 'breaks through' such distinction to the 'Oneness.' Thus, creation and redemption are resolved into a necessary process—the evolution and involution of Godhead. Yet this form of mediæval pantheism appears to advantage when we compare it with that of ancient or of modern times. The pantheism of the Greek took refuge in apathy from Fate. The pantheism of the present day is a plea for self-will. But that of Eckart is half redeemed by a sublime disinterestedness, a confiding abnegation of all choice or preference, which betrays the presence of a measure of Christian element altogether inconsistent with the basis of his philosophy.

V. With Tauler and the 'German Theology.' This is the best, indisputably, of all the forms assumed by the combination in question. The Platonism is practically absorbed in the Christianity. Tauler speaks of the ideal existence of the soul in God—of the loss of our nameless Ground in the unknown Godhead, and we find language in the *Theologia Germanica* concerning God as the substance of all things—concerning the partial and the Perfect, the manifold and the One, which might be pantheistically construed. But such interpretation would be most unfair, and is contradicted by the whole tenour both of the sermons and the treatise. An apprehension of the nature of sin so searching and profound as that in the 'Theology,' is impossible to pantheism. Luther could see therein only most Christian theism. These mystics still employed some of the terms transmitted by a revered philosophy. Tauler cites with deference the names of Dionysius, Proclus, and Plotinus. This mysticism clothes its

thought with fragments from the old philosopher's cloak—but the heart and body belong to the school of Christ. With Dionysius, and even with Erigena, man seems to need but a process of approximation to the divine subsistence—a rise in the scale of being by becoming *quantitatively* rather than *qualitatively* more. With the German mystics he must be altogether unmade and born anew. To shift from one degree of illumination to another somewhat higher, is nothing in their eyes, for the need lies not in the understanding, but in heart and will. According to them, man must stand virtually in heaven or hell—be God's or the devil's. The Father of our spirits is not relegated from men by ecclesiastical or angelic functionaries, but nearer to every one, clerk or lay, gentle or simple, than he is to himself. So the exclusiveness and the frigid intellectualism so characteristic of the ancient ethnic philosophy, has vanished from the Teutonic mysticism. Plato helps rather than harms by giving a vantage ground and defence to the more true and subjective, as opposed to a merely institutional Christianity.

Both Eckart and the *Theologia Germanica* would have man 'break through' and transcend 'distinction.' But it is true, with slight exception, that the distinctions Eckart would escape are natural; those which the 'Theology' would surpass, for the most part artificial. The asceticism of both is excessive. The self-reduction of Eckart is, however, more metaphysical than moral; that of the 'Theology' moral essentially. Both would say, the soul of the regenerate man is one with God—cannot be separated from Him. But only Eckart would say, such soul is not *distinct* from God. Both would essay to pass from the Nature to the Being of God—from his manifested Existence to his Essence, and they both declare that our nature has its

being in the divine. But such assertion, with Tauler and the *Theologia Germanica*, by no means deifies man. It is but the Platonic expression of a great Christian doctrine—the real Fatherhood of God.

Note to page 142.

Itaque tum per totam fere Galliam in civitatibus, vicis, et castellis, a scholaribus, non solum intra scholas, sed etiam triviatim; nec a litteratis, aut provectis tantum, sed a pueris et simplicibus, aut certe stultis, de sancta Trinitate, quæ Deus est, disputaretur, &c.—*Epist.* 337, and comp. *Epist.* 332. Bernard at first refused to encounter Abelard, not simply because from his inexperience in such combats he was little fitted to cope with that dialectic Goliath—a man of war from his youth—but because such discussions were in themselves, he thought, an indignity to the faith.—*Epist.* 189. Abelard he denounces as wrong, not only in his heretical results, but in principle,—Cum ea ratione nititur explorare, quæ pia mens fidei vivacitate apprehendit. Fides piorum credit, non discutit. Sed iste Deum habens suspectum, credere non vult, nisi quod prius ratione discusserit.—*Epist.* 338.

Note to page 143.

In the eyes both of Anselm and Bernard, to deny the reality of Ideas is to cut off our only escape from the gross region of sense. Neither faith nor reason have then left them any basis of operation. We attain to truth only through the medium of Ideas, by virtue of our essential relationship to the Divine Source of

Ideas—the Infinite Truth. That Supreme Truth which gives to existing things their reality is also the source of true thoughts in our minds. Thus our knowledge is an illumination dependent on the state of the heart towards God. On this principle all doubt must be criminal, and every heresy the offspring, not of a bewildered brain, but of a wicked heart.

The fundamental maxim of the mediæval religio-philosophy—Invisibilia non decipiunt, was fertile in delusions. It led men to reject, as untrustworthy, the testimony of sense and of experience. Thus, in the transubstantiation controversy of the ninth century, Realism and Superstition conquered together. It taught them to deduce all knowledge from certain mental abstractions, Platonic Ideas and Aristotelian Forms. Thus Bonaventura (who exhibits this tendency at its height) resolves all science into union with God. The successive attainment of various kinds of knowledge is, in his system, an approximation, stage above stage, to God—a scaling of the heights of Illumination, as we are more closely united with the Divine Word—the repertory of Ideas. Thus, again, the Scriptures were studied by the schoolmen less as a practical guide for the present life than as so much material whence they might deduce metaphysical axioms and propositions—discover more of those divine abstractions which they regarded as the seminal principles of all thought and all existence. They were constantly mistaking results which could only have been attained by revelation or tradition from without, for truth evolved from within the depths of the finite mind, by virtue of its immediate commerce with the Infinite. Anselm found no difficulty in assuming that the God of his ontological proof was identical with the God of the Bible.

Note to page 144.

Thus, speaking of the angelic state, he says,—Creatura cœli illa est, præsto habens per quod ista intueatur. Videt Verbum, et in Verbo facta per Verbum. Nec opus habet ex his quæ facta sunt, factoris notitiam mendicare.—*De Consid.* V. i., and comp. *Serm. in Cantica*, v. 4.

The three kinds of meditation, or stages of Christian proficiency, referred to in the text, Bernard calls *consideratio dispensativa*, *æstimativa*, and *speculativa*. The last is thus defined:—Speculativa est consideratio se in se colligens, et, quantum divinitus adjuvatur, rebus humanis eximens ad contemplandum Deum. He who reaches it is among the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven. At omnium maximus, qui spreto ipso usu rerum et sensuum, quantum quidem humanæ fragilitati fas est, non ascensoriis gradibus, sed inopinatis excessibus, avolare interdum contemplando ad illa sublimia consuevit. Ad hoc ultimum genus illos pertinere reor excessus Pauli. Excessus non ascensus: nam raptum potius fuisse, quam ascendisse ipse se perhibet.—*De Consid.* v. ii. In one of the *Sermons on the Canticles*, Bernard discourses at more length on this kind of exaltation. Proinde et ego non absurde sponsæ exstasim vocaverim mortem, quæ tamen non vita, sed vitæ eripiat laqueis.... Excedente quippe anima, etsi non vita certe vitæ sensu, necesse est etiam ut nec vitæ tentatis sentiatur.... Utinam hac morte frequenter cadam.... Bona mors, quæ vitam non aufert, sed transfert in melius; bona, qua non corpus cadit, sed anima sublevatur. Verum hæc hominum est. Sed moriatur anima mea morte etiam si dici potest, Angelorum, ut presentium memoria excedens

rerum se inferiorum corporearumque non modo cupiditatibus, *sed et similitudinibus* exuat.... Talis, ut opinor, excessus, aut tantum, aut maxime contemplatio dicitur. Rerum etenim cupiditatibus vivendo non teneri, humanæ virtutis est; corporum vero similitudinibus speculando non involvi, angelicæ puritatis est.... Profecisti, separasti te; sed nondum elongasti, nisi et irruentia undique phantasmata corporearum similitudinum transvolare mentis puritate prævaleas. Hucusque noli tibi promittere requiem.—*In Cantica*, *Serm.* lii. 4, 5.

Note to page 144.

Fateor et mihi adventasse Verbum, in insipientia dico, et pluries. Cumque sæpius intraverit ad me, non sensi aliquoties cum intravit. Adesse sensi, adfuisse recordor, interdum et præsentiæ potui introitum ejus, sentire nunquam, sed ne exitum quidem.... Qua igitur introivit? An forte nec introivit quidem, quia non deforis venit? Neque enim est unum aliquid ex iis que foris sunt. Porro nec deintra me venit quoniam bonum est, et scio quoniam non est in me bonum. Ascendi etiam superius meum: et ecce supra hoc Verbum eminens. Ad inferius quoque meum curiosus explorator descendi: et nihilominus infra inventum est. Si foras aspexi, extra omne exterius meum comperi illud esse: si vero intus, et ipsum interius erat.... Ita igitur intrans ad me aliquoties Verbum sponsus, nullis unquam introitum suum indiciis innotescere fecit, non voce, non specie, non incessu. Nullis denique suis motibus compertum est mihi, nullis meis sensibus illapsum penetralibus meis: tantum ex motu cordis, sicut præfatus sum, intellexi præsentiam ejus; et ex fuga vitiorum carnaliumque

compressione affectuum, &c.—*In Cantica, Serm.* lxxiv. 5, 6. The metaphors of Bernard are actual sounds, sights, and fragrances with St. Theresa. From this sensuous extreme his practical devotion is as far removed, on the one side, as from the cold abstraction of Dionysius on the other. His contemplation is no staring at the Divine Essence till we are blind—no oblivion or disdain of outward means. We see God, he says, not as He is, but as He wills—sicuti vult non sicuti est. So when describing that ascent of the soul to God, or descent of God into the soul, which constitutes Union, he says,—In Spiritu fit ista conjunctio.... Non ergo sic affecta et sic dilecta (anima) contenta erit omnino vel illa, quæ multis per ea quæ facta sunt; vel, illa quæ paucis per visa et somnia facta est manifestatio sponsi, nisi et speciali prærogativa intimis illum affectibus atque ipsis medullis cordis cœlitus illapsum suscipiat, habeatque præsto quem desiderat non figuratum, sed infusum: non apparentem sed afficientem; nec dubium quin eo jucundiorem, quo intus, non foris. Verbum nempe est, non sonans, sed penetrans; non loquax, sed efficax; non obstrepens auribus, sed affectibus blandiens, &c.—*In Cantica, Serm.* xxxi. 6 and 1. Comp. also his remarks at the close of the sermon, on the difference between faith and sight, p. 2868.

Bernard describes three kisses of the soul,—the kiss of the feet of God, of the hand, and of the mouth. (*Serm. de diversis*, 87, and *In Cantica, Serm.* iv.) This is his fanciful way of characterising, by the elaboration of a single figurative phrase of Scripture, the progress of the soul through conversion and grace to perfection. Here, as in so many instances, his meaning is substantially correct; it is the expression which is objectionable. He is too much in

earnest for the artificial gradations and metaphysical refinements of later mysticism. Compare him, in this respect, with John of the Cross. Bernard would have rejected as unprofitable those descriptions of the successive absorption of the several faculties in God; those manifold kinds of prayer—prayers of quiet, prayers of union, prayers of ecstasy, with their impalpable distinctions; that analysis, miraculously achieved, of miraculous ravishments, detailed at such length in the tedious treatises of the Spanish mystics. The doctrine taught by John of the Cross, that God compensates the faithful for the mortification of the senses by sensuous gratifications of a supernatural kind, would have revolted the more pure devotion of the simple-minded Abbot of Clairvaux.—See *La Montée du Mont Carmel*, livre ii. chapp. 16, 17; pp. 457, &c.

It should be borne in mind that the highest kind of Consideratio is identical, in Bernard's phraseology, with Contemplatio; and the terms are thus often used interchangeably. Generally, Consideratio is applied to inquiry, Contemplatio to intuition. *De Consid.* lib. ii. cap. 2.

Note to page 146.

See *Vita*, ii. cap. 27, where his biographer gives Bernard's own modest estimate of these wonders.

Wide, indeed, is the difference between the spiritual mysticism of Bernard and the gross materialism and arrogant pretension which characterise the vision and the prophecy to which Hildegard laid claim. The morbid ambition of theurgic mysticism received a new impulse from the sanction afforded her by

Bernard and the contemporary popes. Bernard makes no doubt of the reality of her gifts, and desires a place in her prayers. (*Epist.* 366.) He did not foresee that the most extravagant and sensuous mysticism must soon of necessity displace the simpler and less dazzling. He would be afraid of taking his place with Rationalist mockers, and a superstitious awe would readily persuade him that it was better to believe than to doubt. When emperors and popes corresponded on familiar terms with the seeress; when haughty nobles and learned ecclesiastics sought counsel at her oracle concerning future events, and even for the decision of learned questions; when all she said in answer was delivered as subject to and in the interest of the Church Catholic—was often the very echo of Bernard's own warnings and exhortations—who was he, that he should presume to limit the operations of the Spirit of God? Many of Hildegard's prophecies, denouncing the ecclesiastical abuses of the day, were decidedly reformatory in their tendency. In this respect she is the forerunner of the Abbot Joachim of Calabria, and of St. Brigitta, whose prophetic utterances startled the corrupt Church in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. In her supernatural gift of language, her attendant divine radiance, and her fantastic revelations, she, like her friend Elizabeth of Schonau (who had an angel to wait upon her, and saw the eleven thousand virgins), prepares the way for Catharine of Siena, Angela of Foligni, and St. Theresa.

CHAPTER II.

Licht und Farbe.

Wohne, du ewiglich Eines, dort bei dem ewiglich Einen!
Farbe, du wechselnde, komm' freundlich zum Menschen herab![56]

SCHILLER.

On the next evening of meeting, Gower commenced as follows his promised paper on Hugo and Richard of St. Victor.

Hugo of St. Victor.

The celebrated School of St. Victor (so called from an ancient chapel in the suburbs of Paris) was founded by William of Champeaux at the commencement of the twelfth century. This veteran dialectician assumed there the habit of the regular canons of Augustine, and after an interval, began to lecture once more to the students who flocked to his retirement. In 1114, king and pope combined to elevate the priory to an abbacy. Bishops and nobles enriched it with their gifts. The canons enjoyed the highest repute for sanctity and learning in that golden age of the canonical institute. St. Victor colonized Italy, England, Scotland, and Lower Saxony, with establishments which regarded as their parent the mighty pile of building on the outskirts of Paris. Within a hundred years from its foundation it numbered as its offspring thirty abbeys and more than eighty priories.

Hugo of St. Victor was born in 1097, of a noble

Saxon family. His boyhood was passed at the convent of Hamersleben. There he gave promise of his future eminence. His thirst after information of every kind was insatiable. The youth might often have been seen walking alone in the convent garden, speaking and gesticulating, imagining himself advocate, preacher, or disputant. Every evening he kept rigid account of his gains in knowledge during the day. The floor of his room was covered with geometrical figures traced in charcoal. Many a winter's night, he says, he was waking between vigils in anxious study of a horoscope. Many a rude experiment in musical science did he try with strings stretched across a board. Even while a novice, he began to write. Attracted by the reputation of the abbey of St. Victor, he enrolled his name among the regular canons there. Not long after his arrival, the emissaries of an archdeacon, worsted in a suit with the chapter, murdered the prior, Thomas. Hugo was elected to succeed him in the office of instructor. He taught philosophy, rhetoric, and theology. He seldom quitted the precincts of the convent, and never aspired to farther preferment. He closed a peaceful and honoured life at the age of forty-four, leaving behind him those ponderous tomes of divinity to which Aquinas and Vincent of Beauvais acknowledge their obligations, and which gained for their author the name of a second Augustine.[57]

Hitherto mysticism, in the person of Bernard, has repudiated scholasticism. In Hugo, and his successor Richard, the foes are reconciled. Bonaventura in the thirteenth, and Gerson in the fifteenth century, are great names in the same province. Indeed, throughout the middle ages,

almost everything that merits the title of mystical *theology* is characterized by some such endeavour to unite the contemplation of the mystic with the dialectics of the schoolman. There was good in the attempt. Mysticism lost much of its vagueness, and scholasticism much of its frigidity.

Hugo was well fitted by temperament to mediate between the extreme tendencies of his time. Utterly destitute of that daring originality which placed Erigena at least two centuries in advance of his age, his very gentleness and caution would alone have rendered him more moderate in his views and more catholic in sympathy than the intense and vehement Bernard. Hugo, far from proscribing science and denouncing speculation, called in the aid of the logical gymnastics of his day to discipline the mind for the adventurous enterprise of the mystic. If he regarded with dislike the idle word-warfare of scholastic ingenuity, he was quite as little disposed to bid common sense a perpetual farewell among the cloudiest realms of mysticism. His style is clear, his spirit kindly, his judgment generally impartial. It is refreshing in those days of ecclesiastical domination to meet with at least a single mind to whom that Romanist ideal—an absolute uniformity in religious opinion—appeared both impossible and undesirable.[58]

A few words may present the characteristic outlines of his mysticism. It avails itself of the aid of speculation to acquire a scientific form—in due subjection, of course, to the authority of the Church. It will ground its claim on a surer tenure than mere religious emotion or visionary reverie. Hugo, with all his contemporaries, reverenced the

Pseudo-Dionysius. His more devout and practical spirit laboured at a huge commentary on the *Heavenly Hierarchy*, like a good angel, condemned for some sin to servitude under a paynim giant. In the hands of his commentator, Dionysius becomes more scriptural and human—for the cloister, even edifying, but remains as uninteresting as ever.

Hugo makes a threefold division of our faculties. First, and lowest, *Cogitatio*. A stage higher stands *Meditatio*: by this he means reflection, investigation. Third, and highest, ranges *Contemplatio*: in this state the mind possesses in light the truth which, in the preceding, it desired and groped after in twilight.[59]

He compares this spiritual process to the application of fire to green wood. It kindles with difficulty; clouds of smoke arise; a flame is seen at intervals, flashing out here and there; as the fire gains strength, it surrounds, it pierces the fuel; presently it leaps and roars in triumph—the nature of the wood is being transformed into the nature of fire. Then, the struggle over, the crackling ceases, the smoke is gone, there is left a tranquil, friendly brightness, for the master-element has subdued all into itself. So, says Hugo, do sin and grace contend; and the smoke of trouble and anguish hangs over the strife. But when grace grows stronger, and the soul's eye clearer, and truth pervades and swallows up the kindling, aspiring nature, then comes holy calm, and love is all in all. Save God in the heart, nothing of self is left.[60]

Looking through this and other metaphors as best we may, we discover that Contemplation has two provinces—a lower and a higher. The lower

degree of contemplation, which ranks next above Meditation, is termed Speculation. It is distinct from Contemplation proper, in its strictest signification. The attribute of Meditation is Care. The brow is heavy with inquiring thought, for the darkness is mingled with the light. The attribute of Speculation is Admiration—Wonder. In it the soul ascends, as it were, a watch-tower (*specula*), and surveys everything earthly. On this stage stood the Preacher when he beheld the sorrow and the glory of the world, and pronounced all things human Vanity. To this elevation, whence he philosophizes concerning all finite things, man is raised by the faith, the feeling, and the ascetic practice of religion. Speculative illumination is the reward of devotion. But at the loftiest elevation man beholds all things in God. Contemplation, in its narrower and highest sense, is immediate intuition of the Infinite. The attribute of this stage is Blessedness.

As a mystic, Hugo cannot be satisfied with that mediate and approximate apprehension of the Divine Nature which here on earth should amply satisfy all who listen to Scripture and to Reason. Augustine had told him of a certain spiritual sense, or eye of the soul. This he makes the organ of his mysticism. Admitting the incomprehensibility of the Supreme, yet chafing as he does at the limitations of our finite nature, Faith—which is here the natural resource of Reason—fails to content him. He leaps to the conclusion that there must be some immediate intuition of Deity by means of a separate faculty vouchsafed for the purpose.

You have sometimes seen from a hill-side a valley,

over the undulating floor of which there has been laid out a heavy mantle of mist. The spires of the churches rise above it—you seem to catch the glistening of a roof or of a vane—here and there a higher house, a little eminence, or some tree-tops, are seen, islanded in the white vapour, but the lower and connecting objects, the linking lines of the roads, the plan and foundation of the whole, are completely hidden. Hugo felt that, with all our culture, yea, with Aristotle to boot, revealed truth was seen by us somewhat thus imperfectly. No doubt certain great facts and truths stand out clear and prominent, but there is a great deal at their basis, connecting them, attached to them, which is impervious to our ordinary faculties. We are, in fact, so lamentably far from knowing all about them. Is there not some power of vision to be attained which may pierce these clouds, lay bare to us these relationships, nay, even more, be to us like the faculty conferred by Asmodeus, and render the very roofs transparent, so that from topstone to foundation, within and without, we may gaze our fill? And if to realize this wholly be too much for sinful creatures, yet may not the wise and good approach such vision, and attain as the meed of their faith, even here, a superhuman elevation, and in a glance at least at the Heavenly Truth unveiled, escape the trammels of the finite?

Such probably was the spirit of the question which possessed, with a ceaseless importunity, the minds of men, ambitious alike to define with the schoolman and to gaze with the seer. Hugo answers that the eye of Contemplation—closed by sin, but opened more or less by grace—furnishes the power thus desiderated.[61] But at this, his highest point, he grasps a shadow instead of the

substance. Something within the mind is mistaken for a manifestation from without. A mental creation is substituted for that Divine Existence which his rapture seems to reveal. He asserts, however, that this Eye beholds what the eye of sense and the eye of reason cannot see, what is both within us and above us—God. Within us, he cries, is both *what* we must flee and *whither* we must flee. The highest and the inmost are, so far, identical.[62] Thus do the pure in heart see God. In such moments the soul is transported beyond sense and reason, to a state similar to that enjoyed by angelic natures. The contemplative life is prefigured by the ark in the deluge. Without are waves, and the dove can find no rest. As the holy ship narrowed toward the summit, so doth this life of seclusion ascend from the manifold and changeful to the Divine Immutable Unity.

The simplification of the soul he inculcates is somewhat analogous to the Haplosis of the Neo-Platonists. All sensuous images are to be discarded; we must concentrate ourselves upon the inmost source, the nude essence of our being. He is careful, accordingly, to guard against the delusions of the imagination.[63] He cautions his readers lest they mistake a mere visionary phantasm—some shape of imaginary glory, for a supernatural manifestation of the Divine Nature to the soul. His mysticism is intellectual, not sensuous. Too practical for a sentimental Quietism or any of its attendant effeminacies, and, at the same time, too orthodox to verge on pantheism, his mystical doctrine displays less than the usual proportion of extravagance, and the ardent eloquence of his ‘Praise of Love’ may find an echo in every Christian heart.

Richard of St. Victor.

Now, let us pass on to Richard of St. Victor. He was a native of Scotland, first the pupil and afterwards the successor of Hugo. Richard was a man whose fearless integrity and energetic character made themselves felt at St. Victor not less than the intellectual subtilty and flowing rhetoric which distinguished his prelections. He had far more of the practical reformer in him than the quiet Hugo. Loud and indignant are his rebukes of the empty disputation of the mere schoolman,—of the avarice and ambition of the prelate. His soul is grieved that there should be men who blush more for a false quantity than for a sin, and stand more in awe of Priscian than of Christ.[64] Alas! he exclaims, how many come to the cloister to seek Christ, and find lying in that sepulchre only the linen clothes of your formalism! How many mask their cowardice under the name of love, and let every abuse run riot on the plea of peace! How many others call their hatred of individuals hatred of iniquity, and think to be righteous cheaply by mere outcry against other men's sins! Complaints like these are not without their application nearer home.[65]

His zeal did not confine itself to words. In the year 1162 he was made prior. Ervisius the abbot was a man of worldly spirit, though his reputation had been high when he entered on his office. He gradually relaxed all discipline, persecuted the God-fearing brethren, and favoured flatterers and spies; he was a very Dives in sumptuousness, and the fair name of St. Victor suffered no small peril at his hands. The usual evils of broken monastic

rule were doubtless there, though little is specified—canons going in and out, whither they would, without inquiry, accounts in confusion, sacristy neglected, weeds literally and spiritually growing in holy places, wine-bibbing and scandal carried on at a lamentable rate, sleepy lethargy and noisy brawl, the more shameful because unpunished. Ervisius was good at excuses, and of course good for nothing else. If complaints were made to him, it was always that cellarer, that pittanciar, or that refectorarius—never his fault. These abuses must soon draw attention from without. Richard and the better sort are glad. The pope writes to the king about the sad accounts he hears. Bishops bestir themselves. Orders come from Rome forbidding the abbot to take any step without the consent of the majority of the chapter. Richard's position is delicate, between his vow of obedience to his superior and the good of the convent. But he plays his part like a man. An archbishop is sent to St. Victor to hold a commission of inquiry. All is curiosity and bustle, alarm and hope among the canons, innocent and guilty. At last, Ervisius, after giving them much trouble, is induced to resign. They choose an able successor, harmony and order gradually return, and Richard, having seen the abbey prosperous once more, dies in the following year.[66]

In the writings of Richard, as compared with those of Hugo, I find that what belongs to the schoolman has received a more elaborate and complex development, while what belongs to the mystic has also attained an ampler and more prolific growth. All the art of the scholastic is there—the endless ramification and subdivision of minute distinctions; all the intellectual

fortification of the time—the redoubts, ravelins, counterscarps, and bastions of dry, stern logic; and among these, within their lines and at last above them all, is seen an almost oriental luxuriance of fancy and of rhetoric—palm and pomegranate, sycamore and cypress, solemn cedar shadows, the gloom in the abysses of the soul,—luscious fruit and fragrant flowers, the triumphs of its ecstasy, all blissful with the bloom and odours of the upper Paradise. He is a master alike in the serviceable science of self-scrutiny, and in the imaginary one of self-transcendence. His works afford a notable example of that fantastic use of Scripture prevalent throughout the Middle Age. His psychology, his metaphysics, his theology, are all extracted from the most unlikely quarters in the Bible by allegorical interpretation. Every logical abstraction is attached to some personage or object in the Old Testament history, as its authority and type. Rachel and Leah are Reason and Affection. Bilhah and Zilpah are Imagination and Sense. His divinity is embroidered on the garments of Aaron, engraven on the sides of the ark, hung on the pins and rings of the tabernacle. His definitions and his fancies build in the eaves of Solomon's temple, and make their 'pendent bed and procreant cradle' in the carved work of the holy place. To follow the thread of his religious philosophy, you have to pursue his agile and discursive thoughts, as the sparrow-hawk the sparrow, between the capitals, among the cedar rafters, over the gilded roof, from court to court, column to column, and sometimes after all the chase is vain, for they have escaped into the bosom of a cloud.[67]

On a basis similar to that of Hugo, Richard erects

six stages of Contemplation. The two first grades fall within the province of Imagination; the two next belong to Reason; the two highest to Intelligence. The objects of the first two are *Sensibilia*; of the second pair, *Intelligibilia* (truths concerning what is invisible, but accessible to reason); of the third, *Intellectibilia* (unseen truth above reason). These, again, have their subdivisions, into which we need not enter.[68] Within the depths of thine own soul, he would say, thou wilt find a threefold heaven—the imaginational, the rational, and the intellectual. The third heaven is open only to the eye of Intelligence—that Eye whose vision is clarified by divine grace and by a holy life. This Eye enjoys the immediate discernment of unseen truth, as the eye of the body beholds sensible objects. His use of the word Intelligence is not always uniform. It would seem that this divinely-illumined eye of the mind is to search first into the deeps of our own nature (*inferiora invisibilia nostra*), and then upward into the heights of the divine (*superiora invisibilia divina*).[69]

For the highest degrees of Contemplation penitence avails more than science; sighs obtain what is impossible to reason. This exalted intuition begins on earth, and is consummated in heaven. Some, by divine assistance, reach it as the goal of long and arduous effort. Others await it, and are at times rapt away unawares into the heaven of heavens. Some good men have been ever unable to attain the highest stage; few are fully winged with all the six pinions of Contemplation. In the ecstasy he describes, there is supposed to be a dividing asunder of the soul and the spirit as by the sword of the Spirit of God.

> The body sleeps, and the soul and all the visible world is shut away. The spirit is joined to the Lord, and one with Him,—transcends itself and all the limitations of human thought. In such a moment it is conscious of no division, of no change; all contraries are absorbed, the part does not appear less than the whole, nor is the whole greater than a part; the universal is seen as particular, the particular as universal; we forget both all that is without and all that is within ourselves; all is one and one is all; and when the rapture is past the spirit returns from its trance with a dim and dizzy memory of unutterable glory.[70]
>
> This account presents in some parts the very language in which Schelling and his disciples are accustomed to describe the privilege of Intellectual Intuition.

ATHERTON. I move thanks to Gower.

WILLOUGHBY. Which I second. It has been strange enough to see our painter turn bookworm, and oscillating, for the last fortnight or more, between the forest sunset on his easel and Atherton's old black-letter copy of *Richard of St. Victor*.

GOWER. The change was very pleasant. As grateful, I should think, as the actual alternation such men as Hugo and Richard must have enjoyed when they betook themselves, after the lassitude that followed an ecstasy, to a scholastic argumentation; or again refreshed themselves, after the dryness of that, by an imaginative flight into the region of allegory, or by some contemplative reverie which carried them far enough beyond the confines of logic. The monastic fancy found this interchange symbolized in the

upward and downward motion of the holy bell. Is it not in Longfellow's *Golden Legend* that a friar says—

> And the upward and downward motions show
> That we touch upon matters high and low;
> And the constant change and transmutation
> Of action and of contemplation;
> Downward, the Scripture brought from on high,
> Upward, exalted again to the sky;
> Downward, the literal interpretation,
> Upward, the Vision and Mystery!

WILLOUGHBY. Much as a miracle-play must have been very refreshing after a public disputation, or as the most overwrought and most distinguished members of the legal profession are said to devour with most voracity every good novel they can catch.

ATHERTON. It is remarkable to see the mystical interpreters of that day committing the two opposite mistakes, now of regarding what is symbolical in Scripture as literal, and again of treating what is literal as symbolical.

GOWER. Somewhat like the early travellers, who mistook the hybrid figures of the hieroglyphic sculptures they saw for representations of living animals existing somewhere up the country, and then, at other times, fancied they found some profound significance in a simple tradition or an ordinary usage dictated by the climate.

WILLOUGHBY. Yet there lies a great truth in the counsel they give us to rise above all sensuous images in our contemplation of the Divine Nature.

ATHERTON. No doubt. God is a spirit. The Infinite Mind must not be represented to our thought through the medium of any material image, as

though in that we had *all* the truth. We must not confound the medium with the object. But the object is in fact inaccessible without a medium. The Divine Nature is resolved into a mere blank diffusion when regarded as apart from a Divine Character. We are practically without a God in the presence of such an abstraction. To enable us to realize personality and character there must be a medium, a representation, some analogy drawn from relationships or objects with which we are acquainted.

The fault I find with these mystics is, that they encourage the imagination to run riot in provinces where it is not needed, and prohibit its exercise where it would render the greatest service. Orthodox as they were in their day, they yet attempt to gaze on the Divine Nature in its absoluteness and abstraction, apart from the manifestation of it to our intellect, our heart, and our imagination, which is made in the incarnate Christ Jesus. God has supplied them with this help to their apprehension of Him, but they hope by His help to dispense with it. They neglect the possible and practical in striving after a dazzling impossibility which allures their spiritual ambition. This is a natural consequence of that extravagance of spirituality which tells man that his highest aim is to escape from his human nature—not to work under the conditions of his finite being, but to violate and escape them as far as possible in quest of a superhuman elevation. We poor mortals, as Schiller says, must have *colour*. The attempt to evade this law always ends in substituting the mind's creation for the mind's Creator.

WILLOUGHBY. I cannot say that I clearly understand what this much-extolled introspection of theirs is supposed to reveal to them.

ATHERTON. Neither, very probably, did they. But though an exact localization may be impossible, I think we can say *whereabout* they are in their opinion on this point. Their position is intermediate. They stand between the truth which assigns to an internal witness and an external revelation their just relative position, and that extreme of error which would deny the need or possibility of any external revelation whatever. They do not ignore either factor; they unduly increase one of them.

WILLOUGHBY. Good. Will you have the kindness first to give me the truth as you hold it? Then we shall have the *terminus a quo*.

ATHERTON. There is what has been variously termed an experimental or moral evidence for Christianity, which comes from within. If any one reverently searches the Scriptures, desiring sincerely to know and do the will of God as there revealed, he has the promise of Divine assistance. He will find, in the evil of his own heart, a reality answering to the statements of the Bible. He will find, in repentance and in faith, in growing love and hope, that very change taking place within which is described in the book without. His nature is being gradually brought into harmony with the truth there set forth. He has experienced the truth of the Saviour's words, 'If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God.'

But in this experimental evidence there is nothing mystical. It does not at all supersede or infringe on the evidence of testimony,—the convincing argument from without, which may at first have made the man feel it his duty to study a book supported by a claim so strong. Neither does he cease to use his reason, when looking within, any more than when listening

to witness from without. In self-observation, if in any exercise, reason must be vigilant. Neither is such inward evidence a miraculous experience peculiar to himself. It is common to multitudes. It is open to all who will take the same course he has done. He does not reach it by a faculty which transcends his human nature, and leaves in the distance every power which has been hitherto in such wholesome exercise. There is here no special revelation, distinct from and supplementary to the general. Such a privilege would render an appeal from himself to others impossible. It would entrench each Christian in his individuality apart from the rest. It would give to conscientious differences on minor points the authority of so many conflicting inspirations. It would issue in the ultimate disintegration of the Christian body.

The error of the mystics we are now considering consists in an exaggeration of the truth concerning experimental evidence. They seem to say that the Spirit will manifest to the devout mind verities within itself which are, as it were, the essence and original of the truths which the Church without has been accustomed to teach; so that, supposing a man to have rightly used the external revelation, and at a certain point to suspend all reference to it, and to be completely secluded from all external influences, there would then be manifest to him, in God, the Ideas themselves which have been developed in time into a Bible and a historical Christianity. The soul, on this Platonist principle, enjoys a commerce once more with the world of Intelligence in the depth of the Divine Nature. She recovers her wings. The obliterations on the tablet of Reminiscence are supplied. A theosophist like Paracelsus would declare that the whole universe is laid up potentially in the mind of man—the microcosm answering to the

macrocosm. In a similar way these mystics would have us believe that there is in man a *microdogma* within, answering to the *macrodogma* of the Church without. Accordingly they deem it not difficult to discover a Christology in psychology, a Trinity in metaphysics. Hence, too, this erroneous assertion that if the heathen had only known themselves, they would have known God.

GOWER. If some of our modern advocates of the theory of Insight be right, they ought to have succeeded in both.

ATHERTON. That '*Know thyself*' was a precept which had its worth in the sense Socrates gave it. In the sense of Plotinus it was a delusion. Applied to morals,—regarded as equivalent to a call to obey conscience, it might render service. And yet varying and imperfect consciences—conflicting inner laws, could give men as an inference no immutable and perfect Lawgiver. Understood as equivalent to saying that the mind is in itself an all-sufficient and infallible repertory of spiritual truth, history in every page refutes it. The monstrosities of idolatry, the disputes of philosophical schools, the aspirations among the best of the sages of antiquity after a divine teaching of some sort—all these facts are fatal to the notion. It is one thing to be able in some degree to appreciate the excellence of revealed truth, and quite another to be competent to discover it for ourselves. Lactantius was right when he exclaimed, as he surveyed the sad and wasteful follies of heathendom, *O quam difficilis est ignorantibus veritas, et quam facilis scientibus!*

WILLOUGHBY. I must say I can scarcely conceive it possible to exclude from the mind every trace and result of what is external, and to gaze down into the

depths of our simple self-consciousness as the mystic bids us do. It is like forming a moral estimate of a man exclusive of the slightest reference to his *character*.

GOWER. I think that as the result of such a process, we should find only what we bring. Assuredly this must continually have been the case with our friends Hugo and Richard. The method reminds me of a trick I have heard of as sometimes played on the proprietor of a supposed coal-mine in which no coal could be found, with a view to induce him to continue his profitless speculation. Geologists, learned theoretical men, protest that there can be no coal on that estate—there is none in that part of England. But the *practical* man puts some lumps slyly in his pocket, goes down with them, and brings them up in triumph, as fresh from the depths of the earth.

ATHERTON. Some German writers, even of the better sort have committed a similar mistake in their treatment of the life of Christ. First they set to work to construct the idea of Christ (out of the depths of their consciousness, I suppose), then they study and compare the gospels to find that idea realized. They think they have established the claim of Evangelists when they can show that they have found their idea developed in the biography they give us. As though the German mind could have had any idea of Christ at all within its profundities, but for the fishermen in the first instance.

GOWER. This said Eye of Intelligence appears to me a pure fiction. What am I to make of a faculty which is above, and independent of, memory, reason, feeling, imagination,—without cognizance of those external influences (which at least contribute to make us what we are), and without organs, instruments, or means

of any kind for doing any sort of work whatever? Surely this complete and perpetual separation between intuition and everything else within and without us, is a most unphilosophical dichotomy of the mind of man.

ATHERTON. Equally so, whether it be regarded as natural to man or as a supernatural gift. Our intuitions, however rapid, must rest on the belief of some fact, the recognition of some relationship or sense of fitness, which rests again on a judgment, right or wrong.

WILLOUGHBY. And in such judgment the world without must have large share.

GOWER. For the existence of such a separate faculty as a spiritual gift we have only the word of Hugo and his brethren. The faith of Scripture, instead of being cut off from the other powers of the mind, is sustained by them, and strengthens as we exercise them.

ATHERTON. President Edwards, in his *Treatise on the Affections*, appears to me to approach the error of those mystics, in endeavouring to make it appear that regeneration imparts a new power, rather than a new disposition, to the mind. Such a doctrine cuts off the common ground between the individual Christian and other men. According to the Victorines it would seem to be the glory of Christianity that it enables man, at intervals at least, to denude himself of reason. To me its triumph appears to consist in this, that it makes him, for the first time, truly reasonable, who before acted unreasonably because of a perverted will.

Note to page 158.

The treatise by Hugo, entitled *De Vanitate Mundi*, is a dialogue between teacher and scholar, in which, after directing his pupil to survey the endless variety and vicissitude of life, after showing him the horrors of a shipwreck, the house of Dives, a marriage feast, the toils and disputes of the learned, the instructor bids him shelter himself from this sea of care in that ark of God, the religious life. He proceeds to describe that inner Eye, that *oculus cordis*, whose vision is so precious. 'Thou hast another eye,' he says (lib. i. p. 172), 'an eye within, far more piercing than the other thou speakest of,—one that beholds at once the past, the present, and the future; which diffuses through all things the keen brightness of its vision; which penetrates what is hidden, investigates what is impalpable; which needs no foreign light wherewith to see, but gazes by a light of its own, peculiar to itself (luce aliena ad videndum non indigens, sed sua ac propria luce prospiciens).

Self-collection is opposed (p. 175) to distraction, or attachment to the manifold,—is declared to be *restauratio*, and at the same time *elevatio*. The scholar inquires, 'If the heart of man be an ark or ship, how can man be said to enter into his own heart, or to navigate the universe with his heart? Lastly, if God, whom you call the harbour, be above, what can you mean by such an unheard-of thing as a voyage which carries the ship upwards, and bears away the mariner out of himself?' The teacher replies, 'When we purpose elevating the eye of the mind to things invisible, we must avail ourselves of certain analogies drawn from the objects of sense. Accordingly, when, speaking of things spiritual and unseen, we say that anything is highest, we do not mean that it is at the top of the sky, but that it is the inmost of all things. To ascend to God, therefore, is

to enter into ourselves, and not only so, but in our inmost self to transcend ourselves. (Ascendere ergo ad Deum hoc est intrare ad semet ipsum, et non solum ad se intrare, sed ineffabili quodam modo in intimis etiam se ipsum transire, p. 176.)

Hugo, like Richard, associates this illumination inseparably with the practices of devotion. The tree of Wisdom within is watered by Grace. It stands by Faith, and is rooted in God. As it flourishes, we die to the world, we empty ourselves, we sigh over even the necessary use of anything earthly. Devotion makes it bud, constancy of penitence causes it to grow. Such penitence (compunctio) he compares to digging in search of a treasure, or to find a spring. Sin has concealed this hoard—buried this water-source down beneath the many evils of the heart. The watching and the prayer of the contrite spirit clears away what is earthly, and restores the divine gift. The spirit, inflamed with heavenly desire, soars upward—becomes, as it ascends, less gross, as a column of smoke is least dense towards its summit, till we are all spirit; are lost to mortal ken, as the cloud melts into the air, and find a perfect peace within, in secret gazing on the face of the Lord. *De Arca morali*, lib. iii. cap. 7.

Note to page 162.

See the introductory chapters of the *Benjamin Minor*, or *De prep. anim. ad contemp.* fol. 34, &c.—Richard rates this kind of interpretation very highly, and looks for success therein to Divine Illumination. (*De eruditione interioris hominis*, cap. vi. fol. 25.) A passage or two from an appendix to his Treatise on

Contemplation, may serve, once for all, as a specimen of his mystical interpretation. It is entitled *Nonnullæ allegoriæ tabernaculi fœderis*. 'By the tabernacle of the covenant understand the state of perfection. Where perfection of the soul is, there is the indwelling of God. The nearer we approach perfection, the more closely are we united with God. The tabernacle must have a court about it. Understand by this the discipline of the body; by the tabernacle itself, the discipline of the mind. The one is useless without the other. The court is open to the sky, and so the discipline of the body is accessible to all. What was within the tabernacle could not be seen by those without. None knows what is in the inner man save the spirit of man which is in him. The inner man is divided into rational and intellectual; the former represented by the outer, the latter by the inner part of the tabernacle. We call that rational perception by which we discern what is within ourselves. We here apply the term intellectual perception to that faculty by which we are elevated to the survey of what is divine. Man goes out of the tabernacle into the court in the exercise of works. He enters the first tabernacle when he returns to himself. He enters the second when he transcends himself. Self-transcendence is elevation into Deity. (Transcendendo sane seipsum elevatur in Deum.) In the former, man is occupied with the consideration of himself; in the latter, with the contemplation of God.

'The ark of the covenant represents the grace of contemplation. The kinds of contemplation are six, each distinct from the rest. Two of them are exercised with regard to visible creatures, two are occupied with invisible, the two last with what is divine. The first four are represented in the ark, the

two others are set forth in the figures of the cherubim. Mark the difference between the wood and the gold. There is the same difference between the objects of imagination and the objects of reason. By imagination we behold the forms of things visible, by ratiocination we investigate their causes. The three kinds of consideration which have reference to things, works, and morals, belong to the length, breadth, and height of the ark respectively. In the consideration of *form* and *matter*, our knowledge avails a full cubit. (It is equivalent to a cubit when complete.) But our knowledge of the *nature* of things is only partial. For this part, therefore, we reckon only half a cubit. Accordingly, the length of the ark is two cubits and a half.'... And thus he proceeds concerning the crown, the rings, the staves, the mercy-seat, the cherubim, &c.—Fol. 63, &c.

Note to page 163.

The three heavens within the mind are described at length. (*De Contemp.* lib. iii. cap. 8.) In the first are contained the images of all things visible; in the second lie the definitions and principles of things seen, the investigations made concerning things unseen; in the third are contemplations of things divine, beheld as they truly are—a sun that knows no going down,—and there, and there alone, the kingdom of God within us in its glory.—Cap. x. fol 52.

The eye of Intelligence is thus defined (cap. ix.):—Intelligentiæ siquidem oculus est sensus ille quo invisibilia videmus: non sicut oculo rationis quo occulta et absentia per investigationem quærimus et

invenimus; sicut sæpe causas per effectus, vel effectus per causas, et alia atque alia quocunque ratiocinandi modo comprehendimus. Sed sicut corporalia corporeo sensu videre solemus visibiliter potentialiter et corporaliter; sic utique intellectualis ille sensus invisibilia capit invisibiliter quidem, sed potentialiter, sed essentialiter. (Fol. 52.) He then goes on to speak of the veil drawn over this organ by sin, and admits that even when illuminated from above, its gaze upon our inner self is not so piercing as to be able to discern the *essence* of the soul. The inner verities are said to be within, the upper, beyond the veil. 'It may be questioned, however, whether we are to see with this same eye of Intelligence the things beyond the veil, or whether we use one sense to behold the invisible things which are divine, and another to behold the invisible things of our own nature. But those who maintain that there is one sense for the intuition of things above and another for those below, must prove it as well as they can. I believe that in this way they introduce much confusion into the use of this word Intelligence,—now extending its signification to a speculation which is occupied with what is above, and now confining it to what is below, and sometimes including both senses. This twofold intuition of things above and things below, whether we call it, as it were, a double sense in one, or divide it, is yet the instrument of the same sense, or a twofold effect of the same instrument, and whichever we choose, there can be no objection to our saying that they both belong to the intellectual heaven.' There is certainly much of the confusion of which he complains in his own use of the word,—a confusion which is perhaps explained by supposing that he sometimes allows Intelligence to extend its office

below its proper province, though no other faculty can rise above the limits assigned to it. Intelligence may sometimes survey from her altitude the more slow and laborious processes of reason, though she never descends to such toil.

He dwells constantly on the importance of self-knowledge, self-simplification, self-concentration, as essential to the ascent of the soul.—*De Contemp.* lib. iii. c. 3, c. 6; and on the difficulty of this attainment, lib. iv. c. 6.

Note to page 163.

De Contemp. lib. iv. cap. 6. *Ibid.* cap. 23, and comp. lib. v. cap. 1. Also iv. cap. 10. He calls it expressly a vision face to face:—Egressus autem quasi facie ad faciem intuetur, qui per mentis excessus extra semetipsum ductus summæ sapientiæ lumen sine aliquo involucro figurarum ve adumbratione; denique non per speculum et in enigmate, sed in simplici (ut sic dicam) veritate contemplatur.—Fol. 56. See also lib. v. cœpp. 4, 5, where he enters at large on the degrees and starting-points of self-transcendence. Comp. iv. c. 2, fol. 60.

De Contemp. i. cap. 10, describes the six wings, and declares that in a future state we shall possess them all. Speaking of ecstasy, he says:—'Cum enim per mentis excessum supra sive intra nosmetipsos in divinorum contemplationem rapimur exteriorum omnium statim immo non solum eorum quæ extra nos verum etiam eorum quæ in nobis sunt omnium obliviscimur.' When explaining the separation of soul and spirit, he exclaims,—'O alta quies, O sublimis requies, ubi omnis quod humanitus moveri solet

motum omnem amittit; ubi omnis qui tunc est motus divinitus fit et in Deum transit. Hic ille spiritus efflatus in manus patris commendatur, non (ut ille somniator Jacob) scala indiget ut ad tertium (ne dicam ad primum) cœlum evolet. Quid quæso scala indigeat quem pater inter manus bajulat ut ad tertii cœli secreta rapiat intantum ut glorietur, et dicat, Dextera tua suscepit me.... Spiritus ab infimis dividitur ut ad summa sublimetur. Spiritus ab anima scinditur ut Domino uniatur. Qui enim adhæret Domino unus spiritus est.—*De extermin. mali et promotione boni*, cap. xviii. Again (*De Contemp.* lib. iv. c. 4), In hac gemina speculatione nihil imaginarium, nihil fantasticum debet occurrere. Longe enim omnem corporeæ similitudinis proprietatem excedit quicquid spectaculi tibi hæc gemina novissimi operis specula proponit.... Ubi pars non est minor suo toto, nec totum universalius suo individuo; immo ubi pars a toto non minuitur, totum ex partibus non constituitur; quia simplex est quod universaliter proponitur et universale quod quasi particulare profertur; ubi totum singula, ubi omnia unum et unum omnia. In his utique absque dubio succumbit humana ratio, et quid faciat ibi imaginatio? Absque dubio in ejusmodi spectaculo officere potest; adjuvare omnino non potest. Elsewhere he describes the state as one of rapturous spiritual intoxication. Magnitudine jocunditatis et exultationis mens hominis a seipsa alienatur, quum intima illa internæ suavitatis abundantia potata, immo plene inebriata, quid sit, quid fuerit, penitus obliviscitur; et in abalienationis excessum tripudii sui nimietate traducitur; et in supermundanum quendam affectum sub quodam miræ felicitatis statu raptim transformatur.—*Ibid.* lib. v. c. 5, fol. 60.

BOOK THE SIXTH
GERMAN MYSTICISM IN THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY

CHAPTER I.

I pray thee, peace; I will be flesh and blood,
For there was never yet philosopher,
That could endure the toothache patiently;
However they have writ the style of gods,
And made a pish at chance and sufferance.

MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING.

It is more healthful and nutritive to dig the earth, and to eat of her fruits, than to stare upon the greatest glories of the heavens, and live upon the beams of the sun: so unsatisfying a thing is rapture and transportation to the soul; it often distracts the faculties, but seldom does advantage piety, and is full of danger in the greatest of its lustre.—JEREMY TAYLOR.

The approach of summer separated the members of the Ashfield circle for a time. Atherton purposed

spending a few weeks in Germany, and Willoughby consented to accompany him. They were to visit once more Bonn, Heidelberg, and Frankfort, then to make Strasburg their head quarters, and thence to ramble about Alsace.

As soon as Atherton had left them, Mrs. Atherton and Kate Merivale set out for the West of England, to visit their friends Mr. and Mrs. Lowestoffe. Gower projected a sketching excursion along the banks of the Wye. He knew the Lowestoffes, and gladly bound himself by the promise they exacted, that he would make Summerford House his home for a day or two now and then, in the course of his wanderings. The beauty of the grounds and neighbourhood would have rendered such visits eminently delightful, even had the hospitable host and hostess been less accomplished admirers of art, or had Gower found no irresistible attraction in one of their guests.

The days at Summerford glided by in the enjoyment of those innumerable minor *satisfactions* which, far more than highly pleasurable excitements, make up the happiness of existence. If you doubt it, consult Abraham Tucker on the matter. To many persons, life at the Lowestoffes' would have been intolerably dull. There were few visitors. The family seldom emerged from their retirement to visit the neighbouring city. Their amusements and their occupations, though varied, were confined within limits which some would find lamentably narrow. Lowestoffe himself was an early man and a punctual. It cost him something to smile a courteous forgiveness when even a favourite guest transgressed any of the family regulations on which his comfort so much depended. His horses and dogs, his grounds and his flowers, everything about him and all

dependent upon him, were methodically cared for, inspected, or commanded by himself in person. In one respect only was there irregularity,—no servant, labourer, or workman could be sure of any moment in which the master might not suddenly appear to see that all went rightly. Though scrupulously just, and of a generous nature, Lowestoffe was only too subject to a nervous dread of being defrauded by those he employed, and used often to declare that men were ruined, not so much by what they spent themselves, as by what they allowed others to spend for them. In his early days he had contented himself with the mere necessaries of his position in life, to discharge the debts which he inherited. He would actually have gone into business (to the horror of his aristocratic friends, but with the applause of every impartial conscience), had there been no other way whereby to emancipate his property and honour. All declared he would have made a fortune if he had. A few years of self-denial, and a few more of frugality and industrious vigilance, realized the full accomplishment of his most cherished desire. His care and activity enabled him to deal very liberally whatever his confidence was at last bestowed, and to expend in discriminating charity a large annual sum. He was a connoisseur and a liberal patron of art, but no solicitation could induce him to purchase an old master. He knew well how skilfully imitations of antiquity are prepared, and had he bought a reputed Titian or Correggio, he would have fidgeted himself into a fever in a fortnight, by ruminating on the probabilities of deception. He spent his money far more wisely on choice pieces by living artists. When the morning was over, the afternoon and evening found him a cheerful and fascinating companion. His cares were thrown off, and he was restless and

anxious no longer about little things. Literature and art, even mere frolic, play with a child, or a game of any kind, were welcome. Gower whispered an antithesis one day, to the effect that Lowestoffe gave one half the day to childish wisdom and the other to wise childishness.

We have mentioned what was not to be found at Summerford. What the two sisters did find there was amply sufficient for enjoyment. There was a long avenue winding up to the house, so beset with ancient trees, that it seemed a passage through the heart of a wood. The lawn on which it opened was dotted with islands and rings of flower-bed,—perfect magic circles of horticulture, one all blue, another red, another yellow. There was the house itself, with its old-fashioned terraces, urns, and balustrades, and behind it—oh, joy—a rookery! A conservatory shot out its transparent glittering wing on one side of the edifice. At the foot of a slope of grass descending from the flower-palace lay a pool, shut in by a mound and by fragments of rock overgrown with flowers, and arched above by trees. On the surface spread the level leaves of the water-lilies, with the sparkling bubbles here and there upon their edges, and everywhere the shadowed water was alive with fish, that might be seen darting, like little ruddy flames, in and out among the arrowy sheaves of reeds. Then farther away there were old irregular walks, richly furred with moss, wandering under trees through which the sunbeams shot, now making some glossy evergreen far in among the stems and underwood shine with a startling brightness (so that the passer-by turned to see if there were not running water there, and fancied Undine had been at her tricks again),—now rendering translucent some plume of fern, now kindling some rugged edge of fir,

and again glistening on some old tree-trunk, mailed with its circular plates of white lichen. These wood pathways—often broken into natural steps by the roots of the trees which ran across their course—led up a steep hill. From the summit were seen, in front, opposite heights, thickly covered with foliage, through which it was only here and there that a jutting point of rock could show itself to be reddened by the setting sun. Beneath, at a great depth, a shallow brook idled on its pebbles, and you looked down on the heads of those who crossed its rustic bridge. On the one hand, there stretched away to the horizon a gentle sweep of hills, crossed and re-crossed with hedgerows and speckled with trees and sheep, and, on the other, lay the sea, in the haze of a sultry day, seen like a grey tablet of marble veined with cloud-shadows.

All this without doors, and books, pictures, prints, drawing, chess, chat, so choice and plentiful within, made Summerford ‘a dainty place’—

> Attempred goodly well for health and for delight.

Meanwhile Atherton in Germany was reviving old acquaintanceships and forming new, studying the historic relics of old Strasburg under the shadow of its lofty minster, and relieving his research by rides and walks, now with student and now with professor. Early in August he and Willoughby returned to England, and repaired straightway to Summerford. There, accordingly, the mystical circuit was complete once more. In a day or two the discovery was made, through some mysterious hints dropped by Willoughby, that Atherton had brought home a treasure from the Rhine. Cross-examination elicited the fact that the said treasure was a

manuscript. Something to do with mysticism? Partly so. Then we must hear it. Atherton consented without pretending reluctance. The document purported to be his translation of a narrative discovered among the Strasburg archives, written by one Adolf Arnstein, an armourer of that city,—a personage who appears to have lived in the fourteenth century, and kept some record of what he saw and heard.

So the manuscript was read at intervals, in short portions, sometimes to the little circle grouped on the grass under the trees, sometimes as they sat in the house, with open windows, to let in the evening song of the birds.

Atherton commenced his first reading as follows:—

THE CHRONICLE OF ADOLF ARNSTEIN OF STRASBURG.

This book was begun in the year after the birth of our Lord, one thousand three hundred and twenty. Whosoever readeth this book, let him pray for the soul of Adolf Arnstein, a poor sinful man, who wrote it. And to all who read the same, or hear it read, may God grant everlasting life. Amen.

1320. *September. St. Matthew's Day.*—Three days ago I was surprised by a visit from Hermann of Fritzlar,[71] who has travelled hither from Hesse to hear Master Eckart preach. How he reminded me of what seem old times to me now—ay, old times, though I am but twenty this day—of the days when my honoured father lived and I was a merry boy of fifteen, little thinking that I should so soon be left alone to play the man as I best might.

Hermann is the cause of my writing this. We were talking together yesterday in this room, while the workmen were hammering in the yard below, and the great forge-bellows were groaning away as usual. I told him how I envied his wonderful memory. He replied by reminding me that I could write and he could not. ‘Ah,’ said I, ‘but your mind is full of things worth writing down. You scarcely hear or read a legend, a hymn, or a godly sermon, but it is presently your own, and after it has lain working in your brain for some time, you produce it again, and say or sing it after a way you have, so that it is quite delightful to hear.’

[The night before last I had taken him down into the work-shop, and told the men to stop their clatter for awhile, and hear something to do them good—none of your Latin mumbling, but a godly history in their mother-tongue. And then did my friend tell them the Legend of Saint Dorothea, with such a simple tenderness that my rough fellows stood like statues till he had done. I saw a tear run down Hans’ sooty face, making a white channel over his cheek. He would have it afterwards that some dust had blown into his eye.]

‘My good friend,’ said Hermann, ‘I am a dozen years at least older than you; let me counsel you not to set light by your gift, and let it lie unused. Had I that same scrivening art at my service, I should write me a book setting forth what I heard and observed while it was fresh in my mind. I know many good men who would hold such a book, written by a God-fearing man, as great treasure. They would keep it with care and hand it down to those who came after them, so that the

writer thereof should be thought on when his hand was cold. I have it in my thoughts to dictate one day or other to some cunning scribe, some of the legends I so love. Haply they may not be the worse for their passage through the mind of a plain man with a loving heart, who has carried them about with him whithersoever he went, lived in them and grown one with them. But you can do much more if you list. I know, moreover, that you, Adolf, are not the man to turn away from your father's old friends because the great ones despise and daily vex them.'

This evening I do herewith begin to act on the resolution his words awakened. I am but a layman, and so is he, but for that matter I have hearkened to teachers who tell me that the layman may be nearer to heaven than the clerk, and that all such outer differences are of small account in the eye of God.

My father was an armourer and president of the guild. All looked up to him as the most fearless and far-seeing of our counsellors. He taught us how to watch and to resist the encroachments of the bishop and the nobles. We have to thank his wisdom mainly that our position has been not a little strengthened of late. Still, how much wrong have we oftentimes to suffer from the senate and their presidents! Strasburg prospers—marvellously, considering the dreadful pestilence seven years back; but there is much to amend, Heaven knows! My father fell on a journey to Spires, in an affray with Von Otterbach and his black band. He could use well the weapons he made, and wounded Von Otterbach well nigh to

the death before he was overpowered by numbers. The Rhenish League was strong enough, and for once bold enough, to avenge him well. That castle of Otterbach, which every traveller and merchant trembled to pass, stands now ruinous and empty. I, alas! was away the while, on my apprentice-travels. The old evil is but little abated, though our union has, I doubt not, prevented many of the worst mischiefs of the fist-law. Every rock along the Rhine is castled. They espy us approaching from far off, and at every turn have we to wrangle, and now and then, if strong enough, to fight, with these vultures about their robber-toll. Right thankful am I that my father died a man's death, fighting—that I have not to imagine his fate as like that of some, who, falling alive into their hands, have been horribly tortured, and let down by a windlass, with dislocated limbs, into the loathsome dog-hole of a keep, to writhe and die by inches in putrid filth and darkness. Yet our very perils give to our calling an enterprise and an excitement it would otherwise lack. The merchant has his chivalry as well as the knight. Moreover, as rich old Gersdorf says, risk and profit run together—though, as to money, I have as much already as I care for. We thrive, despite restrictions and extortions innumerable, legal and illegal. My brother Otto sends me word from Bohemia that he prospers. The Bohemian throats can never have enough of our wines, and we are good customers for their metal. Otto was always a rover. He talks of journeying to the East. It seems but yesterday that he and I were boys together, taking our reading and writing lessons from that poor old Waldensian whom my father sheltered in our house. How we all loved him! I never saw my

father so troubled at anything as at his death. Our house has been ever since a refuge for such persecuted wanderers.

The wrath of Popes, prelates, and inquisitors hath been especially kindled of late years against sundry communities, sects, and residues of sects, which are known by the name of Beghards, Beguines, Lollards, Kathari, Fratricelli, Brethren of the Free Spirit,[72] &c. Councils, they tell me, have been held at Cologne, Mayence, and Narbonne, to suppress the Beghards. Yet their numerous communities in the Netherlands and the Rhineland are a blessing to the poor folk, to whom the hierarchy are a curse. The clergy are jealous of them. They live single, they work with their hands, they nurse the sick, they lay out the dead, they lead a well-ordered and godly life in their Beguinasia, under the Magister or Magistra; but they are bound by no vows, fettered by no harassing minutiæ of austerity, and think the liberty of the Spirit better than monkish servitude. Some of them have fallen into the notions of those enthusiastic Franciscans who think the end of the world at hand, and that we live in, or near, the days of Antichrist. And no wonder, when the spiritual heads of Christendom are so unchristian. There are some sturdy beggars who wander about the country availing themselves of the name of Beghard to lead an idle life. These I excuse not. They say some of these Beghards claim the rank of apostles—that they have subterranean rooms, where both sexes meet to hear blasphemous preachers announce their equality with God. Yea, worse charges than these—even of grossest lewdness—do they bring. I know many of them, both here and at Cologne, but nothing of this sort

have I seen, or credibly heard of. They are the enemies of clerical pomp and usurpation, and some, I fear, hold strange fantastical notions, coming I know not whence. But the churchmen themselves are at fault, and answerable for it all. They leave the artisans and labourers in besotted ignorance, and when they do get a solitary religious idea that comes home to them, ten to one but it presently confounds or overthrows what little sense they have. Many deeply religious minds among us, both of laity and clergy, are at heart as indignant at the crimes of the hierarchy as can be the wildest mob-leading fanatic who here and there appears for a moment, haranguing the populace, denouncing the denouncers, and bidding men fight sin with sin. We who sigh for reform, who must have more spiritual freedom, have our secret communications, our meetings now and then for counsel, our signs and counter-signs. Folks call the Rhineland the Parsons' Walk —so full is it of the clergy, so enjoyed and lorded over by them. Verily, it is at least as full of those hidden ones, who, in various wise which they call heresy, do worship God without man coming in between.

The tide of the time is with us.[73] Our once famous Godfrey of Strasburg is forgotten. Wolfram von Eschenbach is the universal model. His *Parzival and Titurel* live on the lips of the many rhymesters and minstrels who wander from town to town now, as once they did from court to court and castle to castle. It is the religiousness and the learning of Wolfram that finds favour for him and countless imitators. This is the good sign I mean. Our singers have turned preachers. They are practical, after their fashion. They are a Book of

Proverbs, and give us maxims, riddles, doctrines, science, in their verses. If they sing of chivalry, it is to satirize chivalry—such knighthood as now we have. They are spreading and descending towards the people. Men may have their songs of chivalry in Spain, where, under the blessed St. Iago, good knights and true have a real crusade against those heathen hounds the Moors, whom God confound. But here each petty lord in his castle has nothing to do but quarrel with his neighbour and oppress all weaker than himself. What to such men, robbing, drinking, devouring their living with harlots, are Arthur and the Round Table, or Oliver and Roland? So the singers come to us. In good sooth, the old virtues of knighthood—its truth and honour, its chastity and courage—are found far more among the citizens than with the nobles. We relish the sage precepts and quaint abstruseness of Reimar of Zweter, though he be somewhat of a pedant. Albertus Magnus is the hero with him, instead of Charlemagne. His learning is a marvel, and he draws all morality by allegory out of the Seven Sciences in most wondrous wise. Frauenlob himself (alas! I heard last year that he was dead) could not praise fair ladies more fairly. He assails, in the boldest fashion, the Pope and Rome, and their daughters Cologne and Mayence. The last time he was over here from Bohemia, we laughed nigh to bursting at his caricature of a tournament, and applauded till the rafters rang again when he said that not birth, but virtue, made true nobleness. Then our ballads and popular fables are full of satire on the vices of ecclesiastics. All this tends to keep men awake to the abuses of the day, and to deepen their desire for reform. We

shall need all the strength we can gather, political and religious, if in the coming struggle the name of German is not to be a shame. Our Holy Father promises to indemnify himself for the humiliation he suffers at Avignon by heaping insults upon Germany. If Louis of Bavaria conquers Frederick, I should not wonder if we Strasburgers wake up some morning and find ourselves excommunicate. All true hearts must be stirring—we shall have cowards and sluggards enow on all hands.

Last month the Emperor Louis was here with his army for a few days. Our bishop Ochsenstein and the Zorn family espouse the cause of his rival Frederick the Fair. Louis has on his side, however, the best of us—the family of the Müllenheim, the chief burghers, and the people generally. Every true German heart, every hater of foreign domination, must be with him. Many a skirmish has there been in our streets between the retainers of the two great houses of Zorn and Müllenheim, and now their enmity is even more bitter than heretofore. The senate received Louis with royal honours. When Frederick was here five years ago, we would only entertain him as a guest. The clergy and most of the nobles hailed him as Emperor. Now, when Louis came, it was their turn to stand aloof. There were few of them in the cathedral the other day, when he graciously confirmed our privileges. The bishop issued orders to put a stop to the performance of all church offices while Louis was here; whereupon, either from prudence or consideration for our souls, he shortened his visit.[74]

1320. *September. St. Maurice's Day.*—A long conversation with Hermann to-day. He has heard

Eckart repeatedly, and, as I looked for, is both startled and perplexed. Of a truth it is small marvel that such preaching as his stirred up all Cologne, gathered crowds of wondering hearers, made him fast friends and deadly enemies, and roused the wrath of the heretic-hunting archbishop. Hermann brought me home some of the things this famous doctor said which most struck him. I wrote them down from his lips, and place them here.

'He who is at all times alone is worthy of God. He who is at all times at home, to him is God present. He who standeth at all times in a present Now, in him doth God the Father bring forth his son without ceasing.[75]

'He who finds one thing otherwise than another—to whom God is dearer in one thing than another, that man is carnal, and still afar off and a child. But he to whom God is alike in all things hath become a man.[76]

'All that is in the Godhead is one. Thereof can we say nothing. It is above all names, above all nature. The essence of all creatures is eternally a divine life in Deity. God works. So doth not the Godhead. Therein are they distinguished,—in working and not working. The end of all things is the hidden darkness of the eternal Godhead, unknown and never to be known.[77]

'I declare, by good truth and truth everlasting, that in every man who hath utterly abandoned self, God must communicate Himself according to all His power, so completely that he retains nothing in His life, in His essence, in His Nature, and in His Godhead—He must communicate all to the bringing forth of fruit.[78]

‘When the Will is so united that it becometh a One in oneness, then doth the Heavenly Father produce his only-begotten Son in Himself and in me. Wherefore in Himself and in me? I am one with Him—He cannot exclude me. In the self-same operation doth the Holy Ghost receive his existence, and proceeds from me as from God. Wherefore? I am in God, and if the Holy Ghost deriveth not his being from me, He deriveth it not from God. I am in nowise excluded.[79]

‘There is something in the soul which is above the soul, divine, simple, an absolute Nothing, rather unnamed than named, unknown than known. So long as thou lookest on thyself as a *Something*, so long thou knowest as little what this is as my mouth knows what colour is, or as my eye knows what taste is. Of this I am wont to speak in my sermons, and sometimes I have called it a Power, sometimes an uncreated Light, sometimes a divine Spark. It is absolute and free from all names and forms, as God is free and absolute in Himself. It is higher than knowledge, higher than love, higher than grace. For in all these there is still distinction. In this power doth blossom and flourish God, with all His Godhead, and the Spirit flourisheth in God. In this power doth the Father bring forth His only-begotten Son, as essentially as in Himself, and in this light ariseth the Holy Ghost. This Spark rejects all creatures, and will have only God, simply as he is in Himself. It rests satisfied neither with the Father, nor the Son, nor the Holy Ghost, nor with the three Persons, as far as each exists in its respective attributes. I will say what will sound more marvellous yet. This Light is satisfied only with the super-essential essence. It is bent on entering into the simple Ground, the

still Waste, wherein is no distinction, neither Father, Son, nor Holy Ghost,—into the Unity where no man dwelleth. There is it satisfied in the light, there it is one; then is it in itself, as this Ground is a simple stillness in itself, immoveable; and yet by this Immobility are all things moved. [80]

'God in himself was not God—in the creature only hath He become God. I ask to be rid of God—that is, that God, by his grace, would bring me into the Essence—that Essence which is above God and above distinction. I would enter into that eternal Unity which was mine before all time, when I was what I would, and would what I was;—into a state above all addition or diminution;—into the Immobility whereby all is moved.[81]

'Folks say to me often—"Pray God for me." Then I think with myself, "Why go ye out? Why abide ye not in your own selves, and take hold on your own possession? Ye have all truth essentially within you?."[82]

'God and I are one in knowing. God's Essence is His knowing, and God's knowing makes me to know Him. Therefore is His knowing my knowing. The eye whereby I see God is the same eye whereby He seeth me. Mine eye and the eye of God are one eye, one vision, one knowledge, and one love.[83]

'If any man hath understood this sermon, it is well for him. Had not a soul of you been here, I must have spoken the very same words. He who hath not understood it, let him not trouble his heart therewith, for as long as a man is not himself like unto this truth, so long will he never understand it, seeing that it is no truth of reflection, to be

thought out, but is come directly out of the heart of God without medium.'[84]

Of all this I can understand scarcely anything. The perpetual incarnation of God in good Christians, the nameless Nothing, the self-unfolding and self-infolding of God (I know not what words to use) are things too high for my grosser apprehension. I shall let the sayings lie here; some one else who reads may comprehend them. I am content to be a child in such matters. I look with awe and admiration on men who have attained while yet in the flesh heights of wisdom which will be, perhaps to all eternity, beyond the reach of such as I am.

1320. *October. St. Francis' Day.*—Went with Hermann this morning to hear mass. Master Eckart preached again. Dr. Tauler in the church. How every one loves that man! As several of his brethren made their way to their places, I saw the people frown on some of them, and laugh and leer to each other as two or three of them passed. They had reason, I know, to hate and to despise certain among them. But to Tauler all bowed, and many voices blessed him. He has a kind heart to feel for us, the commonalty. He and his sermons are one and the same. He means all he says, and we can understand much, at least, of what he means. There is a cold grandeur about Master Eckart. He seems above emotion: his very face, all intellect, says it is a weakness to feel. At him we wonder; with Master Tauler we weep. How reverently did Tauler listen, as a son to a father, to the words of the great Doctor. No doubt he understood every syllable. He is and shall be my sole confessor. I will question him, some day,

concerning these lofty doctrines whereby it would seem that the poorest beggar may outpass in wisdom and in blessedness all the Popes of Christendom.

Master Eckart said to-day:—'Some people are for seeing God with their eyes, as they can see a cow, and would love God as they love a cow (which thou lovest for the milk and for the cheese, and for thine own profit). Thus do all those who love God for the sake of outward riches or of inward comfort; they do not love aright, but seek only themselves and their own advantage.[85]

'God is a pure good in Himself, and therefore will He dwell nowhere save in a pure soul. There He may pour Himself out; into that He can wholly flow. What is Purity? It is that man should have turned himself away from all creatures, and have set his heart so entirely on the pure good, that no creature is to him a comfort, that he has no desire for aught creaturely, save as far as he may apprehend therein the pure good which is God. And as little as the bright eye can endure aught foreign in it, so little can the pure soul bear anything in it, any stain, aught between it and God. To it all creatures are pure to enjoy, for it enjoyeth all creatures in God, and God in all creatures. Yea, so pure is that soul that she seeth through herself, she needeth not to seek God afar off, she finds him in herself, when, in her natural purity, she hath flowed out into the super-natural of the pure Godhead. And thus is she in God and God in her, and what she doeth that she doeth in God and God doeth it in her.[86]

'Then shall a man be truly poor when he is as free from his creature will as he was before he was

born. And I say to you, by the eternal truth, that so long as ye desire to fulfil the will of God, and have any desire after eternity and God, so long are ye not truly poor. He alone hath true spiritual poverty who wills nothing, knows nothing, desires nothing.[87]

'For us, to follow truly what God willeth, is to follow that whereto we are most inclined,—whereto we feel most frequent inward exhortation and strongest attraction. The inner voice is the voice of God.'[88]

After the service, Hermann left me to go and see a sick friend. I mingled with the crowd. There was a knot of people gathered before All-Saints, discussing what they had heard. A portly, capon-lined burgomaster declared he had first been hungry, then sleepy, and that was all he knew. He had verily, as a wag presently told him, obeyed the master, and lost consciousness of all external things. Whereat the jolly citizen was so tickled that he took the joker home to dine with him, promising mountains of pickled pork, a whole Black Forest of sauer kraut, and boundless beakers of hippocras.

An innocent novice from the country (looking fresh as a new-caught trout) began to say, 'Well, it doth seem to me that though Doctor Eckart received his Doctorate from Rome, at the hands of our Holy Father, though he hath studied and taught at Paris, though he hath been Provincial of our order in Saxony, and Vicar-General in Bohemia—where he played the cat with the mice, I can tell you—yet that some things he said were ——'

'Hold your tongue for a jackass,' quoth a senior

brother, who liked not, methinks, to hear a whisper against the orthodoxy of the order, by whomsoever or against whomsoever uttered.

'He is a blasphemer,' said a friar. 'Good people, did not you hear him say that what burned in hell was the Nothing?[89] Then nothing burns; *ergo*, there is no hell.'

'I don't think he believes in God at all,' cried one: —'Did he not say something about caring no more for God than for a stone?'

'Ay, but,' urged the friar, 'no hell, and so no purgatory—think of that. Why, he has swept the universe as clean of the devil as a housewife's platter at a christening.'

Some one in the crowd shouted out, 'That fellow cares not what becomes of God, but he can't give up his devil.' Whereon the friar grew very red in the face, as we all laughed, but could not bethink him of any answer, and went capped with the name of Brother Brimstone ever after.

'What was that he said,' asked a slip-shod, sottish-looking tailor, 'about doing what you like, and that is what God likes?'

'Friends,' cries next a rainbow-coloured, dandified puppy, a secretary of the bishop's, stroking the down of a would-be moustache, evidently as yet only in a state of Becoming (*Werden*)—'I would fain have moderately kicked him,——

'My friends' (smiling with a patronizing blandness at the tailor), 'you are right; the public morals are in danger. Evil men and seducers wax worse and worse. But the Holy Church will protect her children. We have heard pestilent heresy this day.

To hear that man talk, you would fancy he thought there was as much divinity in his little finger as in the whole body of the Virgin Mother of God.'

Whereupon up starts a little man whom I knew for one of the brethren of the Free Spirit—takes his place on a stone that lay in the mud of the middle of the street, and begins—'Good people, did you not hear the doctor say that those who cannot understand his doctrine are to hold by the common faith? Did not Saint Peter say of the Epistles of the blessed Saint Paul that there were some things therein hard to be understood, which the ignorant would wrest to their own destruction? I'll tell you the ignorance he means and the knowledge he means. Friend Crispin there, whom you carried home drunk in a barrow last night, and Master Secretary here, who transgresses in like wise and worse in a daintier style, and hath, by the way, as much perfumery about him as though the scent thereof, rising towards heaven, were so much incense for the taking away of his many sins—they are a couple of St. Paul's ignoramuses. The knowledge St. Paul means is the thoughtful love of doing the right thing for the love of Christ. But the Pope himself may be one of these witless ones, if the love of sin be stronger in him than the love of holiness. The preaching of all the twelve Apostles would be turned to mischief and to licence by such as you, you feather-brained, civet-tanned puppet of a man, you adulterous, quill-driving hypocrite.'

'Seize him,' shouts my Secretary, and darted forward; but an apprentice put out his foot, and over he rolled into the mire, grievously ruffling

and besmutching all his gay feathers, while the little man mingled with the laughing people, and made his escape. I hope he is out of Strasburg, or he may be secluded in a darkness and a solitude anything but divine. He was a trifle free of tongue, assuredly; I suppose that makes a part of the freedom of the Spirit with him. He had right, however, beyond question.

The confusion created by this incident had scarcely ceased, when I saw advancing towards us the stately form of Master Eckart himself. He looked with a calm gravity about upon us, as he paused in the midst—seemed to understand at once of what sort our talk had been, and appeared about to speak. There was a cry for silence—'Hear the Doctor! hear him!' Whereon he spoke as follows:—

'There was once a learned man who longed and prayed full eight years that God would show him some one to teach him the way of truth. And on a time, as he was in a great longing, there came unto him a voice from heaven, and said, "Go to the front of the church, there wilt thou find a man that shall show thee the way to blessedness."

'So thither he went, and found there a poor man whose feet were torn, and covered with dust and dirt, and all his apparel scarce three hellers worth. He greeted him, saying, "God give thee good morrow." Thereat made he answer, "I never had an ill morrow." Again said he, "God prosper thee." The other answered, "Never had I aught but prosperity."

'"Heaven save thee," said the scholar, "how answerest thou me so?"

“‘I was never other than saved.”

“‘Explain to me this, for I understand not.”

“‘Willingly,” quoth the poor man. “Thou wishest me good morrow. I never had an ill morrow, for, am I an hungered, I praise God; am I freezing, doth it hail, snow, rain, is it fair weather or foul, I praise God; and therefore had I never ill morrow. Thou didst say, God prosper thee. I have been never unprosperous, for I know how to live with God; I know that what he doth is best, and what God giveth or ordaineth for me, be it pain or pleasure, that I take cheerfully from Him as the best of all, and so I had never adversity. Thou wishest God to bless me. I was never unblessed, for I desire to be only in the will of God, and I have so given up my will to the will of God, that what God willeth I will.”

“‘But if God were to cast thee into hell,” said the scholar, “what wouldst thou do then?”

“‘Cast me into hell? His goodness holds him back therefrom. Yet if he did, I should have two arms to embrace him withal. One arm is true Humility, and therewith am I one with his holy humanity. And with the right arm of Love, that joineth his holy Godhead, I would embrace him, so He must come with me into hell likewise. And even so, I would sooner be in hell, and have God, than in heaven, and not have Him.”

‘Then understood this Master that true Abandonment, with utter Abasement, was the nearest way to God.

‘Moreover the Master asked: “From whence comest thou?”

‘“From God.”

‘“Where hast thou found God?”

‘“Where I abandoned all creatures. I am a king. My kingdom is my soul. All my powers, within and without, do homage to my soul. This kingdom is greater than any kingdom on the earth.”

‘“What hath brought thee to this perfection?”

‘“My silence, my heavenward thoughts, my union with God. For I could rest in nothing less than God. Now I have found God, and have everlasting rest and joy in Him.”[90]

With that Master Eckart ceased, and went on his way again, leaving us in wonderment; and I watched him, as far as I could see along the winding street, walking on under the over-hanging gables, with his steady step and abstract air, and his silver locks fluttering out in the wind from under his doctor’s hat. When I looked round, I found myself almost alone. He is a holy man, let what will be said about heresy.

I set down here a new hymn Hermann sang me—sweet, as he sang it—with a ringing repetition that chimes right pleasantly, and makes amends for some lack of meaning in the words.[91]

Oh be glad, thou Zion’s daughter,
  Joyous news to thee are sent;
Thou shalt sing a strain of sweetness,
  Sing it to thy heart’s content.
Now the friend of God thou art,
Therefore shalt thou joy at heart,
Therefore know no sorrow-smart.
    Lo! ’tis ju-ju-jubilation,
    Meditation;

Ju-ju-ju-ju-jubilation,
Contemplation;
Ju-ju-ju-jubilation;
Ju-ju-ju-jubilation;
Speculation;
Ju-ju-ju-jubilation,
Conciliation!

Meditation, that is goodly,
When a man on God will muse;
Jubilation worketh wonder,
'Tis the harp the soul doth use.
Speculation, that is sheen,
Contemplation crowns, I ween,
Concord leads, the dance's queen,
Lo! ju-ju-ju-
Conciliation!
'Tis jubilation
At the sweets of contemplation!

Have been haunted by this ju-ju, in-doors and out, whatever I have been doing for the last three days, and I hear it in every stroke upon the anvil.

1320. *Second week in October.*—A ride over to Fegersheim about Sir Rudolf's new bascinet with the beaked ventaille. As I reached the castle the ladies were just coming out for hawking, with a brave company of knights and squires. They were fair to see, with their copes and kirtles blue and white, and those fanciful new-fashioned crowns on their heads, all glittering with gold and jewels. Sir Rudolf stayed for me awhile and then followed them.

On my way back, rested at noon at a little hostelry, where I sat before the door at a table, chatting with mine host. There ride up a priest and monk with attendants. Holy Mary, what

dresses! The monk with bells on his horse's bridle, his hood fastened with a great golden pin, wrought at the head into a true-love knot, his hair growing long so as to hide his tonsure, his shoes embroidered and cut lattice-wise.[92] There was the priest with broad gold girdle, gown of green and red, slashed after the newest mode, and a long sword and dagger, very truly militant. I marvelled at the variety and unction of the oaths they had at their service. The advantage of a theological training was very manifest therein.

Scarcely were these worthies, with bag and baggage, well on their way again when I espied, walking towards the inn, a giant of a man—some three inches higher than I am (a sight I have not often seen), miserably attired, dusty and travel-worn. When he came to where I was he threw down his staff and bundle, cast his huge limbs along the bench, gave a careless, surly glance at me, and, throwing back his shaggy head of black hair, seemed about to sleep. Having pity on his weariness I said, 'Art thirsty, friend? the sun hath power to-day.' Thereupon he partly raised himself, looked fixedly at me, and then drank off the tankard I pushed towards him, grunting out a something which methought was meant for thanks. Being now curious, I asked him straight, 'Where he came from?'

He. I never came from anywhere.

I. What are you?

He. I am not.

I. What will you?

He. I will not.

I. This is passing strange. Tell me your name.

He. Men call me the Nameless Wild.

I. Not far off the mark either; you talk wildly enough. Where do you come from? whither are you bound?

He. I dwell in absolute Freedom.

I. What is that?

He. When a man lives as he list, without distinction (Otherness, *Anderheit*), without before or after. The man who hath in his Eternal Nothing become nothing knows nought of distinctions.

I. But to violate distinction is to violate order, and to break that is to be a slave. That is not the freedom indeed, which the truth gives. He that committeth sin is the servant of sin. No man can be so utterly self-annihilated and lost in God,—can be such a very nothing that there remains no remnant of the original difference between creature and Creator. My soul and body are one, are not separate; but they are distinct. So is it with the soul united to God. Mark the difference, friend, I prithee, between separation and distinction (*Geschiedenheit und Unterschiedenheit*).

He. The teacher saith that the saintly man is God's son, and what Christ doth, that doth he.

I. He saith that such man followeth Christ in righteousness. But our personality must ever abide. Christ is son of God by nature, we by grace. Your pride blinds you. You are enlightened with a false light, coming whence I know not. You try and 'break through' to the Oneness, and you break through reason and reverence.

> He replied by telling me that I was in thick darkness, and the boy coming with my horse, I left him.[93]
>
> As I rode homeward I thought on the contrast I had seen. This man who came last is the natural consequent on the two who preceded him. So doth a hypocritical, ghostly tyranny produce lawlessness. I have seen the Priest and the Levite, and methinks one of the thieves,—where is our good Samaritan? I know not which extreme is the worst. One is selfish absoluteness, the other absolute selfishness. Oh, for men among us who shall battle with each in the strength of a truth above them both! Poor Alsace!

Here Atherton laid aside his manuscript, and conversation commenced.

CHAPTER II.

> For as though there were metempsychosis, and the soul of one man passed into another; opinions do find, after certain revolutions, men and minds like those that first begat them.—SIR THOMAS BROWNE.

WILLOUGHBY. What struck me most as novel in the mysticism of this strange Master Eckart was the stress he laid on our own consciousness of being the sons of God. Neither the ecclesiastical nor the scholastic gradations and preparatives for mysticism, so important with his predecessors, seem of much moment with him in comparison with the

attainment, *per saltum*, as it were, of this blessed certainty. Perhaps the secret of his reaction against the orthodoxy of his day lay here. He craves a firm resting-place for his soul. The Church cannot satisfy the want. He will supply it for himself, and, to do so, builds together into a sort of system certain current notions that suit his purpose, some new and others old, some in tolerable harmony with Christianity, others more hostile to it than he was altogether aware. These pantheistic metaphysics may have seemed to him his resource and justification—may have been the product of the brain labouring to assure the heart.

ATHERTON. A very plausible conjecture. Amalric of Bena, who had been famous as a teacher in Paris nearly a hundred years before Eckart went to study there, maintained that a personal conviction of our union to Christ was necessary to salvation. He was condemned for the doctrine, but it survived.

WILLOUGHBY. Thank you. That fact supports me. Might not Eckart have desired to assert for our inward religious life a worthier and more independent place, as opposed to the despotic externalism of the time—to make our access to Christ more immediate, and less subject to the precarious mercies of the Church?

ATHERTON. A grand aim, if so: but to reach it he unfortunately absorbs the objective in the subjective element of religion—rebounds from servility to arrogance, and makes humanity a manifestation of the Divine Essence.

GOWER. In order to understand his position, the question to be first asked appears to me to be this. If Eckart goes to the Church, and says, 'How can I be assured that I am in a state of salvation?' what

answer will the Holy Mother give him? Can you tell me, Atherton?

ATHERTON. She confounds justification and sanctification together, you will remember. So she will answer, 'My son, as a Christian of the ordinary sort, you cannot have any such certainty—indeed, you are much better without it. You may conjecture that you are reconciled to God by looking inward on your feelings, by assuring yourself that at least you are not living in any mortal sin. If, indeed, you were appointed to do some great things for my glory, you might find yourself among the happy few who are made certain of their state of grace by a special and *extra* revelation, to hearten them for their achievements.'

GOWER. Shameful! The Church then admits the high, invigorating influence of such certainty, but denies it to those who, amid secular care and toil, require it most.

WILLOUGHBY. While discussing Eckart, we have lighted on a doctrine which must have produced more mysticism than almost any other you can name. On receiving such reply, how many ardent natures will strain after visions and miraculous manifestations, wrestling for some token of their safety!

GOWER. And how many will be the prey of morbid introspections, now catching the exultant thrill of confidence, and presently thrown headlong into some despairing abyss.

ATHERTON. As for the mass of the people, they will be enslaved for ever by such teaching, trying to assure themselves by plenty of sacraments, believing these the causes of grace, and hanging for their

spiritual all on the dispensers thereof.

WILLOUGHBY. Then, to apply the result of your question, Gower, to Eckart,—as he has in him nothing servile, and nothing visionary, he resolves to grasp certainty with his own hand—wraps about him relics of the old Greek pallium, and retires to his extreme of majestic isolation.

GOWER. Pity that he could not find the scriptural *Via Media*—that common truth which, while it meets the deepest wants of the individual, yet links him in wholesome fellowship with others—that pure outer light which nurtures and directs the inner.

WILLOUGHBY. No easy way to find in days when Plato was installed high priest, and the whole biblical region a jungle of luxuriant allegoric conceits or thorny scholastic formulas.

GOWER. This daring Eckart reminds me of that heroic leader in Beaumont and Fletcher's *Bonduca*. I think I hear him cry with Caratach,

> Cease your fretful prayers,
> Your whinings, and your tame petitions;
> The gods love courage armed with confidence,
> And prayers fit to pull them down: weak tears
> And troubled hearts, the dull twins of cold spirits,
> They sit and smile at. Hear how I salute 'em.

LOWESTOFFE. Did you not say yesterday, Atherton, that Eckart's system had received high praise from Hegel?

ATHERTON. Oh yes, he calls it 'a genuine and profound philosophy.' Indeed the points of resemblance are very striking, and, setting aside for the moment some redeeming expressions and the more religious spirit of the man, Eckart's theosophy

is a remarkable anticipation of modern German idealism. That abstract ground of Godhead Eckart talks about, answers exactly to Hegel's *Logische Idee*. The Trinity of process, the incarnation ever renewing itself in men, the resolution of redemption almost to a divine self-development, constitute strong features of family likeness between the Dominican and both Hegel and Fichte.[94]

GOWER. One may fancy that while Hegel was teaching at Heidelberg it must have fared with poor Eckart as with the dead huntsman in the Danish ballad, while a usurper was hunting with his hounds over his patrimony,—

> With my dogs so good,
> He hunteth the wild deer in the wood;
> And with every deer he slays on the mould,
> He wakens me up in the grave so cold.

ATHERTON. Nay, if we come to fancying, let us call in Pythagoras at once, and say that the soul of Eckart transmigrated into Hegel.

GOWER. With all my heart. The Portuguese have a superstition according to which the soul of a man who has died, leaving some duty unfulfilled or promised work unfinished, is frequently known to enter into another person, and dislodging for a time the rightful soul-occupant, impel him unconsciously to complete what was lacking. On a dreamy summer day like this, we can imagine Hegel in like manner possessed by Eckart in order to systematize his half-developed ideas.

WILLOUGHBY. It is certainly very curious to mark the pathway of these pantheistic notions through successive ages. Seriously, I did not know till lately how venerably antique were the discoveries of

absolute idealism.

LOWESTOFFE. I confess that the being one in oneness, the nothing, the soul beyond the soul, the participation in the all-moving Immobility of which Eckart speaks, are to me utterly unintelligible.

GOWER. Do not trouble yourself. No one will ever be able to get beyond the words themselves, any more than Bardolph could with the phrase which so tickled the ear of Justice Shallow. 'Accommodated; that is, when a man is, as they say, accommodated: or, when a man is,—being,—whereby,—he may be thought to be accommodated; which is an excellent thing.'

ATHERTON. Yet, to do Eckart justice, he has his qualifications and his distinctions in virtue of which he imagines himself still within the pale of orthodoxy, and he strongly repudiates the Antinomian consequences to which his doctrines were represented as tending.

GOWER. Ay, it is just in this way that the mischief is done. These distinctions many a follower of his could not or would not understand, and so his high philosophy produced in practice far oftener such men as the Nameless Wild than characters resembling the more pure and lofty ideal he drew himself in his discourse to the good people of Strasburg. These philosophical edge-tools are full perilous. Modern Germany is replete with examples of that fatal facility in the common mind for a practical application of philosophic paradox which our friend Adolf lamented at Fegersheim. When a philosophy which weakens the embankments that keep licence out has once been popularized, the philosopher cannot stop the inundation by shouting from his study-window. De Wette himself at last became aware of this, and regretted it in vain. Such

speculation resembles the magic sword of Sir Elidure —its mysterious virtue sometimes filled even its owner with a furor that hurried him to an indiscriminate slaughter, but wielded by any other hand its thirst could be satisfied only with the blood of every one around, and at last with the life of him who held it.

LOWESTOFFE. Still there is far more excuse for Eckart than for our nineteenth century pantheists. Even the desperation of some of those poor ignorant creatures, who exaggerated Eckart's paradoxes till they grew a plea for utter lawlessness, is not so unnatural, however lamentable. Who can wonder that some should have overwrought the doctrine of Christ *in* us and neglected that of Christ *for* us, when the *opus operatum* was in its glory, ghostly comfort bought and sold, and Christ our sacrifice pageanted about in the mass, as Milton says,—a fearful idol? Or that the untaught many, catching the first thought of spiritual freedom from some mystic, should have been intoxicated instantly. The laity, forbidden so long to be Christians on their own account, rise up here and there, crying, 'We will be not Christians merely, but so many Christs.' They have been denied what is due to man, they will dreadfully indemnify themselves by seizing what is due to God. Has not the letter been slaying them by inches all their days? The spirit shall give them life!

GOWER. Like the peasant in the apologue;—religion has been so long doled out to them in a few pitiful drops of holy water, till in their impatience they must have a whole Ganges-flood poured into their grounds, obliterating, with a vengeance, 'all distinctions,' and drowning every logical and social landmark under the cold grey level—the blank

neutral-tint of a stoical indifference which annihilates all order and all law.

ATHERTON. By a strange contradiction, Eckart employs Revelation at one moment only to escape it the next—and uses its beacon-lights to steer *from*, not to the haven. He pays homage to its authority, he consults its record, but presently leaves it far behind to lose himself in the unrevealed Godhead—floats away on his 'sail-broad vans' of speculation through the vast vacuity in search of

> ——a dark
> Illimitable ocean, without bound,
> Without dimension, where length, breadth, and
> height,
> And time and place are lost.

When there, he finds his cloudy seat soon fails him; he returns once more to the realities of revelation, only to forsake this lower ground again when he has renewed his strength. This oscillation betrays a fatal contradiction. To shut behind us the gate on this inferior world is not necessarily to open the everlasting doors of the upper one.

GOWER. I very much admire the absolute resignation of that devout mendicant described by Eckart. He is a Quietist of the very best sort—his life a 'Thy will be done.' He is a Fénelon in rags.

ATHERTON. After all, make what allowance we will, —giving Eckart all the benefit due from the fact that his life was pure, that he stood in no avowed antagonism to Christian doctrine or institute, that devout men like Tauler and Suso valued his teaching so highly,—still, he stands confessed a pantheist; no charity can explain that away.

GOWER. I am afraid not. What else can we call him when he identifies himself and all Christian men with the Son, as we have heard, makes himself essential to God, will share with him in the evolution of the Holy Ghost, and, forbidding you to regard yourself as a something distinct from God, exhorts you (if you would be a justified person and child of God indeed) to merge the ground of your own nature in the divine, so that your knowledge of God and his of you are the same thing,—*i.e.*, you and He one and the same? But can you conjecture, Atherton, by what process he arrived at such a pass?

ATHERTON. Perhaps in this way:—John Scotus Erigena (with whose writings Eckart could scarcely have failed to make acquaintance at Paris) asserts the identity of Being and Willing, of the *Velle* and the *Esse* in God; also the identity of Being and Knowing. Applying this latter proposition to the relationship between God and man, he comes logically enough to this conclusion,—'Man, essentially considered, may be defined as God's knowledge of him; that is, man reduced to his ultimate—his ground, or simple subsistence—is a divine Thought. But, on the same principle, the thoughts of God are, of course, God. Hence Eckart's doctrine—the ground of your being lies in God. Reduce yourself to that simplicity, that root, and you are in God. There is no longer any distinction between your spirit and the divine,—you have escaped personality and finite limitation. Your particular, creature self, as a something separate and dependent on God, is gone. So also, obviously, your creaturely will. Henceforth, therefore, what seems an inclination of yours is in fact the divine good pleasure. You are free from law. You are above means. The very will to do the will of God is resolved into that will itself. This is the Apathy, the Negation,

the Poverty, he commends.

With Eckart personally this self-reduction and deification is connected with a rigorous asceticism and exemplary moral excellence. Yet it is easy to see that it may be a merely intellectual process, consisting in a man's thinking that he is thinking himself away from his personality. He declares the appearance of the Son necessary to enable us to realize our sonship; and yet his language implies that this realization is the perpetual incarnation of that Son—does, as it were, constitute him. Christians are accordingly not less the sons of God by grace than is Christ by nature. Believe yourself divine, and the Son is brought forth in you. The Saviour and the saved are dissolved together in the blank absolute Substance.

WILLOUGHBY. So then, Eckart would say,—'To realize himself, God must have Christians;' and Hegel,—'To realize him self, He must have philosophers.'

ATHERTON. Miserable inversion! This result of Eckart's speculation was expressed with the most impious enormity by Angelus Silesius, in the seventeenth century. In virtue of the necessity God is under (according to this theory) of communicating himself, *bon gré, mal gré*, to whomsoever will refine himself down to his '*Nothing*,' he reduces the Almighty to dependence, and changes places with Him upon the eternal throne on the strength of his self-transcending humility!

Note to page 207.

Both Hegel and Eckart regard *Thought* as the point of

union between the human nature and the divine. But the former would pronounce both God and man unrevealed, *i.e.*, unconscious of themselves, till Thought has been developed by some Method into a philosophic System. Mysticism brings Eckart nearer to Schelling on this matter than to the dry schoolman Hegel. The charge which Hegel brings against the philosophy of Schelling he might have applied, with a little alteration, to that of Eckart. Hegel says, 'When this knowledge which claims to be essential and ignores apprehension (is *begrifflose*), professes to have sunk the peculiarity of Self in the *Essence*, and so to give forth the utterance of a hallowed and unerring philosophy,[95] men quite overlook the fact that this so-called wisdom, instead of being yielded up to the influence of Divinity by its contempt of all proportion and definiteness, does really nothing but give full play to accident and to caprice. Such men imagine that by surrendering themselves to the unregulated ferment of the Substance (*Substanz*), by throwing a veil over consciousness, and abandoning the understanding, they become those favourites of Deity to whom he gives wisdom in sleep; verily, nothing was ever produced by such a process better than mere dreams.'—*Vorrede zur Phœnomenologie*, p. 6.

These are true and weighty words: unfortunately Hegel's remedy proves worse than the disease.

We seem to hear Eckart speak when Fichte exclaims, 'Raise thyself to the height of religion, and all veils are removed; the world and its dead principle passes away from thee, and the very Godhead enters thee anew in its first and original form, as Life, as thine own life which thou shalt and oughtest to live.—*Anweisung zum sel. Leben*, p. 470.

And again, 'Religion consists in the inward consciousness that God actually lives and acts in us, and fulfils his work.'—*Ibid.* p. 473.

But Eckart would not have affirmed with Fichte (a few pages farther on) that, were Christ to return to the world, he would be indifferent to the recognition or the denial of his work as a Saviour, provided a man were only united to God *somehow*!

CHAPTER III.

With that about I tourned my hedde,
And sawe anone the fifth rout
That to this lady gan lout,
And doune on knees, anone, to fall,
And to her tho besoughten all,
To hiden hir good workes eke,
And said, they yeve not a leke
For no fame, ne soch renoun,
For they for contemplacioun,
And Goddes love had it wrought,
Ne of fame would they nought.

CHAUCER: THE HOUSE OF FAME.

On the next occasion when our little Summerford circle was ready to hear some more of Arnstein's Chronicle, they were informed by Atherton that four years of the manuscript were missing,—that such intervals were only too frequent,—in fact, the document was little more than a collection of fragments.

'The next entry I find,' said he, 'is in 1324, and the good armourer, in much excitement, begins with an exclamation.

> 1324. *July. St. Kylian's Day.*—What a day this has been! Strasburg, and all the states which adhere to Louis, are placed under the bann. The bells were ringing merrily at early morning; now, the Interdict is proclaimed, and every tongue of them is silent. As the news flew round, every workman quitted his work. The busy stalls set out on either side of the streets were left empty. The tools and the wares lay unlooked at and untouched. The bishop and the clergy of his party, and most of the Dominicans, keep out of sight. My men are furious. I have been all day from house to house, and group to group, telling the people to keep a good heart. We shall have a sad time of it, I see. It is so hard for the poor creatures to shake off a fear in which they have been cradled.
>
> The clergy and the monks will pour out of Strasburg, as out of a Sodom, in shoals. A mere handful will stay behind,—not nearly enough to christen those who will be born and to shrive those who will die in this populous city. They may name their price: the greedy of gain may make their fortunes. The miserable poor will die, numbers of them, in horror, unable to purchase absolution. And then, out of the few priests who do remain, scarcely any will have the courage to disobey the pope, and, despite the Interdict, say mass.
>
> 'Tis an anxious time for either party. Louis has most of the states on his side, and the common voice, in all the towns of the Rhineland—(in the princely Cologne most of all), is, I hear, loud in

his favour. The Minorites will be with him, and all of that sort among the friars, who have little favour to lose with his Holiness. But France is with the Pope against him; Duke Leopold is a doughty adversary; John of Bohemia restless and fickle, and no doubt the Pope will set on the Polacks and pagan Lithuanians to waste most horribly all the north and eastern frontiers. Since the victory of Mühldorf, Frederick has lain in prison. That battle is the grievance. The enemies of the Emperor are more full of rancour than ever. Yet, with all the mischief it may bring in the present, what lover of the Fatherland can sorrow therefor? Gallant little Schweppermann, with his lame foot and grey hair, and his glorious two eggs, long may he live to do other such deeds![96] Louis holds a high spirit at present, and goes about under the bann with a brave heart. But it is only the outset as yet. I much fear me he may lack the staunchness to go through as he has begun. There is store of thunder behind at Avignon. Methinks he hankers, like a child, mainly after the lance and sword and crown of Charlemagne, to dress him out perfectly withal King of the Romans, and seeth not the full bearing of the very war he wages.

We shall not be idle. It is already proposed to send off troops to the aid of Louis. I have half a mind to go myself; but home can ill spare me now, and I render the Emperor more service by such little influence as I have in Strasburg. To-morrow, to consult about the leagues to be formed with neighbouring towns and with the Swiss burghers, to uphold the good cause together.

1326. *March. St. Gregory's Day.*—Duke Leopold died here yesterday, at the Ochsenstein Palace.[97] After ravaging the suburbs of Spires, he came hither in a raging fever to breathe his last. The bishop told him he must pardon the Landgrave of Lower Alsace from the bottom of his heart. They say he struggled long and wrathfully against the condition, till, finding the bishop firm in refusing absolution on other terms, he gave way. But, just as he was about to receive the host, a fit of vomiting came on, wherein he presently expired, without the sacrament after all.

Frederick has been now at liberty some months. Louis visited him in his prison. To think of their having been together all their boyhood, and loving each other so, to meet thus! Frederick the Handsome, haggard with a three years' imprisonment—his beard down to his waist; and Louis, successful and miserable. They say Frederick cut off his beard at first, and sent it, by way of memorial, to John of Bohemia, and that when he went back to his castle he found his young wife had wept herself blind during his captivity. He swore on the holy wafer to renounce his claim to the empire. The Pope released him from his oath soon after, but he keeps his word like knight, not like priest, and holds to it yet. It is whispered that they have agreed to share the throne. But that can never be brought to pass.

Heard to-day, by a merchant, of Hermann.[98] He is travelling through Spain. I miss him much. Before he left Strasburg he was full of Eckart's doctrine, out of all measure admiring the wonderful man, and hoarding every word that dropped from his lips. Eckart is now sick at

Cologne, among his sorrowing disciples. Grieved to hear that the leeches say he hath not long to live.

A long conversation with Henry of Nördlingen.[99] He has journeyed hither, cast down and needy, to ask counsel of Tauler. Verily he needs counsel, but hath not strength of mind to take it when given. Tauler says Henry has many friends among the excellent of the earth; all love him, and he is full of love, but sure a pitiful sight to see. His heart is with us. He mourns over the trouble of the time. He weeps for the poor folk, living and dying without the sacraments. But the Interdict crushes his soul. Now he has all but gathered heart to do as Tauler doth—preach and labour on, unmoved by all this uproar, but anon his courage is gone, and he falls back into his fear again as soon as he is left alone. He sits and pores over those letters of spiritual consolation which Margaret Ebner has written to him. He says sometimes she alone retains him on the earth. Verily I fear me that, priest as he is, some hopeless earthly love mingles with his friendship for that saintly woman. He has had to flee from his home for refusing to perform service. Strasburg, in that case, can be no abiding place for him. I see nothing before him but a wretched wandering, perhaps for years. I cannot get him to discern the malice of Pope John, rather than the wrath of heaven, in the curse that withers us. I gave him a full account of what the Pope's court at Avignon truly is, as I gathered from a trusty eye-witness, late come from thence, whom I questioned long the other day.[100] I told him that gold was the one true god there—our German wealth, wrung out from us, and squandered on French courtiers, players, buffoons,

and courtezans—Christ sold daily for it—the palace full of cardinals and prelates, grey-haired debauchees and filthy mockers, to a man—accounting chastity a scandal, and the soul's immortality and coming judgment an old wife's fable;—yea, simony, adultery, murder, incest, so frequent and unashamed, that the Frenchmen themselves do say the Pope's coming hath corrupted them. I asked him if these were the hands to take up God's instruments of wrath to bruise with them his creatures? But all in vain. There is an awfulness in the very name of Pope which blinds reason and strikes manhood down, in him, as in thousands more.

A.D. 1332. *Fourth week after Easter.*—But now awaked from the first sleep I have had for the last three days and nights. I set down in a word or two what hath happened, then out to action again. Last Wednesday, at the great festival, the nobles, knights, and senators, with a brave show of fair ladies, banqueted at the grand house in the Brandgasse.[101] Within, far into the night, minstrelsy and dancing; without, the street blocked up with a crowd of serving men and grooms with horses, torch-bearers, and lookers-on of all sorts—when, suddenly, the music stopped—they heard shouts and the clash of swords and shrill screams. There had been a quarrel between a Zorn and a Müllenheim—they drew—Von Hunefeld was killed on the spot, another of the Zorns avenged him by cutting down Wasselenheim; the conflict became general, in hall, in the antechambers, down the great staircase, out on the steps, the retainers took part on either side, and the fray ended in the flight of

the Zorns, who left six slain in the house and in the street. Two were killed on the side of the Müllenheims. All who fell were of high rank, and several of either faction are severely wounded. They draw off to their quarters, each breathing vengeance, preparing for another conflict at daybreak. All the rest of the night the Landvogt and Gotzo von Grosstein were riding to and fro to pacify them—to no purpose. Each party declared they would send for the knights and gentry of their side from the country round about. I was with Burckard Zwinger when we heard this. 'Now,' said I, 'or all is lost. Off, and harangue the people. I will get the best of the burghers together.' We parted. All the city was astir. As I made my way from house to house, I sent the people I met off to the market place to hear Zwinger. I could hear their shouts, summons enough now, without any other. When I got back to the Roland's pillar, I found that his plain, home-thrust speech had wrought the multitude to what we would, and no more. Snatches of it flew from mouth to mouth, like sparks of fire,—he had struck well while the iron was hot. 'To the Stadtmeister!' was the cry. 'The keys! The seal! The standard! We will have our standard. Let the citizens defend their own!' Most of the burghers were of one mind with Zwinger, and we went in a body (the crowd shouting behind us, a roaring sea of heads, and the bell on the townhouse ringing as never before) to demand the keys of young Sieck. He yielded all with trembling. By daybreak we had dispersed; the several corporations repaired armed to their quarters; the gates were shut; the bridges guarded; the walls manned. All was in our hands. So far safe. The nobles, knights, and gentry

of the neighbourhood came up in the morning in straggling groups, approaching the city from various quarters, with as many of their men as could be hastily gathered, but drew off again when they saw our posture of defence. It was truly no time for them. This promptitude has saved Strasburg from being a field of battle in every street for counts and men at arms, who despise and hate the citizens—whose victory, on whatever side, would have been assured pillage and rapine, and, in the end, the loss of our privilege to deal solely for ourselves in our own affairs. Well done, good Zwinger, thou prince of bakers, with thy true warm heart, and cool head, and ready tongue! To our praise be it said, no deed of violence was done; there was no blood-thirstiness, no spoiling, but a steady purpose in the vast crowd that, hap what would, no strangers should come in to brawl and rob in Strasburg.

While the gates have been closed and the Town Hall guarded, we have been deliberating on a new senate. Four new Stadtmeisters elected. Zwinger made Amtmeister. The magistracy taken out of the exclusive hands of the great families and open to the citizens generally, gentlemen, burghers, and artizans, side by side. The workmen no longer to be slaves to the caprice of the gentry. The nobles are disarmed for a time, to help them settle their quarrel more quickly. I go the rounds with the horse patrol every night. The gates are never to be opened except when the great bell has rung to give permission. We sit in the Town Hall with our swords. I took my place there this morning, armed to the teeth, and verily my Margarita seemed proud enough when she sent me forth, with a kiss, to my new dignity, clad in good steel instead of

senatorial finery. We have every prospect of peace and prosperousness. The nobles see our strength, and must relinquish with as good a grace as they may a power they have usurped. The main part of the old laws will abide as before. All is perfectly quiet. There has been no mere vengeance or needless rigour. I hear nothing worse than banishment will be inflicted upon any—that only on a few. The bishop's claws will be kept shorter.

1338. *August. St. Bartholomew's Day.*—Now is the rent between clerk and layman, pope and emperor, wider even than heretofore. Last month was held the electorial diet at Rhense. The electors, by far the greater part, with Louis; and their bold doings now apparent. Yesterday was issued, at Frankfort, a manifesto of the Emperor's, wherein Benedict, he and all his curses, are set at nought, and the mailed glove manfully hurled in his teeth. Thereby he declares, that whomsoever the electors choose they will have acknowledged rightful emperor, whether the pope bless or bann, and all who gainsay this are traitors;—that the emperor is not, and will not be, in anywise dependent on the pope. All good subjects are called on to disregard the Interdict, and such towns or states as obey the same are to forfeit their charters.[102]

It was indeed high time to speak out. Louis, losing heart, tried negotiation, and made unworthy concessions to the pope, whereon he (impatient, they say, to get back to Italy) would have come to an agreement, but the French cardinals took care to cross and undo all. The emperor even applied to Philip personally—asking the King of France,

forsooth, to suffer him to be king of the Romans—then, finding that vain, is leagued with the English king, and war declared against France. This sounds bravely. Shame on the electors if they hold not to their promise now.

As to our Strasburg, we stand by the emperor, as of old, despite our bishop Berthold, who, with sword instead of crook, has done battle with the partisans of Louis for now some years, gathering help from all parts among the nobles and the gentry, burning villages, besieging and being besieged, spoiling and being spoiled; moreover, between whiles, thinking to win himself the name of a zealous pastor by issuing decrees against long hair growing on clerks' heads, and enforcing fiercely all the late bulls against the followers of Eckart, the Beghards, and others.[103] Last year he tasted six weeks' imprisonment, having quarrelled with the heads of the chapter. Rudolph von Hohenstein and others of the opposite party, surrounded one night the house of the Provost of Haselach, where he lay, and carried him off in his shirt to the Castle of Vendenti; and smartly did they make him pay before he came out. We have full authority to declare war against him, if he refuses now to submit to Louis, as I think not likely, seeing how matters go at present. He had the conscience to expect that we magistrates would meddle in his dispute and take his part. Even the senators, who adhere mainly to the Zorn family, were against him, and methinks after all he has done to harass and injure us, we did in a sort return good for evil in being merely lookers-on.

Tauler is away on a visit to Basle, where the state

of parties is precisely similar to our own, the citizens there, as in Friburg, joining our league for Louis and for Germany; and the bishop against them, tooth and nail.[104] My eldest boy (God bless him, he is fifteen this day, and a lad for a father to be proud of) hath accompanied the Doctor thither, having charge of sundry matters of business for me there. Had word from him last week. They have somehow procured a year's remission of the Interdict for Basle. He says Suso came to see Tauler, and that they had long talk together for two days. Henry of Nördlingen is there likewise, and now that the pope hath kennelled his barking curse for a twelvemonth, preaches, to the thronging of the churches, wherever he goes.

A.D. 1339. *January.*—The new year opens gloomily. Without loss of time, fresh-forged anathemas are come, and coming, against the outspoken emperor and this troublesome Germany. Some of the preachers, and the bare-footed friars especially, have yet remained to say mass and perform the offices; now, even these are leaving the city. Some cloisters have stood for now two or three years quite empty. Many churches are deserted altogether, and the doors nailed up. The magistracy have issued orders to compel the performance of service. The clerks are fairly on the anvil; the civil hammer batters them on the one side, and the ecclesiastical upon the other with alternate strokes.

Bitter wind and sleet this morning. Saw three Dominicans creeping back into the town, who had left it a month ago, refusing to say mass. Poor wretches, how starved and woe-begone they

looked, after miserable wanderings about the country in the snow, winter showing them scant courtesy, and sure I am the boors less; and now coming back to a deserted convent and to a city where men's faces are towards them as a flint. Straight, as I saw them, there came into my mind that goodly exhortation of Dr. Tauler's, that we should show mercy, as doth God, unto all, enemies and friends alike, for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God, whom he hath not seen?[105] Ran after them, called them in, thawed them, fed them, comforted them with kind words and good ale by the great fire,—then argued with them. They thought it a cruel thing that they must starve because pope and emperor are at feud. 'And is it not,' urged I, 'a crueller that thousands of innocent poor folk should live without sacrament, never hear a mass, perhaps die unshriven, for the very same reason? Is not God's law higher than the pope's,—do to others as ye would they should do unto you? Could you look for other treatment at the hands of our magistrates, and expect to be countenanced and sustained by them in administering the malediction of their enemies?' Thought it most courteous, however, to ply them more pressingly with food than with arguments.

While they were there, in comes my little Otto, opens his eyes wide with wonder to see them, and presently breaks out with the words, now on the tongue of every Strasburger, a rhyming version of the decree:—

> They shall still their masses sing,
> Or out of the city we'll make them spring.[106]

Told him he should not sing that just then, and, when he was out of the room, bade them mark by that straw which way the wind blew.

I record here a vision vouchsafed to that eminent saint the abbess Christina Ebner, of Engelthal, near Nurnberg. She beheld the Romish Church in the likeness of a great minster, fair to see, but with doors closed by reason of the bann. Priestly voices, solemn and sweet, were heard to chant within; and, without, stood a multitude waiting and hearkening, but no man dared enter. Then came there to the nun one in the habit of a preacher, and told her that he would give her words to speak to comfort the poor folk withal that stood outside,—and that man was the Lord Christ.

And verily, in some sort, so hath God done, having pity upon us, for through all Rhineland hath he moved godly men, both clerks and laity, to draw nearer the one to the other, forming together what we call the association of the *Friends of God*, for the better tending of the inward life in these troublous times, for wrestling with the Almighty on behalf of his suffering Christendom, and for the succour of the poor people, by preaching and counsel and sacrament, that are now as sheep without a shepherd, and perishing for lack of spiritual bread.[107] Tauler is of the foremost among them, and with his brethren, Egenolph of Ehenheim and Dietrich of Colmar, labours without ceasing, having now the wider field and heavier toil, as so few are left in Strasburg who will perform any church service for love or money. Ah! well might the Abbess Christina say of him that the Spirit of God dwelt

within him as a sweet harping. He has travelled much of late, and wherever he goes spreads blessing and consolation; the people flock to hear him; the hands of the Friends of God are strengthened; and a savour of heavenly love and wisdom is left behind. His good name hath journeyed, they say, even beyond the Alps, and into the Low Countries. Neither are there wanting many like-minded, though none equal to him. He found at Cologne Henry of Löwen, Henry, and Franke, and John of Sterngasse,[108] brother Dominicans all of them, preaching constantly, with much of his own fervour, if with a doctrine more like that of Eckart. In Switzerland there is Suso, and I hear much of one Ruysbroek, in the Netherlands, a man younger than Tauler, and a notable master in the divine art of contemplation.

Among the Friends of God are numbers both of men and women of every rank, abbots and farmers, knights and nuns, monks and artizans. There is Conrad, Abbot of Kaisersheim: there are the nuns of Unterlinden and Klingenthal, at Colmar and Basle, as well as the holy sisters of Engelthal; the knights of Rheinfeld, Pfaffenheim, and Landsberg; our rich merchant here, Rulman Merswin, and one, unworthy of so good a name, that holds this pen. Our law is that universal love commanded by Christ, and not to be gainsaid by his vicar. Some have joined themselves to us for awhile, and gone out from us because they were not of us; for we teach no easy road to heaven for the pleasing of the flesh. Many call us sectaries, Beghards, brethren of the Free Spirit, or of the New Spirit, and what not. They might call us by worse names, but we are none of these. The prophecies of some among us, concerning

judgments to be looked for at the hands of God, and the faithful warnings of others, have made many angry. Yet are not such things needed, when, as Dr. Tauler saith, the princes and prelates are, too many of them, worse than Jews and infidels, and mere horses for the devil's riding.[109] So far from wishing evil, we mourn as no others over the present woe, and the Friends of God are, saith Dr. Tauler again, pillars of Christendom, and holders off for awhile of the gathered cloud of wrath. Beyond all question, if all would be active as they are active in works of love to their fellows, the face of the times would brighten presently, and the world come into sunshine.

It was but yesterday that in his sermon Tauler repeated the saying of one—an eminent Friend of God—'I cannot pass my neighbour by without wishing for him in my heart more of the blessedness of heaven than for myself;'—'and that,' said the good Doctor, 'I call true love.' Sure I am that such men stand between the living and the dead.[110]

1339. *March.*—Much encouraged on hearing Dr. Tauler's sermon on 'Whose is the image and superscription?'[111] It was the last part that gladdened me more especially, when he was enforcing watchfulness and self-examination, and yet showed that the command might be obeyed by men such as I am, in the midst of a worldly calling. Many, said he, complain that they are so busied with outward things as to have no time to look inward. But let such, for every six steps they have to take outward in their daily duty, take one step inward, and observe their hearts, and their business will be to them no stumbling-block.

Many are cloistered in body while thought and desire wander to and fro over the earth. But many others do, even amid the noise and stir of the market-place and the shop, keep such watch over their hearts, and set such ward on their senses, that they go unharmed, and their inner peace abides unbroken. Such men are much more truly to be called monks than those who, within a convent wall, have thought and senses so distraught that they can scarce say a single Paternoster with true devotion.

He said that God impressed his image and superscription on our souls when he created us in his image. All true Christians should constantly retire into themselves, and examine throughout their souls wherein this image of the Holy Trinity lieth, and clear away therefrom such images and thoughts as are not of God's impressing,—all that is merely earthly in love and care, all that hath not God purely for its object. It must be in separateness from the world, withdrawal from all trust and satisfaction in what is creaturely, that we present God the image he hath engraven, clear and free from rust. This image and superscription lies in the inmost inmost of the soul, whither God only cometh, and neither men nor angels, and where he delights to dwell. He will share it with no other. He hath said, 'My delight is in the sons of men.' Thus is the inmost of our soul united to the inmost of the very Godhead, where the eternal Father doth ever speak and bring forth his eternal essential Word, his only-begotten Son, equal in honour, power, and worthiness, as saith the Apostle—'He is the brightness of his glory and the express image of his person.' By him hath the Father made all things. As all things have their

beginning and source from the Godhead, by the birth of the eternal Word out of the Father, so do all creatures in their essence subsist by the same birth of the Son out of the Father, and therefore shall they all return in the same way to their source, to wit, through the Son to the Father. From this eternal birth of the Son ariseth the love of God the Father to his divine Son, and that of the Son to his divine Father, which love is the Holy Ghost—an eternal and divine Bond, uniting the Father and the Son in everlasting Love. These three are essentially one—one single pure essential unity, as even the heathen philosophers bear witness. Therefore, saith Aristotle, 'There is but one Lord who ordaineth all things.'

He, therefore, that would be truly united to God must dedicate the penny of his soul, with all its faculties, to God alone, and join it unto Him. For if the highest and most glorious Unity, which is God himself, is to be united to the soul, it must be through oneness (*Einigkeit*). Now when the soul hath utterly forsaken itself and all creatures, and made itself free from all manifoldness, then the sole Unity, which is God, answers truly to the oneness of the soul, for then is there nothing in the soul beside God. Therefore between such a soul and God (if a man be so prepared that his soul hangs on nothing but God himself) there is so great a oneness that they become one, as the Apostle saith, 'He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit.'

But there are some who will fly before they have wings, and pluck the apples before they are ripe, and, at the very outset of the Divine life, be so puffed up that it contents them not to enter in at

the door and contemplate Christ's humanity, but they will apprehend his highness and incomprehensible Deity only. So did once a priest, and fell grievously, and bitterly mourned his folly, and had to say, 'Ah, most Merciful! had I followed truly the pattern of thy holy humanity, it had not been thus with me!' Beware of such perilous presumption—your safe course is to perfect yourselves first in following the lowly life of Christ, and in earnest study of the shameful cross.

Methinks this is true counsel, and better, for our sort at least, than Master Eckart's exhortation to break through into the essence, and to exchange God made manifest for the absolute and inscrutable Godhead.

1339. *March 20.*—Finished to-day a complete suit of armour for young Franz Müllenheim. The aristocratic families bear the change of government more good-humouredly than I looked for. Their influence is still great, and they can afford to make a virtue of necessity. Most of them now, too, are on the right side.

A great improvement—locking our doors at night. [112] This is the first time I have thought to record it, though the custom has been introduced these nine years. Before, there was not a lock to a house-door in Strasburg, and if you wanted to shut it, on ever so great a need, you had to work with spade and shovel to remove a whole mountain of dirt collected about the threshold. Several new roads, too, made of late by the merchant-league of the Rhineland.

CHAPTER IV.

> If you would be pleased to make acquaintance with a solid theology of the good old sort in the German tongue, get John Tauler's sermons; for neither in Latin nor in our own language have I ever seen a theology more sound or more in harmony with the Gospel.—LUTHER (*to Spalatin*).

> Die Sehnsucht und der Traüme Weben
> Sie sind der weichen Seele süss,
> Doch edler ist ein starkes Streben
> Und macht den schönen Traum gewiss.[113]
>
> UHLAND.

On another evening, after Kate had played a plaintive air on the piano as an overture; when Atherton had praised it as expressive of the upward fluttering struggle of the Psyche of Mysticism, and Gower had quoted Jean Paul's fancy, where he says that sweet sounds are the blue waves that hide the sea-monsters which lurk in the deeps of life—Adolf's journal was continued, as follows:—

> 1339. *December. St. Barbara's Day.*—Three days ago, at the close of his sermon, Doctor Tauler said he would preach to-day on the highest perfection attainable in this life. Went to hear him. The cloister-chapel crowded long before the time. He began by telling us that he had much to say, and so would not to-day preach from the gospel according to his wont, and moreover would not put much Latin into his sermon, but would make good all he taught with Holy Writ. Then he went on to preach on the necessity of dying utterly to

the world and to our own will, and to yield ourselves up, 'dying-wise,' into the hands of God. He gave further four-and-twenty marks, whereby we may discern who are the true, righteous, illuminated, contemplative men of God.[114]

Observed close under the pulpit a stranger (by his dress, from the Oberland) who did diligently write down, from time to time, what the Doctor said—a man of notable presence, in the prime of life, with large piercing eyes under shaggy brows, eagle nose, thoughtful head—altogether so royal a man as I never before saw. He mingled with the crowd after sermon, and I could not learn who he was. Several others, as curious, and no wiser than myself. This mysterious personage may perhaps be one of the Friends of God, who are numerous in the Oberland. Methought he wished to escape notice. Perhaps he is a Waldensian, and dreads the evil eye of the inquisitor.

1340. *January. Eve of St. Agnes.*—Strange; nothing has been seen of the Doctor for this whole month. His penitents are calling continually at the convent, craving admittance to their confessor, but he will see no one. He is not ill, they say, and takes his part in the convent services with the rest, but never stirs beyond the walls. None of his many friends can tell us what is the matter.

1340. *July. St. Alexius' Day.*—All things much as aforetime, that is, ill enough. Business slack generally, but our hammers going. The worst is this loss of Tauler, our comfort in our trouble. Many reports, no certainty. Some say he has committed some crime, and sits now in the convent prison. This I everywhere contradict. Others will have it that he is gone mad. Many of

his former friends are now turned against him, and his enemies make them merry. Went again to the convent to get what news I could. Enquired of the porter why the Doctor had shut himself up. He replied, 'Indeed, sir, and I cannot know.' Methought a wonderful close answer for a porter. Went into the locutory. In the passage the cook ran by me, having just received twenty-five cuffs on the head for leaving the vessels and linen dirty on Saturday night. Much laughter thereat. Several monks in the locutory, among them brother Bernard, the cellarer, an acquaintance of mine—a bustling, shrewd little man, provider of the monastic prog[115] to general satisfaction, talking often of pittances and profound in beeves,—a brave blade, and seen swaggering now and then on holidays with sword at his side, affecting, more than beseems, secular gallantry. Said, when I asked him concerning Tauler, 'Oh, poor fellow, the devil's clawing him a bit, that's all.' Another said, 'We always knew it would be this way.' A third, 'I said so from the first—spiritual pride, Lucifer's sin, Lucifer's sin!' Looked at the rascal's paunch—thought he ran little danger of such sin from any over-mortifying of the flesh. His flesh ought to have mortified *him*, the brazen-face. Spake up for Tauler as I could, but saw that he was the jest of his brethren—having doubtless to bear cruelty and mocking along with some melancholy inward fight of afflictions—and came away home with a heavy heart. Could not get speech with the abbot, who was busy looking to the monks' beds, that they were not too soft.

1342. *New Year's Day.*—Public notice given, that in three days Tauler will preach once more. The news makes great talk. My heart sings jubilate

thereat. I look back on two weary years that he has now been hidden from those who so need him. I have confessed to no one the while—somehow, could not to any other—yet I fear me such neglect is a sin. Those like-minded with Tauler have been busy among us in their work of love, but the master-spirit is sorely missed, notwithstanding. One Ludolph of Saxony, who was a Dominican, and has come over hither from Cologne lately, to be prior of the new Carthusian convent, has been a great blessing unto us. He speaks out boldly against abuses, and persuades men tenderly to follow Christ carrying the cross.

Bishop Berthold quieter of late; finds it prudent to keep on better terms at present with the emperor.

Little Hans a month old to-day. A household of now five children. Henry of great service to me. Think sometimes of leaving the business with him almost altogether, if only to have him near. Margarita not again ill since the first times of the interdict. A great mercy! Getting richer yet, and tremble sometimes lest it should ensnare my soul, therefore, I disencumber myself at intervals of considerable sums for sick and poor folk. Must bear in mind Tauler's counsel to use and enjoy everything intending God therein. Find my affections go forth much—I hope not too much—towards this last babe. He thrives well; verily, no child could be more unlike the blessed St. Nicholas, of whom I have heard a friar say that, when hanging on his mother's breast, he fasted Wednesdays and Fridays, and could not be brought to suck more than once a day. But if I stay to number up my blessings, I shall have a list longer than the curse-roll of the Pope. God give

me an unworldly, thankful, watchful spirit!

1342. *January 6.*—Alas! that I should have to write what now I must! I forced a way into the crowded church—every part filled with people, wedged in below so that they could not move, clustered like bees where they had climbed above into every available place, and a dense mass in the porch besides. The Doctor came, looking woefully ill, changed as I scarce ever saw a man, to live. He mounted the lectorium, held his cap before his eyes, and said:

'O merciful and eternal God, if it be thy will, give me so to speak that thy divine name may be praised and honoured, and these men bettered thereby.'

With that he began to weep. We waited, breathless. Still he wept, and could speak no word, his sobs audible in the stillness, and the tears making their way through his fingers as he hid his face in his hands. This continued till the people grew restless. Longer yet, with more manifest discontent. At last a voice cried out from among the people (I think it was that roughspoken Carvel, the butcher), 'Now then, Sir, how long are we to stop here? It is getting late, if you don't mean to preach, let us go home.'

I saw that Tauler was struggling to collect himself by prayer, but his emotion became only the more uncontrollable, and at last he said, with a broken voice,—

'Dear brethren, I am sorry from my heart to have kept you so long, but at this time I cannot possibly speak to you. Pray God for me that he would help me, and I may do better at another

time.'

So we went away, and the report thereof was presently all over Strasburg. The snowball had plenty of hands to roll it, and lost nothing by the way. The people, numbers of them, seemed to me with a wicked glee to delight in showing how the learned Doctor had made a fool of himself. Those who had counted him mad before reckoned themselves now little short of prophets. Many such whom I met in the streets looked and spoke with such a hateful triumph of the matter as well nigh put me beside myself. Not so long ago, no one could satisfy them but Tauler; not the name of the most popular of saints oftener on their lips; the very ground he trod on was blessed; a kindly word from his lips food for days—and now the hands stretched out almost in adoration, throw mire on the fallen idol, and not a 'prentice lad behind his stall but hugs himself in his superior sanity. Had he been a hunter after popularity, what a judgment! Verily that man has the folly of a thousand fools who lives for the applause of the multitude. But I know how Tauler's heart bled for them.

Friar Bernard came over this evening. He says the superiors are wroth beyond measure with Tauler for the scandal he has brought upon the order, and will forbid him to preach more. Entertained my jovial gauger of monks' bellies with the best cheer I had—he has a good heart after all, and is unfeignedly sorry for Tauler's disgrace. Says he thinks the Doctor has fasted and done penance beyond his strength, that the sudden coming out from his cell to preach to such numbers was too much for his weakness,—that he will get over it

and be himself again, and much more,—to the hope whereof he pledged me in another glass, and left me not a little comforted.

1342. *January. St. Vincent's Day.*—Saw Bernard again, who gives me the good news that Dr. Tauler obtained permission from the prior to deliver a Latin address in the school, and did acquit himself to such admiration, that he is to be allowed to preach in public when he will.

1342. *January 23.*—Tauler preached to-day in the chapel of the nunnery of St. Agatha, on 'Behold the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him.' A wondrous discourse—a torrent that seems to make me dizzy yet. As he was describing, more like an angel than a man, the joy of the bride at the approach of the bridegroom, a man cried out, 'It is true!' and fell senseless on the floor. As they were about him to bring him to himself, a woman among them shrieked, 'Oh, stop, sir, stop! or he will die in our arms!' Whereat he said calmly, and with his face lighted up as though he saw the heavens opened, 'Ah, dear children, and if the bridegroom will call home the bride, shall we not willingly suffer him? But nevertheless I will make an end.' Then after sermon he read mass again, and, as I came out, I saw the people gathered about several persons in the court who lay on the ground, as though dead, such had been the power of his words.

1342. *February. St. Blasius' Day.*—Now Tauler is continually preaching, not only in the church of his convent, but in those of various monasteries and nunneries, in the Beguinasia, and in the cells wherein little companies of pious women have gathered themselves together to hide from the

dangers of the world. He never cited so much Latin as some, now less than heretofore. More alive than ever, it would seem, to our wants, he addresses himself mightily to heart and conscience, which he can bind up or smite at will. His love and care, for the laity most of all, is a marvel; he lives for us, and yet appears to hold himself no greater than the least. Before, there was none like him, now we feel that in heavenliness of nature he has gone beyond his former self. So earnestly does he exhort to active love to man, as well as to perfect resignation to God, that already a new spirit seems to pervade many, and they begin to care for others, as he tells us the first Christians did. He tells them mere prayers, and mass, and alms, and penance, will help them nothing unless the Holy Spirit breathes life into them. He says the priests are not of necessity better men because they oftener taste the Lord's body, that outward things such as those profit nothing alone, and that those who love their fellows most are the truest instructors, and teach more wisely than all the schools.

1344. *March.*—Tauler hath of late, besides preaching constantly as ever, begun to send forth from time to time sundry small books, full of consolation and godly counsel for these days. Copies of them are fast multiplied, and people gather to hear them read at each other's houses. This is a new thing, and works powerfully.

The greatest stir has been made by two letters issued by Tauler, Ludolph the Carthusian, and others, and sent out, not only through Strasburg, but all the region round about.[116] The bishop is very angry thereat; though, before, he had come

several times to hear Tauler, and had professed no small admiration of him. One of these letters is to comfort the people, and exhorts all priests to administer the sacraments to all who shall desire, the bann notwithstanding. 'For,' it saith, 'ye are bound to visit and console the sick, remembering the bitter pain and death of Christ, who hath made satisfaction, not for your sins only, but also for those of the whole world, who doth represent us all before God, so that if one falleth innocently under the bann, no Pope can shut him out of heaven. Ye should, therefore, give absolution to such as wish therefor—giving heed rather to the bidding of Christ and his Apostles than to the bann, which is issued only out of malice and avarice.'

Thus truly have these good men done, and many with them, so that numbers have died in peace, fearing the bann not a whit, whereas before, many thousands, unshriven, gave up the ghost in the horrors of despair.

The other letter is addressed to the learned and great ones among the clergy. It saith that there are two swords—a spiritual, which is God's word, and the temporal, the secular power:—that these two are to be kept distinct; both are from God, and ought not to be contrary the one to the other. The spiritual power should fulfil its proper duty and uphold the temporal, while that again should protect the good and be a terror to evil-doers. If temporal princes sin, such as are spiritual should exhort them, in love and humility, to amend their ways. It is against the law of Christ that the shepherds, when one of these falls beneath their displeasure, should for that reason presume to

damn a whole country, with all its cities, towns, and villages, where dwell the poor innocent folk who are no partakers in the sin. It cannot be proved from Scripture that all those who will not kiss the Pope's foot, or receive a certain article of faith, or who hold by an emperor duly elected and well fulfilling his office, and do him service as set over them by God, do therein sin against the Church and are heretics. God will not demand of vassals an account of the sins of their lords, and neither should subjects, bound to obey the emperor as the highest temporal power, be given over to damnation as though answerable for the faults of their rulers. Therefore all who hold the true Christian faith, and sin only against the person of the Pope, are no heretics. Those, rather, are real heretics who obstinately refuse to repent and forsake their sins; for let a man have been what he may, if he will so do, he cannot be cast out of the Church. Through Christ, the truly penitent thief, murderer, traitor, adulterer, all may have forgiveness. Such as God beholdeth under an unrighteous bann, he will turn for them the curse into a blessing. Christ himself did not resist the temporal power, but said, My kingdom is not of this world. Our souls belong unto God, our body and goods to Cæsar. If the emperor sins, he must give account to God therefor—not to a poor mortal man.

CHAPTER V.

The meanes, therefore, which unto us is lent
Him to behold, is on his workes to looke,
Which he hath made in beautie excellent,
And in the same, as in a brasen booke,
To read enregistred in every nooke
His goodnesse, which his beautie doth declare;
For all that's good is beautifull and faire.

Thence gathering plumes of perfect speculation,
To impe the wings of thy high-flying mynd,
Mount up aloft through heavenly contemplation,
From this darke world, whose damps the soule do blynd,
And, like the native brood of eagles kynd,
On that bright Sunne of Glorie fixe thine eyes,
Cleared from grosse mists of fraile infirmities.

SPENSER: HYMNE OF HEAVENLY BEAUTIE.

WILLOUGHBY. I did not think Atherton had so much artifice in him. He broke off his last reading from Arnstein's Chronicle with a mystery unexplained, quite in the most approved *feuilleton* style.

GOWER. You have excited the curiosity of the ladies most painfully, I assure you. I believe I am empowered to say that they cannot listen to any more of the armourer's journal until you have accounted for Tauler's singular disappearance.

KATE. One word for us and two for yourself, Mr. Gower.

ATHERTON. Ungrateful public! You all know I haven't a particle of invention in my nature. It is just because I am not a novelist that I have not been able to explain everything. Arnstein is, like me, a matter-of-fact personage, and could not be in two places at once.

However, to relieve you, I am ready to acknowledge that I am in possession of information about these incidents quite independent of the irregular entries in his record. There is no secret; it is all matter of sober history. The facts are these—

One day there came a stranger to Tauler, desiring to confess to him. It was the remarkable man who had so attracted the attention of Adolf in the church. He was called Nicholas of Basle, and was well known in the Oberland as an eminent 'Friend of God.' He was one of those men so characteristic of that period—a layman exercising a wider spiritual influence than many a bishop. He was perhaps a Waldensian, holding the opinions of that sect, with a considerable infusion of visionary mysticism. The Waldenses, and the Friends of God, were drawn nearer to each other by opposition, and the disorders of the time, as well as by the more liberal opinions they held in common, and it is not always easy to distinguish them.

After confession, the layman requested, much to the Doctor's surprise, that he would preach a sermon on the highest spiritual attainment a man may reach in time. Tauler yielded at length to his importunity, and fulfilled his promise. Nicholas brought his notes of the sermon to Tauler, and in the course of their conversation, disclosed the object of his visit. He had travelled those thirty miles, he said, not merely to listen to the doctor, of whom he had heard so much, but, by God's help, to give him some counsel that should do him good. He told him plainly that the sermon, though excellent in its way, could teach him nothing—the Great Teacher could impart to him more knowledge in an hour than Tauler and all his brethren, preaching till the day of doom. Tauler was first astonished, then indignant, to hear a mere

layman address him in such language. Nicholas appealed to that very anger as a proof that the self-confidence of the Pharisee was not yet cleansed away, that the preacher trusted with unbecoming pride in his mastership and great learning.

You must remember the vast distance which at that day separated the clerk from the layman, to give to the candour and humility of Tauler its due value. The truth flashed across his mind. Deeply affected, he embraced the layman, saying, 'Thou hast been the first to tell me of my fault. Stay with me here. Henceforth I will live after thy counsel; thou shalt be my spiritual father, and I thy sinful son.'

Nicholas acceded to his request, and gave him, to begin with, a kind of spiritual A B C,—a list of moral rules, commencing in succession with the letters of the alphabet, which he was to commit to memory and to practise, together with sundry bodily austerities, for five weeks, in honour of the five wounds of Christ. But the discipline which followed was yet more severe. Tauler was directed to abstain from hearing confession, from study and from preaching, and to shut himself up in his cell, that, in solitary contemplation of the sufferings and death of Christ, he might attain true humility and complete renewal. The anticipated consequences ensued. His friends and penitents forsook him; he became the by-word of the cloister; his painful penances brought on a lingering sickness. Borne down by mental and bodily sufferings together, he applied to his friend for relief. The layman told him that he was going on well—it would be better with him ere long—he might remit his severer self-inflictions, and should recruit the body by a more generous diet.

Nicholas was now called away by important

business, he said, and Tauler was left to himself. His parting advice to his spiritual scholar was, that if he came to want, he should pawn his books, but sell them on no account, for the day would come when he would need them once more.

Tauler continued in this trying seclusion for nearly two years, contemned by the world without as one beside himself, oppressed within by distress of mind and feebleness of body. It had been forbidden him to desire, even when thus brought low, any special communication from God that might gladden him with rapture or consolation. Such a request would spring from self and pride. He was there to learn an utter self-abandonment—to submit himself without will or choice to the good pleasure of God—to be tried with this or any other affliction, if need were, till the judgment day.

Now it came to pass, when he had become so ill that he could not attend mass or take his place in the choir as he had been wont, that, as he lay on his sickbed, he meditated once more on the sufferings and love of our Lord and Saviour, and thought on his own life, what a poor thing it had been, and how ungrateful. With that he fell into a marvellous great sorrow, says the history, for all his lost time and all his sins, and spake, with heart and mouth, these words:—

‘O merciful God, have mercy upon me, a poor sinner; have mercy in thine infinite compassion, for I am not worthy to live on the face of the earth.’

Then as he sat up waking in his sickness and sorrow, he heard a voice saying, ‘Stand fast in thy peace, trust God, remember that he was once on the earth in human nature, healing sick bodies and sick souls.’ When he heard these words he fell back fainting, and

knew no more. On coming to himself, he found that both his inward and outward powers had received new life. Much that had before been strange now seemed clear. He sent for his friend, who heard with joy what he had to tell.

'Now,' said Nicholas, 'thou hast been for the first time moved by the Highest, and art a partaker of the grace of God, and knowest that though the letter killeth, the Spirit giveth life. Now wilt thou understand the Scripture as never before—perceive its harmony and preciousness, and be well able to show thy fellow Christians the way to eternal life. Now one of thy sermons will bring more fruit than a hundred aforetime, coming, as it will, from a simple, humbled, loving heart; and much as the people have set thee at nought, they will now far more love and prize thee. But a man with treasure must guard against the thieves. See to it that thou hold fast thy humility, by which thou wilt best keep thy riches. Now thou needest my teaching no longer, having found the right Master, whose instrument I am, and who sent me hither. Now, in all godly love, thou shalt teach me in turn.'

Tauler had pledged his books for thirty gulden. The layman went immediately and redeemed them at his own cost, and by his advice Tauler caused it to be announced that in three days he would preach once more. You have already heard how our good friend Adolf records the unhappy result of this first attempt. Tauler went with his trouble to Nicholas, who comforted him by the assurance that such farther trial was but a sign of the careful love which carried on the work within. There must have been some remnant of self-seeking which was still to be purged away. He advised him to wait awhile, and then apply

for permission to deliver a Latin address to the brethren in the school. This he at last received, and a better sermon they never heard. So the next preacher, at the close of his discourse, made the following announcement to the congregation: 'I am requested to give notice that Doctor Tauler will preach here to-morrow. If he succeeds no better than before, the blame must rest with himself. But this I can say, that he has read us in the school a prelection such as we have not heard for many a day; how he will acquit himself now, I know not, God knoweth.'

Then followed the overpowering discourse, of whose effects you have heard; and from this time forward commenced a new æra in Tauler's public life. For full eight years he laboured unremittingly, with an earnestness and a practical effect far surpassing his former efforts, and in such esteem with all classes that his fellow-citizens would seem to have thought no step should be taken in spiritual matters, scarcely in temporal, without first seeking counsel of Tauler.

LOWESTOFFE. A most singular story. But how have all these minute circumstances come down to us?

ATHERTON. When Tauler was on his death-bed he sent for Nicholas, and gave him a manuscript, in which he had written down their conversations, with some account of his own life and God's dealings towards him, His unworthy servant, requesting him to make thereof a little book. The layman promised to do so. 'But see to it,' continued the Doctor, 'that you can conceal our names. You can easily write 'The Man and the Doctor'—for the life and words and works which God hath wrought through me, an unworthy, sinful man, are not mine, but belong unto Almighty God for ever. So let it be, for the edifying of our fellow men; but take the writing with thee

into thy country, and let no man see it while I live.' This narrative has been preserved, and there is no difficulty in discerning in the Doctor and the man, Tauler and Nicholas of Basle.[117]

You will now let me resume my reading, I suppose.

> Chronicle of Adolf Arnstein, continued.
>
> 1344. *Eve of St. Dionysius.*—I here set down passages from sermons I have at sundry times heard Doctor Tauler preach. I have made it my wont to go straight home as soon as the service has been ended, and write what I could best remember. The goodly sayings which follow are copied from those imperfect records, and placed here for my edification and that of my children and others after me.
>
> From a sermon on Christ's teaching the multitude out of the ship.—The soul of the believing man, wherein Christ is, doth find its representation in that ship. Speaking of the perpetual peace such souls may have, despite what storm and commotion soever, he added (not a little to my comfort): 'But some of you have not felt all this; be not ye dismayed. There are poor fishers as well as rich; yea, more poor than rich. Hold this as unchangeably sure, that the trials and struggle of no man are of small account. If a man be but in right earnest, longeth to be a true lover of God, and perseveres therein, and loves those he knows or deems to be such,—doth heartily address himself to live fairly after Job's pattern, and intend God unfeignedly in his doing or not doing, such a man will assuredly enter into God's peace, though he should tarry for it till his dying day. Even those true friends and lovers of God who

enjoy so glorious a peace have disquiet and trouble of their own in that they cannot be towards their faithful God all they would, and in that even what God giveth is less large than their desires.'

'In the highest stage of divine comfort is that peace which is said to pass all understanding. When that noblest part of the soul to which no name can be given is completely turned to God and set on Him, it takes with it all those faculties in man to which we can give names. This conversion involves both that in God which is Nameless and that in the consciousness of man which can be named. These are they whom St. Dionysius calls godly-minded men. As Paul saith, 'That ye may be rooted and grounded in love; and understand with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and height, and depth.' For the height and depth which are revealed in such men can be apprehended by no human sense or reason; they reach beyond all sense out into a deep abyss. This great good, light, and comfort, is inwardly revealed only to those who are outwardly sanctified and inwardly illuminated, and who know how to dwell inwardly within themselves. To such, heaven and earth and all creatures are as an absolute Nothing, for they themselves are a heaven of God, inasmuch as God dwelleth and rests in them.'

'God draweth these men in such wise into Himself, that they become altogether pleasing unto Him, and all that is in them becomes, in a super-essential way, so pervaded and transformed, that God himself doeth and worketh all their works. Wherefore, clearly, such persons are called

with right—Godlike (*Gottformige*). For if we could see such minds as they truly are, they would appear to us like God, being so, however, not by nature, but by grace. For God lives, forms, ordaineth, and doeth in them all his works, and doth use Himself in them.'

'It fares with such men as with Peter, when, at the miraculous draught of fishes, he exclaimed, 'Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!' See! he can find no words, no way of utterance, for that within. So is it, I say, with such men—they find themselves empty of fit words and works. And that is the first mode. The other is that they fall utterly into their own groundless Nothing (*in ihr grundloses Nichts*), and become so small and utterly nothing in God as quite to forget all gifts they have received before, and do, as it were, pour themselves back again absolutely into God (whose they properly are) as though such bestowments had never been theirs. Yea, they are withal as barely nothing as though they had never been. So sinks the created Nothing in the Uncreated, incomprehensibly, unspeakably. Herein is true what is said in the Psalter, 'Deep calleth unto deep.' For the uncreated Deep calls the created, and these two deeps become entirely one. Then hath the created spirit lost itself in the spirit of God, yea, is drowned in the bottomless sea of Godhead. But how well it is with such a man passeth all understanding to comprehend. Such a man becomes, thirdly, essential, virtuous, godly; in his walk, loving and kindly, condescending and friendly towards all men, so that no man can detect in him any fault or transgression, any vice or crime. Moreover, he is believing and trustful towards all men, hath

mercy and sympathy for every man without distinction; is not austere and stern, but friendly, gentle, and good, and it is not possible that such men should ever be separated from God. Unto such perfectness may all we be graciously helped of God our Saviour, unto whom be praise for ever. Amen.'[118]

'The ground or centre of the soul is so high and glorious a thing, that it cannot properly be named, even as no adequate name can be found for the Infinite and Almighty God. In this ground lies the image of the Holy Trinity. Its kindred and likeness with God is such as no tongue can utter. Could a man perceive and realize how God dwelleth in this ground, such knowledge would be straightway the blessedness of salvation. The apostle saith, 'be renewed in the spirit of your mind (*Gemüthes*).' When the mind is rightly directed, it tendeth towards this ground whose image is far beyond its powers. In this mind we are to be renewed, by a perpetual bringing of ourselves into this ground, truly loving and intending God immediately. This is not impossible for the mind itself, though our inferior powers are unequal to such unceasing union with God. This renewal must take place also in the spirit. For God is a spirit, and our created spirit must be united to and lost in the uncreated, even as it existed in God before its creation. Every moment in which the soul so re-enters into God, a complete restoration takes place. If it be done a thousand times in a day, there is, each time, a true regeneration: as the Psalmist saith,—'This day have I begotten thee.' This is when the inmost of the spirit is sunk and dissolved in the inmost of the Divine Nature, and thus new-made and

transformed. God pours Himself out thus into our spirit, as the sun rays forth its natural light into the air, and fills it with sunshine, so that no eye can tell the difference between the sunshine and the air. If the union of the sun and air cannot be distinguished, how far less this divine union of the created and the uncreated Spirit! Our spirit is received and utterly swallowed up in the abyss which is its source. Then the spirit transcends itself and all its powers, and mounts higher and higher towards the Divine Dark, even as an eagle towards the sun.'

'Yet let no man in his littleness and nothingness think of himself to approach that surpassing darkness,—rather let him draw nigh to the darkness of his ignorance of God, let him simply yield himself to God, ask nothing, desire nothing, love and mean only God, yea, and such an unknown God. Let him lovingly cast all his thoughts and cares, and his sins too, as it were, on that unknown Will. Beyond this unknown will of God he must desire and purpose nothing, neither way, nor rest, nor work, neither this nor that, but wholly subject and offer himself up to this unknown will. Moreover, if a man, while busy in this lofty inward work, were called by some duty in the Providence of God to cease therefrom and cook a broth for some sick person, or any other such service, he should do so willingly and with great joy. This I say that if it happened to me that I had to forsake such work and go out to preach or aught else, I should go cheerfully, believing not only that God would be with me, but that He would vouchsafe me it may be even greater grace and blessing in that external work undertaken out of true love in the service of my neighbour than I

should perhaps receive in my season of loftiest contemplation.'

'The truly enlightened man—alas! that they should be so few—scarce two or three among a thousand—sinks himself the deeper in his Ground the more he recognises his honour and his blessedness, and of all his gifts ascribes not even the least unto himself. Our righteousness and holiness, as the prophet saith, is but filthiness. Therefore must we build, not on our righteousness, but on the righteousness of God, and trust, not in our own words, works, or ways, but alone in God. May this God give us all power and grace to lose ourselves wholly in Him, that we may be renewed in truth, and found to His praise and glory. Amen.'[119]

Speaking of the publican in the temple, he put up a prayer that God would give him such an insight as that man had into his own Nothing and unworthiness;—'That,' said he, 'is the highest and most profitable path a man can tread. For that way brings God continually and immediately into man. Where God appears in His mercy, there is He manifest also with all His nature—with Himself.'[120]

I understand the Doctor as teaching three states or conditions wherein man may stand; that of nature, by the unaided light of reason, which in its inmost tends Godward, did not the flesh hinder; that of grace; and a higher stage yet, above grace, where means and medium are as it were superseded, and God works immediately within the transformed soul. For what God doeth that He is. Yet that in this higher state, as in the second, man hath no merit; he is nothing and God

all. In the course of this same sermon he described humility as indispensable to such perfectness, since the loftiest trees send their roots down deepest. He said that we should not distress ourselves if we had not detailed to our confessor all the short-coming and sin of our hearts, but confess to God and ask His mercy. No ecclesiastical absolution can help us unless we are contrite for our sin before God. We are not to keep away from the Lord's body because we feel so deeply our unworthiness to partake of the sacrament, seeing that they who are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.[121]

'There are some who can talk much and eloquently of the incarnation and bitter sufferings of Christ, who do with tears apostrophise him from head to foot as they present him to their imagination. Yet is there often in this more of sense and self-pleasing than of true love to God. They look more to the means than to the end. For my part, I would rather there were less of such excitement and transport, less of mere sweet emotion, so that a man were diligent and right manful in working and in virtue, for in such exercise do we learn best to know ourselves. These raptures are not the highest order of devotion, though would that many a dull heart had more of such sensibility! There are, as St. Bernard hath said, three kinds of love, the sweet, the wise, and the strong. The first is as a gilded image of wood, the second as a gilded image of silver, the third an image of pure gold. One to whom God hath vouchsafed such sweetness should receive it with lowliness and thankfulness, discerning therein his weakness and imperfection, in that God has to allure and entice him as a little

child. He should not rest at this point, but press on, through images, above all image and figure; through the outward exercise of the senses to the inward ground of his soul, where properly the kingdom of God is. There are many altogether at home amid sensuous imagery, and having great joy therein, whose inner ground is as fast shut to them as a mountain of iron through which there is no way.'

'Dionysius writeth how God doth far and superessentially surpass all images, modes, forms, or names that can be applied to Him. The true fulness of divine enlightenment is known herein that it is an essential illumination, not taking place by means of images or in the powers of the soul, but rather in the ground itself of the soul, when a man is utterly sunk in his own Nothing. This I say against the 'free spirits,' who persuade themselves that by means of certain appearances and glances of revelation they have discerned the truth, and please themselves with their own exaltation, knowledge, and wisdom; going about in a false emptiness (*Ledigkeit*) of their own; and speaking to others as though they were not yet advanced beyond the use of forms and images; bringing, with their frivolous presumption, no small dishonour upon God. But know ye, Christians beloved, that no truly pious and God-fearing man gives himself out as having risen above all things, for things in themselves utterly insignificant and mean are yet, in the truth, right and good; and though any one may be in reality elevated above such lesser matters, yet doth he love and honour them not less than heretofore; for the truly pious account themselves less than all things, and boast not that they have surpassed or

are lifted above them.'[122]

'O, dear child, in the midst of all these enmities and dangers, sink thou into thy ground and thy Nothingness, and let the tower with all its bells fall on thee, yea, let all the devils in hell storm out upon thee, let heaven and earth with all their creatures assail thee, all shall but marvellously serve thee—sink thou only into thy Nothingness, and the better part is thine!'[123]

'Yet some will ask what remains after a man hath thus lost himself in God? I answer, nothing but a fathomless annihilation of himself, an absolute ignoring of all reference to himself personally, of all aims of his own in will and heart, in way, in purpose, or in use. For in this self-loss man sinks so deep into the ground that if he could, out of pure love and lowliness, sink himself deeper yet, and become absolutely nothing, he would do so right gladly. For such a self-annihilation hath been brought to pass within him that he thinketh himself unworthy to be a man, unfit to enter God's house and temple, and to look upon a crucifix painted on the wall; yea, such a man deemeth himself not so good by far as the very worst. Nevertheless, as far as regards the sufferings and death of the Lord—the birth and incarnation of the Son of God—His holy and perfect life that He lived on earth among sinful men, all this such a man did never before so heartily and strongly love as now he doth; yea, now his care is how he may order his life right Christianly, and fashion it anew, and out of fervent love toward his Lord and Saviour, exercise himself without ceasing in all good work and virtue.'[124]

> ‘There are those who thoughtlessly maim and torture their miserable flesh, and yet leave untouched the inclinations which are the root of evil in their hearts. Ah, my friend, what hath thy poor body done to thee, that thou shouldst so torment it? Oh folly! mortify and slay thy sins, not thine own flesh and blood.’[125]

WILLOUGHBY. My dear Atherton, this is grand doctrine. May I never be farther from the kingdom of heaven than such a mystic. Surely Luther’s praise is just. Compare such theology as this with the common creed and practice of that day. The faults are nearly all those of the time—the excellence his own.

ATHERTON. It is wonderful to see how little harm his Platonism can do to a man so profoundly reverent, so fervent in his love to Christ. How often he seems to tread the verge of Eckart’s pantheistic abyss, but never falls into it! His heart is true; he walks uprightly, and so, surely. That conception of sin as selfishness—that doctrine of self-abandonment, death in ourselves and life in God—these are convictions with him so deep and blessed—so far beyond all Greek philosophy—so fatal to the intellectual arrogance of pantheism, that they bear him safe through every peril.

GOWER. His sermons cannot fail to do one good—read with the heart and imagination. But if you coldly criticise, and can make no allowance for the allegories and metaphors and vehement language of the mystic, you may shut the book at once.

ATHERTON. And shut out blessing from your soul. It is not difficult to see, however, where Tauler’s danger lies. There is an excess of negation in his

divinity. He will ignore, deny, annihilate almost everything you can name,—bid you be knowledgeless, desireless, motionless,—will enjoin submission to the *unknown* God (when it is our triumph in Christ that we submit to the Revealed and Known)—and, in short, leaves scarcely anything positive save the mysterious lapse of the soul's Ground, or Spark, into the Perfect, the Essential One. He seems sometimes to make our very personality a sin, as though the limitations of our finite being were an element in our guilt. The separation of a particular faculty or higher power of the soul which unites with God, while the inferior powers are either absorbed or occupied in the lower sphere, this is the great metaphysical mistake which lies at the root of so many forms of mysticism. With Tauler the work of grace consists too much of extremes—it dehumanizes in order to deify.

WILLOUGHBY. But that, remember, is no fault of Tauler's especially. He does but follow here the ascetic, superhuman aspiration of a Church which, trying to raise some above humanity, sinks myriads below it.

ATHERTON. Granted. That error does not lessen my love and admiration for the man.

GOWER. Your extracts show, too, that the Nothingness towards which he calls men to strive is no indolent Quietism, nor, as with Eckart, a kind of metaphysical postulate, but in fact a profound spiritual self-abasement and the daily working out of a self-sacrificing Christ-like character.

ATHERTON. Blessed are his contradictions and inconsistencies! Logic cannot always reconcile Tauler with himself—our hearts do.[126]

WILLOUGHBY. Never surely was a theory so negative combined with an action more fervently intense—a positiveness more benign.

GOWER. In his life we understand him,—that is at once the explanation and vindication of what his mysticism means.

ATHERTON. Few, however, of his fellow-mystics rose, so far as Tauler, above the peculiar dangers of mysticism. Even the good layman, Nicholas of Basle, was a man of vision, and assumed a kind of prophecy. Tauler and the *Theologia Germanica* stand almost alone in rejecting the sensuous element of mysticism—its apparitions, its voices, its celestial phantasmagoria. With many of his friends mysticism became secluded, effeminate, visionary, because uncorrected, as in his case, by benevolent action, by devoted conflict against priestly wrong.

KATE. Tauler, then, was a Protestant in spirit—a genuine forerunner of the Reformation?

ATHERTON. Unquestionably.

MRS. ATHERTON. But what could the common people make of this high ideal he sets before them? Could they be brought heartily to care about that kind of ultra-human perfectness? Beautiful it must have been to hear this eloquent man describe the divine passion of the soul, how—

Love took up the harp of life and smote on all the
chords with might,
Smote the chord of Self, that, trembling, passed in
music out of sight,

—but bewildering, rather?

ATHERTON. I am afraid so. Yet there was much they evidently did understand and relish.

GOWER. In fact the Reformers were wanted, with their Bible, with their simpler, homelier teaching—so much less ascetic, so much more human—and with their written word, interpreted more soundly; coming, not to extinguish that inner light, but to enclose, as in a glass, the precious flame, otherwise fitfully blown about by the gusts of circumstance and feeling.

WILLOUGHBY. But none the less let us praise the man who lived so nobly by the light he had—who made human works as nothing, that God might be all—who took the heavenly kingdom from the hands of the priest, and proclaimed it in the heart of every spiritual worshipper.

GOWER. Though Tauler adopts at times the language of Eckart, no one can fail to discern a very different spirit. How much more profound his apprehension of sin—his sense of need; how much more prominent Christ, rescuing and purifying the stricken soul. Tauler lays man in the dust, and keeps him there. Eckart suffers him to expand from Nothing to Infinity. Summarily, I would put the difference thus: —With Eckart the language of Christianity becomes the metaphorical expression for pantheism; with Tauler, phraseology approaching pantheism is the metaphorical expression of a most truly Christian

conviction. If the former sins even more in the spirit than in the letter, in the case of the latter the sins of the letter are redeemed by the excellence of the spirit.

Note to page 246.

The passages in the text are from the second *Sermon on Fifth Sunday after Trinity*, *Predigten*, ii. pp. 353, &c. The spiritual conflict and desolation which had shaken Tauler's nature to its depths bears fruit in this profound humility. Self-abasement is the cardinal doctrine of all his sermons; his lowliness of spirit the safeguard of his theology from all dangerous error. The troubles through which he and Suso were made to pass, gave them an antidote to the poison of the current ecclesiastical doctrine. Consciences so stirred were not to be cast into a sleep by the mesmeric passes of a priestly hand. He only who had hurt could heal; they fled from man to God—from means to the End, and so, like the patriarch, their eye saw God, and they repented and abhorred themselves as in dust and ashes. Never after that could they believe in salvation by works, and so they became aliens from the spirit of that Church whose pale retained them to the last.

Tauler and his brethren will 'escape *distinction*;'—not that which is between creature and Creator, or between good and evil—that rather which the Pharisee makes when he says, 'I am holier than thou.' It is their very anxiety to escape all assumption of merit which partly vitiates the letter of their theology, and makes them speak as though grace substituted God for man within the renewed

nature. They will escape the dry and fruitless distinctions of the schoolman. They will escape the distinction which selfish comfort-worshippers make so broad between ease and hardship. Sorrow and joy, pain and pleasure, are trustfully accepted as alike coming from the hand of love.

Even when Tauler speaks of self-surrender to an '*unknown* Will,' we must not press his words too far. It is very evident that he who reaches this coveted abandonment is not supposed to have forgotten that gracious character under which God has made Himself known—of which Christ is the manifestation. In casting his care on an unknown Will, Tauler acts on the conviction that he is cared for,—this fact he knows; but precisely what that care may deem best for him he does not know. He surrenders, in true self-distrust, his personal notion of what may be the Divine good pleasure in any particular case. Few lessons were more needed than this in Tauler's day, when superstition found signs and wonders everywhere, and fanaticism so recklessly identified human wrath and Divine righteousness.

Tauler's 'state above grace,' and 'transformed condition of the soul, in which God worketh all its works,' are perhaps little more than injudicious expressions for that more spontaneous and habitual piety characteristic of the established Christian life, —that religion which consists so much more in a pervading spirit of devotion than in professed and special religious acts. He certainly inculcates no proud and self-complacent rejection and depreciation of any means. Rather would the man who learnt Tauler's doctrine well find all persons, objects, and circumstances, made more or less 'means of grace' to

him. In a landscape or a fever, an enemy or an accident, his soul would find discipline and blessing, and not in mass and penance and paternoster merely; —for is not God in all things near us, and willing to make everything minister to our spiritual growth? Such teaching was truly reformatory, antagonistic as it was to that excessive value almost everywhere attached in those days to works and sacraments.

So again with Tauler's exhortation to rise above symbol, image, or figure. He carries it too far, indeed. Such asceticism of the soul is too severe a strain for ordinary humanity. It is unknown to His teaching, who spake as never man spake. Yet there lay in it a most wholesome protest against religious sentimentalism, visionary extravagance, hysterical inoperative emotions,—against the fanciful prettinesses of superstitious ritual and routine.

Tauler's 'Nothing,' or 'Ground' of the soul, may be metaphysically a fiction—religiously it indicates the sole seat of inward peace. Only as we put no trust in things earthly,—only as amidst our most strenuous action the heart saith ever, 'Thy will be done,'—only as we strive to reduce our feverish hopes and fears about temporal enjoyment as nearly as we can to Nothing,—are we calm and brave, whatever may befal. This loving repose of Faith is Eternal Life, as sin is so much present death;—it is a life lived, in harmony with the everlasting, above the restlessness of time;—it is (in Eckart's phrase, though not in Eckart's sense) a union with the Allmoving Immobility—the divine serenity of Love Omnipotent, guiding and upholding all without an effort.

Note to page 248.

The above is from the *Sermon on the Nineteenth Sunday after Trinity*, ii. p. 546. He says in this discourse that the soul has various names, according to the different operations and attributes belonging to it. It is called Anima, or soul; Spirit; and Disposition (*gemüth*), a marvellous and very lovely thing—for the memory, the understanding, and the will of man are all collected therein. The Disposition hath an *objectum* above the other powers, and as it follows or forsakes that aim so is it well or ill with the rest of man's nature. Fourthly, the soul is called mens or mensch (*man*), and that is the ground which is nameless, and wherein dwells hidden the true image of the Holy Trinity. (Compare *Third Serm. on Third Sunday after Trin.*, ii. p. 305, and *Serm. on Eleventh Sunday after Trin.*, ii. p. 435.) By the synteresis, or synderesis, Tauler appears to mean the native tendency of the soul towards God. With Tauler and the mystics generally this tendency is an original capacity for knowing God immediately. The term is not peculiar to the mystics, but it bears in their writings a signification which non-mystical theologians refuse to admit. The distinction usually made between συντήρησις and συνείδησις is simply this: the former expresses that constitution of our nature whereby we assent at once to the axioms of morality, while the latter denotes that judgment which man passes on himself in conformity with such constitution of his moral nature. The second is related to the first somewhat as recollection is to memory.

On this divine centre or substratum of the soul rests the fundamental doctrine of these mystics. So Hermann of Fritslar says, speaking of—di kraft in der sêle di her heizit *sinderisis*. In dirre kraft mac inkein krêatûre wirken noch inkein krêatûrlîch bilde,

sunder got der wirket dar in âne mittel und âne underlâz. *Heiligenleben*, p. 187. Thus, he says elsewhere, that the masters speak of two faces of the soul, the one turned toward this world, the other immediately to God. In the latter God doth flow and shine eternally, whether man knoweth it or not. It is, therefore, according to man's nature as possessed of this divine ground, to seek God, his original; it must be so for ever, and even in hell the suffering there has its source in the hopeless contradiction of this indestructible tendency.

Note to page 251.

This passage is from the *Third Serm. on Thirteenth Sun. after Trin.*, ii. p. 480. The same remarkable combination of inward aspiration and outward love and service is urged with much force and beauty in the *Sermon on Fifth Sunday after Trinity*, and in that on the *Sixteenth Sunday after Trinity*, ii. p. 512.

Tauler speaks of this Ground of the soul as that which is inseparable from the Divine nature, and wherein man hath by Grace what God is by nature. *Predigten*, ii. p. 199. He quotes Proclus as saying that, while man is busied with images, which are beneath us, and clings to such, he cannot possibly return into his Ground or Essence. 'If thou wilt know by experience that such a Ground truly is, thou must forsake all the manifold and gaze thereon with thine intellectual eye alone. But wouldst thou come nearer yet, turn thine intellectual eyesight therefrom—for even the intellect is beneath thee—and become one with the One—that is, unite thyself with Unity.' This unity Proclus calls the 'calm, silent, slumbering, and

incomprehensible divine Darkness.' 'To think, beloved in the Lord, that a heathen should understand so much and go so far, and we be so behind, may well make us blush for shame. To this our Lord Jesus Christ testifies when he says the kingdom of God is within you. That is, this kingdom is born in the inmost Ground of all, apart from all that the powers of the mind can accomplish.... In this Ground the eternal heavenly Father doth bring forth his only-begotten Son, a hundred thousand times quicker than an instant, according to our apprehension,—ever anew in the light of Eternity, in the glory and unutterable brightness of his own Self. He who would experience this must turn himself inward far away from all working of his outward and inward powers and imaginations—from all that ever cometh from without, and then sink and dissolve himself in the Ground. Then cometh the power of the Father, and calls the man into Himself through his only-begotten Son; and so the Son is born out of the Father and returneth unto the Father, and such a man is born in the Son of the Father, and floweth back with the Son into the Father again, and becomes one with them' (p. 203, and Schmidt, p. 127). Yet, with all this, Tauler sincerely repudiates any pantheistic confusion of the Divine and human, and is always careful to state that this highest attainment—the vanishing point of Humanity, is the work of Grace. Some of his expressions in describing this union are almost as strong as those of Eckart (*Third Serm. on Third Sun. after Trin.*, ii. p. 310), but his general tone far more lowly, practical, and true.

Note to page 253.

We best ascertain the true meaning of Tauler's mystical phraseology, and discover the point at which he was desirous that mysticism should arrest its flight, by listening to the rebukes he administers to the unrighteous, pantheistic, or fantastical mystics of the day. A sermon of his on Psalm xci. 5 (*Pred.* vol. i. p. 228) is of great importance in this respect.

Speaking of such as embrace a religious life, without any true vocation, he points out how, as they follow only their own inclinations, they naturally desire rest, but are satisfied with a merely natural inaction instead of that spiritual calm which is the gift of God. Consequently, while the devout mind (as Gregory saith) cannot tolerate self-seeking, or be content with any such mere negation, these men profess to have attained the elevation of true peace while they have done nothing more than abstain from all imagination and action. Any man, remarks Tauler, very sensibly, may do this, without any especial grace from God. Such persons live in indolence, become self-complacent and full of pride. True love ever longs to love more; the more of God it hath the more it covets. God is never to be found in the pretended quiet of such men, which any Turk or heathen could find in the same way, as easily as they. They are persuaded by the devil that devout exercises and works of charity will only disturb their inward quiet, and do, in fact, disobey and resist God in their self-satisfied delusion.

He next exposes the error of those who undergo great austerities to be thought holy,—suffering for their own glory rather than that of God; and who think their penance and their works give them an extraordinary claim on the Most High. He shows how often they fall into temptation by their wayward and

passionate desire after special spiritual manifestations, and by their clamorous importunity for particular bestowments on which their unmortified self-will has been obstinately set. Divine love, he says, offers itself up without reserve to God—seeks His glory alone, and can be satisfied with nothing short of God Himself. Natural love seeks itself in all things, and falls ere long, as Adam did, into mortal sin—into licence, pride, and covetousness.

Then he proceeds to describe an error, 'yet more dangerous than this,' as follows:—'Those who compose this class call themselves God-seeing (*Gott schauende*) men. You may know them by the natural rest they profess to experience, for they imagine themselves free from sin and immediately united to God. They fancy themselves free from any obligation to obey either divine or human laws, and that they need no longer be diligent in good works. They believe the quiet to which they have devoted themselves so lofty and glorious a thing that they cannot, without sin, suffer themselves to be hindered or disturbed therein. Therefore will they be subject to no man—will work not at all, either inwardly or outwardly, but lie like an idle tool awaiting its master's hand. They think, if they were to work, God's operation within them would be hindered; so they sit inactive, and exercise themselves in no good work or virtue. In short, they are resolved to be so absolutely empty and idle that they will not so much as praise and thank God—will not desire or pray for anything—will not know or learn anything. All such things they hold to be mischievous—persuade themselves that they possess already all that can be requested, and that they have the true spiritual poverty because, as they flatter themselves, they live

without any will of their own, and have abandoned all choice. As to the laws and ordinances of the Church, they believe that they have not only fulfilled them, but have advanced far beyond that state for which such institutions were designed. Neither God nor man (they say) can give or take from them aught, because they suffered all that was to be suffered till they passed beyond the stage of trial and virtue, and finally attained this absolute Quiet wherein they now abide. For they declare expressly that the great difficulty is not so much to attain to virtue as to overcome or surpass it, and to arrive at the said Quiet and absolute emptiness of all virtue. Accordingly they will be completely free and submit to no man,—not to pope or bishops, or to the priests and teachers set over them; and if they sometimes profess to obey, they do not in reality yield any obedience either in spirit or in practice. And just as they say they will be free from all laws and ordinances of the Holy Church, so they affirm, without a blush, that as long as a man is diligently striving to attain unto the Christian virtues he is not yet properly perfect, and knows not yet what spiritual poverty and spiritual freedom or emptiness really are. Moreover, they believe that they are exalted above the merits of all men and angels; that they can neither add to their virtues nor be guilty of any fault or sin, because (as they fancy) they live without will, have brought their spirit into Quiet and Emptiness, are in themselves nothing, and veritably united unto God. They believe, likewise, madly enough, that they may fulfil all the desires of their nature without any sin, because, forsooth, they have arrived at perfect innocence, and for them there is no law. In short, that the Quiet and freedom of their spirit may not be hindered, they do whatsoever they

list. They care not a whit for fasts, festivals, or ordinances, but what they do is done on account of others, they themselves having no conscience about any such matters.'

A fourth class brought under review are less arrogant than these enthusiasts, and will admit that they may progress in grace. They are 'God-suffering (*Gottesleidende*) men'—in fact, mystics of the intransitive theopathetic species *par excellence*. Their relation toward God is to be one of complete passivity, and all their doings (of whatever character) are His work. Tauler acknowledges duly the humility and patient endurance of these men. Their fault lies, he says, in their belief that every inward inclination they feel is the movement of the Holy Ghost, and this even when such inclinations are sinful, 'whereas the Holy Spirit worketh in no man that which is useless or contrary to the life of Christ and Holy Scriptures.' In their constancy as well as in their doctrine they nearly resemble the early Quakers. They would sooner die, says Tauler, than swerve a hair's breadth from their opinion or their purpose.

Tauler's reprobation of these forms of mysticism—which his own expressions, too literally understood, might appear sometimes to approach—shows clearly that he was himself practically free from such extremes. His concluding remarks enforce very justly the necessity of good works as an evidence to our fellow-men of our sincerity. He dwells on the indispensableness of religious ordinance, worship, and thanksgiving, as at once the expression and the nourishment of devout affection. He precludes at the same time, in the strongest language, all merit in the creature before God. 'I say that if it were possible for

our spiritual nature to be deprived of all its modes of operation, and to be as absolutely inactive as it was when it lay yet uncreated in the abyss of the Divine Nature,—if it were possible for the rational creature to be still as it was when in God prior to creation,—neither the one nor the other could even thus merit anything, yea, not now any more than then; it would have no more holiness or blessedness in itself than a block or a stone' (p. 243). He points to the example of Christ as the best refutation of this false doctrine of Quiet, saying, 'He continued without ceasing to love and desire, to bless and praise his Heavenly Father, and though his soul was joined to and blessed in the Divine Essence, yet he never arrived at the Emptiness of which these men talk.'

CHAPTER VI.

Keep all thy native good, and naturalize
All foreign of that name; but scorn their ill.
Embrace their activeness, not vanities;
Who follows all things forfeiteth his will.

HERBERT.

The day after the conversation recorded in the last chapter, Atherton was called to a distance from Summerford on legal business. Before leaving, he had some further talk with Willoughby on several topics suggested by what had passed on the previous day. The lawyers did not release him so promptly as he had expected, and as he had taken a copy of

Tauler's sermons with him, and had time at his disposal, he wrote more than once to his friend in the course of the next week. This chapter will consist of extracts from the letters thus written, and will form a fitting supplement to matters dealt with in several preceding conversations.

I scarcely need remind you that there are great practical advantages to be derived from a course of mental travel among forms of Christian belief in many respects foreign to our own. Nothing so surely arrests our spiritual growth as a self-complacent, insular disdain of other men's faith. To displace this pride by brotherly-kindness—to seek out lovingly the points whereon we agree with others, and not censoriously those wherein we differ, is to live in a clearer light, as well as a larger love. Then again, the powers of observation and of discrimination called into exercise by such journeyings among brethren of another speech will greatly benefit us. The very endeavour to distinguish between the good in others which we should naturalize and assimilate for ourselves, and the error which could be profitable neither for them nor for us, is most wholesome. Such studies lead us to take account of what we already have and believe; so that we come to know ourselves better by the comparison both in what we possess and in what we lack. Every section of the Church of Christ desires to include in its survey the whole fabric of revealed truth. What party will admit to an antagonist that its study of the divine edifice has been confined to a single aspect? And yet the fact is beyond all candid questioning that each group of worshippers, with whatever honesty of intention they may have started to go round about the building, and view it fairly from every side, have,

notwithstanding, their favourite point of contemplation—one spot where they are most frequently to be found, intent on that side of truth to which, from temperament or circumstance, they are most attached. There is both good and evil in this inevitable partiality; but the good will be most happily realized, and the evil most successfully avoided, if we have liberality enough now and then to take each other's places. It is possible, in this way, both to qualify and to enrich our own impressions from the observations of those who have given themselves, with all the intensity of passion, to some aspect of truth, which, while it may be the opposite, is yet the complement of the view preferred by ourselves. How often, as the result of an acquaintance made with some such diverse (and yet kindred) species of devotion, are we led to ask ourselves—'Is there not a fuller meaning than I had supposed in this passage, or that other, of Holy Writ? Have I not, because certain passages have been abused, allowed myself unconsciously to slight or to defraud them of their due significance?' And, in this way both those parts of Scripture we have most deeply studied, and those which we have but touched with our plummet, may disclose their blessing to us, and fill higher the measure of our joy.

Nor is this all. We gather both instruction and comfort from the spiritual history of others who have passed through the same darkness, doubt, or sorrow, which we ourselves have either encountered, or may be on our way to meet. How glad was Christian when he heard the voice of a fellow-pilgrim in the Valley of the Shadow of Death! And when suns are bright, and the waters calm, and the desired wind blows steadily, he is the wise mariner who employs his leisure in studying the records of others who have

made voyage already in those latitudes; who learns from their expedients, their mishaps, or their deliverances, how best to weather the storms, or to escape the quicksands that await him. Of all who have sailed the seas of life, no men have experienced a range of vicissitude more wide than has fallen to the lot of some among the mystics. Theirs have been the dazzling heights; the lowest depths also have been theirs. Their solitary vessels have been swept into the frozen North, where the ice of a great despair has closed about them like the ribs of death, and through a long soul's winter they have lain hidden in cold and darkness, as some belated swallow in the cleft of a rock. It has been theirs, too, to encounter the perilous fervours of that zone where never cooling cloud appears to veil insufferable radiance, and to glow beneath those glories with an ardour so intense that some men, in their pity, have essayed to heal it as a fever, and others, in their wrath, to chain it as a frenzy. Now afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, ere long there hath been built for them at once a palace and a place of rest; their foundations have been laid with sapphires, their windows have been made of agates, and their gates of carbuncles, and all their borders of pleasant stones.

A place of rest! Yes, in that one word REST lies all the longing of the mystic. Every creature in heaven above, and in the earth beneath, saith Master Eckart, all things in the height and all things in the depth, have one yearning, one ceaseless, unfathomable desire, one voice of aspiration: it is for rest; and again, for rest; and ever, till the end of time, for rest! The mystics have constituted themselves the interpreters of these sighs and groans of the travailing creation; they are the hierophants to

gather, and express, and offer them to heaven; they are the teachers to weary, weeping men of the way whereby they may attain, even on this side the grave, a serenity like that of heaven. What the halcyon of fable is among the birds, that are the mystics among their kind. They essay to build them a marvellous nest, which not only floats upon the waves of life, but has the property of charming those waves to a glassy stillness, so that in mid-winter, and the very heart of storms, their souls enjoy, for a season, what the ancients called 'the halcyon days,'—that wondrous week of calm ordained for the favoured bird when the year is roughest. 'Tis pity, murmurs old Montaigne, that more information hath not come down to us concerning the construction of these nests. Tradition has it, that the halcyon first of all fashions the said nest by interlacing the bones of some fish. When it is put together she takes it, like a boat ready for launching, and lays it on the beach: the waves come up: they lift it: they let it fall: they toss it gently among the rocks and pebbles; what is faultily made their play breaks, or makes to gape, so that the bird discovers the weak places, and what parts must be more duly finished; what is well knit together already, their strokes only season and confirm. Now when we read the lives of the mystics —each of whom has a method, more or less his own, of weaving such a nest, in other words, his *Theory and Practice of Quietude*—we see the structure on trial. Experience, with its buffeting, tests each man's method for the attainment of Rest. If we watch carefully, we shall see that some things in the doctrine of many of them break away under trial, while others are rendered only more compact and buoyant thereby. The examination of the appliances and the processes adopted by these searchers after

the Divine Stillness, ought to be very helpful to ourselves. As far as we have their history before us, we can try them by their fruits. We ask, in the case of one man, by what divine art was it that his ark was so skilfully framed as to out-ride those deluges of trouble as though they had been the waters of some windless mere? We ask, in the case of another, by what fault came it in the structure of his sailing nest, that the waters entered, and he sank, or seemed to sink, finding not the rest of soul he sought, but the vexation of soul he fled? We ask, in the several most signal examples of the class, how far did their mysticism help them to realize true manhood—make them strong to bear and strong to do? How far did it tend, or did it not tend, towards the complete development and consecration of their nature?

To derive from such inquiries their full benefit, two qualifications are indispensable:—the judgment must be clear, the sympathies must be warm. The inquirer must retain self-possession enough not to be too readily fascinated, or too soon offended, by certain strange and startling forms of expression; he must not suppose, that because, for a long time, the mystics have been unduly depreciated, it is wisdom now to cover them with thoughtless and indiscriminate praise. He must not suppose that the mystics are an exception to the ordinary limitations of mortals—that the glorious intensity of some among them was realized without any diminution of breadth, and that their view embraced, with equal fondness and with equal insight, every quarter in the heaven of truth. And, on the other hand, let him beware how he seeks to understand these men without fellow-feeling and without love. The weak and volatile nature is smitten, on a first interview with the mystics, with a rage for mysticism—is for

turning mystic straightway, and is out of patience, for six weeks, with every other form of Christianity. The cold and proud nature scorns their ardour as a phantasy, and (to its own grievous injury) casts out the warmth they bring. The loving nature and the wise says not, 'I will be blind to their errors,' but, 'I will always look at those errors in the light of their excellences.'

'The critic of Tauler no man has a right to become, who has not first ascertained that he is a better man than Tauler.'[127] What are we to understand by these words? If such an assertion be true at all, it cannot be true for Tauler only. Would Mr. Kingsley say that no man has a right to become the critic of Augustine, of Luther, of Calvin, of Wesley, of George Fox, who has not first ascertained himself a better man? Ought every biographer, who is not a mere blind eulogist, to start with the presumption that he is a better man than he of whom he writes? Ought the historian, who forms his critical estimate of the qualities possessed or lacking—of the service rendered in this direction or in that, by the worthies of the Church, to suppose himself superior to each in turn? As in art he who estimates the worth of a poem is not required to write better poetry, so in morals, he who estimates the worth of a character is not required to display superior virtue. Or is it the *opinions*, rather than the character of Tauler, which only a better man than Tauler may criticise? Any one who, on being made acquainted with certain opinions, differs from them, is supposed to have criticised them. In as far as Mr. Kingsley may not agree with some of the well-known opinions of Augustine, Luther, or Fox, so far has he ventured to be their critic; yet he does not suppose himself a better man. Why should Tauler alone be thus fenced about with a statement that virtually

prohibits criticism? Such advocacy harms a client's cause. People are apt to suspect that their scrutiny is feared, when such pains are taken to keep them at a distance. So confident am I that the dross in Tauler is as nothing beside the gold, that I would invite, rather than deter, the most candid and sober exercise of the critical judgment with regard to him. Perhaps Mr. Kingsley may be, in reality, much of the same mind; if so, he should not write as though he thought quite otherwise.

I cannot suppose that Mr. Kingsley would seriously maintain that the mystic ought, from the very nature of his claims, to be exempt from that scrutiny to which history continually subjects the fathers, the schoolmen, and the reformers. Yet there are those who would have us hearken to every voice professing to speak from the 'everlasting deeps' with a reverence little more discriminating than that which the Mussulman renders to idiocy and madness. Curiously ignorant concerning the very objects of their praise, these admirers would seem to suppose that every mystic repudiates the exercise of understanding, is indifferent to the use of language, and invariably dissolves religious opinion in religious sentiment. These eulogists of mysticism imagine that they have found in the virtues of a Tauler, a platform whence to play off with advantage a volley of commonplaces against 'literalisms,' 'formulas,' 'creeds,' 'shams,' and the like. It is high time to rescue the mystics from a foolish adoration, which the best among them would be the most eager to repudiate. So far from forbidding men to try the spirits, the most celebrated among the mystics lead the way in such examination. It is the mystics themselves who warn us so seriously that mysticism comprises an evil tendency as well as a good, and

has had its utterances from the nether realms as well as from the upper. The great mystics of the fourteenth century would have been indignant with any man who had confounded, in a blind admiration, their mysticism with the self-deifying antinomianism that prevailed among the 'Brethren of the Free Spirit.' In many of Tauler's sermons, in the *Theologia Germanica*, in the writings of Suso and of Ruysbroek, care is taken to mark, with all the accuracy possible to language, the distinction between the False Light and the True. There is not a confession of faith in the world which surpasses in clearness and precision the propositions in Fénelon's *Maxims of the Saints*, whereby it is proposed to separate the genuine Quietism from the spurious. The mystic Gerson criticises the mystic Ruysbroek. Nicholas of Strasburg criticises Hildegard and Joachim; Behmen criticises Stiefel and Meth; Henry More criticises the followers of George Fox. So far are such mystics from that indifference to the true or the false in doctrine, which constitutes, with some, their highest claim to our admiration. It is absurd to praise men for a folly: it is still more absurd to praise them for a folly of which they are guiltless.

But here I can suppose some one ready to interrupt me with some such question as this:—Is it not almost inevitable, when the significance of the word mysticism is so broad and ill-defined, that those who speak of it should misunderstand or be misunderstood? What two persons can you meet with who will define the term in precisely the same way? The word is in itself a not less general and extensive one than *revolution*, for instance. No one speaks of revolution in the abstract as good or evil. Every one calls this or that revolution glorious or disastrous, as they conceive it to have overthrown a good

government or a bad. But the best among such movements are not without their evil, nor are the worst perhaps absolutely destitute of good. Does not mysticism, in like manner, sometimes rise up against a monstrous tyranny, and sometimes violate a befitting order? Has there been no excess in its triumphs? Has there been no excuse for its offences? See, then, what opposites are coupled under this single word! Is it not mainly for this reason that you hear one man condemning and another extolling mysticism? He who applauds is thinking of such mystics as Bernard, or Tauler, or Fénelon; he who denounces is thinking of the Carlstadts, the Münzers, or the Southcotes. He who applauds is thinking of men who vanquished formalism; he who denounces is thinking of men who trampled on reason or morality. Has not each his right? Are not your differences mere disputes about nomenclature, and can you ever come to understanding while you employ so ambiguous a term?

So it seems to me that Common Sense might speak, and very forcibly, too. It is indeed to be regretted that we have not two words—one to express what may be termed the true, and another for the false, mysticism. But regret is useless. Rather let us endeavour to show how we may employ, least disadvantageously, a term so controverted and unfortunate.

On one single question the whole matter turns:—Are we or are we not to call St. John a mystic? If we say 'Yes,' then of course all those are mystics whose teaching is largely impregnated with the aspect of Christianity presented in the writings of that Apostle. Then he is a mystic who loves to dwell on the union of Christians with Christ; on His abode in us, and our

abiding in Him; on the identity of our knowledge of God with our likeness to Him; of truth with love; of light with life; on the witness which he who believes hath within himself. Then he is a mystic who regards the Eternal Word as the source of whatever light and truth has anywhere been found among men, and who conceives of the Church of Christ as the progressive realization of the Redeemer's prayer—'I in them and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one.'

Now, I think that, in the strict use of language, the word mystic should be applied, not to St. John, but to those who more or less exaggerate his doctrine concerning spiritual influence and life in God. The Scripture is the standard whereby alone the spirits are to be tried, in all candour and charity. To those who repudiate this authority I do not write. But if any one, understanding by 'mystics' simply those who give full force to the language of St. John, shall praise them, however highly, I am perfectly at one with him in his admiration—my only difference is about the use of the mere word.

So much then is settled. It will be obvious, however, that the *historian* of mysticism will scarcely find it possible always to confine his use of the word to the exaggeration just specified. For he must take up, one after the other, all those personages who have at any time been reckoned by general consent among the mystics. But an age which has relapsed into coldness will inevitably stigmatize as a mystic any man whose devout ardour rises a few degrees above its own frigidity. It is as certain as anything can be that, if a German had appeared among the Lutherans of the seventeenth century, teaching in his own way just as St. John taught, without one particle of exaggeration, he would have been denounced as a mystic from a

hundred pulpits. Hence it has come to pass that some men, who have figured largely as mystics in the history of the Church, have in them but a comparatively small measure of that subjective excess which we would call mysticism, in the strict sense. Tauler is one of these.

But it may be said,—You talk of testing these men by Scripture; yet you can only mean, by *your interpretation* of Scripture. How are you sure that your interpretation is better than theirs? Such an objection lies equally against every appeal to Scripture. For we all appeal to what we suppose to be the meaning of the sacred writers, ascertained according to the best exercise of our judgment. The science of hermeneutics has established certain general principles of interpretation which are acknowledged by scholars of every creed. But if any one now-a-days resolves the New Testament into allegory, and supposes, for example, that by the five husbands of the woman of Samaria we are to understand the five Senses, I cannot of course try my cause with him before a Court where he makes the verdict what he pleases. I can only leave him with his riddles, and request him to carry my compliments to the Sphinx.

There is, then, a twofold test by which Tauler and other mystics are to be judged, if their teaching is to profit rather than to confuse and mislead us. We may compare the purport of his discourses with the general tenor and bearing of the New Testament, as far as we can apprehend it as a whole. Are some unquestionable truths but rarely touched, and others pushed to their utmost limits? If we think we see a certain disproportionateness—that there is a joyousness, and freedom, and warm humanity about

the portraiture of Christian life in St. John, which we lack in his very sincere disciple, the ascetic and the mystic,—we trifle with truth if we do not say so. The other test is the *historical*. Was a certain mystic on the side of the truth and onwardness of his time, or against it? Did he rise above its worst errors, or did he aggravate them? And here Tauler stands with a glory round his head. Whatever exaggeration there may have been of the inward as against the outward, it was scarcely more than was inevitable in the case of a man who had to maintain the inmost verities of Christian life amidst almost universal formality and death.

What then, it may be asked, is that exaggeration of which you speak? For hitherto your account of mysticism proper is only negative—it is a something which St. John does *not* teach.

I will give a few examples. If a man should imagine that his inward light superseded outward testimony, so that the words of Christ and his inspired disciples became superfluous to him; if he regarded indifference to the facts and recorded truths of the New Testament as a sign of eminent spirituality, such a man would, I think, abuse the teaching of St. John concerning the unction from the Holy One. The same Apostle who declares that he who hateth his brother abideth in darkness, refuses to bid God speed to him who brings not the doctrine of Christ, and inseparably associates the ‘anointing’ which his children had received, with their abiding in the truth they had heard from his lips. (1 John ii. 24.) If, again, any man were to pretend that a special revelation exempted him from the ordinary obligations of morality—that his union with God was such as to render sinless in him what would have

been sin in others, he would be condemned, and not supported, by conscience and Scripture. Neither could that mystic appeal to St. John who should teach, instead of the discipline and consecration of our faculties, such an abandonment of their use, in favour of supernatural gifts, as should be a premium on his indolence, and a discouragement to all faithful endeavour to ascertain the sense of Holy Writ. Nor, again, does any mystic who disdains hope as a meanness abide by the teaching of St. John. For the Apostle regards the hope of heaven as eminently conducive to our fitness for it, and says—'He that hath this hope purifieth himself.' The mystical ascetic who refuses to pray for particular or temporal bestowments is wrong in his practice, however elevated in his motive. For St. John can write,—'I pray (εὔχομαι) above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.' (3 John 2.) Nowhere does that Apostle prescribe absolute indifference, or absolute passivity. Lastly, John is not so afraid of anthropomorphism as to discourage or refine away the symbol and the figure. It is evident that he regards the fatherhoods and the brotherhoods of this earthly life, not as fleshly ideas which profane things spiritual, but as adumbrations, most fit (however inadequate) to set forth the divine relationship to us,—yea, farther, as facts which would never have had place in time, had not something like their archetype from the first existed in that Eternal Mind who has made man in his own image.

I remember hearing of an old lady, a member of the Society of Friends, who interrupted a conversation in which the name of Jerusalem had been mentioned, by the exclamation, 'Jerusalem—umph—Jerusalem —it has not yet been revealed to me that there is

such a place!' Now I do not say that our friend the Quakeress might not have been an excellent Christian; but I do venture to think her far gone in mysticism. Her remark puts the idea of mysticism, in its barest and most extreme form, as a tendency which issues in refusing to acknowledge the external world as a source of religious knowledge in any way, and will have every man's Christianity evolved *de novo* from the depths of his own consciousness, as though no apostle had ever preached, or evangelist written, or any Christian existed beside himself. It is not, therefore, the holding the doctrine of an inward light that makes a mystic, but the holding it in such a way as to ignore or to diminish the proper province of the outer.

I should certainly like to see some one settle for us definitively the questions which lie at the root of mysticism, such as these, for example:—Is there an immediate influence exerted by the Spirit of God on the spirit of man? And if so, under what conditions? What are those limits which, once passed, land us in mysticism? But the task, I fear, is beyond all hope of satisfactory execution. Every term used would have to be defined, and the words of the definition defined again, and every definition and subdefinition would be open to some doubt or some objection. Marco Polo tells us that the people of Kin-sai throw into the fire, at funerals, pieces of painted paper, representing servants, horses, and furniture; believing that the deceased will enjoy the use of realities corresponding to these in the other world. But, alas, for our poor definition-cutter, with his logical scissors! Where shall he find a faith like that of the Kin-sai people, to believe that there actually exist, in the realm of spirit and the world of ideas, realities answering to the

terms he fashions? No; these questions admit but of approximate solution. The varieties of spiritual experience defy all but a few broad and simple rules. Hath not One told us that the influence in which we believe is as the wind, which bloweth as it listeth, and we cannot tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth?

For my own part, I firmly believe that there is an immediate influence exerted by the Divine Spirit. But is this immediate influence above sense and consciousness, or not? Yes, answers many a mystic. But, if it be above consciousness, how can any man be conscious of it? And what then becomes of the doctrine—so vital with a large class of mystics—of perceptible guidance, of inward impulses and monitions? Speaking with due caution on a matter so mysterious, I should say that, while the indwelling and guidance of the Spirit is most real, such influence is not ordinarily perceptible. It would be presumption to deny that in certain cases of especial need (as in some times of persecution, sore distress, or desolation) manifestations of a special (though not miraculous) nature may have been vouchsafed.

With regard to the witness of the Spirit, I think that the language of St. John warrants us in believing that the divine life within us is its own evidence. Certain states of physical or mental distemper being excepted, in so far as our life in Christ is vigorously and watchfully maintained, in so far will the witness of the Spirit with our spirit give us direct conviction of our sonship. How frequently, throughout his first Epistle, does the Apostle repeat that favourite word, οἴδαμεν, '*we know!*'

Again, as to the presence of Christ in the soul. Says the Lutheran Church, 'We condemn those who say

that the gifts of God only, and not God himself, dwell in the believer.' I have no wish to echo any such condemnation, but I believe that the Lutheran affirmation is the doctrine of Scripture. Both Christ himself and the Spirit of Christ are said to dwell within the children of God. We may perhaps regard the indwelling of Christ as the abiding source or principle of the new life, and the indwelling of the Spirit as that progressive operation which forms in us the likeness to Christ. The former is vitality itself; the latter has its degrees, as we grow in holiness.

Once more, as to passivity. If we really believe in spiritual guidance, we shall agree with those mystics who bid us abstain from any self-willed guiding of ourselves. When a good man has laid self totally aside that he may follow only the leading of the Spirit, is it not essential to any practical belief in Divine direction that he should consider what then appears to him as right or wrong to be really such, in his case, according to the mind of the Spirit? Yet to say thus much is not to admit that the influences of the Spirit are ordinarily perceptible. The motion of a leaf may indicate the direction of a current of air; it does not render the air visible. The mystic who has gathered up his soul in a still expectancy, perceives at last a certain dominant thought among his thoughts. He is determined, in one direction or another. But what he has perceived is still one of his own thoughts in motion, not the hand of the Divine Mover. Here, however, some mystics would say, 'You beg the question. What we perceive *is* a something quite separate from ourselves—in fact, the impelling Spirit.' In this case the matter is beyond discussion. I can only say, my consciousness is different. I shall be to him a rationalist, as he to me a mystic; but let us not dispute.

Obviously, the great difficulty is to be quite sure that we have so annihilated every passion, preference or foregone conclusion as to make it certain that only powers from heaven can be working on the waters of the soul. That ripple, which has just stirred the stillness! Was it a breath of earthly air? Was it the leaping of a desire from within us? Or was it indeed the first touch, as it were, of some angelic hand, commissioned to trouble the pool with healing from on high? If such questions are hard to answer, when judging ourselves, how much more so when judging each other!

When we desire to determine difficult duty by aid of the illumination promised, self must be abandoned. But what self? Assuredly, selfishness and self-will. Not the exercise of those powers of observation and judgment which God has given us for this very purpose. A divine light is promised, not to supersede, but to illuminate our understanding. Greatly would that man err who should declare those things only to be his duty to which he had been specially ‘drawn,’ or ‘moved,’ as the Friends would term it. What can be conceived more snug and comfortable, in one sense, and more despicable, in another, than the easy, selfish life which such a man might lead, under pretence of eminent spirituality? Refusing to read and meditate on the recorded example of Christ’s life —for that is a mere externalism—he awaits inertly the development of an inward Christ. As he takes care not to expose himself to inducements to unpleasant duty—to any outward teachings calculated to awaken his conscience and elevate his standard of obligation—that conscience remains sluggish, that standard low. He is honest, respectable, sober, we will say. His inward voice does not as yet urge him to anything beyond this.

Others, it is true, exhaust themselves in endeavours to benefit the souls and bodies of men. They are right (he says), for so their inward Christ teaches them. He is right (he says), for so does *not* his inward Christ teach him. It is to be hoped that a type of mysticism so ignoble as this can furnish but few specimens. Yet such is the logical issue of some of the extravagant language we occasionally hear concerning the bondage of the letter and the freedom of the spirit. When the letter means what God chooses, and the spirit what *we* choose, Self is sure to exclaim, 'The letter killeth.' If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!

Such, then, in imperfect outline, is what I hold to be true on this question concerning the reality and extent of the Spirit's influence. As there are two worlds—the seen and the unseen—so have there been ever two revelations—an inward and an outward—reciprocally calling forth and supplementing each other. To undervalue the outward manifestation of God, in nature, in providence, in revelation, because it *is* outward—because it is vain without the inward manifestation of God in the conscience and by the Spirit, is the great error of mysticism. Hence it has often disdained means because they are not—what they were never meant to be—the end. An ultra-refinement of spirituality has rejected, as carnal and unclean, what God has commended to men as wholesome and helpful. It is not wise to refuse to employ our feet because they are not wings.

But it is not mysticism to believe in a world of higher realities, which are, and ever will be, beyond sight and sense; for heaven itself will not abrogate

manifestation, but substitute a more adequate manifestation for a less. What thoughtful Christian man supposes that in any heaven of heavens, any number of millenniums hence, the Wisdom, Power, or Goodness of God will become manifest to him, as so many visible entities, with form, and hue, and motion? It is not mysticism to believe that the uncreated underlies all created good. Augustine will not be suspected of pantheism; and it is Augustine who says—'From a good man, or a good angel, take away angel, take away man—and you find God.' We may be realists (as opposed to the nominalist) without being mystics. For the surmise of Plato, that the world of Appearance subsisted in and by a higher world of Divine Thoughts is confirmed (while it is transcended) by Christianity, when it tells us of that Divine Subsistence, that Eternal Word, by whom and in whom, all things consist, and without whom was not anything made that is made. And herein lies that real, though often exaggerated, affinity between Platonism and Christianity, which a long succession of mystics have laboured so lovingly to trace out and to develop. In the second and third centuries, in the fourteenth, and in the seventeenth; in the Christian school at Alexandria, in the pulpits of the Rhineland, at Bemerton, and at Cambridge, Plato has been the 'Attic Moses' of the Clements and the Taulers, the Norrises and the Mores.

But when mysticism, in the person of Plotinus, declares all thought essentially one, and refuses to Ideas any existence external to our own minds, it has become pantheistic. So, also, when the Oriental mystic tells us that our consciousness of not being infinite is a delusion (*maya*) to be escaped by relapsing ecstatically into the universal Life. Still more dangerous does such mysticism become when it

goes a step farther and says—That sense of sin which troubles you is a delusion also; it is the infirmity of your condition in this phantom world to suppose that right is different from wrong. Shake off that dream of personality, and you will see that good and evil are identical in the Absolute.

In considering the German mysticism of the fourteenth century it is natural to inquire, first of all, how far it manifests any advance beyond that of preceding periods. An examination of its leading principles will show that its appearance marks an epoch of no mean moment in the history of philosophy. These monks of the Rhineland were the first to break away from a long-cherished mode of thought, and to substitute a new and profounder view of the relations subsisting between God and the universe. Their memorable step of progress is briefly indicated by saying that they substituted the idea of the *immanence* of God in the world for the idea of the *emanation* of the world from God. These two ideas have given rise to two different forms of pantheism; but they are neither of them necessarily pantheistic. To view rightly the relationship of God to the universe it is requisite to regard Him as both above it and within it. So Revelation taught the ancient Hebrews to view their great 'I am.' On the one hand, He had His dwelling in the heavens, and humbled Himself to behold the affairs of men; on the other, He was represented as having beset man behind and before, as giving life to all creatures by the sending forth of His breath, as giving to man understanding by His inspiration, and as dwelling, in an especial sense, with the humble and the contrite. But philosophy, and mysticism, frequently its purest aspiration, have not always been able to embrace fully and together these two conceptions of

transcendence and of immanence. We find, accordingly, that from the days of Dionysius Areopagita down to the fourteenth century, the emanation theory, in one form or another, is dominant. The daring originality of John Scotus could not escape from its control. It is elaborately depicted in Dante's *Paradiso*. The doctrine of immanence found first utterance with the Dominican Eckart; not in timid hints, but intrepid, reckless, sounding blasphemous. What was false in Eckart's teaching died out after a while; what was true, animated his brother mystics, transmigrated eventually into the mind of Luther, and did not die.

To render more intelligible the position of the German mystics it will be necessary to enter into some farther explanation of the two theories in question. The theory of emanation supposes the universe to descend in successive, widening circles of being, from the Supreme—from some such 'trinal, individual' Light of lights, as Dante seemed to see in his Vision. In the highest, narrowest, and most rapid orbits, sing and shine the refulgent rows of Cherubim and Seraphim and Thrones. Next these, in wider sweep, the Dominations, Virtues, Powers. Below these, Princedoms, Archangels, Angels, gaze adoring upwards. Of these hierarchies the lowest occupy the largest circle. Beneath their lowest begins our highest sphere—the empyrean, enfolding within its lesser and still lesser spheres, till we reach the centre—'that dim spot which men call earth.' Through the hierarchies of heaven, and the corresponding hierarchies of the church, the grace of God is transmitted, stage by stage, each order in its turn receiving from that above, imparting to that below. This descent of divine influence from the highest point to the lowest is designed to effect a similar

ascent of the soul from the lowest to the highest. Of such a theory John Scotus Erigena is the most philosophical exponent. With him the restitution of all things consists in their resolution into their ideal sources (*causæ primordiales*). Man and nature are redeemed in proportion as they pass from the actual up to the ideal; for in his system, the actual is not so much the realization of the ideal as a *fall* from it. So, in the spirit of this theory, the mounting soul, when it anticipates in imagination the redemption of the travailing universe, will extract from music the very essence of its sweetness, and refine that again (far above all delight of sense) into the primal idea of an Eternal Harmony. So likewise, all form and colour—the grace of flowers, the majesty of mountains, the might of seas, the red of evening or of morning clouds, the lustre of precious stones and gold in the gleaming heart of mines—all will be concentrated and subtilized into an abstract principle of Beauty, and a hueless original of Light. All the affinities of things, and instincts of creatures, and human speech and mirth, and household endearment, he will sublimate into abstract Wisdom, Joy, or Love, and sink these abstractions again into some crystal sea of the third heaven, that they may have existence only in their fount and source—the superessential One.

Very different is the doctrine of Immanence, as it appears in the *Theologia Germanica*, in Eckart, in Jacob Behmen, and afterwards in some forms of modern speculation. The emanation theory supposes a radiation from above; the theory of immanence, a self-development, or manifestation of God from within. A geometrician would declare the pyramid the symbol of the one, the sphere the symbol of the other. The former conception places a long scale of degrees between the heavenly and the earthly: the

latter tends to abolish all gradation, and all distinction. The former is successive; the latter, immediate, simultaneous. A chemist might call the former the sublimate, the latter the diluent, of the Actual. The theory of immanence declares God everywhere present with all His power—will realize heaven or hell in the present moment—denies that God is nearer on the other side the grave than this—equalizes all external states—breaks down all steps, all partitions—will have man at once escape from all that is not God, and so know and find only God everywhere. What are all those contrasts that make warp and woof in the web of time; what are riches and poverty, health and sickness; all the harms and horrors of life, and all its joy and peace,—what past and future, sacred and secular, far and near? Are they not the mere raiment wherewith our narrow human thought clothes the Ever-present, Ever-living One? Phantoms, and utter nothing—all of them! The one sole reality is even this—that God through Christ does assume flesh in every Christian man; abolishes inwardly his creature self, and absorbs it into the eternal stillness of His own 'all-moving Immobility.' So, though the storms of life may beat, or its suns may shine upon his lower nature, his true (or uncreated) self is hidden in God, and sits already in the heavenly places. Thus, while the Greek Dionysius bids a man retire into himself, because there he will find the foot of that ladder of hierarchies which stretches up to heaven; the Germans bid man retire into himself because, in the depths of his being, God speaks immediately to him, and will enter and fill his nature if he makes Him room.

In spite of some startling expressions (not perhaps unnatural on the first possession of men by so vast a truth), the advance of the German mysticism on that

of Dionysius or Erigena is conspicuous. The Greek regards man as in need only of a certain illumination. The Celt saves him by a transformation from the physical into the metaphysical. But the Teuton, holding fast the great contrasts of life and death, sin and grace, declares an entire revolution of will—a totally new principle of life essential. It is true that the German mystics dwell so much on the bringing forth of the Son in all Christians *now*, that they seem to relegate to a distant and merely preliminary position the historical incarnation of the Son of God. But this great fact is always implied, though less frequently expressed. And we must remember how far the Church of Rome had really banished the Saviour from human sympathies, by absorbing to the extent she did, his humanity in his divinity. Christ was by her brought really near to men only in the magical transformation of the Sacrament, and was no true Mediator. The want of human sympathy in their ideal of Him, forced them to have recourse to the maternal love of the Virgin, and the intercession of the saints. Unspeakable was the gain, then, when the Saviour was brought from that awful distance to become the guest of the soul, and vitally to animate, here on earth, the members of his mystical body. Even Eckart, be it remembered, does not say, with the Hegelian, that every man is divine already, and the divinity of Christ not different in kind from our own. He attributes a real divineness only to a certain class of men—those who by grace are transformed from the created to the uncreated nature. It is not easy to determine the true place of Christ in his pantheistic system; but this much appears certain, that Christ and not man—grace, and not nature, is the source of that incomprehensible deification with which he invests

the truly perfect and poor in spirit.

On the moral character of Eckart, even the malice of persecution has not left a stain. Yet that *unknown* God to which he desires to escape when he says 'I want to be rid of God,' is a being without morality. He is *above* goodness, and so those who have become identical with Him 'are indifferent to doing or not doing,' says Eckart. I can no more call him good, he exclaims, than I can call the sun black. In his system, separate personality is a sin—a sort of robbery of God: it resembles those spots on the moon, which the angel describes to Adam as 'unpurged vapours, not yet into her substance turned.' I am not less than God, he will say, there is no distinction: if I were not, He would not be. 'I hesitate to receive anything from God—for to be indebted to Him would imply inferiority, and make a distinction between Him and me; whereas, the righteous man is, without distinction, in substance and in nature, what God is.' Here we see the doctrine of the immanence of God swallowing up the conception of his transcendence. A pantheism, apparently apathetic and arrogant as that of the Stoics, is the result. Yet, when we remember that Eckart was the friend of Tauler and Suso, we cannot but suppose that there may have lain some meaning in such language less monstrous than that which the words themselves imply. Eckart would probably apply such expressions, not to his actual self;—for that he supposes non-existent, and reduced to its true nothing—but to the divine nature which, as he thought, then superseded within him the annihilated personality. Tauler (and with him Ruysbroek and Suso) holds in due combination the correlative ideas of transcendence and of immanence.

Such, then, is one of the most important characteristics of German mysticism in the fourteenth century. I have next to ascertain in which of the leading orders of mystics Tauler should be assigned a place.

'Divination,' saith Bacon, 'is of two kinds—primitive, and by influxion.' The former is founded on the belief that the soul, when by abstinence and observances it has been purified and concentrated, has 'a certain extent and latitude of pre-notion.' The latter is grounded on the persuasion that the foreknowledge of God and of spirits may be infused into the soul when rendered duly passive and mirror-like. Of these two kinds of divining the former is characterized by repose and quiet, the latter by a fervency and elevation such as the ancients styled *furor*. Now our mystical divines have this in common with the diviners, that they chiefly aim to withdraw the soul within itself. They may be divided most appropriately after a like manner. A cursory inspection will satisfy any one that theopathetic mysticism branches into two distinct, and often contrasted, species. There is the serene and contemplative mysticism; and over against it, the tempestuous and the active. The former is comparatively self-contained and intransitive; the latter, emphatically transitive. Its subject conceives himself mastered by a divine seizure. Emotions well-nigh past the strain of humanity, make the chest to heave, the frame to tremble; cast the man down, convulsed, upon the earth. Or visions that will not pass away, burn into his soul their glories and their terrors. Or words that will not be kept down, force an articulation, with quaking and with spasms, from organs no longer under his control. The contemplative mystic has most commonly loved best

that side of Christian truth which is nearest to Platonism; the enthusiastic or practical mystic, that which connects it with Judaism. The former hopes to realize within himself the highest ascents of faith and hope—nay, haply, to surpass them, even while here below. The latter comes forth from his solitude, with warning, apocalyptic voice, to shake a sleeping Church. He has a word from the Lord that burns as a fire in his bones till it be spoken. He lifts up his voice, and cries, exhorting, commanding, or foretelling, with the authority of inspiration.

The Phrygian mountaineer, Montanus, furnishes the earliest example, and a very striking one, of this enthusiastic or prophetic kind of mysticism. He and his followers had been cradled in the fiercest and most frantic superstitions of heathendom. Terrible was Cybele, the mountain mother, throned among the misty fastnesses of Ida. Maddest uproar echoed through the glens on her great days of festival. There is beating of drum and timbrel, clashing of cymbals, shrill crying of pipes; incessant the mournful sound of barbarous horns; loud, above all, the groans and shrieks and yells from frenzied votaries whom the goddess has possessed. They toss their heads; they leap; they whirl; they wallow convulsed upon the rocks, cutting themselves with knives; they brandish, they hurl their weapons; their worship is a foaming, raving, rushing to-and-fro, till the driving deity flings them down exhausted, senseless. Among these demoniacs—*sanguine fleti, Terrificas capitum quatientes numine cristas*, as Lucretius has described them—these Corybantes, or head-tossers, Christianity made its way, exorcising a legion of evil spirits. But the enthusiastic temperament was not expelled. These wild men, become Christians, carried much of the old fervour into the new faith. Violent

excitement, ecstatic transport, oracular utterance, were to them the dazzling signs of the divine victory —of the forcible dislodgment of the power of Darkness by the power of Light. So Montanus readily believes, and finds numbers to believe, that he is the subject of a divine possession. Against the bloodthirsty mob in the villages and towns—against a Marcus Aurelius, ordaining massacre from the high places of the Cæsars—had not God armed his own with gifts beyond the common measure—with rapture—with vision—with prophecy? Yes! the promised Paraclete was indeed among them, and it was not they, but He, who spake. So thought the Montanists, as they announced new precepts to the Church; as they foretold the gathering judgment of Antichrist and the dawning triumph of the saints; as they hastened forth, defiant and sublime, to provoke from their persecutors the martyr's crown. Let us not overlook the real heroism of these men, while touching on their errors. But their conception of the Church of Christ, so analogous, in many respects, to that of the early Quakers—was it the right one? According to Montanus, the Church was to be maintained in the world by a succession of miraculous interventions. From time to time, fresh outpourings of the Spirit would inspire fresh companies of prophets to ordain ritual, to confute heresy, to organize and modify the Church according to the changing necessities of each period. He denied that the Scripture was an adequate source, whence to draw the refutation of error and the new supplies of truth demanded by the exigencies of the future. As Romanism sets up an infallible Pope to decide concerning truth, and in fact to supplement revelation, as the organ of the Divine Spirit ever living in the Church; so these mystics have their

inspired teachers and prophets, raised up from time to time, for the same purpose. But the contemplative mystics, and indeed Christians generally, borne out, as we think, by Scripture and by history, deny any such necessity, and declare this doctrine of supplementary inspiration alien from the spirit of Christianity. While Montanus and his prophetesses, Maximilla and Priscilla, were thus speaking, in the name of the Lord, to the country-folk of Phrygia or to the citizens of Pepuza, Clement at Alexandria was teaching, on the contrary, that we *have* the organ requisite for finding in the Scriptures all the truth we need—that they are a well of depth sufficient, nay inexhaustible; and that the devout exercise of reason in their interpretation and application is at once the discipline and prerogative of the manhood proper to the Christian dispensation. We are no longer Jews, he would say, no longer children. The presence of the Spirit with us is a part of the *ordinary* law of the economy under which we live. It is designed that the supernatural shall gradually vindicate itself as the natural, in proportion as our nature is restored to its allegiance to God. It is *not* necessary that we should be inspired in the same way as the sacred writers were, before their writings can be adequately serviceable to us.

Such was the opposition in the second century, and such has it been in the main ever since, between these two kinds of mystical tendency. The Montanist type of mysticism, as we see it in a Hildegard, among the Quakers, among the Protestant peasantry of the Cevennes, and among some of the 'Friends of God,' usually takes its rise with the uneducated, is popular, sometimes revolutionary. Animated by its spirit, Carlstadt filled Wittenberg with scandal and confusion; and the Anabaptist mob reddened the sky

with the burning libraries of Osnaburg and Munster. The Alexandrian mysticism, so far from despising scholarship and philosophy, as so much carnal wisdom, desires to appropriate for Christianity every science and every art. It is the mysticism of theologians, of philosophers, and scholars. It exists as an important element in the theology of Clement, of Origen, and of Augustine. It assumes still greater prominence in a Hugo or a Richard of St. Victor. It obtained its fullest proportions in these German mystics of the fourteenth century. It refined and elevated the scholarship of Reuchlin, Ficinus, and Mirandola. It is at once profound and expansive in our English Platonists.

Yet let it not be supposed that the extravagance of the enthusiastic mysticism has not its uses, or that the serenity of the contemplative is always alike admirable. Both have, in their turn, done goodly service. Each has had a work given it to do in which its rival would have failed. The eccentric impetuosity of Montanism, ancient and modern, has done good, directly and indirectly, by breaking through traditional routine—by protesting against the abuses of human authority—by stirring many a sleeping question, and daring many an untried path of action. On the other hand, the contemplative mysticism has been at times too timid, too fond of an elegant or devout, but still unworthy, ease. The Nicodemuses of the sixteenth century, the Briçonnets and the Gerard Roussels, were nearly all of them Platonists. They were men whose mysticism raised them above the wretched externalism of Rome, and at the same time furnished them with an ingenious excuse for abiding safely in her communion. ‘What,’ they would say, ‘are the various forms of the letter, to the unity of the Spirit? Can we not use the signs of Romanism in

the spirit of Protestantism—since, to the spiritual and the wise, this outward usage or that, is of small matter?' The enthusiastic mysticism tends to multiply, and the contemplative to diminish, positive precept and ordinance. The former will sometimes revolt against one kind of prescription only to devise a new one of its own. So the followers of Fox exchanged surplice and 'steeple-house' for a singularity of hat, coat, and pronouns. The contemplative mystic loves to inform his common life with the mysterious and the divine. Certain especial sanctities he has, but nothing unsanctified; and he covers his table with an altar-cloth, and curtains his bed with a chasuble, and drinks out of a chalice every day of his life. A Montanus commends celibacy; an Origen sees typified in marriage the espousals of the Church. The zeal of the enthusiastic mysticism is ever on the watch for signs—expects a kingdom coming with observation—is almost always Millenarian. The contemplatist regards the kingdom of heaven as internal, and sees in the history of souls a continual day of judgment. The one courts the vision and hungers after marvel: the other strives to ascend, above all form and language, from the valley of phantasmata to the silent heights of 'imageless contemplation.' The one loves violent contrasts, and parts off abruptly the religious world and the irreligious, the natural and the supernatural. The other loves to harmonize these opposites, as far as may be—would win rather than rebuke the world—would blend, in the daily life of faith, the human with the divine working: and delights to trace everywhere types, analogies, and hidden unity, rather than diversity and strife. The Old Testament has been always the favourite of the prophetic mysticism: the contemplative has drunk most deeply

into the spirit of the New.

Mysticism, as exhibited in Tauler's sermons, is much more likely to win appreciation at the hands of English readers than mysticism in the *Theologia Germanica*. The principles which were there laid down as bare abstractions are here warmed by sunshine and clothed with verdure. To the theory of mysticism we find added many a suggestive hint concerning its practice. There were general statements in the *Theologia Germanica* so dim, so vast, so ultra-human, that many readers would be at a loss to understand how they could possibly become a practice or a joy in any soul alive. In the sermons, a brother mystic supplies the requisite qualification, and shows that the old Teutonic knight had, after all, a meaning not so utterly remote from all the ways and wants of flesh and blood.

Brought out to view by Tauler's fervour, his invisible ink becomes a legible character. The exhortations of the pulpit thus interpret the soliloquy of the cell; and when the preacher illuminates mysticism with the many-coloured lights of metaphor and passion—when he interrogates, counsels, entreats, rebukes, we seem to return from the confines of the nameless, voiceless Void to a region within the rule of the sun, and to beings a little lower than the angels. It will reassure many readers to discover from these sermons that the mystics whom Tauler represents are by no means so infatuated as to disdain those external aids which God has provided, or which holy men of old have handed down—that they do not call history a husk, social worship a vain oblation, or decent order bondage to the letter—that when they speak of transcending time and place, they pretend

to no new commandment, and do but repeat a truth old as all true religion—that they are on their guard, beyond most men, against that spiritual pride which some think inseparable from the mystical aspiration—that so far from encouraging the morbid introspection attributed to them, it is their first object to cure men of that malady—that instead of formulating their own experience as a test and regimen for others, they tell men to sit down in the lowest place till God calls them to come up higher—and finally, that they are men who have mourned for the sins, and comforted the sorrows of their fellows, with a depth and compass of lowly love such as should have disarmed every unfriendly judgment, had their errors been as numerous as their excellence is extraordinary.

Any one who has attentively read Tauler's discourses as now accessible may consider himself familiar with the substance of Tauler's preaching. From whatever part of Scripture history, prophecy, song, or precept, his text be taken, the sermons, we may be sure, will contain similar exhortations to self-abandonment, the same warnings against a barren externalism, the same directions to prepare the way for the inward Advent of the Lord in the Ground of the Soul. The allegorical interpretation, universal in those days, rendered easy such an ever-varied presentation of a single theme. Did the multitude go out into the wilderness to the preaching of John? We are to go forth into the wilderness of the spiritual life. Did Joseph and Mary seek their son in vain among their friends and acquaintance, and find him in his Father's house? We also must retire to the inmost sanctuary of the soul, and be found no more in the company of those hindering associates, our own Thoughts, Will, and Understanding. Did Christ say to

Mary Magdalen, 'I have not yet ascended to my Father?' He meant, 'I have not yet been spiritually raised within thy soul;' for he himself had never left the Father.

From the sermon on the fifteenth Sunday after Trinity I select a passage which contains in two sentences the kernel of Tauler's doctrine—the principle which, under a thousand varieties of illustration and application, makes the matter of all his sermons. 'When, through all manner of exercises the outward man has been converted into the inward, reasonable man, and thus the two, that is to say, the powers of the senses and the powers of the reason, are gathered up into the very centre of the man's being—the unseen depths of his spirit wherein lies the image of God,—and thus he flings himself into the divine abyss, in which he dwelt eternally before he was created; then when God finds the man thus simply and nakedly turned towards Him, the Godhead bends down and descends into the depths of the pure, waiting soul, and transforms the created soul, drawing it up into the uncreated essence, so that the spirit becomes one with Him. Could such a man behold himself, he would see himself so noble that he would fancy himself God, and see himself a thousand times nobler than he is in himself, and would perceive all the thoughts and purposes, words and works, and have all the knowledge of all men that ever were.'

An explanation of this extract will be a summary of Tauler's theology. First of all, it is obvious that he regards human nature as tripartite—it is a temple in three compartments: there is the outer court of the senses; there is the inner court of the intellectual nature, where the powers of the soul, busy with the

images of things, are ever active, where Reason, Memory, Will, move to and fro, as a kind of mediating priests; there is, lastly, and inmost, a Holy of Holies—the Ground of the Soul, as the mystics term it.

'Yes!' exclaims some critic, 'this *Ground*, of which we hear so much, which the mystics so labour to describe, what is it, after all?' Let Tauler answer. He here calls it 'the very centre of man's being'—'the unseen depths of his spirit, wherein lies the image of God.' I believe that he means to indicate by these and other names that element in our nature by virtue whereof we are moral agents, wherein lies that idea of a right and a wrong which finds expression (though not always adequate) in the verdicts of conscience—that *Synderesis* (to use an Aristotelian word) of which the *Syneidesis* is the particular action and voice—that part of our finite nature which borders on the infinite—that gate through which God enters to dwell with man. Nor is the belief in such a principle by any means peculiar to the mystics; men at the farthest remove, by temperament and education, from mysticism, are yet generally found ready to admit that we can only approach a solution of our great difficulties concerning predestination and free will, by supposing that there is a depth in our nature where the divine and human are one. This is Tauler's spark and potential divinity of man—that face of man's soul wherein God shineth always, whether the man be aware thereof or not. This, to speak Platonically, is the ideal part of man—that part of him whereby, as a creature, he participates in the Word by whose thought and will all creatures exist. It is the unlost and inalienable nobleness of man—that from which, as Pascal says, his misery as well as his glory proceeds—that which, according to Tauler,

must exist even in hell, and be converted into the sorrow there. The Christian Platonist expresses his conception of the consummated redemption of man by saying that he is restored to his original idea—becomes what he was designed to be before sin marred him—puts off the actual sinful self, and puts on the truer primal self which exists only in God. In this sense Eckart says, 'I shall be sorry if I am not younger to-morrow than I am to-day—that is, a step nearer to the source whence I came'—away from this Eckart to the Divine Idea of man.

Such, then, is this Ground. Next, how is the lapse, or transit into it, effected? Tauler reminds us that many men live as though God were not in this way nearer to them than they are to themselves. They possess inevitably this image—this immediate receptivity of God, but they never think of their prerogative, never seek Him in whom they live and move. Such men live in the outside of themselves—in the sensuous or intellectual nature; but never lift the curtain behind which are the rays of the Shekinah. It will profit me nothing, says Tauler, to be a king, if I know it not. So the soul must break away from outward things, from passion and self, and in abandonment and nothingness seek God immediately. When God is truly found, then indeed the simplified, self-annihilated soul, is passive. But the way thereto, what action it demands, what strong crying and tears, what trampling out of subtle, seemly, darling sins!

First of all, the senses must be mastered by, and absorbed in, the powers of the soul. Then must these very powers themselves—all reasonings, willings, hopings, fearings, be absorbed in a simple sense of the Divine presence—a sense so still, so blissful, as to

annihilate before and after, obliterate self, and sink the soul in a Love, whose height and depth, and length and breadth, passing knowledge, shall fill it with all the fulness of God.

‘What!’ it may be said, ‘and is this death—not of sin merely, but of nature—the demand of your mysticism? Is all peace hollow which is not an utter passivity—without knowledge, without will, without desire—a total blank?’

Not altogether so, the mystic will reply. These powers of the soul must cease to act, in as far as they belong to self; but they are not destroyed: their absorption in the higher part of our nature is in one sense a death; in another, their truest life. They die; but they live anew, animated by a principle of life that comes directly from the Father of lights, and from the Light who is the life of men. That in them which is fit to live, survives. Still are they of use in this lower world, and still to be employed in manifold service; but, shall I say it? they are no longer quite the same powers. They are, as it were, the glorified spirits of those powers. They are risen ones. They are in this world, but not of it. Their life has passed into the life which, by slaying, has preserved and exalted them. So have I heard of a nightingale, challenged by a musician with his lute; and when all nature’s skill was vain to rival the swift and doubling and redoubling mazes and harmonies of mortal science, the bird, heart-broken, dropt dead on the victorious lute;—and yet, not truly dead, for the spirit of music which throbbed in that melodious throat had now passed into the lute; and ever afterward breathed into its tones a wild sweetness such as never Thessalian valley heard before—the consummate blending of the woodland witchery with

the finished height of art.

‘You see,’ our mystic continues—and let us hear him, for he has somewhat more to say, and to the purpose, as it seems—‘you see that we are no enemies to the symbol and the figure in their proper place, any more than we are to the arguments of reason. But there are three considerations which I and my brethren would entreat you to entertain. First of all, that logical distinctions, and all forms of imagery, must of necessity be transcended when we contemplate directly that Being who is above time and space, before and after,—the universal Presence, —the dweller in the everlasting Now. In the highest states of the soul, when she is concentrated on that part of her which links her with the infinite, when she clings most immediately to the Father of spirits, all the slow technicalities, and the processes and the imaginations of the lower powers, must inevitably be forgotten. Have you never known times when, quite apart from any particular religious means, your soul has been filled, past utterance, with a sense of the divine presence,—when emotion has overflowed all reasoning and all words, and a certain serene amazement—a silent gaze of wonder—has taken the place of all conclusions and conceptions? Some interruption came, or some reflex act dissolved the spell of glory and recalled you to yourself, but could not rob you of your blessing. There remained a divine tranquillity, in the strength whereof your heaviest trouble had grown lighter than the grasshopper, and your hardest duty seemed as a cloud before the winds of the morning. In that hour, your soul could find no language; but looking back upon it, you think if that unutterable longing and unutterable rest could have found speech, it would have been in words such as these—“Whom have I in

heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee."

'Then again, we would have you consider that the mere conclusions of the intellect, the handiwork of imagination, the effervescence of sentiment, yea, sensible delight in certain religious exercises—all these things, though religion's hand-maidens, are not religion herself. Sometimes they are delusive; always are they dangerous, if they, rather than God, become in any way our dependence. If the heart—the central fount of life's issues—be not God's, what avail the admitted propositions, and touching pictures, and wafts of sweetness—the mere furniture, adornment, and incense, of the outer courts of thy nature? Christ in thy soul, and not the truth about Him in thy brain, is thy life's life; and his agony of love must pierce thee somewhat deeper than the pathos of a tragedy. There are those who live complacently on the facilities and enjoyments they have in certain practices of devotion, when all the while it is rather they themselves, as thus devout, and not their Lord, whom they love. Some such are not yet Christians at all. Others, who are, have yet to learn that those emotions they set such store by, belong, most of them, to the earliest and lowest stages of the Christian life. The lotus-flowers are not the Nile. There are those who violently excite the imagination and the feeling by long gazing on the crucifix—by picturing the torments of martyrs—by performing repeated acts of Contrition,—by trying to wish to appropriate to themselves, for Christ's sake, all the sufferings of all mankind—by praying for a love above that of all seraphim, and do often, in wrestling after such extraordinary gifts, and harrowing their souls with such sensuous horrors, work out a mere passion of the lower nature, followed by melancholy

collapse, and found pitiably wanting in the hour of trial.[128] In these states does it oftenest happen that the phantoms of imagination are mistaken for celestial manifestations; and forms which belong to middle air, for shiny ones from the third heaven. I have been told that astronomers have sometimes seen in the field of their glass, floating globes of light —as it seemed, new planets swimming within their ken; and these were but flying specks of dust, hovering in the air; but magnified and made luminous by the lenses through which they looked, and by the reflection of the light. The eye of the mind may be visited by similar illusions. I counsel all, therefore, that they ask only for grace sufficient against present evil, and covet not great things, but be content with such measures of assurance and sensible delight as God shall think safe for them; and that, above all, they look not at His gifts in themselves, but out of themselves, to Him, the Giver.

'The third consideration I have to urge, in justification of precepts which appear to you unnatural, is this:—there are certain trials and desolations of soul, to which the best are exposed, wherein all subordinate acts are impossible; and then happy is he who has never exalted such helps above their due place. I scarcely know how to make myself understood to any save those who have been at some time on the edge, at least, of those unfathomable abysses. Good men of prosperous and active life may scarcely know them. Few who have lived much in retirement, with temperament meditative, and perhaps melancholy, have altogether escaped. There are times when, it may be that some great sorrow has torn the mind away from its familiar supports, and laid level those defences which in prosperity seemed so stable—when the most rooted convictions

of the reason seem rottenness, and the blossom of our heavenward imaginations goes up before that blast as dust—when our works and joys and hopes, with all their multitude and pomp and glory, seem to go down together into the pit, and the soul is left as a garden that hath no water, and as a wandering bird cast out of the nest—when, instead of our pleasant pictures, we have about us only doleful creatures among ruins—when a spirit of judgment and a spirit of burning seem to visit the city of the heart, and in that day of trouble and of treading down and of perplexity, the noise of viols, and the mirth of the tabret, and the joy of the harp, are silent as the grave. Now, I say, blessed is the man who, when cast into this utter wretchedness, far away from all creatures and from all comfort, can yet be willing, amidst all his tears and anguish, there to remain as long as God shall please—who seeks help from no creature—who utters his complaint to the ear of God alone—who still, with ever-strengthening trust, is ready to endure till self shall have been purged out by the fires of that fathomless annihilation—who, crying out of the depths, while the Spirit maketh intercession within him with groanings that cannot be uttered, shall presently be delivered when the right time hath come, and rejoice in that glorious liberty of the children of God, wherein they are nothing and He is all!'

Now, somewhat thus, I think, would that class of mystics whom Tauler represents, reply to the very natural objections urged by many in our times. Nor does such reply, so far, seem to me either unsatisfactory in itself, or in any way contrary to Scripture. It is with the aim, and under the qualifications, I have endeavoured to set forth, that these mystics would refuge the soul in a height

above reasonings, outward means and methods, in a serenity and an abstraction wherein the subtlest distinctions and most delicate imaginations would seem too gross and sensuous—where (as in Endymion's ecstasy)

> 'Essences
> Once spiritual, are like muddy lees,
> Meant but to fertilize our earthly root,
> And make our branches lift a golden fruit
> Into the bloom of heaven.'

On the latter part of the extract given just now I have not yet commented. It suggests a question of no small moment. What, it will be asked, is the relation sustained by the Saviour of mankind to this mystical process—this drawing up of the created soul into the uncreated essence? Is not a blank abstraction—an essential nothing, substituted for the Son of man? How does the abstract Essence in which Tauler would sink the soul, differ from the abstract Essence or super-essential Unity in which a Plotinus would lose himself, or from that Divine substance in which the pantheistic Sufis sought to dissolve their personality? In this region (confessedly above distinction), the mystic cannot, by his own admission, distinguish one abstraction from the other. There is a story of a lover who, Leander-like, swam nightly across a strait to visit the lady of his heart. A light which she exhibited on the shore was the beacon of the adventurous swimmer. But two brothers (cruel as those who murdered Isabella's lover in the wood) removed the light one dark and stormy night, and placed it in a boat anchored not near shore, but in mid-waters, where the strait was broadest. Their victim struggled as long as mortal strength might endure, towards the treacherous light

—farther and farther out—into the ocean which engulphed him. Have not the mystics, in like manner, shifted the beacon and substituted an expanse—an abyss, as the object of man's effort, instead of that love and sympathy which await him in the heart of the Son of man?

Can it be possible that the best thing to do with a revelation of God, now we have one, is to throw it behind our backs? Now that the light the wisest heathen longed for has come, are we to rid ourselves of it, with all speed, and fly, like Eckart, from the known to the old, *unknown* God? To do this, is to account as foolishness the wisdom of God manifest in the flesh. Is it not all—as the enemies of Quietism used to say—a device of the Devil? Does it not look as though the Arch-enemy, unable to undo the work of redemption, had succeeded, by a master-stroke of policy, in persuading men to a false spirituality, which should consist in obliterating the facts of that redemption from their own minds as completely as though it had never been wrought?

Now it is much better, I think, to put objections like these in all their strength, and to give them fair hearing. They will occur to many persons in the reading of these sermons. They will awaken a distrust and a perplexity which are not to be talked down by high words, or by telling men that if they do not sufficiently admire these mystics, so much the worse for them. One of the objections thus urged is logically unanswerable. If Eckart and Plotinus both succeed in reducing their minds to a total emptiness of all memory, knowledge, and desire, in order to contemplate a super-essential Void, equally blank, the Christian and the heathen pantheist are indistinguishable. Vacuum A, would be a vacuum no

longer if it contained anything to distinguish it from vacuum B; and to escape, in the most absolute sense, all distinction, is Eckart's highest ambition. But it is to be remembered, first of all, that Tauler does not go so far as Eckart in his impatience of everything intelligible, conceivable, or utterable. And next, that, happily, neither Eckart, Tauler, nor any man, can really reduce himself to that total nescience and apathy demanded by the theory which makes personality a sin, knowledge an infirmity, imagination a folly. Humanity is still too strong for any such de-humanizing ideal. The Absolute of Tauler is not, like the Absolute of Plotinus, an abstraction above morality. His link between finite and infinite—his image of God, is moral, not metaphysical merely. It is his knowledge, first of all, of God in Christ which enables him to contemplate the Infinite, not as boundless being, but as unfathomable love. So he stands firm on the grand Christian foundation, and the Son is his way to the Father. Following Dionysius, that arch-mystagogue, he does indeed invite the trembling soul into the shadows of a Divine darkness, wherein no specific attribute or act is perceptible to the baffled sight. But across that profound obscure and utter silence, there floats, perceptible, some incense from the censer, of the Elder Brother—the eternal High Priest. It is a darkness, but such an one as we have when we close our eyes after spectacles of glory—a darkness luminous and living with the hovering residue of splendours visible no longer. It is a silence, but such an one as we have after sweet music—a silence still stirred by inward echoes, and repetitions, and floating fragments of melodies that have ceased to fall upon the ear. It seems a chilling purity, a hueless veil—but such a veil as the snowfall lays upon an

Alpine church-yard, hiding all colour but not all form, and showing us still where the crosses are. By their fruits we know these mystics. No men animated by a love so Christ-like as was theirs, could have put an abstraction in the place of Christ.

With regard to the work of Christ, Tauler acknowledges (more readily than George Fox) that the divine element or inward light in man must remain a mere surmise or longing, apart from the historic manifestation of God in the flesh. It is Jesus of Nazareth who at once interprets to the soul, while He satisfies, its own restless heavenward desire. It is His grace alone which makes a mere capacity of God, a possession—a mere potentiality, actual. The view of Christ which Tauler loves to present most frequently is that expressed by those passages of Scripture which speak of Him as the first-born among many brethren, and which remind us that both He that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are all of one. He would say that the Saviour now lives upon the earth, in the person of all true believers; and that, in a subordinate sense, the Word is being continually made flesh, as Christ is formed in the hearts of Christians. With one voice Eckart and Tauler, Ruysbroek and Suso, exclaim—'Arise, O man! realize the end of thy being: make room for God within thy soul, that he may bring forth his Son within thee.'

The Saviour's obedience unto death is regarded by Tauler, rather in its exemplary, than in its propitiatory aspect. Very important, as characteristic of his theology, is the distinction he makes between our union to the humanity of Christ, and our union to his divinity. As man, He is the ideal of humanity—the exemplar of self-surrender. All that He received

from the Father was yielded up to Him in that absolute devotedness which all His brethren imitate. We are united to His humanity in proportion as we follow the obedience and self-sacrifice of His earthly life. But above this moral conformity to His example, Tauler sets another and a higher union to His divinity. And this union with the Godhead of the Son is not a superior degree of moral likeness to Him, it is rather an approximation to another mode of existence. It is an inward transit from our actual to our ideal self—not to the *moral* ideal (for that is already realized in proportion as we are united to His humanity), but to our Platonic archetypal ideal. This higher process of union to the Word, or return to our ideal place in Him, consists in escaping from all that distinguishes us as creatures on this earth—in denuding ourselves of reasonings, imaginations, passions,—humanities, in fact, and reducing ourselves to that metaphysical essence or germ of our being, which lay from eternity—not a creature, but the *thought* of a creature, in the Divine Word.

Now it appears to me that this self-spiritualizing process which seeks by a refined asceticism to transcend humanity and creatureliness, is altogether a mistake. An ideal sufficiently high, and ever beyond us, is already given in the moral perfection of Christ Jesus. This desire to escape from all the modes and means of our human existence came not from Paul, but from Plato. It revives the impatience of that noble but one-sided, Greek ideal, which despised the body and daily life, abhorred matter as a prison-house, instead of using it as a scaffolding, and longed so intensely to become pure, passionless intellect. I know no self-transcendence, and I desire none, higher than the self-sacrifice of the good Shepherd, who laid down his life for the sheep. You will

probably be reminded here of another great Platonist. Origen, also, makes a distinction between those who know Christ, according to the flesh, as he terms it, *i.e.*, in his sufferings, death, and resurrection, and that higher class of the perfect, or *Gnostici*, who, on the basis of that fundamental knowledge, rise from the historical Christ to the spiritual essence of the Word. Origen, however, supposed that this communion with the Logos, or eternal Reason, might become the channel of a higher knowledge, illumining the *Gnosticus* with a divine philosophy. With Tauler, on the contrary, the intellectual ambition is less prominent; and he who has ascended into the uncreated essence cannot bring down from thence any wisdom for this lower world. Thus, in our extract, he says that if the soul united to the word could perceive itself, it would seem altogether like God, and would appear possessed of all knowledge that ever was. Such is the *ideal*; but the first reflex act would dissolve that trance of absolute, immediate oneness, and restore the mystic to the humbling consciousness of a separate, actual self; and here lies the great difference between Tauler and Eckart. Tauler, Suso, and Ruysbroek say, that in these moments of exaltation the soul (above distinctions) is not conscious of its distinction as a separate, creature entity. Eckart says, not that the soul has, for a moment, forgotten all that is personal, and that parts it off from God, but that the distinction does not exist at all,—not that *we* do not know ourselves as separate, but that *God* does not. To draw the line between theism and pantheism, is not always easy; but I think it must lie somewhere hereabout.

With regard to the doctrines of holy indifference and disinterested love, the German mystics are by no

means so extreme as the French. Their views of the divine character were more profound and comprehensive; their heaven and hell were less external and realistic. A mysticism like theirs could not concentrate itself, as Quietism did, on the degrees and qualities of one particular affection. Their God was one who, by a benign necessity of nature, must communicate Himself in blessing, one whose love lay at the root of His being. 'If men would only believe,' cries Tauler, in one of his sermons, 'how passionately God longs to save, and bring forth His Son in them!' They care little for being themselves accused of making matter eternal, and creatures necessary to God, if they can free Him from the imputation of selfishness or caprice. And so they have no scruples as to whether it be not selfish and criminal to pray for our own salvation. In the sense of Tauler—a true and deep one—no man can say, 'Thy will be done,' and 'Thy kingdom come,' without praying for his own salvation. When Tauler seems to demand a self-abnegation which consents to perdition itself, he is to be understood in one of two ways: either he would say that salvation should be desired for the sake of God, above our own, and that we should patiently submit, when He sees fit to try us by withdrawing our hope of it; or that the presence and the absence of God make heaven and hell—that no conceivable enjoyment ought to be a heaven to us without Him, no conceivable suffering a hell with Him. But how different is all this from teaching, with some of the Quietists, that, since (as they say) God is equally glorified in our perdition and in our salvation, we should have no preference (if our love be truly disinterested) for the one mode of glorifying Him above the other. That any human being ever attained such a sublime indifference I

shall not believe, until it is attested by a love for man as much above ordinary Christian benevolence, as this love for God professes to be above ordinary Christian devotion; for what is true of the principle of love, is true of its degrees—'He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how shall he love God whom he hath not seen?'

The strongly ascetic language of Tauler and his brethren, their almost Manichean contempt of the world, must be read by the light of their times, so full of misery and corruption; and by the light, also, of those fearful furnaces of trial through which they had personally passed. What soul, into which the iron has entered, will say, while the pain is still fresh, that the words of Tauler, or of Thomas à Kempis, are intemperate? It is probable that Tauler would have been less impatient to abolish his very personality, in order to give place to God, had he been able, like Luther, to regard salvation, in greater measure, as consisting in a work done *for*, as well as wrought *in* him. But his justification is a progressive, approximate process. It is not a something he accepts, but a something he has to work out; and seeing, as, with his true humility, he was sure to do, how unsatisfactory was his likeness to God, how great the distance still, the only resource open to him is to ignore or annihilate that sorry and disappointing personality altogether, that God, instead of it, may perform his actions, and be, in fact, the substitute for his soul. Both Tauler and Luther believe in substitution. The substitution of Tauler is internal—God takes his place within himself. The substitution of Luther is external—when he believed in Christ, the Saviour associated him with Himself, and so brought him into sonship. So inevitable is the idea of *some* substitution, where the sense of sin is

deep. Luther believes as profoundly as Tauler in a present, inward, living Saviour, as opposed to a remote historic personage, intellectually acknowledged. In the theology of both the old dualism is broken down, and God is brought near to man, yea, within him. But the Son to whom Tauler is united, is the uncreated essence, the super-essential Word, from the beginning with the Father. The Son to whom Luther is united is emphatically the Godman, as truly human, in all sympathy and nearness, as when He walked the Galilean hills. The humanity of Christ is chiefly historic with Tauler, and for any practical purpose can scarcely be said to have survived His exaltation; but with Luther that humanity is so vital and so perpetual that he will even transfer to it the attributes of Deity. So far from desiring to pass upward from the man Christ Jesus to the Logos, as from a lower to a higher, Luther calls 'that sinking himself so deep in flesh and blood,' the most glorious manifestation of Godhead. He does not, with the Platonists, see degradation in the limitations of our nature; that nature has been honoured unspeakably, and is glorified, not annihilated, by the Incarnate One. According to Luther, the undivine consists in sin, and sin alone; not in our human means and modes, and processes of thought. Thus with him the divine and human are intimately associated, not merely in the religious life, as it is termed, but in our temporal hopes and fears, in every part of our complicated, struggling, mysterious humanity. The theology of Luther is more free, joyous, and human, partly because the serene and superhuman ideal of Tauler did not appear to him either possible or desirable, partly because sanctification was, with him, a change of state consequent on a change of relation—the grateful

service of one who, by believing, has entered into rest; and partly, also, because he does not lose sight of the humanity of Christ, in His divinity, to the extent which Tauler does. Both Luther and Tauler say—the mere history alone will not profit: Christ must be born in you. Luther adds—Christ begins to be born in you as soon as you heartily believe upon Him. Tauler adds—Christ is born in you as soon as you have become nothing.

It would be very unfair to make it a matter of blame to Tauler that he did not see with Luther's eyes, and do Luther's work. Luther in one century, and Tauler in another, had their tasks appointed, and quitted themselves like men. It was for Tauler to loosen the yoke of asceticism: it was for Luther to break it in pieces. But it would be just as culpable to disguise the real differences between Tauler and Luther, and to conceal the truth, from a desire to make Tauler appear a more complete reformer than he really was. Our High Churchmen, in their insular self-complacency, love to depreciate Luther and the Continental reformers. Idolaters of the past as they are, we do not think that they will be better pleased with that noblest product of the Middle Age—the German mysticism of the fourteenth century, now placed within their reach. These sermons of Tauler assert so audaciously against sacerdotalism, the true priesthood of every Christian man. There is so little in them of the 'Church about us,' so much of the 'Christ within us.'

It would have moved the scorn of some of the mystics, and the sorrow of others, could they have been made aware of the strange uses to which some persons were to turn them in this nineteenth century.

The Emersonian philosophy, for example, is grieved that one series of writings should arrogate inspiration to themselves alone. It is obvious that a ready credence given to professed inspiration in other quarters, and later times, must tend to lower the exclusive prestige of the Scriptures. Thus the mystics may be played off against the Apostles, and all that is granted to mysticism may be considered as so much taken from the Bible. A certain door has been marked with a cross. Emerson, like the sly Abigail of the Forty Thieves, proceeds to mark, in like manner, all the doors in the street. Very gratifying truly, and comic in the highest degree, to witness the perplexity of mankind, going up and down, seeking some indication of the hoped-for guidance from above! I do not believe that the inspired writers were (to use Philo's comparison) as passive as a lyre under the hand of a musician. But some, who are much shocked at this doctrine in their case, would have us be awe-stricken, rather than offended, by similar pretension on the part of certain mystics. *Then*, they tell us to tread delicately—to remember how little the laws of our own nature are known to us—to abstain from hasty judgment. In this way, it is supposed that Bibliolatry may be in some measure checked, and one of the greatest religious evils of the time be happily lessened. Criticise, if you will, John's history, or Paul's letters, but let due reverence restrain you from applying the tests of a superficial common sense to the utterances of the Montanuses, the Munzers, the Engelbrechts, the Hildegards, the Theresas. But what saith History as to mysticism? Very plainly she tells us that the mystics have been a power in the world, and a power for good, in proportion as their teaching has been in accordance with the Bible;—that the instances

wherein they have failed have been precisely those in which they have attempted (whether wittingly, or not) to substitute another and a private revelation for it. They have come as a blessing to their age, just in proportion as they have called the attention of men to some of the deepest lessons of that book—to lessons too commonly overlooked. The very men who might seem, to superficial observers, to bear witness *against* the Bible, do in reality utter the most emphatic testimony *for* it. A fact of this nature lends additional importance to the history of mysticism at the present time.

Again, there are some who may suppose there is a real resemblance between the exhortations of Tauler, and the counsel given men by such philosophers as Fichte or Herr Teufelsdröckh. Do not both urge men to abandon introspections—to abstain from all self-seeking—to arise and live in the transcendental world, by abandoning hope and fear, and by losing our finite in an Infinite Will? Some similarity of sound there may occasionally be, but the antipathy of principle between the two kinds of teaching is profound and radical.

I will suppose that there comes to our Teufelsdröckh some troubled spirit, full of the burden of 'this unintelligible world,' questioning,—as to an oracle. The response is ready. 'What do you come whining to me about your miserable soul for? The soul-saving business is going down fast enough now-a-days, I can tell you. So you want to be happy, do you? Pining after your Lubberland, as usual,—your Millennium of mere Ease and plentiful supply. Poor wretch! let me tell you this,—the very fact of that hunger of yours proves that you will never have it supplied. Your appetite, my friend, is too enormous. In this wild

Universe of ours, storming-in, vague-menacing, it is enough if you shall find, not happiness, but existence and footing to stand on,—and that only by girding yourself for continual effort and endurance. I was wretched enough once—down in the "Everlasting Nay," thinking this a Devil's-world, because, in the universal scramble of myriads for a handful, I had not clutched the happiness I set my heart on. Now, here I am in the "Everlasting Yea," serene as you see me. How? Simply by giving up wanting to be happy, and setting to work, and resigning myself to the Eternities, Abysses, or whatsoever other name shall be given to the fontal Vortices of the inner realms.... Miracles! Fiddlestick! Are not you a miracle to your horse? What can they prove?... Inspiration!—Try and get a little for yourself, my poor friend. Work, man: go work, and let that sorry soul of thine have a little peace.'

'Peace,' repeats our 'poor friend,' as he goes discomfited away. 'Peace! the very thing this soul of mine will not let me have, as it seems. I know I am selfish. I dare say this desire of happiness is very mean and low, and all that; but I would fain reach something higher. Yet the first step thereto he does not show me. To leap into those depths of stoical apathy which that great man has reached, is simply impossible to poor me. His experience is not mine. He tells a bedridden man to climb the mountains, and he will straightway be well. Let him show me the way to a little strength, and in time I may. I will not hunger any more after mere "lubberly enjoyment," if he will offer my affections something more attractive. But Infinite Will, and Law, and Abysses, and Eternities, are not attractive—nay, I am not sure that they are intelligible to me or any mortal.'

Now the doctrine of Tauler is nowhere more in contrast with that just uttered than in its tenderness of Christian sympathy and adaptation, as compared with the dreary and repellent pride of the philosopher. Instead of overwhelming the applicant by absurdly demanding, as the first step, a sublimity of self-sacrifice which only the finished adept may attain, Tauler is not too proud to begin at the beginning. Disinterested love is, with him, a mountain to which he points in the distance, bright with heavenly glory. Disinterested love, with Teufelsdröckh, is an avalanche hurled down right in the path of the beginner. Tauler does not see, in the unhappiness of the man, so much mere craven fear, or thwarted selfishness. He sees God's image in him; he believes that that hunger of his soul, which he vainly tries to satisfy with things earthly, is a divine craving, a proof that he was born to satisfy it with things heavenly. He does not talk grandiloquently about Duty, and the glory of moral Freedom. He tells him that the same Saviour who died upon the cross is pleading and knocking at his heart, and doth passionately long to bless him. He sends him away to think over this fact, till it shall become more real to him than house and home, or sun and stars. He does not think that he can improve on 'the low morality' of the gospel by disdaining to appeal to hope and fear in order to snatch men from their sins. If so to plead be to speak after the flesh, after the flesh he will speak, to save a brother. There will be time enough, he thinks, if God sees fit to lead the man to the heights of absolute self-loss; and God will take His own way to do it. All Tauler has to do is to declare to him the truth concerning a Saviour, not to prescribe out of his own experience a law beyond that which is written. In this way, instead of striking

him into despair, or bidding him bury care in work, he comforts and strengthens him. He does not despise him for keeping the law simply out of love to Him who gave it. He does not think it unmanly, but true manhood rather, when he sees him living, a suppliant, dependent on a life higher than his own—on a Person, whose present character and power were attested of old by history and miracle, as well as now by the 'witness of the Spirit.'

I think the candid reader of Tauler's sermons, and of *Sartor Resartus*, will admit that a difference in substance such as I have pointed out, does exist between them. If so, those who follow the philosophy of Teufelsdröckh cannot claim Tauler—have no right to admire him, and ought to condemn in *him* that which they condemn in the Christianity of the present day.

CHAPTER VII.

> Alas poor country;
> Almost afraid to know itself! It cannot
> Be called our mother, but our grave. Where nothing,
> But who knows nothing, is once seen to smile;
> Where sighs, and groans, and shrieks that rend the air,
> Are made, not mark'd; where violent sorrow seems
> A modern ecstasy; the dead man's knell
> Is there scarce asked, for who; and good men's lives
> Expire before the flowers in their caps,
> Dying or ere they sicken.

MACBETH.

The day after Atherton's return, Willoughby and Gower met about noon, at Lowestoffe's lodge gate, the one returning from a piscatory expedition of six hours, with fish, the other from a pictorial ramble of four days, with sketches. Willoughby had to tell of the escapades of tricksy trout, and of the hopes and fears which were suspended on his line. But not a word, of course, had he to say of the other thoughts which busied him the while,—how his romance was in his head, as he carried those credentials of idleness, the fishing-tackle, and how, while he was angling for fish, he was devising the fashion in which Blanche should throw the fly for Florian. Gower had seen such glades and uplands—such wondrous effects of light and shadow—he, too, had had his adventures, and could show his trophies.

Dinner was succeeded by that comparatively somnolent period which preceded the early tea so dear to Lowestoffe. Atherton found that a book of Schubert's, which had interested him in the morning, was, in the afternoon, only a conducting-rod to lure down the subtile influence of sleep. Lowestoffe, lulled by the buzzing flies, dropped off into an arm-chair doze, without apology or disguise. He had been early up, and had been riding about all day on a new chestnut mare. Violently had he objurgated that wretch of a groom for giving her too many beans, thereby rendering her in danger of flying at the heels; and what was worse, the monster had put on a gag snaffle with the martingale, and narrowly escaped getting her into mischief. But the flying storm had long since swept away. Before tea, Lowestoffe was in his good-humoured, irrational

humour; after tea he would be in his good-humoured rational one. As for Gower and Kate, they had quietly withdrawn together to see a water-lily that had just blown, and were not heard of till tea-time.

After tea, when certain sleepy people had again become responsible creatures, conversation began.

GOWER. Don't you think Atherton has a very manuscriptural air to-night?

KATE. There is a certain aspect of repletion about him.

MRS. ATHERTON. We must bleed him, or the consequences may be serious. What's this? (*Pulls a paper out of his pocket.*)

KATE. And this! (*Pulls out another.*)

WILLOUGHBY. He seems better now.

ATHERTON (*abstractedly*). I was thinking of the difference between Gower's studies and mine for the last few days. I have been reading a dark, miserable chapter in the history of man. He has been the chronicler of pleasant passages in the history of rocks and trees,—his great epochs, a smile of sun-shine or sudden chill of shadow,—the worst disasters, a dull neutral-tint kind of day, or a heavy rain,—his most impracticable subjects, beauties too bright or evanescent to be caught. It is sad to think how every subject of our study deepens in sorrow as it rises in dignity.

WILLOUGHBY. And yet it is only by the manful struggles of past generations through calamity and against wrong, that we have bequeathed to us the leisure, the liberty, and the knowledge essential to the highest enjoyment of nature. Atherton, in fact, studies the chequered and intricate causes which

issue in the taste of Gower as one of their effects. I should think it must be no small gain for an artist to be placed beyond the mediæval idea which set the *Inferno* in the centre of the earth, and imagined, far below the roots of the mountains and the channels of the sea, eternal flames as the kernel of the world.

GOWER. I have sometimes endeavoured, while lying on the grass, to realise in my own way the conception of the world by the light-hearted Greeks as an animal, or as a robe or peplus. I have imagined the clouds the floating breath of the great creature, rising against the crystal sphere of the sky, under which it lies as in an enchanter's glass;—the seas, some delicate surfaces of the huge organism, that run wrinkled into a quick shiver at the cold touch of wind;—the forests, a fell of hair which is ruffled by the chafing hand of the tempest. Then, when I look at the earth in the other aspect, as a variegated woven robe, I see it threaded silverly with branching rivers spangled with eyes of lakes; where the sleek meadows lie, it is rich with piled velvet, and where the woods are, tufted with emerald feathers. But now I want to hear something more about our Strasburg people.

ATHERTON. Bad news. There is a great hiatus in Arnstein's journal, which history fills up with pestilence and bloodshed. I have drawn up a few notes of this interval which must serve you as an outline. (*Reads.*)

> In the year 1348 that terrible contagion, known as the Black Death, which journeyed from the East to devastate the whole of Europe, appeared at Strasburg.[129] Everywhere famine, floods, the inversion of the seasons, strange appearances in the sky, had been its precursors. In the

Mediterranean Sea, as afterwards in the Baltic, ships were descried drifting masterless, filled only by plague-stricken corpses. Every man dreaded, not merely the touch and the breath of his neighbour, but his very eye, so subtile and so swift seemed the infection. In many parts of France it was computed that only two out of every twenty inhabitants were left alive. In Strasburg sixteen thousand perished; in Avignon sixty thousand. In Paris, at one time, four or five hundred were dying in a day. In that city, in the midst of a demoralization and a selfish horror like that Thucydides has painted, the Sisters of Mercy were seen tending the sufferers who crowded the Hôtel-Dieu; and, as death thinned their martyr-ranks, numbers more were ready to fill the same office of perilous compassion. Pausanias says that in Athens alone out of all Greece there was raised an altar to mercy. But it was an altar almost without a ministry. Heathendom, at its best, might glory in the shrine; Christianity, at its worst, could furnish the priesthood.

In Strasburg Tauler laboured fearlessly, with Thomas and Ludolph, among the panic-stricken people—doubly cursed by the Interdict and by the plague. Great fires of vine-wood, wormwood, and laurel were kept burning in the squares and market-places to purify the air, lighting up the carved work of the deserted town-hall, and flickering aslant the overhanging gables of the narrow crooked streets and the empty tradesmen's stalls. The village was ravaged as fatally as the town. The herds grew wild in the fields of the dead peasants, or died strangely themselves—victims, apparently, to the universal blight of life. The charlatans of the day drove for awhile a

golden traffic with quintessences and distillations, filthy and fantastic medicines, fumigation of shirts and kerchiefs, charms and invocations, only at last to perish in their turn. Even the monks had lost their love for gold, since every gift was deadly. In vain did trembling men carry their hoards to the monastery or the church. Every gate was barred, and the wealthy might be seen tossing their bags of bezants over the convent walls. In the outskirts of towns and cities, huge pits were opened, whose mouths were daily filled with hideous heaps of dead. The pope found it necessary to consecrate the river Rhone, and hundreds of corpses were cast out at Avignon, from the quays and pleasant gardens by the water-side, to be swept by the rapid stream under the silent bridges, past the forgotten ships and forsaken fields and mourning towns, livid and wasting, out into the sea.

In a frenzy of terror and revenge the people fell upon the miserable Jews. They were accused of poisoning the wells, and every heart was steeled against them. Fear seemed to render all classes more ferocious, and the man who might sicken and die to-morrow found a wretched compensation in inflicting death to-day on the imagined authors of his danger. Toledo was supposed to be the centre of an atrocious scheme by which the Jews were to depopulate Christendom. At Chillon several Jews, some after torture and some in terror of it, confessed that they had received poison for that purpose. It was a black and red powder, made partly from a basilisk, and sent in the mummy of an egg. The deposition of the Jews arrested at Neustadt was sent by the castellan of Chillon to Strasburg. Bishops, nobles, and chief citizens held a diet at

Binnefeld in Alsace, to concert measures of persecution. The deputies of Strasburg, to their honour be it spoken, declared that nothing had been proved against the Jews. Their bishop was the most pitiless advocate of massacre. The result was a league of priests, lords, and people, to slay or banish every Jew. In some places the senators and burgomasters were disposed to mercy or to justice. The pope and the emperor raised their voices, alike in vain, in behalf of the victims. Some Christians, who had sought from pity or from avarice to save them, perished in the same flames. The noble of whom they bought protection was stigmatised as a Jew master, execrated by the populace, at the mercy of his enemies. No power could stem the torrent. The people had tasted blood; the priest had no mercy for the murderers of the Lord; the baron had debts easily discharged by the death of his creditor. At Strasburg a monster scaffold was erected in the Jewish burial ground, and two thousand were burnt alive. At Basle all the Jews were burnt together in a wooden edifice erected for the purpose. At Spires they set their quarter in flames, and perished by their own hands. A guard kept out the populace while men commissioned by the senate hunted for treasure among the smoking ruins. The corrupting bodies of those slain in the streets were put up in empty wine casks, and trundled into the Rhine. When the rage for slaughter had subsided, hands, red with Hebrew blood, were piously employed in building belfries and repairing churches with Jewish tombstones and the materials of Jewish houses.

The gloomy spirit of the time found fit expression in the fanaticism of the Flagellants.[130] Similar

troops of devotees had in the preceding century carried throughout Italy the mania of the scourge; but never before had the frenzy of penance been so violent or so contagious. It was in the summer of 1349 that they appeared in Strasburg. All the bells rang out as two hundred of them, following two and two many costly banners and tapers, entered the city, singing strange hymns. The citizens vied with each other in opening to them their doors and seating them at their tables. More than a thousand joined their ranks. Whoever entered their number was bound to continue among them thirty-four days, must have fourpence of his own for each day, might enter no house unasked, might speak with no woman. The lash of the master awaited every infraction of their rule. The movement partook of the popular, anti-hierarchical spirit of the day. The priest or friar could hold no rank, as such, among the Flagellants. The mastership was inaccessible to him, and he was precluded from the secret council. The scourging took place twice a day. Every morning and evening they repaired in procession to the place of flagellation outside the city. There they stripped themselves, retaining only a pair of linen drawers. They lay down in a large circle, indicating by their posture the particular sin of which each penitent was principally guilty. The perjured lay on his side, and held up three fingers; the adulterer on his face. The master then passed round, applying his lash to each in succession, chanting the rhyme—

> Stand up in virtue of holy pain,
> And guard thee well from guilt again.

One after the other, they rose and followed him,

singing and scourging themselves with whips in which were great knots and nails. The ceremony closed with the reading of a letter, said to have been brought by an angel from heaven, enjoining their practice, after which they returned home in order as they came. The people crowded from far and near to witness the piteous expiation, and to watch with prayers and tears the flowing blood which was to mingle with that of Christ. The pretended letter was reverenced as another gospel, and the Flagellant was already believed before the priest. The clergy grew anxious as they saw the enthusiasm spreading on every side. But the unnatural furor could not last; its own extravagance prepared its downfall. An attempt made by some Flagellants in Strasburg to bring a dead child to life was fatal to their credit. The Emperor, the Pope, and the prelates took measures against them simultaneously, in Germany, in France, in Sicily, and in the East. The pilgrimage of the scourge was to have lasted four-and-thirty years. Six months sufficed to disgust men with the folly, to see their angelic letter laughed to scorn, their processions denounced, their order scattered.

Meanwhile the enemies of Tauler were not idle. Louis of Bavaria was dead. The new Emperor Charles IV. was of the papal party, and called the Parsons' Kaiser, but a man of vigour and enlightenment; so weary Germany, broken by so many calamities, was generally inclined to acknowledge his claim. About the year 1348 he visited Strasburg, and the clergy brought Tauler and his two friends before him. They were to answer for their hard words against priests and princes. Charles listened attentively to the

statement of their principles, and to their spirited defence of what they had said and done. At last he said (conceive the dismay of the prelates!) that, after all, 'he was very much of their mind.' But the ecclesiastics did not rest till they had procured a condemnatory sentence. The accused were commanded to publish a recantation, and to promise to refrain for the future from such contumacious language concerning the Church and the Interdict, on pain of excommunication. It is said that, in spite of this decision, they did but speak and write the more in the same spirit. This, however, is not certain. It is known that Tauler shortly afterwards left his native city, and fixed his residence in Cologne, where he mostly spent the remainder of his life, actively engaged as a preacher in endeavouring to promote a deeper spirituality, and in combating the enthusiasm of the pantheistic Beghards who abounded in that city.[131]

Chronicle of Adolf Arnstein, continued.

STRASBURG. 1354. *January.*—In the comparative leisure of the winter time, I set down in order (from such fragmentary notes as I then made) records of a journey undertaken last year to Flanders.

When I left Strasburg, to sail down the Rhine, our city had enjoyed at last nearly two years' prosperity. We could scarcely believe the respite real. First of all, after so many troubles and dissensions, the Black Death had laid us waste. Then came the Flagellants, turning all things

upside down—the irresistible infection of their fury—the thirst for blood they stirred up everywhere—the slaughter of the miserable Jews. Then we had the Emperor among us, demanding unrighteous imposts. Our old spirit rose. For two years and a half our chains and guard-ships barred the passage of the Rhine.[132] We would endure any extremity rather than submit, and our firmness won the day. Now, for the last three years,—the pestilence and its horrors over; blockaded business free again;—our little world has been gambolling like children let loose from school. Never such rapid and fruitful buying and selling, such marrying and giving in marriage, such feasting, pageantry, and merriment, among high and low alike.[133] All the year is May for the morris-dancers. No one remembers now the scourge or the torch.

The clergy might have learnt a lesson from the outbreak of the Flagellants. It should have shown them how hateful their vices and their pride had made them to the people. But the universal levity now pardons clerical crime and folly as it does every other. The odious exaggeration of the Flagellants has given men a pretext for licence, and ruined the hopes of reform. The cause of emperor against pope exists no longer. In the hour of conflict and of sorrow, men hailed the help and listened to the teaching of the Friends of God. Tauler himself, were he among us, would find it another Strasburg.

Landed at Cologne, I hastened to the cloister of St. Gertrude to find Dr. Tauler. With what delight did I see him once more! I thought him looking much older, and, indeed, he said he thought the same of

me. The time has been long but a stepmother to merry faces and ruddy cheeks. He told me that he had met with great kindness in this city, which he had always loved. His friends were numerous; his preaching, he hoped not without fruit, and he had succeeded in reforming much that had been amiss.[134] I had many messages for him from his old friends in Strasburg, and he had so many questions to ask, he knew not where to begin.

He inquired particularly after Rulman Merswin. This rich merchant had withdrawn from the world (with the consent of his wife) and devoted himself altogether to the contemplative life, a short time previous to the coming of the Black Death. His austerities had been almost fatal. Tauler's last counsel to him was to lessen their severity. I saw him before I left, and he desired me to tell Tauler that the Layman had visited him more than once, and was now his spiritual guide. I informed the Doctor, moreover, that during the last year Merswin had been privately busied in writing a book, to be called *The Nine Rocks*, of which he did me the honour of reading to me a part.[135] The Doctor asking what I thought, I said it seemed to be the work of a powerful and sombre imagination, excited by the sufferings he had inflicted on himself, yet containing many solemn and most just rebukes of the vices prevalent. Tauler said that such excessive mortification in all classes, and especially among the clergy, often weakened, instead of exalting the intellect. He feared that the good Rulman would always lean too much on visions, voices, ecstasies, and the like, and never rise to the higher calm of unsensuous, imageless contemplation.

The second time I visited Tauler, I found him reading—he told me for the fourth time—a book called *The Spiritual Nuptials*, by John Ruysbroek. [136] The Doctor praised it highly, and as I questioned him about it, offered to lend it me to read. I had heard of Ruysbroek as a master in spiritual mysteries, often holding intercourse by letter with the Friends of God in Cologne, Alsace, and even in the Oberland. I took the book home to my inn, and shut myself up to read it. Many parts of it I copied out. Not a few things in it I found hard to be understood, and consulting with the Doctor about them, he told me he purposed setting out in a few days to visit the author. Should I like to accompany him? I said 'Yes, with all my heart.' So we left Cologne to travel to the convent of Grünthal, in the heart of the forest of Soigne, not far from Louvain, whither the holy man, now sixty years of age, had of late retired. [137]

From Cologne we journeyed direct to Aix-la-Chapelle. There we saw the chair in which the emperors sit when they are crowned. Its sides are of ivory, and the bottom is made of a piece of wood from Noah's Ark. Tasted the water in the famous hot springs there. It is saltish; the physicians say of singular virtue, whether taken inwardly or outwardly. Saw near the town a water which is lukewarm, by reason of one of the hot springs which passes under it. There are bred in it fine fish, they say, which must be put in cold water two months before they are eaten.

From Aix-la-Chapelle we went to Maestricht, and thence through Tirlemont, to Louvain. This last is a wealthy city, with a fine town-hall. The Flemings seem very fond of bells, which are

always chiming, and the great multitude of storks was a strange thing to me; they make their nests on the tops of the chimneys. The country round is very fertile, and the great guilds exceeding prosperous. The small handicrafts have more power there than with us at Strasburg. At Ypres, I hear, they lately mustered five thousand strong in the market-place, and headed by their deacons, engaged and routed the knights and men-at-arms who wished to hold the town against the men of Ghent.[138] They are very brave and determined, and keep better together, as it seems to me, than our folk. I found no small excitement in the city, on account of the war then carrying on between the men of Ghent and their allies, on the one side, and the Earl of Flanders on the other. It began with the old rivalry between Ghent and Bruges—some dispute about a canal from the Lys. The real struggle is between lords and commons. What Bishop Berthold and his party have been to us, that is the Count de Male to these Flemings. The popular side has lost a brave leader in John Lyon. He revived the White Hoods, and stirred up all Flanders against the earl. But two at least of the new captains, John Boule and Peter du Bois, bid fair to fill his place. When I was at Louvain, the troops of the earl were besieged in Oudenarde by upwards of a hundred thousand men, gathered out of all the principal towns, well provisioned and appointed. The besiegers were very strong in cross-bow men, and had with them some great guns, which did no small damage. Many hot assaults were made, both by land and water, and on both sides many brave men slain (Heaven rest their souls!) for the Flemings were no whit behind the knights in foolhardiness. When I left Brabant,

report said that a peace was, or soon would be concluded, to be ratified, according to their wont there, by enormous dinners. Certain it is that neither Oudenarde nor Dendermonde were carried after all.[139]

They still talked at Louvain about that flower of chivalry Edward III. of England, who was there for a season some few years back.[140] His princely entertainments to lords and ladies left the country full of golden traditions about him. The islanders won all hearts by their unparalleled magnificence and generosity. They say the English king called James von Artaveld—brewer of metheglin as he was—his cousin, and was passing wroth when he heard of his murder. Yet methinks he cares but little after all for the Flemish weavers, save as they may help him and his knights against France. Nevertheless, the weaker France, the better for Germany. I think I understand why our emperor Charles so flatters the pope. If his Holiness could confide in Germany he would fain break with France. Be this as it may, not a word now is heard about the claims of the empire. The Ghibelline cause finds no leader. The spirit of the Hohenstaufen lives only in the rhymes of the minstrel. No doubt times are changed. There may be policy in the submission, but I love it not. The Doctor interpreted to me the other day the emperor's Latin motto, which set me thinking. It means—the best use you can make of your own wits is to turn to good account the follies of other people.[141] So cardinals and envoys riding to and fro, plotting and treaty-making, will manage Christendom now, not strong arms and sword-strokes. Whether, in the end, this change will lead to better or to worse, it baffles my poor brain to

decide.

We set out from Louvain for Grünthal, quite a troop of us. There was a noble widow-lady, with her attendants, who was going to crave ghostly counsel from the prior. She had lost her husband by the plague, three years since, and appeared still overwhelmed with grief, speaking to no one, and never suffering her face to be seen. Her women, when not near her, were merry enough with the followers of a young Frenchman of family who carried letters to Ruysbroek from his uncle, an abbot in Paris. We had with us besides two Minorite friars from Guelders. The head dresses of the women were fit for giantesses, rising up like a great horn, with long ribbons fluttering from the top. One of them had a little dagger in her girdle, and managed a spirited horse to admiration. The Frenchman, with whom I had much talk, was an arrant fop, yet a shrewd fellow withal. He jingled like a jester with his many silver bells, his hair was tied behind in a tail, the points of his shoes turned up, his parti-coloured doublet cut short round (a new fashion, adopted for greater swiftness in flying from an enemy), and his beard, long and bushy, trimmed with a sort of studied negligence. He gave me a melancholy account of the state of France, divided within, overrun by the English invaders, nobles plundering and burning—here to-day and there to-morrow, without pity, law, or loyalty; knights destroying, not helping the weak: troops of robbers surprising castles and even taking towns; and the wretched peasantry fain often to hide themselves and their cattle for weeks and months in great caves hollowed out underneath the ground.

One of the friars told me a story current about Prior Ruysbroek, how, one day, he was absent longer than usual in the forest, whither he was accustomed to retire for meditation, and as some of the brethren went to seek him they saw a tree at a distance which appeared surrounded by fiery glory. The holy man was sitting at its foot, lost in contemplation! The Saviour and our Blessed Lady herself are said to have appeared to him more than once.[142]

We reached Grünthal—a great building of exceeding plainness—soon after nightfall. Found there visitors from Brussels, so that, between us, nearly all the guest chambers were filled. The good Ruysbroek has been there but a year, yet if he is always to be thus sought unto, methinks he is as far from his longed-for seclusion as ever.[143]

We remained three weeks at Grünthal, for whenever the Doctor would be going, the good Prior so besought him to tarry longer that he could not in courtesy say him nay. Often Ruysbroek and Tauler would spend all the summer morning in the forest, now walking, now sitting under the trees, talking of the concerns of the soul, or of the fears and hopes awakened by these doubtful times. I was permitted repeatedly to accompany them, and afterwards wrote down some of the more remarkable things I heard said. These two saintly men, prepared to love each other as brothers in a common experience, seemed at once to grow together into a friendship as strong as though many years had been employed in the building thereof. Neither of them vain, neither jealous, each was for humbling himself beneath the other, and seemed desirous

rather to hear and learn than to talk about himself.

Speaking about the Son of God and the soul of man, Ruysbroek said—'I believe that the Son is the Image of the Father, that in the Son have dwelt from all eternity, foreknown and contemplated by the Father, the prototypes of all mankind. We existed in the Son before we were born—He is the creative ground of all creatures—the eternal cause and principle of their life. The highest essence of our being rests therefore in God,—exists in his image in the Son. After our creation in time, our souls are endowed with these properties, which are in effect one; the first, the Imageless Nudity, (*die bildlose Nacktheit*)—by means of this we receive and are united to the Father; the second, the Higher Reason of the Soul (*die höhere Vernunft der Seele*), the mirror of brightness, by which we receive the Son; the third, the Spark of the Soul (*Funken der Seele*) by which we receive the love of God the Holy Ghost. These three faculties are in us all the ground of our spiritual life, but in sinners they are obscured and buried under their transgressions.[144]

'The office of the Son in time was to die for us, fulfil the law, and give us a divine pattern of humility, love, and patience. He is the fountain whence flows to us all needed blessing, and with him works the Holy Spirit. What the Son did he did for all—is Light-bringer for all mankind, for the Catholic Church especially, but also for every devoutly-disposed mind. Grace is common, and whoever desires it has it. Without it no natural powers or merits can save us. The will is free by nature, it becomes by grace more free; yea, a

king, lord of every lower power, crowned with Love, clad in the might of the Holy Ghost. There is a natural will towards good (*Synderesis*) implanted in us all, but damped by sin. We can will to follow this better impulse, and of ourselves desire the help of divine grace, without which we can never overcome sin and rise above ourselves. Everything depends on will. A man must will right strongly. Will to have humility and love, and they are thine. If any man is without the spirit of God, it is his own fault, for not seeking that without which he cannot please Him.[145]

'True penitence is of the heart; bodily suffering is not essential. No one is to think he is shut out from Christ because he cannot bear the torturing penance some endure. We must never be satisfied with any performance, any virtue—only in the abyss, the Nothingness of Humility, do we rise beyond all heavens. True desire after God is not kept back by the sense of defect. The longing soul knows only this, that it is bent on God. Swallowed up in aspiration, it can take heed of nothing more.'[146] (A very weighty saying this, methinks, and helpful.)

Speaking of the inner life, and the union of the soul with God, Ruysbroek said—

'God dwells in the highest part of the soul. He who ascends this height has all things under his feet. We are united to God when, in the practice of the virtues, we deny and forsake ourselves, loving and following God above all creatures. We cannot compel God by our love to love us, but He cannot sanctify us unless we freely contribute our effort. There is a reciprocal desire on our part and that of God. The free inspiration of God is the

spring of all our spiritual life. Thence flows into us knowledge—an inner revelation which preserves our spirit open, and, lifting us above all images and all disturbance, brings us to an inward silence. Here the divine inspiration is a secret whispering in the inner ear. God dwells in the heart pure and free from every image. Then first, when we withdraw into the *simplicitas* of our heart, do we behold the immeasurable glory of God, and our intellect is as clear from all considerations of distinction and figurative apprehensions, as though we had never seen or heard of such things. Then the riches of God are open to us. Our spirit becomes desireless, as though there were nothing on earth or in heaven of which we stood in need. Then we are alone with God, God and we—nothing else. Then we rise above all multiplicity and distinction into the simple nakedness of our essence, and in it become conscious of the infinite wisdom of the Divine Essence, whose inexhaustible depths are as a vast waste, into which no corporeal and no spiritual image can intrude. Our created is absorbed in our uncreated life, and we are as it were transformed into God. Lost in the abyss of our eternal blessedness, we perceive no distinction between ourselves and God. As soon as we begin to reflect and to consider what that is we feel, we become aware of such distinction, and fall back to the level of reason.'[147]

Here Tauler asked whether such language was not liable to abuse by the heretics who confound man and God? He referred to a passage in the *Spiritual Nuptials*, in which Ruysbroek said that we became identical, in this union, with the glory by which we are illumined.[148]

Ruysbroek answered, that he had designed to qualify duly all such expressions. ‘But you know, Doctor,’ continued he, ‘I have not your learning, and cannot at all times say so accurately as I would what I mean. Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings!—I would say that in such a state all our powers are in repose, not that they are annihilated. If so, we should lose our existence as creatures. We are one with God, but yet always creature existences distinct from God. I do humbly believe, let my enemies say what they may, that I wrote no word of that book save at the impulse of the Holy Ghost, and with a peculiar and most blessed presence to my soul of the Holy Trinity. But what shall I call this blessedness? It includes peace, inward silence, affectionate hanging on the source of our joy, sleep in God, contemplation of the heaven of darkness, far above reason.‘[149]

The conversation then turned on the heresies of the time, the corruptions of the Church and of the State, and other practical matters more within my compass. Ruysbroek said that the great sin and error of these heretics lay in their aspiring to union with God by a summary and arrogant method of their own. They persuaded themselves that, merely by ceasing to think and distinguish, they could withdraw themselves into the essence of their nature, and so, without the help of grace or the practice of virtue, attain by bare nature the rest and blessedness of absolute simplicity and superiority to all modes and images.

‘Verily,’ quoth Tauler, ‘though they give themselves out for the wisest and the holiest, it is only themselves, not God, they enjoy. Yet mischievous as they are, often as I have preached

against them, I never have taken, nor shall I take, any part in their persecution.'[150]

'I have had plentiful opportunity,' continued Ruysbroek, 'for observing these men. I would divide them into four classes.[151] First of all there are those whose doctrine sins especially against the Holy Ghost. They say the essential Godhead works not, but the Holy Ghost doth: that they belong to that Divine Essence, and will rest in like manner;—that they are, therefore, above the Spirit of God. They hold that, after time, all things will be God, one absolute Quiescence, without distinction and without change. So they will neither know nor act, neither think nor thank, but be free from all desire, all obligation. This they call Poverty of Spirit. I say it is a devilish poverty, and such souls must be poor as hell in divine love and knowledge.

'The second class say, with like blasphemy, 'We are divine by nature. There is one God, and we are identical with Him. We with Him have created all things; if we had not chosen, we had not been born. It was our own choice to exist as we do. God can do nothing without us, and we give Him therefore no preference, pay Him no homage. Honour to Him is honour to us. What we are we would be, what we would be we are; with God we have created ourselves and all things; heaven and earth hang on our will.' This insane spiritual pride is flatly contrary to all catholic doctrine.

'The third class sin not less against the Son. They say, we are as much incarnate as Christ was, and, in the same sense, divine sons of God. Had He lived long enough, He would have attained to the same contemplative quiet we enjoy. Retired into

our inmost selves, we find ourselves the same Wisdom of God which Christ is. When He is honoured, we are honoured, for we are identical with Him.

'The fourth class declare that neither God nor themselves, heaven nor hell, action nor rest, good nor evil, have any real existence. They deny God and the work of Christ, Scripture, sacraments,—everything. God is nothing; they are nothing; the universe is nothing.

'Some hold doctrines such as these in secret, and conform outwardly, for fear. Others make them the pretext for every kind of vice and insolent insubordination. Of a truth we should cross ourselves when we but speak of them, as in the neighbourhood of spirits from the pit.'

'And what hope,' said Tauler, 'of better things, while the Church is crowded with hirelings, and, with lust and bravery, everywhere leads on the world in sin?'

'What hope, indeed!' mournfully responded Ruysbroek. 'The grace of the sacraments is shamefully bought and sold. Rich transgressors may live as they list. The wealthy usurer is buried before the altar, the bells ring, the priest declares him blessed. I declare that if he died in unrighteousness, not all the priests in Christendom, not all his hoards lavished to feed the poor, could save him from perdition. See, too, the monks, mendicants and all, what riches! what sumptuous fare! what licence, in violation of every vow! what odious distinctions! Some have four or five garments, another scarcely one. Some revel with the prior, the guardian, and the lector in the refectory, at a place of their own. Others

must be content with herring and cabbage, washed down with sour beer. Little by little the habit is changed, black becomes brown, grey is exchanged for blue, the white must be of the finest stuff, the shape of the newest cut.'

'This,' said Tauler, 'is what I so much admire in your little community here. You have practically abolished those mischievous distinctions, the cause of so much bitterness in our religious houses. Every one has his place, but no one is degraded. You yourself will perform the meanest offices, as the other morning, when Arnstein found you sweeping the lectorium. Yours is the true canonical life—the life of a family. Every one is ready to do kind offices for his brethren, and your own example teaches daily forgetfulness of self.'

Ruysbroek looked uneasy under these praises, and they spoke again of the prevalent evils in the Church.[152]

'How many nuns have I seen,' said Ruysbroek, 'daintily attired, with silver bells to their girdles, whose prison was the cloister and their paradise the world! A retinue of forty reiters is a moderate attendance for a prelate out on a visitation. I have known some priests who engaged themselves as business agents to laymen; others who have entered the service of ladies of rank, and walked behind them as footmen into church. A criminal has but to pay money down, and he may serve the devil for another year. A trim reckoning, and satisfaction for all parties! The bishop gets the gold, the devil gets the soul, and the miserable fool the moment's pleasure of his lust.'[153]

When, one day, they were conversing on future

rewards and punishments, I remember hearing Ruysbroek say—'I trust I am ready for all God sends me, life or death, or even hell-pains themselves.' An attainment of virtue inconceivable to me.[154]

At Grünthal I saw much of a lay brother named John Affliginiensis, the cook of the community.[155] He accompanied Ruysbroek thither. Though wholly unlettered, he serves daily as a goodly ensample of the active and contemplative life united. It is his calling to see to the dinners of the brethren; he is scarce less helpful to their devotions. That he is a good plain cook I can bear witness, and to the edifying character of the discourses he sometimes delivers to the canons, all testify. He scarcely sleeps at all, goes meanly clad, and eats the veriest refuse of the convent fare. He is one of the meekest and most humble of men—has had his sore fights of temptation, fierce inward purgations, and also his favoured hours and secret revelations. Ruysbroek loves him like a brother. The esteem in which he is held, and the liberty of speech allowed him, is characteristic of the simple and brotherly spirit which dwells among these worthy canons. Grünthal is not, like so many religious houses, a petty image of the pettiest follies of the world. There they do seem to have withdrawn in spirit from the strife and pomp of secular life. Gladly would I spend my last years among the beeches and the oaks that shut in their holy peace. But while I may I must be doing; had my call been to the contemplative life I should have been moulded in another fashion.

On our journey back from Louvain I had rare entertainment. We had scarcely passed out

beyond the gates, when Tauler rode forward, in deep discourse with an ecclesiastic of the party. A hasty glance at our fellow-travellers, as we mustered at the door of the hostelry, had not led me to look for any company likely to eke out a day's travel with aught that was pleasant or of profit. But I was mistaken. I espied ere long, a neat, merry-looking little man, in a minstrel's habit, with a gittern slung at his back. To him I joined himself, and he, pleased evidently with the notice I took of him, sang me songs and told me stories all the way. He said his name was Muscatblut, and I was not sorry to be able to gratify him by answering that his fame had already reached my ears.[156] He had store of songs, with short and long lines curiously interwoven in a way of his own, a very difficult measure to write, as he assured me—the very triumph of his heart. These love-lays he interspersed with riddles and rhyming proverbs, with quaint allegories, satires on clerks and monks, and stories about husbands and wives, making all within hearing roll in their saddles with laughter. He had likewise certain coarse songs, half amatory, half devotional, tagged with bits of slang and bits of Latin, about the wooing of our Lady. I told him, to his surprise, to stop; it was flat blasphemy. He said the voluptuous passages of his lay were after Frauenlob's best manner, and as to the sacred personages, by St. Bartholomew! many a holy clerk had praised that part most of all, calling it a deep allegory, most edifying to the advanced believer.

At Cologne I parted from the Doctor with many embraces. On my way back to Strasburg I took boat up the Mayne to Frankfurt, whither business

called me. We passed a little woody island in the midst of the river, which was pointed out to me as the residence of the leprous barefooted friar, whose songs and airs are so popular throughout the Rhineland. I looked with reverence at the melancholy spot. There he dwells alone, shut out from mankind, yet delighting and touching every heart. His songs are sweet as the old knightly lays of love, full of courtly grace and tenderness, and yet they are songs for the people from one truly of themselves. The burgher has his minstrelsy now, as well as the noble. This at least is a good sign.

Note to page 321.

From this time forward, Rulman Merswin gave himself up to the spiritual guidance of Nicholas the layman—taking him to be to him 'in God's stead.' He took no step without his direction, and wrote at his command his book entitled *Von den vier ioren sins anevohenden lebendes*—a record of what may be called his spiritual apprenticeship. Nicholas took a copy of it back with him to the Oberland. Schmidt has brought together what is known of Merswin, in the Appendix to his life of Tauler, pp. 177, &c.

The *Book of the Nine Rocks* was commenced in 1352. It has been published in Diepenbrock's edition of the works of Suso, to whom it was, till recently, attributed. The claim of Merswin to its authorship is established beyond question—(Schmidt, 180). The work opens by relating how, early one morning in Advent, a man (the author) was warned of God to prepare himself, by inward retirement, for that which He should show him. He was made to behold

a vision full of strange and alarming appearances. He cried out, ‘Ah, my heart’s Love! what meanest thou with these mysterious symbols?’ He struggled hard against the phantoms of his trance, but the marvellous forms only multiplied the more. He was constrained by a divine voice to gaze, and commanded, in spite of his humble remonstrances, to write in a book what he saw—the image of the corruptions of Christendom, for the warning of the guilty and the edification of the faithful. The dialogues are given at length between him and God —‘the Man’ and ‘the Answer.’ For eleven weeks, in sickness and spiritual distress, he wavered. He was but a poor, ignorant layman; how should he presume to exhort the Church? ‘The Voice of the Answer’ is heard saying, ‘Came not thy reluctance from humility, I would consign thee to the pit. I see I must compel thee. In the name of the Holy Trinity, I command thee to begin to write this day.’

The souls of men proceeding from God, but few of them returning to their Original, are shown him under the similitude of multitudes of fish, brought down by the descent of great waters from the summit of a mountain. Men in the valley are catching them in nets. Scarce half of them reach the sea below. There the remnant swim in all directions, and at length endeavour to leap back, up to the source whence they came. Numbers are taken in the nets; only a few reach even the base of the mountain. Some who ascend higher fall back upon the rocks and die. A very few, springing from rock to rock, reach exhausted, the fountain at the top, and there forget their pains.

The twenty following chapters are occupied with a dialogue, in which the divine Voice enumerates the

characteristic sins of all classes of mankind, from the pope to the begging friar—from the emperor to the serf.

Then commences the vision of the Nine Rocks. A mountain, enormous in breadth and height, fills all the scene. As the eye travels up the ascent, it beholds nine steep rocks, each loftier than that which preceded it,—the highest lost in the heavens. From the lowest the whole surface of the earth is visible. A net is spread over all the region beneath, but it does not reach the mountain. The multitudes seen beneath it are men in mortal sin. The men standing on the first and lowest rock are religious persons, but such as are lukewarm, defective in aspiration and in zeal. They dwell dangerously near the net—(cap. xxiii.). Some, from the first rock, are seen making their way up the precipice, and reaching the second, where they become of dazzling brightness. Those on the second rock have heartily forsaken the world; they will suffer less in purgatory, enjoy more in heaven, than those beneath; but they, too, are far from their Origin yet, and in danger of spiritual pride, self-seeking, and of growing faint and remiss in their painful progress—(cap. xxiv.). Those on the third rock, fewer in number, suffering far more severely in time, are nearer to God, will suffer little in purgatory, and are of yet more glorious aspect than their predecessors—(cap. xxv.). Such is the process to the summit. All the nine rocks must be surmounted, would we return to our Divine Source. But few attain the last, which is indeed the Gate of the Origin—the consummate blessedness, in which the believer, fearless of hell and purgatory, has annihilated self, and hath no wish or will save that of God. One of these true worshippers brings more blessing to Christendom than thousands of such as live after

their own will, and know not that they are nothing.

Finally, ‘the man’ is permitted a moment’s glance into the Divine ‘Origin.’ The rapture of that moment he attempted in vain to describe;—no reflection, no image, could give the least hint of it.

Both Rulman and ‘the Friend of God in the Oberland’ believed themselves repeatedly warned of God in visions, that they should build a house for him in Strasburg. The merchant purchased a ruined cloister on a little island in the river Ill, without the city walls. He restored the church, and erected a stone belfry. Nicholas advised him to bestow it on the Johannites, in preference to any other Order,—for there had been no little rivalry among the monks as to who was to enjoy the gift. The conditions of the deed for which he stipulated with the Master of the Order are indicative of the new and more elevated position which mysticism had taught the laity to claim. The government of the house was to rest entirely with a lay triumvirate; the two survivors always to choose a third. The first three governors were Rulman himself, Heinzmann Wetzel, knight, and John Merswin, burg-graf. The admission of brethren rested with these heads of the house, and they were free to receive any one, clerk or layman, knight or serving man, whether belonging to the order of St. John or not, requiring only that he should bring with him the moderate sum requisite to render his residence no burden on the convent. (Schmidt, p. 189.)

Note to page 329.

The passage to which Tauler is made to refer is contained in the third book of the Spiritual Nuptials, chap. 5:—'Ind alle die minschen die bouen ir geschaffenheit verhauen sin in eyn schauwende leuen, die synt eyn mit deser gotlicher clairheit, ind sij sint die clairheit selver. Ind sy sien ind gevoilen ind vynden sich selver ouermitz dit gotliche licht, dat sy sin der selue eynveldige gront na wijse irre ungeschaffenheit, da de clairheit sonder mias vs schynt in gotlicher wijsen ind na sympelheit des wesens eynueldich binnen blijfft ewelich sonder wise. Ind hervm soilen die innyge schauwende minschen vsgayn na wijse des schauwens bouen reden ind bouen vnderscheit ind bouen ir geschaffen wesen mit ewigen instarren ouermitz dat ingeboiren licht, soe werden sy getransformeirt ind eyn mit desem seluen licht da sy mede sien ind dat sy sien. Ind also vervolgen die schauwende minschen ir ewich bilde da si zo gemacht sin ind beschauwen got ind alle dinck sonder vnderscheit in eyme eynveldigen sien in gotlicher clairheit. In dat is dat edelste ind dat vrberlichste schauwen da men zo komen mach in desem leuen.'—*Vier Schriften*, p. 144.

[And all men who are exalted above their creatureliness into a contemplative life are *one with this divine glory,—yea, are that glory*. And they see, and feel, and find in themselves, by means of this divine light, that they are the same simple Ground as to their uncreated nature (*i.e.*, in respect of their ideal pre-existence in the Son), since the glory shineth forth without measure, after the divine

manner, and abideth within them simply and without mode (particular manifestation or medium), according to the simplicity of the essence. Wherefore interior contemplative men should go forth in the way of contemplation above reason and distinction, beyond their created substance, and gaze perpetually by the aid of their inborn light, and so they become transformed, and *one with the same light, by means of which they see, and which they see*. Thus do contemplative men arrive at that eternal image after which they were created, and contemplate God and all things without distinction in a simple beholding, in divine glory. And this is the loftiest and most profitable contemplation whereto men may attain in this life.]

This passage, and others like it, gave rise to the charge of pantheism brought by Gerson against Ruysbroek in the following century. The prior of Grünthal found a defender in Schönhoven, who pointed with justice to numerous expressions in the writings of the accused, altogether incompatible with the heresy alleged. Quite inconsistent with any confusion of the divine and human is Ruysbroek's fine description of the insatiable hunger of the soul—growing by that it feeds on,—the consciousness that all possessed is but a drop to the illimitable undeemed Perfection yet beyond. ('Wi leren in waerheit sijns aenschijns dat al dat wi gesmaken tegen dat ons ontblijft dat en is niet een draep tegen al die zee, dit verstormt onsen geest in hetten ende in ongeduer van mynnen.'—*Von dem funkelnden Steine*, x. p. 194.) So again he says, 'Want wy enmogen te mael niet got werden ende onse gescapenheit verliesen, dat is onmoegelic'—p. 190; and similarly that we become one with God in love, not in nature, ('ouerformet ende een mit hem in sijnre minnen, niet

in sijnre naturen.')—*Spiegel der Seligkeit*, xxiv.

Note to page 329.

Ruysbroek expressed to Gerard Groot, in these very words, his belief in the special guidance of the Holy Spirit vouchsafed for the composition of his books on these 'deep things' of the kingdom. (Engelhardt, p. 168.)

The doctrine of Ruysbroek is substantially the same with that of his friend and brother-mystic, Tauler. Whether speaking the high German of the upper Rhine or the low German of the Netherlands, mysticism gives utterance to the same complaint and the same aspiration. Ruysbroek is individually less speculative than Eckart, less practical than Tauler. The Flemish mystic is a more submissive son of the Church than the stout-hearted Dominican of Strasburg, and lays proportionally more stress on what is outward and institutional. He is fond of handling his topics analytically. His numerous divisions and subdivisions remind us of the scholastic Richard of St. Victor, but Ruysbroek, less methodical by nature, and less disciplined, more frequently loses sight of his own distinctions. The subject itself, indeed, where it possesses the writer, repudiates every artificial treatment. While he specifies with minuteness the stages of the mystical ascent, Ruysbroek does not contend that the experience of every adept in the contemplative life must follow the precise order he lays down. (*Geistl. Hochzeit*, ii. § 30, p. 71.) He loves to ally the distinctions he enumerates in the world of nature, in the operations of grace, in the heavenly state, and in the Divine

Being, by a relationship of correspondence. Thus the seven planets and the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit answer to each other. The Empyrean in the external world corresponds to Pure Being in the divine nature, to the Spark of the soul in man, and to the Contemplative stage of his spiritual experience. This scheme of analogies, incidental in Ruysbroek and the earlier mystics, makes up almost the whole system of mystics like Behmen and Swedenborg. His elaborate comparison of the operations of grace to a fountain with three streams (one of which refreshes the memory, another clarifies the understanding, while a third invigorates the will), resembles strikingly the fanciful method of Madame Guyon in her *Torrents*, and of St. Theresa in her *Degrees of Prayer*. (*Geistl. Hochzeit*, xvii. § 36, p. 80.) The mysticism of Ruysbroek is less sensuous than that of the poetical Suso. Beyond question the higher elevation of the contemplative life must have been a welcome refuge to many devout minds wearied with vain ritual, penance, and routine. As acknowledged contemplatists, they could escape without scandal from contact with the grosser machinery of their religion. Accordingly, to claim superiority to means and modes was by no means always the arrogant pretension it may seem to us. Tauler's 'state above grace' was the ark of an unconscious Protestantism. Where the means were made the end, wisdom forsook them, and rejoiced to find that the name of mystic could shelter spirituality from the dangers of the suspected heretic. Ruysbroek, however, felt the want of such a protection for freer thought, much less than did Tauler and some of his more active followers.

CHAPTER VIII.

Unde planctus et lamentum?
  Quid mentem non erigis?
Quid revolvis monumentum?
  Tecum est quem diligis;
Jesum quæris, et inventum
  Habes, nec intelligis.

Unde gemis, unde ploras?
  Verum habes gaudium.
In te latet quod ignoras
  Doloris solatium.
Intus habes, quæris foras
  Languoris remedium.[157]

HYMN OF THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY.

Vivo sin vivir mi,
Y tan alta vida espero
Que muero porque no muero.[158]

ST. THERESA.

On the next evening Atherton resumed his reading as follows:—

Chronicle of Adolph Arnstein, continued.

1354. *March. St. Brigitta's Day.*—A fortnight ago this day, there came to me, to buy as goodly a battle-axe as could be made, young Sir Ulric—the same who, at the tourney the other day, graced his new-won spurs by such gallant feats of arms. We fell into talk about the great floods which

have everywhere wrought of late such loss of life, and cattle, and husbandry. He said he had but the day before saved the life of a monk who, with his companion, had been carried beyond his depth by the force of the water, as they were wading across the fields.

'The one most in danger,' said Ulric, 'had a big book in his bosom. As he flounders about, out tumbles the book; he lets go his staff, and makes after it; and souse he goes, over head and ears in a twinkling. The other stands stock still, and bawls out to me for help. I, just sworn to succour the distressed and be true to the Church, spur Roland, plunge in, and lift out the draggled, streaming father by the hood, half throttled and half drowned, but clutching the book in his frozen fingers as though it were a standard or a fair lady's token. I lay him before me across my horse; his fellow catches hold of my stirrup, and we land on the rising ground. When my monk had somewhat come to himself, he pours as many blessings on my head as there were drops running from his habit; not, he said, for saving his poor life merely, but that the book was safe. He had just finished writing it—there was not another copy in the world—the devil had an especial spite against it—no doubt the fiend had raised the waters to destroy the seed which fed men's souls as well as the grain which nourished their bodies; but the faithful God had sent me, like his angel, just in time for rescue. I saw them in safety, and he promised to remember me in his orisons. His name, I think he said, was Seusse or Suso.'[159]

So Suso is in Strasburg, thought I,—the man I have long wished to see. I lost no time in

inquiring after him at the Dominican convent. There I found, with no small satisfaction, that he was none the worse for his mishap; saw him several times, and persuaded him, at last, to honour for a few days my unworthy roof. He has been with us for a week, but must pursue his journey to-morrow. On my part, I could tell him news about Ruysbroek, and Tauler, and some of his old friends at Cologne. On his, he has won the love of all the household by his gentle, affectionate nature, blessed us by his prayers, and edified every heart by his godly conversation. My good wife would love him, if for nothing else, because he so loves the little ones. They love him because he always goes with them to feed the old falcon, and to throw out crumbs for the sparrows, because he joins them in petting Argus, and talks so sweetly about the Virgin and Child, and the lilies and violets and roses, and the angels with gold-bright wings that live in heaven. Those three tall fellows, my boys, fonder of sword-play, wrestling, and camping the bar, than of churchmen or church-going, will listen to him by the hour, while he tells of his visions, his journeys, his dangers, and his deliverances. Rulman Merswin also came over and spent two evenings with us. He talked much with Suso about Master Eckart. Suso was full of reminiscences and anecdotes about him. In his youthful days he had been his disciple at Cologne.

‘At one time,’ said Suso, ‘I was for ten years in the deepest spiritual gloom. I could not realize the mysteries of the faith. A decree seemed to have gone forth against me, and I thought I was lost. My cries, my tears, my penance,—all were vain. I bethought me at last of consulting my old teacher,

left my cell, sailed down the Rhine, and at Cologne the Lord gave to the words of the master such power that the prison-doors were opened, and I stepped out into the sunshine once more. Neither did his counsel cease with life. I saw him in a vision, not long after his death. He told me that his place was in the ineffable glory, and that his soul was divinely transformed in God. I asked him, likewise, several questions about heavenly things, which he graciously answered, strengthening me not a little in the arduous course of the inner life of self-annihilation. I have marvelled often that any, having tasted of the noble wine of his doctrine, should desire any of my poor vintage.'[160]

In talking with the brethren at the convent, while Suso was their guest, I heard many things related concerning him altogether new to me. I was aware that he had been greatly sought after as a preacher in German throughout the Rhineland, and stood high in the esteem of holy men as a wise and tender-hearted guide of souls. That he was an especial friend of the Friends of God wherever he found them, I knew. When at Cologne I heard Tauler praise a book of his which he had in his possession, called the *Horologe of Wisdom*.[161] Something of the fame of his austerities, conflicts, and revelations, had come to my ears, but the half had not been told me.

It seems that his life, from his eighteenth to his fortieth year, was one long self-torture. The Everlasting Wisdom (who is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her, more precious than rubies, and with whom are durable riches and righteousness) manifested herself to him. This was

his call to the spiritual life. He seemed to behold her—a maiden, bright as the sun,—her crown, eternity;—her raiment, blessedness;—her words, sweetness; unknown, and yet well known; near, and yet afar off; smiling on him, and saying, 'My son, give me thine heart!' From that time forth he dedicated his life to her service. He called himself the servant of the Eternal Wisdom, armed his soul as her knight, wooed her as his heart's queen, bore without a murmur the lover's pangs of coyness, doubt, and distance, with all the hidden martyrdom of spiritual passion.[162]

But the rose of his love, as he is wont to term it, had fearful thorns. I heard with a shudder of what he underwent that he might crush to death his naturally active, buoyant, impulsive temperament. Day and night he wore a close-fitting shirt in which were a hundred and fifty sharp nails, the points turned inward on the flesh. In this he lay writhing, like a mangled worm; and lest in his sleep he should find some easier posture, or relieve with his hands in any way the smart and sting that, like a nest of vipers, gnawed him everywhere, he had leather gloves made, covered with sharp blades, so that every touch might make a wound. Time after time were the old scars opened into new gashes. His body appeared like that of one who has escaped, half dead, from the furious clutches of a bear. This lasted sixteen years, till a vision bade him cease.

Never satisfied with suffering, he devised a new kind of discipline. He fashioned a wooden cross, with thirty nails whose points stood out beyond the wood, and this he wore between his shoulders underneath his garments, till his back was one

loathly sore. To the thirty nails he added afterwards seven more, in honour of the sorrows of the Mother of God. When he would administer the discipline, he struck a blow on this cross with his fist, driving the points into his wounded flesh. He made himself, moreover, a scourge, one of the iron tags of which was bent like a fisher's hook, and with this he lashed himself till it broke in his hand. For many years he lay at nights in a miserable hole he called his cell, with an old door for his bed, and in the depth of winter thought it sin to approach the stove for warmth. His convent lay on a little island where the Rhine flows out of the Lake of Constance. He could see the sparkling water on every side. His wounds filled him with feverish thirst; yet he would often pass the whole day without suffering a drop to moisten his lips. His recompence was the vision in which, at one time, the Holy Child brought him a vessel of spring-water; and, at another, Our Blessed Lady gave him to drink from her own heart. Such, they tell me, was his life till his fortieth year, when it was signified to him that he should remit these terrible exercises. He is now, I believe, little more than fifty years old—the mere wreck of a man to look at; but with such life and energy of spirit that, now he hath begun to live more like other people, he may have a good thirty years before him still.[163]

I questioned him about his book called the *Horologe of Wisdom*, or *Book of the Eternal Wisdom*, for it hath gone abroad under both names. He said it was finished in the year 1340, since which time he hath written sundry other pieces. He declared to me that he wrote that treatise only in his most favoured moments, himself ignorant and passive,

but under the immediate impulse and illumination of the Divine Wisdom. He afterwards carefully examined all he had written, to be sure that there was nothing in his pages other than the holy Fathers had taught, and the Church received. [164] Methought, if he was sure of his inspiration, he might have spared himself this pain, unless the Holy Spirit could in some sort gainsay his own words.

He is strongly moved by music,—but what must have been his rapture to hear the hymns of the heavenly host! He has seen himself surrounded by the choir of seraphim and cherubim. He has heard a voice of thrilling sweetness lead the response, 'Arise and shine, Jerusalem,' and has wept in his cell with joy to hear from angels' lips, at early dawn, the soaring words, 'Mary, the morning star, is risen to-day.' Many a time has he seen a heavenly company sent down to comfort him. They have taken him by the hand, and he has joined in spirit in their dance,—that celestial dance, which is a blissful undulation to and fro in the depths of the divine glory. One day, when thus surrounded in vision, he asked a shining prince of heaven to show him the mode in which God had His secret dwelling in his soul. Then answered the angel, 'Take a gladsome look into thine inmost, and see how God in thy loving soul playeth His play of love.' Straightway (said Suso to me) I looked, and behold the body about my heart was clear as crystal, and I saw the Eternal Wisdom calmly sitting in my heart in lovely wise: and, close by that form of beauty, my soul, leaning on God, embraced by His arm, pressed to His heart, full of heavenly longing, transported, intoxicated with love! [165]

We were talking one evening of May-day eve, and asking Suso wherein their custom of celebrating that festival differed from our own. He said that in Suabia the youths went out, much in our fashion, singing songs before the houses of the maidens they loved, and craving from them garlands in honour of the May. He told us how he, in like manner, besought Our Lady with prayers and tears that he might have a garland from her Son, the Eternal Wisdom. It was his wont, he said, to set up a spiritual May-pole—the holy cross, that May-bough of the soul, blossoming with grace and beauty. 'Before this,' he continued, 'I performed six venias,[166] and sung the hymn, 'Hail, holy cross!' thereafter praising God somewhat thus:—

'Hail! heavenly May of the Eternal Wisdom, whose fruit is everlasting joy. First, to honour thee, I bring thee, to-day, for every red rose a heart's love; then, for every little violet a lowly inclination; next, for every tender lily, a pure embrace; for every bright flower ever born or to be born of May, on heath or grassplot, wood or field, tree or meadow, my heart doth bring thee a spiritual kiss; for every happy song of birds that ever sang in the kindly May, my soul would give thee praises inexhaustible; for every grace that ever graced the May, my heart would raise thee a spiritual song, and pray thee, O thou blest soul's May! to help me so to glorify thee in my little time below, that I may taste thy living fruit for evermore above!'[167]

The beginning of a new stage of trial was made known to him by the appearance, in a vision, of an angel, bringing him the attire and the shoes of

a knight. With these he was to gird himself for new and yet more terrible conflicts. Concerning his own austerities he never speaks, nor does he show to any one the letters of the name of Jesus, which he is said to have cut with a style upon his bosom. But of the sufferings which came upon him from without, he talks freely. At one time, when in Flanders, he was brought before the chapter on a charge of heresy; but his enemies gained not their wicked end.[168] He was in greatest danger of his life shortly before the coming of the plague, when the fearful rumour was abroad about the poisoning of the wells. He himself told me the story, as follows:—

'I was once despatched on a journey in the service of the convent, and they gave me as my companion a half-witted lay-brother. We had not been many days on the road, when, one morning, having early left our quarters for the night, we arrived, after a long, hungry walk through the rain, at a village on the banks of the Rhine. It happened to be the fair-time. The street was full of booths and stalls, horses and cattle, country-folk, players, pedlers, and idle roystering soldiers. My fellow-traveller, Peter, catches sight of a sign, and turns in straightway to warm himself at the fire, telling me I can go on, do what I have to do, and I shall find him there. As I learnt after, he sits himself down to table with a ruffianly set of drovers and traders that had come to the fair, who first of all make him half-drunk, and then seize him, and swear he has stolen a cheese. At this moment there come in four or five troopers, hardened fellows, ripe for any outrage, who fall on him also, crying, 'The scoundrel monk is a poisoner.' The clamour soon gathers a crowd.

‘When Peter sees matters at this pass, he piteously cries out to them to loose him, and stand still and listen: he will confess everything. With that they let go their hold, and he, standing trembling in the midst of them, begins: ‘Look at me, sirs,—you see I am a fool; they call me silly, and nobody cares for what I say: but my companion, he is a wise man, so our Order has given him the poison-bag, and he is to poison all the springs between here and Alsace. He is gone now to throw some into the spring here, to kill every one that is come to the fair. That is why I stayed here, and would not go with him. You may be sure that what I say is true, for you will see him when he comes with a great wallet full of bags of poison and gold pieces, which he and the Order have received from the Jews for this murderous business.’

‘At these words they all shouted, ‘After the murderer! Stop him! Stop him!’ One seized a spear, another an axe, others the first tool or weapon they could lay hands on, and all hurried furiously from house to house, and street to street, breaking open doors, ransacking closets, stabbing the beds, and thrusting in the straw with their swords, till the whole fair was in an uproar. Some friends of mine, who heard my name mentioned, assured them of my innocence of such an abominable crime, but to no purpose. At last, when they could nowhere find me, they carried Peter off to the bailiff, who shut him up in the prison.

‘When I came back to the inn, knowing nothing of all this, the host told me what had befallen Peter, and how this evil rumour had stirred up the whole fair against me. I hastened off to the bailiff

to beg Peter's release. He refused. I spent nearly the whole day in trying to prevail with him, and in going about in vain to get bail. At last, about vesper time, with a heavy sum of gulden I opened the heart of the bailiff and the doors of the jail.

'Then my greatest troubles began. As I passed through the village, hoping to escape unknown, I was recognised by some of the mob, and in a moment they were swarming about me. 'Down with the poisoner!' they cried. 'His gold shall not serve him with us as it did with the bailiff.' I ran a little way, but they closed me in again, some saying, 'Drown him in the Rhine;' others answering, 'No, burn him! he'll poison the whole river if you throw him in.' Then I saw (methinks I see him now) a gigantic peasant in a russet jerkin, forcing his way through the crowd, with a pike in his hand. Seizing me by the throat with one hand, and flourishing the pike in the other, he shouted, 'Hear me, all of you. Let me spit him with my long pike, like a poisonous toad, and then plant it in this stout hedge here, and let the caitiff howl and twist in the air till his soul goes home to the devil. Then every one that goes by will see his withered carcass, rotting and wasting, and sink him deeper down in hell with curses. Come on,—it serves him right.'

'My brain swam round. I closed my eyes. I expected the next instant to feel the iron. By some merciful interposition, the wretch was not suffered to execute his purpose. I thought I saw some of the better sort looking on with horror-stricken faces, but they dared not interfere. The women shrieked and wrung their hands. I made my way from one to another of those who seemed

least pitiless, beseeching them to save me. Heaven must have heard my cries, though man did not. They stood round watching me, disputing with horrid oaths among themselves what they should do. At length—as I had sunk on my knees under the hedge, praying for deliverance—I saw a priest, more like an angel than a man, mightily thrusting them from side to side, and when he reached me, laying his hand on my arm, he looked round on the ring of savage faces, and threatened them with the hottest curses of the Church if they harmed a hair upon the head of her servant; outvoiced their angry cries with loud rebukes of their cowardice, cruelty, and sacrilege, and led me out safely through them all. He brought me to his house, made fast the doors, refreshed and sheltered me for the night, and by the earliest dawn I was away and safe upon my journey, while that abode of the wicked was sunk in its drunken sleep. I keep the anniversary of that dreadful day, and never shall I cease to praise the goodness which answered my prayer in the hour of need, and delivered me as a bird from the snare of the fowler.[169]

'On one other occasion only,' continued Suso, 'did I taste so nearly the bitterness of death.'

We begged him to tell us the adventure, and so he did, somewhat thus—

'I was once on my way home from Flanders, travelling up the Rhine. A great feebleness and sickness had been upon me for some days, so that I could not walk fast, and my companion, young and active, had gone on about two miles ahead. I entered an old forest whose trees overhung the steep river bank. It was evening, and it seemed to

grow dark in a moment as I entered the chilling shadow of a wood, in which many a defenceless passenger had been robbed and slain. I had gone on deeper and deeper into the growing gloom, the wind among the pines sounding like a hungry sea. The fall of my own footsteps seemed like the tread of one coming after me. I stood still and hearkened. It was no one; when suddenly I saw, not far off among the trees, two persons, a man and a woman, talking together and watching me. I trembled in every limb, but I made the sign of the cross, and passed on. Soon I heard quick footsteps behind me. I turned—it was the woman. She was young and fair to look on. She asked my name, and when she learnt it, said she knew and reverenced me greatly, told me how that robber with whom I saw her had forced her to become his wife, and prayed me there and then to hear her confession.

'When I had shriven her, think how my fear was heightened to see her go back and talk long and earnestly with the robber, whose brow grew dark, as he left her without a word, and advanced gloomily towards where I stood. It was a narrow pathway; on the one side the forest, on the other the precipice, sheer down to the rapid river. Alas, thought I, as my heart sank within me, now I am lost. I have not strength to flee: no one will hear a cry for help: he will slay me, and hide the body in the wood. All was still. I listened in vain for the sound of a boat, a voice, or even the bark of a dog. I only heard the feet of the outlaw and the violent beating of my own heart. But, lo! when he approached me, he bowed his knee, and began to confess. Blessed Mary, what a black catalogue! While he spake I heard, motionless, every word of

the horrible recital, and yet I was all the time listening for rescue, watching his face, and minutely noting every little thing about his person. I remember the very graining of the wood of his lance which he laid aside on the grass when he knelt to me—the long knife in his belt—his frayed black doublet—his rough red hair, growing close down to his shaggy eyebrows—two great teeth that stood out like tusks—and his hands clasped, covered with warts, and just the colour of the roots of the tree by which I stood. Even during those fearful moments, I can call to mind distinctly how I marked a little shining insect that was struggling among the blades of grass, climbing over a knot of wood, and that got upon a fir-cone and fell off upon its back.

'After revealing to me crimes that made my blood run cold, he went on to say, 'I was once in this forest, just about this hour of the day, on the look-out for booty as I was this evening, when I met a priest, to whom I confessed myself. He was standing just where you are now, and when my shrift was ended, I drew out this knife, stabbed him to the heart, and rolled his body down there into the Rhine.' When I heard this, the cold sweat burst out upon my face; I staggered back giddy, almost senseless, against the tree. Seeing this, the woman ran up, and caught me in her arms, saying, 'Good sir, fear nothing, he will not kill you.' Whereat the murderer said, 'I have heard much good of you, and that shall save your life to-day. Pray for me, good father, that, through you, a miserable sinner may find mercy in his last hour.' At this I breathed again, and promised to do as he would have me. Then we walked on some way together, till they parted from me, and I

reached the skirts of the wood, where sat my companion waiting. I could just stagger up to him, and then fell down at his side, shivering like a man with the ague. After some time I arose, and we went on our way. But I failed not, with strong inward groaning, to plead with the Lord for the poor outlaw, that he might find grace and escape damnation. And, in sooth, I had so strong an assurance vouchsafed to me of God, that I could not doubt of his final salvation.'

With stories such as these of what befel himself, and many others, whom he knew in Suabia and the Oberland, or met with on his journeys, the holy man whiled away our windy March nights by the ingle. Very edifying it was to hear him and Rulman Merswin talk together about the higher experiences of the inward life.

Concerning the stages thereof, Suso said that the first consisted in turning away from the world and the lusts of the flesh to God: the second, in patient endurance of all that is contrary to flesh and blood, whether inflicted of God or man: the third, in imitating the sufferings of Christ, and forming ourselves after his sweet doctrine, gracious walk, and pure life. After this, the soul must withdraw itself into a profound stillness, as if the man were dead, willing and purposing nought but the glory of Christ and our heavenly Father, and with a right lowly demeanour toward friend and foe. Then the spirit, thus advanced in holy exercise, arriveth at freedom from the outward senses, before so importunate; and its higher powers lose themselves in a supernatural sensibility. Here the spirit parts with its natural properties, presses within the circle which represents the eternal

Godhead, and reaches spiritual perfection. It is made free by the Son in the Son.

'This I call,' he said, 'the transit of the soul,—it passes beyond time and space, and is, with an amorous inward intuition, dissolved in God. This entrance of the soul banishes all forms, images, and multiplicity; it is ignorant of itself and of all things; it hovers, reduced to its essence, in the abyss of the Trinity. At this elevation there is no effort, no struggle; the beginning and the end are one.[170] Here the Divine Nature doth, as it were, embrace, and inwardly kiss through and through, the soul; that they may be for ever one.[171] He who is thus received into the Eternal Nothing is in the Everlasting Now, and hath neither before nor after. Rightly hath St. Dionysius said that God is Non-being—that is, above all our notions of being.[172] We have to employ images and similitudes, as I must do in seeking to set forth these truths, but know that all such figures are as far below the reality as a blackamoor is unlike the sun.[173] In this absorption whereof I speak, the soul is still a creature, but, at the time, hath no thought whether it be creature or no.'[174]

Suso repeated several times this saying—'A man of true self-abandonment must be *un*built from the creature, *in*-built with Christ, and *over*-built into the Godhead.'[175]

We bid adieu with much regret to this excellent man, and his visit will abide long in our memory. We drew from him a half promise that he would come to see us yet again.

May, 1354.—Oh, most happy May! My brother Otto hath returned, after trading to and fro so long in foreign parts. He is well and wealthy, and

will venture forth no more. What store of marvellous tales hath he about the East! What hairs-breadth escapes to relate, and what precious and curious things to show! Verily, were I to write down here all he hath to tell of, I might be writing all my days.

Only one thing will I note, while I think of it. He visited Mount Athos, now fourteen years ago: he described to me the beauty of the mountain, with its rich olives and lovely gardens, and the whole neighourhood studded with white convents and hermitages of holy men. Some of the monasteries were on rocks so steep that he had to be drawn up by a rope in a basket to enter them. The shrines were wondrous rich with gold and silver and precious stones. But nowhere, he said, was he more martyred by fleas. When he was there, a new doctrine or practice which had sprung up among the monks (taught, it is said, by a certain Abbot Simeon), was making no small stir. There was to be a synod held about it at that time in Constantinople. It seems that some of the monks (called, if I mistake not, Hesychasts) held that if a man shut himself up in a corner of his cell, with his chin upon his breast, turning his thoughts inward, gazing towards his navel, and centering all the strength of his mind on the region of the heart; and, not discouraged by at first perceiving only darkness, held out at this strange inlooking for several days and nights, he would at length behold a divine glory, and see himself luminous with the very light which was manifested on Mount Tabor. They call these devotees Navel-contemplators. A sorry business! All the monks, for lack of aught else to do, were by the ears about it,—either trying the same or reviling it.[176]

> Methought if our heretics have their extravagances and utmost reaches of mystical folly here, there are some worse still among those lazy Greeks.

KATE. And is that the end of Arnstein's journal?

ATHERTON. No more has come down to posterity.

MRS. ATHERTON. That last piece of news from Mount Athos seems quite familiar to me. I have just been reading Curzon's *Monasteries of the Levant*, and thanks to him, I can imagine the scenery of the mountain and its neighourhood: the Byzantine convents, with their many little windows rounded at the top, the whole structure full of arches and domes,—the little farms interspersed, with their white square towers and cottages of stone at the foot,—the forests of gigantic plane trees, with an underwood of aromatic evergreens,—flowers like those in the conservatory everywhere growing wild,—waterfalls at the head of every valley, dashing down over marble rocks,—and the bells, heard tinkling every now and then, to call the monks to prayer.

WILLOUGHBY. The crass stupidity of those Omphalopsychi shows how little mere natural beauty can contribute to refine and cultivate,—at any rate when the pupils are ascetics. The contemporary mysticism of the East looks mean enough beside the speculation, the poetry, and the action of the German mystics of the fourteenth century. It is but the motionless abstraction of the Indian Yogi over again.

ATHERTON. Yet you will be unjust to the Greek Church (which has little enough to boast of) if you reckon this gross materialist Quietism as the only specimen of mysticism she has to show during this period. There was a certain Cabasilas, Archbishop of

Thessalonica,[177] a contemporary of our German friends, an active man in the political and religious movements of the time, whose writings exhibit very fairly the better characteristics of Byzantine mysticism. His earnest practical devotion rests on the basis of the traditional sacerdotalism, but he stands between the extremes of the objective and the subjective mysticism, though naturally somewhat nearer to the former. He presents, however, nothing original to detain us;—so let us away to supper.

Note to page 354.

The following passage, placed in the mouth of the Everlasting Wisdom may serve as a further specimen of the sensuous and florid cast of Suso's language:—

'I am the throne of joy, I am the crown of bliss. Mine eyes are so bright, my mouth so tender, my cheeks so rosy-red, and all my form so winning fair, that were a man to abide in a glowing furnace till the Last Day, it would be a little price for a moment's vision of my beauty. Behold! I am so beauteously adorned with a robe of glory, so delicately arrayed in all the blooming colours of the living flowers—red roses, white lilies, lovely violets, and flowers of every name, that the fair blossoms of all Mays, and the tender flowerets of all sunny fields, and the sweet sprays of all bright meadows, are but as a rugged thistle beside my loveliness.' (Then he breaks into verse):—

'I play in the Godhead the play of joy,
  And gladden the angel host on high
With a sweetness such that a thousand years
  Like a vanishing hour of time run by.

'... Happy he who shall share the sweet play, and tread at my side the joy-dance of heaven for ever in gladsome security. One word from my sweet mouth surpasses all the songs of angels, the sound of all harps, and all sweet playing on stringed instruments.... Lo! I am a good so absolute that he who hath in time but one single drop thereof finds all the joy and pleasure of this world a bitterness,—all wealth and honour worthless. Those dear ones who love me are embraced by my sweet love, and swim and melt in the sole Unity with a love which knows no form, no figure, no spoken words, and are borne and dissolved into the Good from whence they sprang,' &c.—*Leben*, cap. vii. p. 199.

The following is a sample of Suso's old Suabian German, from the extracts given by Wackernagel, p. 885:—

'*Entwürt der ewigen wisheit.* Zuo uallende lon lit an sunderlicher frœd. die diu sel gewinnet von sunderlichen vnd erwirdigen werken mit dien si hie gesiget hat. alz die hohen lerer, die starken marterer. Vnd die reinen iungfrowen. Aber wesentliche lon. lit an schöwlicher ver einung der sele mit der blossen gotheit. Wan e geruowet si niemer, e si gefueret wirt über alle ir krefte vnd mugentheit. vnd gewiset wirt in der personen naturlich wesentheit. Vnd in dez wesens einvaltig blosheit. Vnd in dem gegenwurf vindet si denn genuegde vnd ewige selikeit. Vnd ie ab gescheidener lidiger usgang. ie frier uf gang., Vnd ie frier uf gang. ie neher in gang. in die wilden wuesti. vnd in daz tief ab gründe der wiselosen gotheit in die siu versenket ver swemmet vnd uer einet werdent. daz siu nit anderz mugen wellen denn daz got wil, vnd daz ist daz selb wesen daz do got ist. daz ist daz siu selig sint. von genaden. als er selig ist

von nature. [*Answer of the Everlasting Wisdom.*—*Adventitious* reward consists in a particular joy which souls receive for particular worthy deeds wherein they have here been conquerors,—such, for example, are the lofty teachers, the stout martyrs, and the pure virgins. But *essential* reward consists in contemplative union of the soul with the bare Godhead: for she resteth not until she be carried above all her own powers and possibility, and led into the natural essentiality of the Persons, and into the simple absoluteness of the Essence. And in the reaction she finds satisfaction and everlasting bliss. And the more separate and void the passage out (of self), the more free the passage up; and the freer the passage up, the nearer the passage into the wild waste and deep abyss of the unsearchable Godhead, in which the souls are sunk and dissolved and united, so that they can will nothing but what God wills, and become of one nature with God,—that is to say, are blessed by grace as He is blessed by nature.]

CHAPTER IX.

> Di Meistere sprechen von zwein antlitzen der sêle. Daz eine antlitze ist gekart in dise werlt. Daz ander antlitze ist gekart di richte in got. In diseme antlitze lûchtet und brennet got êwiclîchen, der mensche wizzes oder enwizzes nicht.[178]—HERMANN VON FRITZLAR.

KATE. I should like to know what became of our

mysterious ‘Layman,’ Nicholas of Basle.

ATHERTON. He lived on many years, the hidden ubiquitous master-spirit of the Friends of God; expending his wealth in restless rapid travels to and fro, and in aiding the adherents of the good cause; suddenly appearing, now in the north and now in the south, to encourage and exhort, to seek out new disciples and to confirm the old; and again vanishing as suddenly, concealing his abode even from his spiritual children, while sending them frequent tracts and letters by his trusty messenger Ruprecht; growing ever more sad and earnest under repeated visions of judgment overhanging Christendom; studying the Scriptures (which had opened his eyes to so much of Romanist error) somewhat after the old Covenanter fashion, with an indiscriminate application of Old Testament history, and a firm belief that his revelations were such as prophets and apostles enjoyed,—till, at last, at the close of the century, he was overtaken at Vienna by the foe he had so often baffled, and the Inquisition yet more ennobled a noble life by the fiery gift of martyrdom. [179]

GOWER. I can well imagine what a basilisk eye the Inquisition must have kept on these lay-priests—these indefatigable writers and preachers to the people in the forbidden vernacular—these Friends of God, Beghards, and Waldenses; and on those audacious Ishmaels, the Brethren of the Free Spirit, most of all. I fancy I see it, lurking always on the edge of any light, watching and watching, as they say the Indian lizard does, crouched in the shadow just outside the circle of light a lamp makes upon the ceiling, to snatch up with its arrowy tongue the moths which fly toward the fascinating brightness.

WILLOUGHBY. And do not let us forget that even those pantheistic Brethren of the Free Spirit, with all their coarseness and violence of exaggeration, held at least some little truth, and might plead a large excuse. If some of them broke blindly through all restraint, they made at any rate a breach in priestcraft better used by better men.—

GOWER.—Just as the track where buffaloes have made their huge crashing way through the forest, has often guided the hunter of the backwoods.

ATHERTON. We must not think that the efforts of such a man as Nicholas were fruitless, whatever the apparent success of his persecutors.—

GOWER.—Though history has paid him too little attention, and though the Inquisition paid him too much. How I love to find examples of that consoling truth that no well-meant effort for God and man can ever really die—that the relics of vanished, vanquished endeavours are gathered up and conserved, and by the spiritual chemistry of Providence transformed into a new life in a new age, so that the dead rise, and mortality puts on immortality. The lessons such men scattered, though they might seem to perish, perpetuated a hidden life till Luther's time;—like the dead leaves about the winter tree, they preserved the roots from the teeth of the frost, and covered a vitality within, which was soon to blossom on every bough in the sunshine of the Reformation.

ATHERTON. Our fourteenth century, so full of mysticism both in East and West, has some other mystical products to show, principally of the visionary, theurgic species. There is St. Brigitta, a widow of rank, leaving her Swedish pine forests to visit Palestine, and after honouring with a pilgrimage

every shrine and relic in southern Europe, fixing her residence at Rome, to the great pecuniary advantage of the faithful there. She writes a discourse on the Blessed Virgin at the dictation of an angel, who visited her punctually for the purpose: indites bombastic invocations to the eyes, ears, hair, chin, &c., of the Saviour; and *ditto* to *ditto* of the Virgin; and, what was not quite so bad, gives to the world a series of revelations and prophecies, in which the vices of popes and prelates are lashed unsparingly, and threatened with speedy judgment.[180]

WILLOUGHBY. It would be interesting to trace this series of reformatory prophets, male and female. From the twelfth to the close of the fifteenth century there is a succession of them, called forth by the hideousness of ecclesiastical corruption—Hildegard, Joachim, Brigitta, Savonarola.

GOWER. Do not forget Dante.

ATHERTON. You hear them all executing variations, plaintive or indignant, menacing or despairing, on the old and never antiquated theme—

> Curia Romana non petit ovem sine lanâ,
> Dantes exaudit, non dantibus ostia claudit.

GOWER. And, to silence these complaints, the Church found inquisitors and censors of service, but most of all—her pattern children—those enthusiasts whose painful labours were employed to quiet the croaking, much as the lord in old feudal times would often exercise his right of compelling a vassal to spend a night or two in beating the waters of the ponds, to stop the frog-chorus there, and procure his master an easy sleep. Obedient enthusiasm toils all night that cardinals may snore.

ATHERTON. Angela de Foligni, who made herself miserable—I must say something the converse of flourished—about the beginning of the fourteenth century, was a fine model pupil of this sort, a genuine daughter of St. Francis. Her mother, her husband, her children dead, she is alone and sorrowful. She betakes herself to violent devotion—falls ill—suffers incessant anguish from a complication of disorders—has rapturous consolations and terrific temptations—is dashed in a moment from a seat of glory above the empyrean to a depth so low that the floor of hell might be its zenith. She tells us how, on her way to Assisi, the Saviour addressed her, called her his love, his sweet, his joy; and manifested himself within her soul as he had never done to evangelist or apostle. On one occasion, her face shone with a divine glory, her eyes were as flaming lamps; on another, a star proceeded from her side, broke into a thousand beautiful colours, and glided upwards into the sky.[181]

WILLOUGHBY. A notable example of mystical pyrotechny.

ATHERTON. Her etherialised olfactories were gratified by odours of indescribable fragrance; and to her exalted taste, the consecrated wafer became almost insupportably delicious. Visions and ecstasies by scores are narrated from her lips in the wretched Latin of Arnold the Minorite. All is naught! The flattest and most insipid reading in the world—from first to last a repetition of the old stock phrase, 'feelings more readily imagined than described.' She concludes every account by saying, 'No words can describe what I enjoyed;' and each rapture is declared to surpass in bliss all the preceding.

LOWESTOFFE. Enough! enough!

ATHERTON. Catharine of Siena——

WILLOUGHBY. No more, pray.

ATHERTON. Only this one. Catharine of Siena closes the century. She is a specimen somewhat less wretched, of this delirious mysticism. Her visions began when she was six years old, and a solemn betrothal to our Lord was celebrated, with ring and vow, not very long after. She travelled through the cities and hamlets of Italy, teaching, warning, expostulating, and proclaiming to assembled crowds the wonders she had seen in heaven and hell during that trance in which all had thought her dead. She journeyed from Florence to Avignon, and back to Florence again, to reconcile the Pope and Italy; she thrust herself between the spears of Guelph and Ghibelline—a whole Mediæval Peace-Society in her woman's heart—and when she sank at last, saw all her labour swept away, as the stormy waters of the Great Schism closed over her head.[182]

GOWER. What a condemning comment on the pretended tender mercies of the Church are those narratives which Rome delights to parade of the sufferings, mental and bodily, which her devotees were instructed to inflict upon themselves! I am reminded of the thirsting mule, which has, in some countries, to strike with its hoof among the spines of the cactus, and drink, with lamed foot and bleeding lips, the few drops of milk which ooze from the broken thorns. Affectionate suffering natures came to Rome for comfort; but her scanty kindness is only to be drawn with anguish from the cruel sharpness of asceticism. The worldly, the audacious, escape easily; but these pliant excitable temperaments, so anxiously in earnest, may be made useful. The more dangerous, frightful, or unnatural their performances, the more

profit for their keepers. Men and women are trained by torturing processes to deny their nature, and then they are exhibited to bring grist to the mill—like birds and beasts forced to postures and services against the laws of their being—like those who must perform perilous feats on ropes or with lions, nightly hazarding their lives to fill the pockets of a manager. The self-devotion of which Rome boasts so much is a self-devotion she has always thus made the most of for herself. Calculating men, who have thought only of the interest of the priesthood, have known well how best to stimulate and to display the spasmodic movements of a brainsick disinterestedness. I have not the shadow of a doubt that, once and again, some priest might have been seen, with cold grey eye, endeavouring to do a stroke of diplomacy by means of the enthusiastic Catharine, making the fancied ambassadress of heaven in reality the tool of a schemer. Such unquestionable virtues as these visionaries may some of them have possessed, cannot be fairly set down to the credit of the Church, which has used them all for mercenary or ambitious purposes, and infected them everywhere with a morbid character. Some of these mystics, floating down the great ecclesiastical current of the Middle Age, appear to me like the trees carried away by the inundation of some mighty tropical river. They drift along the stream, passive, lifeless, broken; yet they are covered with gay verdure, the aquatic plants hang and twine about the sodden timber and the draggled leaves, the trunk is a sailing garden of flowers. But the adornment is not that of nature—it is the decoration of another and a strange element; the roots are in the air; the boughs, which should be full of birds, are in the flood, covered by its alien products, swimming side by side with the alligator.

So has this priestcraft swept its victims from their natural place and independent growth, to clothe them in their helplessness, with a false spiritual adornment, neither scriptural nor human, but ecclesiastical—the native product of that overwhelming superstition which has subverted and enslaved their nature. The Church of Rome takes care that while simple souls think they are cultivating Christian graces, they shall be forging their own chains; that their attempts to honour God shall always dishonour, because they disenfranchise themselves. To be humble, to be obedient, to be charitable, under such direction, is to be contentedly ignorant, pitiably abject, and notoriously swindled.

ATHERTON. Strong language, Lionel,—yet not unjust to the spirit of the Romanist system. The charity which pities the oppressed is bound to denounce the oppressor.

WILLOUGHBY. *Rem acu tetigisti.* If you call priestcraft by smooth names, your spurious charity to the tyrant is uncharitableness to the slave. It is sickening to hear the unctuous talk with which now-a-days ultra-liberalism will sometimes stretch out a hand to spiritual tyranny.

ATHERTON. Not surprising. It is just like the sentimental sympathy got up for some notorious criminal, which forgets the outrage to society and the sufferings of the innocent, in concern for the interesting offender.

And now let us bid adieu to that fourteenth century which has occupied us so long. I shall only afflict you with one more paper,—to-morrow, Lowestoffe, if we don't go to Hawksfell. Some notes I have drawn up on the contemporary Persian mysticism.

WILLOUGHBY. Stay—do not let us forget that little book, so much read in the fifteenth century, and praised and edited by Luther,—the *German Theology*. [183] I have read it with great interest. It seems to me to stand alone as an attempt to systematise the speculative element in the more orthodox mysticism of the age.

ATHERTON. We may call it a summary of Tauler's doctrine, without his fancy and vehement appeal; it is a treatise philosophic in its calmness, deservedly popular for its homely, idiomatic diction. What we were saying about Tauler applies substantially to the *Theologia Germanica*.

MRS. ATHERTON. I have been waiting to hear something about Thomas à Kempis,[184]—certainly the best known of all your mystics.

ATHERTON. Right. Who could forget the comforter of the fifteenth century? It is curious to compare the third book of his *Imitation of Christ*, with its dialogue between Christ and the disciple, and Suso's conversation, in his *Book of the Eternal Wisdom*, between Wisdom and the Servant.

GOWER. There is less genius, less *abandon*, if one may so say, about Thomas.

ATHERTON. Decidedly. That original and daring spirit which carried mysticism to such a height in the fourteenth century, could not survive in the fifteenth, —an age tending towards consolidation and equilibrium, bent on the softening down of extremes. Suso, a poet as much as an ascetic, is continually quitting his cell to admire nature and to mix with men. He mingles speculation borrowed from his master, Eckart, with the luxuriant play of his own inexhaustible fancy. Thomas à Kempis is exclusively

the ascetic. His mysticism ranges in a narrower sphere. Hence, to a great extent, his wider influence. He abjures everything that belongs to the thought of the philosopher or the fine feeling of the artist. He appeals neither to the intellect nor to the imagination—simply to the heart. He could be understood without learning, appreciated without taste, and so thousands, in castle and in cloister, prayed and wept over his earnest page. 'See!' said he, 'this life is filled with crosses.' And multitudes, in misery, or fear of misery, made answer, 'It is true.'—'Then,' urged the comforter, 'be thyself crucified to it, and it cannot harm thee. Cease to have any care, any aim, any hope or fear, save Christ. Yield thyself, utterly passive and dead to this life, into his hands who is Lord of a better.' Then the sufferers dried their tears, and strove hard to forget time and self in contemplating Christ.

GOWER. And, let us hope, not always quite in vain.

ATHERTON. I have one more name yet upon my list, with which the mediæval mysticism reaches its conclusion. It is the great Frenchman, Chancellor Gerson.[185] His figure stands out prominently among the confusions of the time, half-way between the old age and the new. Up to a certain point, he is a reformer; beyond it, the enemy of reform. He is active in the deposition of John XXII., yet he does not hesitate to burn John Huss. He looks on, with a smile of satisfaction, when the royal secretaries stab with their penknives the papal bulls, and the rector tears the insolent parchment into shreds. He sees, half with pity and half with triumph, the emissaries of the Pope, crowned in mockery with paper tiaras, and hung with insulting scrolls, dragged through the streets in a scavenger's tumbril, to be pilloried by

angry Paris. But he stands aloof in disdain when the University, deserted by the Parliament, fraternizes with the mob to enforce reform,—when threadbare students come down from their garrets in the Pays Latin to join the burly butchers of St. Jacques la Boucherie,—when grave doctors shake hands with ox-fellers, and Franciscans and White-hoods shout together for the charter.

WILLOUGHBY. And very wrong he was, too, for those butchers, rough as they were, were right in the main,—honest, energetic fellows, with good heads on their shoulders. Could they but have raised money, they would have saved France. But Gerson would rather be plundered than pay their tax, and had to hurry down for hiding to the vaults of Notre Dame. I remember the story. And when the princes came back to power, the moderates were pillaged like the rest,—and serve them right.

ATHERTON. Yes, the reform demanded was just and moderate, and even the rioters lost none of their respect for royalty, feeling still in their rude hearts no little of that chivalrous loyalty which animated Gerson himself when he bent low before the poor idiot king, and with oriental reverence exclaimed, 'O King, live for ever!' Gerson was a radical in the Church and a conservative in the State—the antagonist of the political republicanism, the champion of the ecclesiastical. His sanguine hopes of peace for his country and of reform for his Church, were alike doomed to disappointment.

His great work on the theory and practice of mysticism was composed during the stormy period of his public life. Imagine how happily he forgot popes and councils, Cabochiens and Armagnacs, during those brief intervals of quiet which he devoted to the

elaboration of a psychology that should give to mysticism a scientific basis. Nominalist as he was, and fully conscious of the defects of scholasticism, then tottering to its fall, he differs little in his results from Richard of St. Victor. He closes the series of those who have combined mysticism with scholasticism, and furnishes in himself a summary and critical *resumé* of all that had previously been accomplished in this direction. He was desirous at once of making mysticism definite and intelligible, and of rendering the study of theology as a science more practical, devout, and scriptural. Hence his opposition to the extravagance of Ruysbroek on the one side, and to the frigid disputation of the schools on the other. He essays to define and investigate the nature of ecstasy and rapture. He even introduces into mysticism that *reflection* which its very principle repudiates. He recommends an inductive process, which is to arrange and compare the phenomena of mysticism as manifest in the history of saintly men, and thence to determine the true and legitimate mystical experience, as opposed to the heterodox and the fantastic. He maintains that man rises to the height of abstract contemplation, neither by the intellectual machinery of Realism, nor by the flights of Imagination. If he attempts the first, he becomes a heretic; if the second, a visionary. The indispensable requisite is what he calls ‘rapturous love.’ Yet even this is knowledge in the truest sense, and quite compatible with a rational, though impassioned self-consciousness. His doctrine of union is so temperate and guarded as almost to exclude him from the genuine mystical fellowship. He has no visions or exaltations of his own to tell of. Resembling Richard in this respect, to whom he is so much indebted, he elaborates a system, erects a tabernacle, and leaves it

to others to penetrate to the inmost sanctuary. Like Bernard, he thinks those arduous and dazzling heights of devotion are for 'the harts and climbing goats,' not for active practical men such as the Chancellor. Above all, urges this reformer both of the schoolmen and the mystics, clear your mind of phantasms—do not mistake the creations of your own imagination for objective spiritual realities. In other words, 'Be a mystic, but do not be what nine mystics out of every ten always have been.'

But now let us have a walk in the garden.

Thither all repaired. They entered the conservatory to look at the flowers.

'Which will you have, Mr. Atherton,' asked Kate, 'to represent your mystics? These stiff, apathetic cactuses and aloes, that seem to know no changes of summer and winter, or these light stemless blossoms, that send out their delicate roots into the air?'

'Those Aroideæ, do you mean?' replied Atherton. 'I think we must divide them, and let some mystics have those impassive plants of iron for their device, while others shall wear the silken filaments of these aërial flowers that are such pets of yours.'

As they came out, the sun was setting in unusual splendour, and they stood in the porch to admire it.

'I was watching it an hour ago,' said Gower. 'Then the western sky was crossed by gleaming lines of silver, with broken streaks of grey and purple between. It was the funeral pyre not yet kindled, glittering with royal robe and arms of steel, belonging to the sun-god. Now, see, he has descended, and lies upon it—the torch is applied, the glow of the great burning reaches over to the very

east. The clouds, to the zenith, are wreaths of smoke, their volumes ruddily touched beneath by the flame on the horizon, and those about the sun are like ignited beams in a great conflagration, now falling in and lost in the radiance, now sending out fresh shapes of flashing fire: that is not to be painted!'

LOWESTOFFE (*starting*). The swan, I declare! How can he have got out? That scoundrel, John!

ATHERTON. Never mind. I know what he comes for. He is a messenger from Lethe, to tell us not to forget good Tauler.

LOWESTOFFE. Lethe! Nonsense.

MRS. ATHERTON. My love, how can you?

ATHERTON. The creature reminded me of an allegorical fancy recorded by Bacon,—that is all. At the end of the thread of every man's life there is a little medal containing his name. Time waits upon the shears, and as soon as the thread is cut, catches the medals, and carries them to the river of Lethe. About the bank there are many birds flying up and down, that will get the medals and carry them in their beak a little while, and then let them fall into the river. Only there are a few swans, which, if they get a name, will carry it to a temple, where it is consecrated. Let the name of Tauler find a swan!

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CHAPTER I.

> Also, there is in God
> Which being seen would end us with a shock
> Of pleasure. It may be that we should die
> As men have died of joy, all mortal powers
> Summed up and finished in a single taste
> Of superhuman bliss; or, it may be
> That our great latent love, leaping at once
> A thousand years in stature—like a stone
> Dropped to the central fires, and at a touch
> Loosed into vapour—should break up the terms
> Of separate being, and as a swift rack,
> Dissolving into heaven, we should go back
> To God.
>
> DOBELL.

The next day was fine, as well it might be after such a sunset; to Hawksfell all the party went, and there was no reading. But on the following (sunnier yet, if possible) they assembled immediately after breakfast in the summer-house, Lowestoffe not excepted, for

even he grew inactive with the heat, and declared himself content to lie on the grass by the hour. Atherton congratulated his hearers that they would not for some time be troubled with more lucubrations of his—not till they came, in due course, to Madame Guyon. For Willoughby was to take up Jacob Behmen, and Gower, who possessed (as the fruit of an artist's tour) some acquaintance with Spanish, St. Theresa. Then, unrolling his manuscript, he began.

The Sufis, or Mystical Poetry in the East and West.

Among all the religions of civilized man, it would be difficult to find one more unfriendly to the growth of mysticism than that of Mohammed. Yet in no religion has mysticism spread more widely or raised its head with greater pride. The cold rationalism of the Koran, its ritual minutiæ, its formal self-righteousness, its prohibition of the monastic order,—all combined to warn the mystic from the religious domain of the Crescent. But stronger than Mohammedan orthodoxy or the dying commands of the Prophet were the wants of the human heart and the spirit of an eastern people. The generation which laid Mohammed in the holy earth of Medina saw monastic institutions arise and multiply on every side. Mystical interpretation could with ease elude the less favourable passages of the Koran, and turn others into a warrant. With a single touch of this dexterous pencil, the mystic could make the Prophet's portraiture all he desired, and turn the frown into a smile. The fatalism of the creed of

Islam would furnish a natural basis for the holy indifference of Quietism.

Each succeeding century of the Hegira was found more abundant than the last in a class of men who revolted against the letter in the name of the spirit, and who aspired to a converse and a unity with God such as the Koran deemed unattainable on this side heaven. The names of the saints and martyrs, the poets and philosophers, of mysticism, are among the brightest in the hagiography and the literature of the Mohammedan world. The achievements of the former class are adorned with legendary extravagances such as those with which the Prophet delighted to invest himself. The philosophy of the latter (whether sung or said) was not a little aided, in its contest with rigid orthodoxy, by the Grecian learning of that Alexandria which fell, in the first outbreak of Moslem zeal, before the hosts of Amrou. In later times (under the names of Plato and of Aristotle) mysticism and method did battle with each other, in the East as in the West,—at Shiraz, at Bagdad, or at Cordova, even as in the University of Paris or the academies of Italy.

The term Sufism appears to be a general designation for the mystical asceticism of the Mohammedan faith. The Sufis cannot be said to constitute a distinct sect, or to embrace any particular philosophical system. Their varieties are endless; their only common characteristics a claim of some sort to a superhuman commerce with the Supreme,—mystical rapture, mystical union, mystical identity, or theurgic powers;—and a life of ascetic observance. The name is given to mystics of every shade, from the sage to the

quack, from poets like Saadi or philosophers like Algazzali, to the mendicant dervise or the crazy fanatic.

Persia has been for several centuries the great seat of Sufism. For two hundred years (during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries of our era) the descendants of a Sufi occupied the throne,—governing, however, as may be supposed, not like mystics, but as men of the world.[186] It is with Sufism as exhibited principally by the Sufi poets of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, that I propose now to occupy your attention.

It will be found worth our while, as we proceed, to compare the mystical poetry of the East and West. Oriental mysticism has become famous by its poets; and into poetry it has thrown all its force and fire. The mysticism of the West has produced prophecies and interpretations of prophecy; soliloquies, sermons, and treatises of divinity;—it has found solace in autobiography, and breathed out its sorrow in hymns;—it has essayed, in earnest prose, to revive and to reform the sleeping Church;—but it has never elaborated great poems. In none of the languages of Europe has mysticism achieved the success which crowned it in Persia, and prevailed to raise and rule the poetic culture of a nation. Yet the occidental mysticism has not been wholly lacking in poets of its own order. The seventeenth century can furnish one, and the nineteenth another,—Angelus Silesius and Ralph Waldo Emerson.

The latest research has succeeded only in deciding who Angelus Silesius was *not*. Some Roman Catholic priest or monk, assuming the name of Angelus, did, in the seventeenth century, send

forth sundry hymns and religious poems,—among others, one most euphuistically entitled *The Cherubic Wanderer*. The author of this book has been generally identified, on grounds altogether inadequate, with a contemporary named John Scheffler,—a renegade from Jacob Behmen to the Pope. Suffice it to say that no two men could be more unlike than the virulent fagotty-minded pervert Scheffler, and the contemplative pantheistic Angelus—be he who he may.[187]

The Cherubic Wanderer is a collection of religious epigrams or rhyming sentences, most of them smart and pithy enough as to expression, not a few as destitute of sense as they all are of poetry. The Wanderer travelled a little way into the eighteenth century, and then, lighting upon one of those oblivious arbours so fatal to pilgrims, sat down, and slept long. A few years ago some Romanticist littérateurs of Germany woke him up, and announced to the world, with much sounding of brass and tinkling of cymbals, that they had resuscitated a paragon of saintship and philosophy.

The Silesian's book reiterates the customary utterances of mysticism. But a harsher tone is audible, and the doctrines with which we are familiar appear in a more startling and paradoxical form. The more dangerous elements are intensified. Pantheism is latent no longer. Angelus loves to play at a kind of intellectual seesaw with the terms Finite and Infinite, and their subject or kindred words. Now mounts one side, now the other, of the restless antithesis. Each factor is made to share with its rival every attribute of height or lowness. His favourite style

of talking may run as follows:—'I cannot do without God, nor He without me; He is as small as I, and I as great as He:—let time be to thee as eternity, and eternity as time; the All as nothing, and nothing as the All; then thou hast solved life's problem, and art one with God, above limit and distinction.' We matter-of-fact folk feel irresistibly inclined to parody such an oracle, and say,—'Let whole and part, black and white, be convertible terms;—let thy head be to thee as thy heels, and thy heels as thy head; and thou hast transcended the conditions of vulgar men, and lapsed to Limbo irretrievably.' Silesius, as a good churchman, repudiates, of course, the charge of pantheism. He declares that the dissolution in Deity he contemplates does not necessitate the loss of personality, or confound the Maker and the made. His distinction is distinguishable 'as water is in water.' He appeals to the strong language he hunts out from Bernard, Tauler, and Ruysbroek. But the cold-blooded epigram cannot claim the allowance due to the fervid sermon or the often rhapsodical volume of devotion. Extravagant as the Sufi, he cannot plead like him a spiritual intoxication. Crystals and torrents must have separate laws. And which, moreover, of the mystical masters to whom Angelus refers us would have indited such presumptuous doggrel as this?

God in my nature is involved,
  As I in the divine;
I help to make his being up,
  As much as he does mine.

As much as I to God owes God to me
His blissfulness and self-sufficiency.

I am as rich as God, no grain of dust
That is not mine too,—share with me he must.
More than his love unto himself,
God's love to me hath been;
If more than self I too love him,
We twain are quits, I ween.[188]

On the other hand, there are many terse and happy couplets and quatrains in the *Wanderer*, which express the better spirit of mysticism. Angelus insists constantly on the vanity of mere externals,—the necessity of a Christ formed within, as opposed to a dead, unsanctifying faith, —the death of self-will, as the seat of all sin,—the reality of the hell or heaven already wrought in time by sin or holiness. These were the maxims and ejaculations which religious minds, mystically inclined, found so edifying. The arrogant egotheism of some passages they took in another sense, or deemed the sense beyond them. Moreover, the high-flown devotion affected by Rome has always familiarized her children with expressions which (as Thomas Fuller has it) 'do knock at the door of blasphemy, though not always with intent to enter in thereat.'

The second representative of the West, who must assist towards our comparative estimate of pantheistic mysticism in its poetical form, is Mr. Emerson, the American essayist. Whether in prose or verse he is chief singer of his time at the high court of Mysticism. He belongs more to the East than to the West—true brother of those Sufis with whose doctrine he has so much in common. Luxuriant in fancy, impulsive, dogmatic, darkly oracular, he does not reason. His majestic monologue may not be interrupted by a question.

His inspiration disdains argument. He delights to lavish his varied and brilliant resources upon some defiant paradox—and never more than when that paradox is engaged in behalf of an optimism extreme enough to provoke another Voltaire to write another *Candide*. He displays in its perfection the fantastic incoherence of the 'God-intoxicated' man.

In comparing Emerson with the Sufis, it may be as well to state that he does not believe in Mohammed and receive the Koran in a manner which would satisfy an orthodox Mussulman. Yet he does so (if words have meaning) much after the same fashion in which he believes in Christ and receives the Bible. Mohammed and Jesus are both, to him, extraordinary religious geniuses—the Bible and the Koran both antiquated books. He looks with serene indifference on all the forms of positive religion. He would agree perfectly with those Sufis who proclaimed the difference between the Church and the Mosque of little moment. The distance between the Crescent and the Cross is, with him, one of degree—their dispute rather a question of individual or national taste than a controversy between a religion with evidence and a religion without.

In the nineteenth century, and in America, the doctrine of emanation and the ascetic practice of the East can find no place. But the pantheism of Germany is less elevated than that of Persia, in proportion as it is more developed. The tendency of the latter is to assign reality only to God; the tendency of the former is to assign reality only to the mind of man. The Sufi strove to lose humanity in Deity; Emerson dissolves Deity in humanity.

The orientals are nearer to theism, and the moderns farther from it, than they sometimes seem. That primal Unity which the Sufi, like the Neo-Platonist, posits at the summit of all things, to ray forth the world of Appearance, may possibly retain some vestige of personality. But the Over-Soul of Emerson, whose organs of respiration are men of genius, can acquire personality only in the individual man. The Persian aspired to reach a divinity above him by self-conquest; the American seeks to realize a divinity within him by self-will. Self-annihilation is the watchword of the one; self-assertion that of the other.

CHAPTER II.

Und so lang du das nicht hast
  Dieses: Stirb und werde!
Bist du nur ein trüber Gast
  Auf der dunkeln Erde.[189]

GOETHE.

'Let us proceed, then,' resumed Atherton, smoothing his manuscript, 'on our Persian expedition. Dr. Tholuck, with his German translation, shall act as interpreter, and we may pause now and then on our way to listen to the deliverances of the two men of vision who accompany us from Breslau and from Boston.'

The first century of the Hegira has scarcely expired when a mysticism, strikingly similar to that of Madame Guyon, is seen to arise spontaneously in the devout ardours of a female saint named Rabia.[190] There is the same straining after indifference and self-abnegation—after a love absolutely disinterested—after a devotion beyond language and above means.

By the sick-bed of Rabia stood two holy men. One of them said, 'The prayers of that man are not sincere who refuses to bear the chastening strokes of the Lord.' The other went beyond him, saying, 'He is not sincere who does not rejoice in them.' Rabia, detecting something of self in that very joy, surpassed them both as she added, 'He is not sincere who does not, beholding his Lord, become totally unconscious of them.' The Mohammedan *Lives of the Saints* records that, on another occasion, when questioned concerning the cause of a severe illness, she replied, 'I suffered myself to think on the delights of Paradise, and therefore my Lord hath punished me.' She was heard to exclaim, 'What is the Kaaba to me? I need God only.' She declared herself the spouse of Heaven, —described her will and personality as lost in God. When asked how she had reached this state, she made the very answer we have heard a German mystic render, 'I attained it when everything which I had found I lost again in God.' When questioned as to the mode, she replied, 'Thou, Hassan, hast found Him by reason and through means; I immediately, without mode or means.'

The seeds of Sufism are here. This mystical element was fostered to a rapid growth through

succeeding centuries, in the East as in the West, by the natural reaction of religious fervour against Mohammedan polemics and Mohammedan scholasticism.

In the ninth century of our era, Sufism appears divided between two distinguished leaders, Bustami and Juneid. The former was notorious chiefly for the extravagance of his mystical insanity. The men of genius who afterwards made the name of Sufism honourable, and the language of its aspiration classical, shrank from such coarse excess. It was not enough for Bustami to declare that the recognition of our personal existence was an idolatry, the worst of crimes. It was not enough for him to maintain that when man adores God, God adores himself. He claimed such an absorption in his pantheistic deity as identified him with all the power, the wisdom, and the goodness of the universe. He would say, 'I am a sea without bottom, without beginning, without end. I am the throne of God, the word of God. I am Gabriel, Michael, Israfil; I am Abraham, Moses, Jesus.'

If Epiphanius is to be believed, the Messalians were a sect chargeable with the very same folly. If asked, he says, concerning a patriarch, a prophet, an angel, or Christ, they would reply, 'I am that patriarch, that prophet, that angel; I am Christ.'

A reference to Emerson's Essay on History renders such professions perfectly credible. Bustami and the Messalians could not have made them in the literal, but (by anticipation) in the Emersonian sense. They believed, with him, that 'there is one mind common to all individual men.' They find in him their interpreter, when he says, 'Who hath

access to this universal mind is a party to all that is or can be done, for this is the only sovereign agent.' Emerson couches their creed in modern rhymes, as he sings exultant,—

> I am owner of the sphere,
> Of the seven stars and the solar year,
> Of Cæsar's hand and Plato's brain,
> Of Lord Christ's heart, and Shakspeare's strain.

In the spirit of the same philosophy, Angelus Silesius hints at the possibility of such an empire. He reminds his readers that there is no greatness which makes the glory of the past that may not be realized by themselves in the present. Thus he asks—

> Dost prize alone King Solomon as wisest of the wise?
> Thou also canst be Solomon, and all his wisdom thine.[191]

But what is only potential with him is claimed as actual by mystical brethren bolder yet than he.

The first endeavour of the Sufi (as of so many Christian mystics) is to achieve that simplifying, purifying process which shall remove from the mind everything earthly and human—all its creaturely accidents, and reduce it to that abstract essence which mirrors Deity, and is itself ultimately divine. An apologue in the Mesnevi of Jelaleddin Rumi (a Sufi poet who wrote in the first half of our thirteenth century) teaches this doctrine quite in the oriental manner.

The Greeks and the Chinese dispute before a certain sultan as to which of the two nations is the more skilful in the art of decoration. The sultan

assigns to the rival painters two structures, facing each other, on which they shall exercise their best ability, and determine the question of precedence by the issue:—

> The Chinese ask him for a thousand colours,
> All that they ask he gives right royally;
> And every morning from his treasure-house
> A hundred sorts are largely dealt them out.
> The Greeks despise all colour as a stain—
> Effacing every hue with nicest care.
> Brighter and brighter shines their polished front,
> More dazzling, soon, than gleams the floor of
> heaven.
> This hueless sheen is worth a thousand dyes,—
> This is the moon—they but her cloudy veil;
> All that the cloud is bright or golden with
> Is but the lending of the moon or sun.
> And now, at length, are China's artists ready.
> The cymbals clang—the sultan hastens thither,
> And sees enrapt the glorious gorgeousness—
> Smit nigh to swooning by those beamy
> splendours.—
> Then, to the Grecian palace opposite.
> Just as the Greeks have put their curtain back,
> Down glides a sunbeam through the rifted clouds,
> And, lo, the colours of that rainbow house
> Shine, all reflected on those glassy walls
> That face them, rivalling: the sun hath painted
> With lovelier blending, on that stony mirror
> The colours spread by man so artfully.
> Know then, O friend! such Greeks the Sufis are,
> Owning nor book nor master; and on earth
> Having one sole and simple task,—to make
> Their hearts a stainless mirror for their God.
> Is thy heart clear and argent as the moon?
> Then imaged there may rest, innumerous,
> The forms and hues of heaven.[192]

So, too, says Angelus Silesius,—

> Away with accidents and false appearance,
> Thou must be essence all, and colourless.

And again,—

> Man! wouldst thou look on God, in heaven or while yet here,
> Thy heart must first of all become a mirror clear. [193]

Jelaleddin Rumi describes the emancipation of the soul from intellectual distinctions—the laws of finite thought, the fluctuations of hope and fear, the consciousness of personality,—under the image of night. This has been the favourite and appropriate symbol of all the family of mystics, from Dionysius, with his 'Divine Darkness,' to John of the Cross, in his *De Nocte Obscurâ*, and on to Novalis, in his *Hymnen an die Nacht*. In the following vigorous passage, Night is equivalent to the state of self-abandonment and self-transcendence:—

> Every night God frees the host of spirits—
> Makes them clear as tablets smooth and spotless —
> Frees them every night from fleshy prison.
> Then the soul is neither slave nor master,
> Nothing knows the bondman of his bondage,
> Nothing knows the lord of all his lordship,
> Gone from such a night is eating sorrow,
> Gone the thoughts that question good and evil.
> Then, without distraction or division,
> In the One the spirit sinks and slumbers.

Silesius has the same thought, cold and dry, after the poetic Persian, yet in words that would

furnish no inapt motto to express in a sentence this species of mysticism:—

> Ne'er sees man in this life, the Light above all light,
> As when he yields him up to darkness and to night.[194]

The ascetic Sufi bids the mystical aspirant close the senses against every external impression—for the worlds of sense and of contemplation reciprocally exclude each other. We have seen how the Hindoos and the Hesychasts endeavoured literally to obey this counsel, reiterated so often by so many mystagogues:—

> Put wool within the ear of flesh, for that
> Makes deaf the inner hearing, as with wool;
> If that can hear, the spirit's ear is deaf.
> Let sense make blind no more the spirit's eye.
> Be without ear, without a sense or thought,
> Hark only to the voice, 'Home, wanderer, home!'

It is quite in accordance with such precepts that the judging faculty should be abandoned by the Sufi for the intuitive, and the understanding sacrificed to the feeling. According to the Koran, Mohammed once soared heavenwards, to such a height that Gabriel could not overtake him, and far off below, appeared to the Prophet no larger than a sparrow. Jelaleddin compares the heart, the divine principle in man (the spirit, in his psychology), to Mohammed, and the understanding to Gabriel. Names and words, he says, are but 'nets and shackles.' With justice, in one sense, he bids men pass from the sign to the thing signified, and asks,—

Didst ever pluck a rose from R and O and S?
Names thou mayst know: go, seek the truth they name;
Search not the brook, but heaven, to find the moon.

The senses and the lower powers, nourished by *forms*, belong to earth, and constitute the mere foster-mother of our nature. The intuitive faculty is a ray of Deity, and beholds Essence. The soul which follows its divine parent is therefore a wonder, and often a scandal to that which recognises only the earthly. Jelaleddin compares the rapturous plunge of the soul into its divine and native element to the hastening of the ducklings into the water, to the terror of the hen that hatched them.[195]

While exulting in a devotion above all means and modes, we find the Sufi (in nearly every stage of his ascension save the last) yielding implicit obedience to some human guide of his own choice. The Persian Pir was to him what the Director was to the Quietist or semi-Quietist of France; what the experienced Friend of God was to the mystic of Cologne or Strasburg; what Nicholas of Basle was so long to Tauler. That a voluntary submission to such authority was yielded is certain. Yet we find scarcely an allusion to these spiritual guides among the chief bards of Sufism. Each singer claims or seeks a knowledge of God which is immediate, and beyond the need of at least the orthodox and customary aids and methods. Thus Rumi says—

He needs a guide no longer who hath found
The way already leading to the Friend.
Who stands already on heaven's topmost dome

Needs not to search for ladders. He that lies,
Folded in favour on the sultan's breast,
Needs not the letter or the messenger.

So Emerson,—

'The relations of the soul to the divine spirit are so pure that it is profane to seek to interpose helps.... Whenever a mind is simple, and receives a divine wisdom, then old things pass away,—means, teachers, texts, temples, fall; it lives now and absorbs past and future into the present hour.'[196]

Hence, in both cases, the indifference before noticed to all the various forms of positive religion. The Persian describes all religions as the same liquor in different glasses—all are poured by God into one mighty beaker.

The self-abandonment and self-annihilation of the Sufis rest on the basis of their pantheism. Personal existence is with them the great illusion of this world of appearance—to cling to it is to be blind and guilty. Mahmud (a Sufi of the fourteenth century) says, in the *Gulschen Ras*,—

All sects but multiply the I and Thou;
This I and Thou belong to partial being;
When I and Thou and several being vanish,
Then Mosque and Church shall bind thee never more.
Our individual life is but a phantom:
Make clear thine eye, and see Reality!

Again, (though here the sense may be moral rather than philosophic, and selfishness, not personality, abjured)—

Go, soul! with Moses to the wilderness,

> And hear with him that grand ‘I am the Lord!’
> While, like a mountain that shuts out the sun,
> Thine *I* lifts up its head, thou shalt not see Me.
> The lightning strikes the mountain into ruins,
> And o’er the levelled dust the glory leaps!

Jelaleddin says of the Sufi in his self-abnegation,—

> His love of God doth, like a flame of hell,
> Even in a moment swallow love of self.

Mahmud, to express the same thought, employs the image used by Thomas à Kempis:—

> The path from *Me* to God is truly found,
> When pure that *Me* from Self as clearest flame
> from smoke.

Angelus Silesius bids men lose, in utter Nihilism, all sense of any existence separate from the Divine Substance—the Absolute:—

> While aught thou art or know’st or lov’st or hast,
> Not yet, believe me, is thy burden gone.
>
> Who is as though he were not—ne’er had been—
> That man, oh joy! is made God absolute.
>
> Self is surpassed by self-annihilation;
> The nearer nothing, so much more divine.[197]

Thus individuality must be ignored to the utmost; by mystical death we begin to live; and in this perverted sense he that loseth his life shall find it. Hence, by a natural consequence, the straining after a sublime apathy almost as senseless as the last abstraction of the Buddhist. The absolutely disinterested love, to which the Sufi aspires,

assumes, however, an aspect of grandeur as opposed to the sensuous hopes and fears of Mohammed's heaven and hell. Rumi thus describes the blessedness of those whose will is lost in the will of God:—

They deem it crime to flee from Destiny,
For Destiny to them brings only sweetness.
Welcome is all that ever can befal them,
For were it fire it turns to living waters.
The poison melts to sugar on their lip;
The mire they tread is lustrous diamond,
And weal and woe alike, whatever comes.
They and their kingdom lie in God's divineness.
To pray, 'O Lord, turn back this trouble from me,'
They count an insult to the hand that sent it.

Faithful they are, but not for Paradise;
God's will the only crowning of their faith:
And not for seething hell, flee they from sin,
But that their will must serve the Will Divine.
It is not struggle, 'tis not discipline,
Wins them a will so restful and so blest;—
It is that God from his heart-fountain ever
Fills up their jubilant souls.

So, again, Angelus Silesius, sometimes pushing his negation to unconscious caricature:—

True hero he that would as readily
Be left without God as enjoy him near.

Self-loss finds God—to let God also go,
That is the real, most rare abandonment.

Man! whilst thou thankest God for this or that,
Yet art thou slave to finite feebleness.

Not fully God's is he who cannot live,

Even in hell, and find in hell no hell.

Nought so divine as to let nothing move thee,
Here or hereafter (could'st thou only reach it).

Who loves without emotion, and without
knowledge knows,
Of him full fitly say we—he is more God than
man.

Compare Emerson, discoursing of Intuition and the height to which it raises men:—

'Fear and hope are alike beneath it. It asks nothing. There is somewhat low even in hope. We are then in vision. There is nothing that can be called gratitude nor properly joy. The soul is raised over passion,' &c. So, again: 'Prayer as a means to effect a private end is theft and meanness. It supposes dualism in nature and consciousness. As soon as the man is at one with God he will not beg. He will then see prayer in all action.'[198]

This elevation above petition and above desire, towards which many a Sufi toiled, watching, fasting, solitary, through the 'seven valleys' of mystic discipline, is cheaply accomplished now-a-days by mere nonchalance, and is hit off by a flourish of the pen. It is the easy boast of any one who finds prayer distasteful and scoffs at psalm singing—who chooses to dub his money-getting with the title of worship, and fancies that to follow instinct is to follow God. The most painful self-negation and the most facile self-indulgence meet at the same point and claim the same pre-eminence.

The eastern mystic ignores humanity to attain

divinity. The ascent and the descent are proportionate, and the privileges of nothingness are infinite. We must accompany the Sufi to his highest point of deification, and in that transcendental region leave him. His escape from the finite limitations of time and space is thus described,—

> On earth thou seest his outward, but his spirit
> Makes heaven its tent and all infinity.
> Space and Duration boundless do him service,
> As Eden's rivers dwell and serve in Eden.

Again, Said, the servant, thus recounts one morning to Mohammed the ecstasy he has enjoyed:—

> My tongue clave fever-dry, my blood ran fire,
> My nights were sleepless with consuming love,
> Till night and day sped past—as flies a lance
> Grazing a buckler's rim; a hundred faiths
> Seemed then as one; a hundred thousand years
> No longer than a moment. In that hour
> All past eternity and all to come
> Was gathered up in one stupendous *Now*,—
> Let understanding marvel as it may.
> Where men see clouds, on the ninth heaven I gaze,
> And see the throne of God. All heaven and hell
> Are bare to me and all men's destinies,
> The heavens and earth, they vanish at my glance:
> The dead rise at my look. I tear the veil
> From all the worlds, and in the hall of heaven
> I set me central, radiant as the sun.
> Then spake the Prophet:—'Friend, thy steed is warm;
> Spur him no more. The mirror in thy breast
> Did slip its fleshly case, now put it up—

Hide it once more, or thou wilt come to harm.'

This magniloquence of Said's is but the vehement poetic expression for the 'absolute intuition' of modern Germany—that identity of subject and object in which all limitations and distinctions vanish, and are absorbed in an indescribable transcendental intoxication. If the principle be true at all, its most lofty and unqualified utterance must be the best, and what seems to common-sense the thorough-going madness of the fiery Persian is preferable to the colder and less consistent language of the modern Teutonic mysticism. Quite in the spirit of the foregoing extracts, Emerson laments that we do not oftener realize this identity, and transcend time and space as we ought.—

'We live in succession, in division, in parts, in particles. Meantime within man is the soul of the whole, the wise silence, the universal beauty, to which every part and particle is equally related,—the eternal ONE. And this deep power in which we exist, and whose beatitude is all accessible to us, is not only self-sufficing and perfect every hour, but the act of seeing and the thing seen, the seer and the spectacle, the subject and the object, are one.' And again:—'Time and space are but inverse measures of the force of the soul. A man is capable of abolishing them both. The spirit sports with time—

'Can crowd eternity into an hour
Or stretch an hour to eternity.'

So Angelus Silesius:—

Rise above Space and Time, and thou canst be

At any moment in Eternity.[199]

The following passage from Jelaleddin exhibits the kind of identity with God claimed by the more extravagant devotees of Sufism:—

Are we fools, we're God's captivity;
Are we wise, we are his promenade;
Are we sleeping, we are drunk with God;
Are we waking, then we are his heralds;
Are we weeping, then his clouds of wrath;
Are we laughing, flashes of his love.

Some among them carried their presumption to a practical extreme which did away with all distinction between good and evil. They declared the sins of the Sufi dearer to God than the obedience of other men, and his impiety more acceptable than their faith.[200]

Two extracts more will suffice to show the mode in which this pantheistic mysticism confounds, at its acme, the finite and the infinite. They are from Feridoddin Attar, who died in the second or third decade of the fourteenth century.—

Man, what thou art is hidden from thyself.
Know'st not that morning, mid-day, and the eve,
All are within thee? The ninth heaven art thou;
And from the spheres into this roar of time
Didst fall erewhile. Thou art the brush that
painted
The hues of all this world—the light of life,
That rayed its glory on the nothingness.

Joy! joy! I triumph! Now no more I know
Myself as simply me, I burn with love
Unto myself, and bury me in love.
The Centre is within me, and its wonder

Lies as a circle everywhere about me.
Joy! joy! no mortal thought can fathom me.
I am the merchant and the pearl at once.
Lo, time and space lie crouching at my feet.
Joy! joy! when I would revel in a rapture,
I plunge into myself and all things know.

The poet then introduces Allah, as saying that he had cast Attar into a trance, and withdrawn him into his own essence, so that the words he uttered were the words of God.[201]

Both with Emerson and Angelus, he who truly apprehends God becomes a part of the divine nature,—is a son, a god in God, according to the latter; and according to the former, grows into an organ of the Universal Soul. This notion of identity Emerson seems to arrive at from the human, Angelus from the divine side. The salvation of man is reduced with the German, very much to a process of divine development. With the American, every elevated thought merges man for a time in the Oversoul. The idealism of Emerson is more subjective, his pantheism more complete and consequent. Angelus is bold on the strength of a theory of redemption which makes man necessary to God. Emerson is bolder yet, on his own account, for he makes his own God. This he does when he adores his own ideal, and, expanding Self to Universality, falls down and worships.

Hear him describe this transcendental devotion:—

‘The simplest person, who in his integrity worships God, becomes God; yet for ever and ever the influx of this better and universal self is new and unsearchable.’ Again: ‘I, the imperfect, adore

my own Perfect. I am somehow receptive of the great soul, and thereby I do overlook the sun and the stars, and feel them to be but the fair accidents and effects which change and pass.' So, speaking of the contemplation of Nature:—'I become a transparent eyeball. I am nothing. I see all. The currents of the Universal Being circulate through me; I am part or particle of God,' &c.

Angelus says, in virtue of his ideal sonship,—

> I am as great as God, and he as small as I;
> He cannot me surpass, or I beneath him lie.
>
> God cannot, without me, endure a moment's
> space,
> Were I to be destroyed, he must give up the
> ghost.
>
> Nought seemeth high to me, I am the highest
> thing;
> Because e'en God himself is poor deprived of me.
> [202]

The central idea of the Persian mysticism is *Emanation*. The soul is to escape from the manifold to the One. Its tendency (in proportion as its votary believes that return accomplished) is to confound man with the Father. The leading principle in the mysticism of Eckart and Angelus Silesius is *Incarnation*. Angelus is never weary of reiterating the doctrine that God became man in order that man might become God. He does not labour, like the orientals, to attain deification by ascetic efforts of his own. He has a kind of Mediator. He seems to believe that through Christ, in some way, every man is a divine Son of God, if he will only think so. All he has to do is to realize

this sonship; then he becomes, by *Grace*, all that the Son of God is by *Nature*. The obvious result of this mysticism is to identify man with the Son.

In that order of modern mysticism represented by Emerson, the central doctrine is *Inspiration*. In the creative efforts of the poet, in the generalizations of the philosopher, the man of genius speaks as he is moved by the Oversoul. An influx of the universal spirit floods his being and carries him beyond himself. In intuition the finite Ego is identified with the absolute Ego. Humanity is a divine evolution, and each true man (to use Emerson's apt illustration)—a *façade* of Deity. Even Angelus would have acknowledged that it was in some sort through Christ that his boastful sonship became possible. But the believer in the Oversoul will admit no such medium, and owns a debt to Christ much as he owns a debt to Shakspeare. Mysticism of this order usurps the office of the Holy Ghost, and directly identifies the spirit of man with the Spirit of God.

Mysticism has always been accustomed to express the transports of its divine passion by metaphors borrowed from the amorous phraseology of earth. It has done this with every variety of taste, from the grossness of some of the most eminent Romanist saints, to the beautiful Platonism of Spenser's Hymns of 'Heavenly Love' and 'Heavenly Beautie.' But nowhere has metaphor branched so luxuriantly into allegory as in the East, and nowhere in the East with such subtilty and such freedom as among the Persian mystics. The admiring countrymen of Hafiz, Saadi, and Jami, interpret mystically almost everything they wrote. They underlay these poems everywhere

with a system of correspondence whose ingenuity would have done no discredit to Swedenborg himself. Sir William Jones furnishes some specimens of a sort of mystical glossary, by aid whereof their drinking songs may be read as psalms, and their amatory effusions transformed into hymns full of edification for the faithful.[203] Never, since the days of Plotinus, was a deity imagined more abstract than the Unity toward which the Sufi aspires. Yet never was religious language more florid and more sensuous. According to the system alluded to, wine is equivalent to devotion; the tavern is an oratory; kisses and embraces, the raptures of piety; while wantonness, drunkenness, and merriment, are religious ardour and abstraction from all terrestrial thoughts.

The following passage from Mahmud's *Gulschen Ras* may suffice as a specimen of these devout Bacchanalia. It has the advantage of exhibiting the key in the lock:—

Know'st thou who the Host may be who pours the spirit's wine
Know'st thou what his liquor is whose taste is so divine?
The Host is thy Beloved One—the wine annihilation,
And in the fiery draught thy soul drinks in illumination.
Up, soul! and drink with burning lip the wine of ecstasy,
The drop should haste to lose itself in His unbounded sea.
At such a draught mere intellect swims wildered and grows wild;
Love puts the slave-ring in his ear and makes the

rebel mild.
Our Friend holds out the royal wine and bids us drink it up;
The whole world is a drinking-house and everything a cup.
Drunken even Wisdom lies—all in revel sunken;
Drunken are the earth and heaven; all the angels drunken.
Giddy is the very sky, round so often hasting,
Up and down it staggers wide, with but a single tasting.
Such the wine of might they drink in blest carouse above.
So the angels higher lift their flaming height of love.
Now and then the dregs they fling earthward in their quaffing,
And where'er a drop alights, lo, an Eden laughing![204]

BOOK THE EIGHTH
THEOSOPHY IN THE AGE OF THE REFORMATION

CHAPTER I.

Amongst them all sate he that wonned there,
That hight *Phantastes* by his nature trew;
A man of years yet fresh, as mote appere,
Of swarth complexion and of crabbed hew,
That him full of melancholy did shew;
Bent hollow beetle brows, sharpe staring eyes
That mad or foolish seemed: one by his view
Mote deeme him born with ill disposed skyes,
When oblique Saturne sate in th' house or agonyes.

SPENSER.

The autumn is already advanced, and our friends who met at Summerford have returned to the neighbourhood of London. The days of damp and fog have arrived. All nature looks sullen and lustreless. As Gower gazes through the streaming pane on the narrowed dripping landscape, he sometimes tries, as sunny Persia and the Sufis recur to him, to transform

the slope before his windows into an eastern valley. Fancy shall sow it thick with poppies, and daisies, and hyacinths of brilliant red;—a thymy smell breathes up the pass;—and there the ungainly stork, and gaily painted quails flutter away at the sound of his horse's hoofs. Or those house-tops at the foot of the hill, among their trees, shall be a Persian town, on which he looks from an eminence. There are the flat-roofed white houses, enclosing in their courts those twinkling silver lights, the fountains; the green of trees among the shining walls relieves the eye; the domes and minarets look down into the narrow streets; there sleeps the burial-ground, under the shadow of its sentinel cypresses; and there blows the garland of gardens, surrounding the whole with its wavy line of many colours. But the weather is a water-monster, and swallows up too-venturous Fancy. For a few moments imagination can lay light behind the clouds; bright hues flush out on the surface of familiar forms, and the magic power prevails to change them into creatures of the Orient. But the rainy reality is too potent, and the wilderness of vapour will receive no form, retain no colour. So Gower turns away from the windows—pokes the fire —feels idle and fit for nothing—struggles with himself—conquers, and finally achieves a morning's work.

Willoughby has laid aside his romance for a time and taken to the theosophists—to Jacob Behmen more especially. In fact, he had come to an exciting point in his story. He thought he had found a kind of seething turbulence in his thoughts, like that which certain rivers are said to manifest, when in parts of their course they pass over beds of subterranean fire. Afraid of becoming morbid and unnatural, he stopped work at once, and had recourse to Behmen

as a refrigerant and sedative. The remedy succeeded to admiration. Within a day or two the patient could pronounce himself out of poetical danger; and Atherton found him, when he dropped in one morning, enjoying, with Behmen in his hand, that most promising token of convalescence—a profound sleep.

Gower resolved to make himself amends for that uncongenial morning, by spending the evening at Ashfield. Thither also Willoughby had found his way. A considerable part of the evening was passed in Atherton's library, and conversation turned, before very long, upon the mystics, once more, and their position as regards the Reformation.

WILLOUGHBY. Those Teutonic worthies of the fourteenth century are noble specimens of the mystic.

GOWER. Truly, with them, Mysticism puts on her beautiful garments. See her standing, gazing heavenward; 'her rapt soul sitting in her eyes,' and about her what a troop of shining ones! There is Charity, her cheek wet with tears for the dead Christ and pale with love for the living; carrying, too, the oil and the wine—for Mysticism was the good Samaritan of the time, and succoured bleeding Poverty, when priest passed by and Levite;—there is Truth, withdrawing worship from the form and superstitious substitute, transferring it from priest and pageantry to the heart alone with God, and pressing on, past every channel, toward the Fount Himself;—there Humility, pointing to the embers of consumed good works, while she declares that man is nothing and that God is all;—and there, too, Patriotism, and awakening Liberty—for Mysticism

appealed to the people in their native tongue; fashioned the speech and nerved the arms of the German nation; gave heart to the Fatherland (bewildered in a tempest of fiery curses) to withstand, in the name of Christ, the vicar of Christ; led on the Teutonic lion of her popular fable to foil the plots of Italian Reynard; and dared herself to set at nought the infuriate Infallibility.

ATHERTON. Go on, Gower.

GOWER. It seems to me that the doctrine of justification by faith, is practically involved in a theology like that of Tauler, so deep in its apprehension of sin as selfishness, so thorough in renouncing all merit on the part of man.

ATHERTON. Yes, practically. What was needful in addition was, that this doctrine should take its due central place in the system of Christian truth, as the principle, if I may so speak, of salvation for all men. It was not enough to arrive at it as the upshot of individual mystical experience.

WILLOUGHBY. There I think you indicate the weak point of this mysticism—it is *so* individual—so much a matter of the personal inward life.

GOWER. That surely is the very secret of its strength.

WILLOUGHBY. Yes, of its strength up to a certain limit; beyond that limit, of its weakness. It lacked facility of impartation. Its sympathies were broad and humane; its doctrine too narrow and ascetic. Speaking from the depths of a soul that had known the nether darkness and the insufferable glory, its utterance was broken and obscure. It must be lived through to be understood. It might attract, but could only partially retain, the many. Its message, after all, was to the few.

GOWER. But those few, master-minds, remember.

ATHERTON. True, yet what powers could compensate for the want of clear speech—of a ready vehicle for transference of thought? A deep saying that of Jeremy Taylor's, where he remarks concerning mystical elevations and abstractions, that, while in other sciences the terms must first be known and then the rules and conclusions, the whole experience of mysticism must first be obtained before we can so much as know what it is, and the end acquired first —the conclusion before the premises.

WILLOUGHBY. When Luther appears, appealing to the Bible in the hands of the people, the defect is supplied, and we have the Reformation. That visible and venerable externalism, the Romish Church, could not be successfully assailed on merely internal grounds. The testimony of the individual heart against it was variable and uncertain, because more or less isolated. But where the Scriptures are set free, and they can be made the basis of assault, an externalism quite as visible, and more venerable, brings the outward to bear against the outward; while the power of an inward life, pure and deep and ardent as the best of the mystics ever knew, animates the irresistible onset.

GOWER. The testimony of History, then, is decidedly against our modern spiritualism, which complains that we make too much of the book, and sacrifice the subjective religious development to an outward authority. Luther—a true man of the spirit—conquered because he could point to a letter. The fire of his own inward life could kindle so grand a flame, because he was sustained by an authority which no individual mystic could arrogate. The Scriptures were the common ground for the Reformer who had

the truth, and the inquirer who sought it. The excessive subjectivity of the mystic deprived him of that advantage.

WILLOUGHBY. But are we not overlooking other causes which enabled Luther to accomplish so much, and precluded the mystics from carrying further their reforming tendency?

ATHERTON. By all means let the influence of the interval between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries be duly taken into account. To do so will only make good Gower's remark. During the fifteenth century you find no fresh development of mysticism. The genuine religion of the period was still mystical in its complexion, but characterised by a much larger infusion of the scriptural element. This was the real advance of that interim. At the Universities the Bible began to displace the schoolmen. A better system of interpretation prevailed. Even with the mystics St. Paul was already taking the place of Dionysius, and mysticism began to lose its nature, merging in a true spirituality, sober-minded while fervent. In the theology of such men as John Wessel and Staupitz (who with Tauler and the German theology nourished the early religious life of Luther), we see a clearer apprehension of the nature of Christ's work for us—a better balancing of the outward and the inward. In fact, the great step necessary to produce a reformation, after the mystics had made their preparation, was this very bringing into prominence of the word of God. Then, to the ardour and the power of mysticism in its noblest form, was added the authority, the guidance, and the divine adaptation of that message of salvation announced to all mankind.

WILLOUGHBY. Then, again, the doctrine of Luther

directed men at once to the attainment of that clear hope concerning their spiritual safety which, say what we will, is the craving of our nature. We have seen how an Eckart would become pantheist to extort from philosophy that assurance which was denied him by the Church.

GOWER. Yet does not the strength and attraction of Romanism lie in this very characteristic—its tempting facility of comfort? Most men prefer a sleeping conscience to a tender one; and for such the Romish Church offers a perpetual siesta.

WILLOUGHBY. Granted; for this very reason, however, she cannot satisfy the deeper wants of the class I speak of—those men out of whom may be made mystics, reformers, heretics,—but religious Helots never. I am not speaking of mere comfort, but of true peace,—of that entrance into a new relationship towards God which gives us the heart to aspire towards a new nature.

GOWER. Agreed, then. Bunyan follows Paul when he makes Christian lose his burden early in the pilgrimage, so that he treads the onward path thenceforward with a lighter step.

ATHERTON. And can front Apollyon better. Look round at the Christendom of that age. You see only two classes who escape the condition of the hired servant—who are the sons of God and not his bondsmen. These are the mystics and the reformers. The mystic realizes adoption through appalling griefs and toils; the reformer is led thither straightway, as he exclaims with St. Paul, 'Being therefore justified by faith, we have peace with God.'

WILLOUGHBY. How strongly does Luther urge men to believe on Christ as a Saviour for *them*—to receive in

lowly simplicity the peace divinely offered. How triumphantly does he show that such a faith is victory—that all other is a mere historic belief *about* Christ, not a belief *in* an ever-present Deliverer, who lives within, and redeems us daily from ourselves. Thus did his followers helm them speedily with hope, and escape, in great measure, the fearful strain of those alternations between rapture and despair, for which mysticism did not even seek a remedy. The distinction between justification and sanctification is no mere theological refinement. Its practical recognition, at least, is essential to that solemn joyousness which is the strength and glory of the Christian life.

ATHERTON. That is, after all, the true escape from Self which delivers you from bondage to the shifting frames and feelings of the hour—the mere accidents of personal temperament, by making clear the external ground of hope. Mysticism had not light enough to find the way to its own ideal of rest. Luther, with his Bible, realized in soberness the longed-for repose of its intense passion.

WILLOUGHBY. We must confess too, I think, that the representatives of the better mysticism were not strong enough to cope with the fanatical or lawless leaders of the worse. How Tauler, Suso, Ruysbroek, and the author of the *Theologia Germanica*, lift up their voices against the 'false lights'—against men who deified every impulse, who professed to have transcended all virtue, who renounced all moral obligation and outward authority, or who resigned themselves to a stupid apathy which they called poverty of spirit.

GOWER. Those who constituted this last class must have been men who found in the false doctrine only

an excuse for remaining as they were:—hard, indeed, to raise them to anything better. I imagine them poor ignorant hinds, the undermost victims of feudalism. One thinks of Tennyson's portraiture of the serf,—

> The staring eye glazed o'er with sapless days,
> The long mechanic pacings to and fro,
> The set gray life and apathetic end.

WILLOUGHBY. Be that as it may, this bastard mysticism, whether rapacious as King Stork, or passive as King Log, multiplies among men. Want and oppression seize on the sacred pretext of an inward light, and mysticism is fast growing fierce and revolutionary. Good men, speaking words of spiritual freedom, have unawares awakened licence. They themselves slew Self with vigil and with tears; and, lo! a Hydra-headed Self, rampant and ruthless, stalks abroad, and they have been unwittingly his creators.

ATHERTON. What could they do, as mystics, but mourn and rebuke? The inward testimony would not render an unvarying verdict in every case. Their appeal must be, either to an amount of right moral discernment already in the individual, or to the social judgment of a certain religious circle. Beyond these limits their very consistency is their weakness. For the thorough-going mystic, who is resolved to be in all things a light and law unto himself, replies that his inward light is quite as divinely authoritative *for him* as is that of the moderate man, reproving his excesses, for himself. He will answer, 'Friend, walk thou by thy light, as I by mine. The external is nothing to the internal. "What is the chaff to the wheat?" saith the Lord. Thou art external to me, I listen therefore to the voice within me, not to thine.'

WILLOUGHBY. We have, too, the express testimony of Melanchthon to the fact, that had not Luther appeared when he did, to divert the under-current of popular indignation into the middle course of the Reformation, a fearful outbreak must have desolated Europe from the fury kindled by the intolerable oppressions of Church and State.

GOWER. Certainly mysticism could never have spoken with power enough to turn aside such a long-gathered tempest.

WILLOUGHBY. Where the revolutionary spirit had once broken out, only the strong hand could avail.

ATHERTON. And how ruthlessly was that remedy applied! But—what in the world—Gower, I say, open your eyes. Are you going to sleep?

GOWER. I was trying to recall a dream I had after reading about the Anabaptists of Munster.

WILLOUGHBY. A dream! Let us have it.

GOWER. Wait a moment—ah, now I remember. First of all, I saw numbers of people toiling across the fields or along miry roads; weary mothers, delicately nurtured, carrying their babes, and followed by their crying little ones; the fathers laden, it would seem, with such property as they were allowed to take away. They look back mournfully towards the walls of a city, out of whose gates more of their friends are being thrust. These are the magistrates, the rich, the unbelievers, driven forth by the populace to find what shelter they may among the boors, or in the nearest towns. Then I am suddenly inside the city. I see, in one place, a crowd gathered about a shaggy, wild-eyed preacher, spluttering, screaming, foaming at the mouth; in another is a circle surrounding two men in rags, whirling round like spinning dervishes.

One man, with face ghastly pale, and bandaged head, who seems to have escaped from a hospital, moans and wrings his hands, predicting universal ruin. Now, with a yell, he has fallen down in convulsions. There a burly brute has pushed down a weeping woman from the door-steps of a great house, that he may stand on the spot to roar out his prophecy and exhortation. All this was somehow mingled with hosannas to Mathieson, the baker; and at the end of the high street they were dancing about a bonfire made of all the books in the town, save the Bible only. Then the crowd made way for the favourite wife of John Bokelson, the tailor, riding in a great coach, resplendent in silks and costly stuffs torn from the churches. Methought I entered the Town Hall. There, on a throne, in a suit of silver tissue, slashed and lined with crimson, fastened with buckles of gold, sat John Bokelson himself.[205]

WILLOUGHBY. A Mormon elder, 'all of the olden time!'

ATHERTON. Be quiet. He had only eight wives.

GOWER. There he sat, with his triple crown, his globe, and cross of gold, his silver and golden swords, and above his head I could read, '*King of Righteousness over the whole World*.' Then came a long succession of petitioners, thrice kneeling and prostrating themselves before him. A bell rang. The audience was over. Now he was sending out ambassadors, calling on the neighbouring towns to rise and establish the Kingdom of the Holy Ghost, —'for the meek are to inherit the earth, and the time for spoiling the Egyptians is come.' After this I saw long tables spread in the market-place, with fine linen cloths, whereat four thousand people partook of the sacrament, and afterwards riotously feasted;

the grey towers of the cathedral looking down upon them. I passed in at the church doors. All was confusion there, drunken shouts, and running to and fro of boys from cook-shops. The great oriel window had been broken by stones, and on the pavement, with its time-worn epitaphs, lay the many-coloured fragments of glass, among broken flagons and pools of beer. A mad musician had seized upon the organ, and above the uproar rolled the mighty volumes of sound, shaking the old dusty banners. Now came a crash of unearthly music—quite unheeded,—and then the melody melted and trembled away, dying down with a far-off wail of unutterable pathos. In the midst of his ecstasy the crazed performer was hurled away by a swarm of 'prentice lads who had found their way up the staircase. One among them struck up the well-known air of a wanton song. There was an outcry and sound of struggling, and I saw the madman leap from the clerestory down into the middle of the nave,——

WILLOUGHBY. And you woke?

GOWER. No. There came over me a kind of blank bewilderment, and all was changed. The sides of the church had become mountains. I was in a winding rocky glen, and the moon was rising over the black fantastic peaks that shut in the valley. I saw what made me think of Ezekiel's vision of dry bones. Along the hollow of the gorge, and in the great furrows of the heights on each side, where should have been mountain streams and pebbles, were the glistening bones; and on the rock-ledges where the moonlight fell I could see them strewn; and on every boulder, skeleton-heaps; and at the mouth of every cavern, like icicles hanging from the stony jaws. I heard a rising wind sweep up the pass,—another

blast, and another; and then, coming nearer and nearer, a sound as though withered boughs of innumerable trees were snapping in a tempest. All was whirling, darting motion among the white rattling fragments, above, beneath, around; till every clanking bone had been locked to its fellow, and a skeleton sat on every crag and lay in every hollow. The sinews and the flesh then came up upon them; after that, the breath; and they arose, an exceeding great army. I heard a muttering near me, and turning, I saw one gazing on the multitude, having in his hand a torch. His wild, eager look startled me. Now I thought he was Carlstadt, and then he changed into Thomas Münzer. Then again I was sure I recognized Spenser's Phantastes. He flung his torch into a cleft, whence it breathed out its last sparks into the windy night, and bowing his head, turned slowly away. I heard him say, 'Dead Church! Dead Church! How shalt thou live? I have learnt it. Flesh and blood first—then breath. Truth for a body, then Love for a soul. The spirit must have a form—must quicken a letter. First a fact for motive; then let the young life work. The soul must have its sinews; the spirit its instrument, its means, its words. Lie there, fire that destroyest; come hither, fire that warmest,—that warmest to good, and that warnest from evil.' Then I saw that he had a new book in his hand,—the last part then published of Luther's German New Testament. He vanished. The hills rolled away in smoke, and I awoke with a start.

ATHERTON. I wish Phantastes and his kindred had really learnt the lesson of your dream. But such hot-brained enthusiasts cannot be taught, not even by sore stripes of adversity in the school of fools.

CHAPTER II.

> He that misbelieves and lays aside clear and cautious reason in things that fall under the discussion of Reason, upon the pretence of hankering after some higher principle, (which, a thousand to one, proves but the infatuation of Melancholy and a superstitious hallucination), is as ridiculous as if he would not use his natural eyes about their proper object till the presence of some supernatural light, or till he had got a pair of Spectacles made of the Crystalline Heaven, or of the Cœlum Empyreum, to hang upon his nose for him to look through.—HENRY MORE.

ATHERTON. I ought to acknowledge, I suppose, that I have by me a rough draught, made some time since, representing the first strife between Mysticism and Reformation. But, as to reading it, I scarcely think ——

WILLOUGHBY. You will not do so, I beg.

ATHERTON. Willoughby, you shall suffer for that. I'll begin.

WILLOUGHBY. Pelt away. I thought I should get a cocoa-nut for my stone. (*Atherton reads.*)

> *Luther and the Mystics.*
>
> The estimate to be formed of the mystics who lived before the Reformation differs very widely from that which is due to those who appeared after it. Previous to the Reformation, there was a far larger amount of truth with the mystics than with any other party in the Romish Church. They

were, in reality, men of progress, and belonged to the onward element in their day and generation. For reform of some sort many of them laboured—all of them sighed. They protested against the corruptions of religion. Many an Augean stable would they have cleansed, could they but have found their Hercules. In France, Briconnet, Gerard, and Roussel were men of this class—not so outspoken as Luther and his followers, but led by mysticism to sympathy with reforming views, and enabled by that very mysticism to retain their connexion with Rome, regarding externals as indifferent.

When Luther comes with his doctrine of justification by faith, and his announcement that the Scriptures are the sufficient standard of Christian truth, a great change takes place. Mystics of the more thoughtful, rightly earnest sort, are among the first to embrace the new doctrines. Here they have the guide they longed for—here they find what mysticism could never give. They are, some of them, like Justin Martyr, who waited long among the schools of the Platonists for their promised immediate intuition of Deity, and then discovered among Christians that God was to be known in another way far better—through the medium of his written Word, by the teaching of his Spirit. But those who when a fuller light came, refused to quit for its lustre that isolated and flickering torch, about which men had gathered for lack of anything brighter, such were given over to the veriest absurdity, or speedily consigned to utter forgetfulness. By the mystic of the fourteenth century, the way of the Reformation was in great part prepared. By the mystic of the sixteenth century it was hindered

and imperilled. In that huge ship of the state ecclesiastic, which all true hearts and hands in those troublous times were concerned to work to their very best, a new code of regulations had been issued. Such rule came in with Luther. Now some of those who would have been among the very best sailors under the old management, proved useless, or worse than useless under the new. One set of them were insolent and mutinous —had a way of reviling the captain in strange gibberish—and a most insane tendency to look into the powder-room with a light. Another class lay about useless, till having been tumbled over many times by their more active comrades, they got kicked into corners, whence they were never more to emerge. So fared it with mysticism, attempting to persist in existence when its work for that time was done. The mystic so situated was either a caricature of reform or a cipher, either a fanatical firebrand or an unheeded negation.

We need not go far for examples. Dr. Bodenstein of Carlstadt (best known as simple Carlstadt) is professor at Wittenberg, and a thorough reformer. He is a little, swarthy, sunburnt man, crotchety to the last degree. He follows his intuitions—now this whim, now that—right to-day, wrong to-morrow—a man whom you never know where to find. He must spring to his conclusion at once; he will not first pause for satisfying reasons,—for clear ideas on the various bearings of his thought or deed. So his life is a series of starts; his actions incongruous and spasmodic, unlinked, unharmonized by any thoughtful plan or principle.

But Carlstadt is a man of books as well as of action. He writes treatises, repeating the doctrines of Tauler and the German Theology, all about abandonment, and not seeing God or enjoying Him more in this than in that event or employment; about the sin of enjoying ordinances and media, rather than God immediately; about the blessed self-loss in the One; about the reduction of ourselves to nothing. Ah, Dr. Bodenstein, thou mayest write for ever that way, and no one now will read! Men have left all this behind. A ripe full vintage invites their thirst; thine acrid and ascetic grape is now deserted. Gladly do they, for the most part, exchange the refined and impracticable requirements of mysticism, its vagueness, its incessant prohibition, for the genial, simple truth of that German New Testament which Luther is giving them.

At the juncture of which we are about to speak, Luther lay hidden in the Wartburg. In the small town of Zwickau, in the Erzgebirge, there arose a knot of enthusiasts for whom Luther did not go half far enough. There was Storch, a weaver, to whom Gabriel had made very wonderful communications one night; another weaver, named Thomas, and a student, Stübner, who had forsaken the toil of study for the easier method of supernatural illumination. To these should be added the more notorious Thomas Münzer, who has been erroneously regarded as the founder of the party. ‘Why such a slavish reverence for what the Bible says?’ cry these mystics. ‘What is a mere book?’ ‘Have we not immediate voices, impulses, revelations from the Holy Spirit, dictating all we should do? Better this than your Bible reading and college work.’ Then, next, they prophesy terrible

woes and judgments to come on Christendom, mainly through the Turks; they themselves, perhaps, in fitting time, may draw the sword of the Lord and of Gideon, and win the land for the saints.

These worthies were put down by the magistrates of Zwickau. Shaking off the Zwickau dust against their enemies, several of them seek a ‘larger sphere of usefulness’ in Wittenberg. They found the city already in no small excitement concerning certain reforms which Carlstadt was making at full speed. He fraternizes with the Zwickau prophets at once. Indeed, he had been heard to say of the whole body of Scripture what divines were accustomed to say of the law only, that it was a killing letter, leading to nothing more than a sense of guilt and deserved condemnation. Faster and faster come his changes, so well-meant, but so ill-advised. With a few strokes he abolishes auricular confession, makes it incumbent to violate the fast days, and renders it customary to come to the sacrament without preparation. Next an iconoclast riot is raised. Carlstadt declares that the magistrates have power to render criminal those observances which the popular voice declares contrary to the Word of God; that if they refuse, the community may take the law into its own hands.

A scholar like Carlstadt, a professor of established repute, surrenders at last to the vulgar error of the very coarsest mysticism. He advises his students to go home; human learning is vain; Hebrew and Greek an idle toil; inspiration is far above scholarship. Were there not prophets among them, wiser than all the doctors, who had never

studied anything or anywhere for half an hour? He himself went about among the poor people, asking them the meaning of Scripture passages, and believing that the hap-hazard notions they put forth were a special revelation from Him who hideth from the wise and prudent what is revealed unto babes. Imagine the Professor bawling a text into the ear of some deaf old crone who cowers beside the stove, and awaiting the irrelevant mumblings of ignorant decrepitude as the oracle of God! Fancy him accosting the shoemaker at his stall, and getting his notion of the text in question, noting it down as infallible, and going his way rejoicing; while Crispin, who knows him, thinks over and over again what a far cleverer answer he might have given, and wishes unsaid what Carlstadt believes inspired!

Is there no one in Wittenberg to unmask these follies, and to quiet the smouldering excitement dangerously spreading among townspeople and students? Melanchthon is young. The loud browbeating volubility of the prophets overpowers his gentle nature. He is undecided—he fancies he sees some force in what they say about baptism. He is timid—he will do nothing.

Friends write to Luther. Back comes an answer from a man who sees to the heart of the matter in a moment—a standing confutation of the mystic's ambition, in three sentences. Thus replies Luther —'Do you wish to know the place, the time, the manner in which God holds converse with men? Hear then—'As a lion so hath he crushed all my bones;' and again, 'I am cast out from before thy face;' and again, 'My soul is filled with plagues, and my life draweth nigh unto the gates of hell.'

The Divine Majesty does not speak to men immediately, as they call it, so that they have vision of God, for He saith, 'No flesh shall see me and live.' Human nature could not survive the least syllable of the Divine utterance. So God addresses man through men, because we could not endure His speaking to us without medium.'

And the mystics could not say (as mystics so commonly plead) that Luther was a man unable, from defective experience, to understand them. If any man had sounded the depths of the soul's 'dim and perilous way,' it was he. Nay, it is for him to question *their* experience. 'Inquire,' he says to Melanchthon, 'if they know aught of those spiritual distresses, those divine births, and deaths, and sorrows, as of hell.'[206]

Luther receives day by day more alarming intelligence. He fears the spread of false doctrine —insurrection in the name of reform. He is anxious lest the elector should persecute the new lights—a step which the fat, amiable, children-with-sugar-plums-feeding Frederick, was not very likely to take. He forms the heroic resolve of quitting his refuge, and suddenly reappears in Wittenberg. He preaches sermons marvellous for moderation and wisdom—sermons which accomplish what is so hard, the calming of heated passion, the reconciliation of adversaries. At his voice Violence and Tumult slink away—their hounds still in the leash; and Charity descends, waving her wand of peace, and shedding the light of her heavenly smile on every face. So triumphs Religion over Fanaticism.

Finally, Luther was called on to hold a discussion with two of the prophets, Stübner, and one

Cellarius, a schoolmaster. The latter, when called upon by Luther to substantiate his positions from the Scripture, stamps, strikes the table with his fist, and declares it an insult to speak so to a man of God. Luther, at last, seeing this man foaming, roaring, leaping about like one possessed, comes to believe that there *is* a spirit in these men—but an unclean one from beneath. He cries out finally, after his homely fashion, 'I smack that spirit of yours upon the snout.' Howls of indignation from the Zwickauer side—universal confusion—dissolution of assembly. The prophets after this find themselves moved to quit Wittenberg without delay—their occupation gone. Let prosaic or sceptical folk regard this discussion as they may, to those who look beneath the surface, it is manifest that there really was a conflict of spirits going on then and there—the unclean spirit of Arrogance and Misrule quailing before that of Truth and Soberness.[207]

Carlstadt and his allies of Zwickau exhibit mysticism rampant, making reformation look questionable. A very fair representative of the other class of mystic is found in Sebastian Frank. This man, born at the close of the fifteenth century, seems to have lived a wandering life in different parts of Germany (often brought into trouble by his doctrines, probably) for some forty or fifty years. He was early enamoured of the German Theology, the writings of Tauler, above all, of Eckart's speculations. The leading principles contained in the books he regarded with such veneration, he elaborated into a system of his own. Starting with the doctrine of the *Theologia Germanica*, that God is the *substans* of all things, he pushes it to the verge of a dreamy pantheism—

nay, even beyond that uncertain frontier. He conceives of a kind of divine life-process (*Lebens-prozess*) through which the universe has to pass. This process, like the Hegelian, is threefold. *First*, the divine substance, the abstract unity which produces all existence. *Second*, said substance appearing as an opposite to itself—making itself object. *Third*, the absorption of this opposition and antithesis—the consummate realization whereof takes place in the consciousness of man when restored to the supreme unity and rendered in a sense divine. The fall of man is, in his system, a fall from the Divinity within him—that Reason which is the Holy Ghost, in which the Divine Being is supposed first to acquire will and self-consciousness. Christ is, with him, the divine element in man. The work of the historic Saviour is to make us conscious of the ideal and inward, and we thus arrive at the consciousness of that fundamental divineness in us which knows and is one with the Supreme by identity of nature.[208] Such doctrine is a relapse upon Eckart, and also an anticipation of modern German speculation.

Yet, shall we say on this account that Sebastian Frank was before his age or behind it? The latter unquestionably. He stood up in defence of obsolescent error against a truth that was blessing mankind. He must stand condemned, on the sole ground of judgment we modern judges care to take, as one of the obstructives of his day who put forth what strength he had to roll back the climbing wheel of truth. We pardon Tauler's allegorical interpretations—those freaks of fancy, so subtile, so inexhaustible, so curiously irrelevant in one sense, yet so sagaciously brought home in another—we assent to Melanchthon's verdict, who

calls him the German Origen; but we remember that every one in his times interpreted the Bible in that arbitrary style. The Reformers, aided by the revival of letters, were successful in introducing those principles of interpretation with which we are ourselves familiar. But for this more correct method of exegesis, the benign influence of the Scriptures themselves had been all but nullified; for any one might have found in them what he would. Yet against this good thing, second only to the Word itself, Sebastian Frank stands up to fight in defence of arbitrary fancy and of lifeless pantheistic theory with such strength as he may. So has mysticism, once so eager to press on, grown childishly conservative, and is cast out straightway. Luther said he had written nothing against Frank, he despised him so thoroughly. 'Unless my scent deceive me,' says the reformer, 'the man is an enthusiast or spiritualist (*Geisterer*), for whom nothing will do but spirit! spirit!—and not a word of Scripture, sacrament, or ministry.'

So Frank, contending for the painted dreams of night against the realities of day—for fantasy against soberness—and falling, necessarily, in the fight, has been curtained over in his sleep by the profoundest darkness. Scarcely does any one care to rescue from their oblivion even the names of his many books. What is his *Golden Ark*, or *Seven Sealed Book*, or collection of most extravagant interpretations, called *Paradoxa*, to any human creature?

For a Chronicle he left behind, the historian has sometimes to thank him. He had a near-sighted mind. Action immediately about him he could limn truly. But he had not the comprehensiveness

to see whither the age was tending.

WILLOUGHBY. How admirable is that reply of Luther's;—an unanswerable rebuke of that presumptuous mysticism which would boastfully tear aside the veil and dare a converse face to face with God. Semele perishes. That the fanatic survives is proof that he has but embraced a cloud.

ATHERTON. A rebuke, rather, of that folly, in all its forms, which imagines itself the subject of a special revelation that is no fearful searching of the soul, but merely a flattering reflection of its own wishes.

GOWER. And what can most men make of that milder form of the same ambition—I mean the exhortation to escape all image and figure? How else can we grasp spiritual realities? The figurative language in which religious truth is conveyed to us seems to me to resemble that delicate membrane gummed to the back of the charred papyrus-roll, which otherwise would crumble to pieces in unwinding. The fragile film alone would drop to dust, but by this means it coheres, and may be unfolded for inspection.

WILLOUGHBY. And when a scripture figure is pressed too far (the besetting sin of systematising divines), it is as though your gold-beater's skin, or whatever it be, had been previously written on, and the characters mistaken for those of the roll to which it was merely the support and lining.

GOWER. I can readily conceive how provoking a man like Sebastian Frank must have been to Luther, with his doctrines of passivity and apathy, his holy contempt for rule, for rationality, or practicability, and his idle chaotic system-spinning, when every hand was wanted for the goodly cause of Reform.

ATHERTON. Then there was Schwenkfeld, too, who went off from Luther as pietist in one direction, while Frank departed as pantheist in the other.

GOWER. A well-meaning man, though; a kind of sixteenth-century Quaker, was he not?

ATHERTON. Yes. Compound a Quaker, a Plymouth Brother, and an Antipædo Baptist, and the result is something like a Schwenkfeldian.

WILLOUGHBY. For my enquiries concerning Jacob Behmen, I find that the most important of the Lutheran mystics was a quiet man of few words, pastor at Tschopau during the latter half of the sixteenth century, by name Valentine Weigel.

GOWER. You will give us more information about him when you read your essay on Jacob Behmen. For the present I confess myself tired of these minor mystics.

WILLOUGHBY. I shall have to do with him only in as far as he was a forerunner of Jacob. Weigel's treatises were published posthumously, and a very pretty quarrel there was over his grave. He bases his theology on the *Theologia Germanica*, adds a modification of Sebastian Frank, and introduces the theosophy of Paracelsus. In this way he brings us near to Behmen, who united in himself the two species of mysticism—the theopathetic, represented by Schwenkfeld, on the one side, and the theosophic, by Paracelsus, on the other.

ATHERTON. As Lutheranism grew more cold and rigid, mysticism found more ground of justification, and its genial reaction rendered service to the Church once more.

WILLOUGHBY. I think the sword of the Thirty Years'

War may be said to have cleared legitimate space for it. In that necessary strife for opinion the inward life was sorely perilled. It was inevitable, I suppose, that multitudes should at least have sought, not only spirituality in mysticism and purity in separation, but wisdom in the stars, wealth in alchemy, and the communion of saints in secret societies.

Note to page 46.

Luther writes:—Jam vero privatum spiritum explores etiam, quæras, num experti sint spirituales illas angustias et nativitates divinas, mortes, infernosque. Si audieris blanda, tranquilla, devota (ut vocant) et religiosa, etiamsi in tertium cœlum sese raptos dicant, non approbabis. Tenta ergo et ne Iesum quidem audias gloriosum, nisi videris prius crucifixum. A golden rule.—*Luth. Epist.* De Wette, No. 358. Jan. 13, 1522. The language he uses elsewhere concerning such fanatics is strong, but not stronger than the occasion demanded. It was indeed no time for compliment—for hesitant, yea-nay utterance upon the question. The freedom claimed by Carlstadt's followers led straightway to a lawless pride, which was so much servitude to Satan—was the death-wound, not the crown, of spiritual life. It was from the fulness of his charity—not in lack of it—that Luther uttered his manly protest against that perilous lie. Michelet selects a passage which shows in a very instructive manner how the strong mind (in this quarrel, as in so many more) breaks in pieces, with a touch, the idols which seduce the weak. 'If you ask Carlstadt's people,' says Luther, 'how this sublime spirit is arrived at, they refer you, not to the Gospel, but to their reveries, to their vacuum. 'Place

thyself,' say they, 'in a state of void tedium as we do, and then thou wilt learn the same lesson; the celestial voice will be heard, and God will speak to thee in person.' If you urge the matter further, and ask what this void tedium of theirs is, they know as much about it as Dr. Carlstadt does about Greek and Hebrew.... Do you not in all this recognize the Devil, the enemy of divine order? Do you not see him opening a huge mouth, and crying, 'Spirit, spirit, spirit!' and all the while he is crying this, destroying all the bridges, roads, ladders,—in a word, every possible way by which the spirit may penetrate into you; that is to say, the external order established by God in the holy baptism, in the signs and symbols, and in his own Word. They would have you learn to mount the clouds, to ride the wind; but they tell you neither how, nor when, nor where, nor what; all these things you must learn of yourself, as they do.'

CHAPTER III.

Subtle. Your *lapis philosophicus*?

Face. 'Tis a stone,
And not a stone; a spirit, a soul, and a body;
Which if you do dissolve, it is dissolved;
If you coagulate, it is coagulated;
If you make it to fly, it flieth.

THE ALCHEMIST.

ATHERTON. We are to call on Willoughby to-night, I

believe, to conduct us to Jacob Behmen—or Boehme, more correctly.

WILLOUGHBY. I shall scarcely bring you so far this evening. I have to trouble you with some preliminary paragraphs on the theosophic mysticism which arose with the Reformation, some remarks on the theurgic superstitions of that period, and a word or two about Cornelius Agrippa and Paracelsus. A very formidable preamble,—yet necessary, I assure you.

And herewith, Willoughby, after solacing himself with a goodly bunch of grapes, began to read his essay.

ON THE THEOSOPHY OF JACOB BEHMEN.

§ 1. *Mysticism and Science.*

I have to trace the advance of mysticism into a new world. Prior to the Reformation the mystic sought escape in God from all that was not God. After that epoch he is found seeking at the hands of his Maker a supernatural acquaintance with all that He has made. Once his highest knowledge was that surpassing ignorance which swoons in the glory of the Infinite. Now he claims a familiarity passing that of common mortals with the mysteries of sea and land, of stars and elements. Escaping that monastic dualism which abandoned the world to Satan, mysticism will now dispute the empire of the prince of this world. Inspired from above, and haply not unaided by angelic ministries, the master of the hidden wisdom will devoutly elicit the benign

potencies of the universe, and repel the malevolent. No longer a mere contemplatist—gazing up at the heights of the divine nature, or down into the depth of the human—the mystic of the new age will sweep, with all-piercing vision, the whole horizon of things visible. The theosophist covets holiness still, but knowledge scarcely less. Virtue (as aforetime) may be regarded by such mystics too much as the means to an end. But the end is no longer the same. With the theopathetic mysticism the exercise of the Christian graces and the discipline of fiery spiritual purgations were the road to a superhuman elevation—a vision and repose anticipating heaven. With the theosophic, Faith and Charity and Hope were the conditions of the higher knowledge. For never to the proud, the greedy, the impure, would heaven vouchsafe the keys of mystery and hazardous prerogative in the unseen world. To the contemplative mystic the three heavenly sisters brought a cloud of glory; for the theosophist they unclasped nature's 'infinite book of secrecy;' in the hand of the theurgist they placed an enchanter's wand.

The sphere of mysticism was not thus extended by any expansive force of its own. The spirit of a new and healthier age had ventured to depreciate the morbid seclusion of the cloister. Men began to feel that it was at once more manly and more divine to enquire and to know than to gaze and dream. After the servitude of the schools and the collapse of the cloister, the ambition of the intellect would acknowledge no limit, would accept of no repose. The highest aspirations of religion and the most daring enterprise of science were alike mystical. They coalesced in theosophy. Changes such as

these were wrought by a power from without. Mysticism was awakened from its feverish dream by the spirit of the time—as Milton's Eve by Adam from her troubled morning sleep—and invited to go forth and see 'nature paint her colours.'

As the revival of letters spread over Europe the taste for antiquity, and natural science began to claim its share in the freedom won for theology, the pretensions of the Cabbala, of Hermes, of the Neo-Platonist theurgy, became identified with the cause of progress.

That ancient doctrine, familiar to the school of Plotinus, according to which the world was a huge animal—a living organism united in all its parts by secret sympathies,—received some fresh development in the fancy of every adept. The student of white magic believed, with Iamblichus, in the divine power inherent in certain words of invocation, whereby the aspirant might hold intercourse with powers of the upper realm. With the modern, as with the ancient Neo-Platonists, religion bore an indispensable part in all such attempts. Proclus required of the theurgist an ascetic purity. Campanella demands a *fides intrinseca*,—that devout simplicity of heart which should qualify the candidate at once to commune with holy spirits and to baffle the delusive arts of the malign.[209]

But the theosophists of Germany were not, like the Alexandrians, slavish worshippers of the past. They did not resort to theurgy in order to prop a falling faith. They did not wield that instrument to prolong, by the spasmodic action of superstitious practice, the life of an expiring philosophy. Those formulæ of incantation, those

'symbola' and 'synthemata,' which were everything with Iamblichus, were with many of them only a bye-work, and by others utterly abjured. They believed devoutly in the genuineness of the Cabbala. They were persuaded that beneath all the floods of change this oral tradition had perpetuated its life unharmed from the days of Moses downward,—even as Jewish fable taught them that the cedars alone, of all trees, had continued to spread the strength of their invulnerable arms below the waters of the deluge. They rejoiced in the hidden lore of that book as in a treasure rich with the germs of all philosophy. They maintained that from its marvellous leaves man might learn the angelic heraldry of the skies, the mysteries of the divine nature, the means of converse with the potentates of heaven.[210] But such reverence, so far from oppressing, seemed rather to enfranchise and excite their imagination. In the tradition before which they bowed, the majesty of age and the charm of youth had met together. Hierocles brought to them Pythagoras out of an immemorial past; and there was no novelty more welcome in that restless wonder-loving present. Thus the theosophists could oppose age to age, and reverently impugn the venerable. Antiquity, in the name of Aristotle, so long absolute, had imposed a shameful bondage. Antiquity, in the name of Plato, newly disinterred, imparted a glorious privilege. The chains of the past were being filed away by instruments which the past had furnished. Ancient prescription became itself the plea for change when one half of its demands was repudiated in honour of the other.

This theosophy was a strange mixture of the

Hellenic, the Oriental, and the Christian styles of thought. I shall assume as its emblem the church of St. John, at Rhodes, which, full of statues of saints and tombs of knights, broken, or rounded into mounds of sullied snow by the hand of time, is surmounted by a crescent, and echoes to the voice of the muezzin, while sheltering beneath its porch the altar of a Grecian God. But our incongruous theosophic structure, ever open and ever changing, enlarged its precincts continually. A succession of eccentric votaries enriched it ceaselessly with quaint devices, fresh flowers of fancy, new characters in mystical mosaic, and intricate arabesques of impenetrable significance.

Plotinus, indifferent to the material universe, had been content to inherit and transmit the doctrine of the world's vitality. That notion now became the nucleus of a complex system of sympathies and antipathies. It suggested remedies for every disease, whether of mind or body. It prompted a thousand fantastic appliances and symbols. But at the same time it rendered the enquirer more keenly observant of natural phenomena. Extolling Trismegistus to the skies, and flinging his Galen into the fire, Paracelsus declared the world his book.[211] The leaves of that volume were continents and seas—provinces, its paragraphs—the plants, the stones, the living things of every clime, its illuminated letters.

In the dawn of science hovered a meteor, which at once lured onward and led astray the seekers after truth,—it was the hope of special illumination. They hastened to generalize on a medley of crude fancies and of partial facts. For generalization was with them a sudden impulse, not a slow result. It

was an exalted act prompted by a Divine light that flashed on intuition from without, or radiated from the wondrous depths of the microcosm within. Hence (as with bees in dahlias) their industry was their intoxication. It is of the essence of mysticism to confound an internal creation or process with some external manifestation. Often did the theosophist rejoice in the thought that nature, like the rock in the desert, had been made to answer to his compelling rod,—that a divinely-given stream welled forth to satisfy his thirst for knowledge. As we look back upon his labours we can perceive that the impulse was by no means a wonder, and often anything but a blessing. It was in reality but as the rush of the water into the half-sunk shaft of his research, flooding the region of his first incautious efforts, and sooner or later arresting his progress in every channel he might open. In fact, the field of scientific enquiry, which had withered under the schoolman, was inundated by the mystic,—so facile and so copious seemed the knowledge realized by heaven-born intuition. It was reserved for induction to develop by a skilful irrigation that wonder-teeming soil. No steady advance was possible when any hap-hazard notion might be virtually invested with the sanction of inspiration.

The admixture of light and darkness during that twilight period reached precisely the degree of shadow most favourable to the vigorous pursuit of natural science by supernatural means.

It is true that the belief in witchcraft everywhere prevalent did, ever and anon, throw people and rulers alike into paroxysms of fear and fury. But an accomplished student of occult art was no

longer in much danger of being burnt alive as a fair forfeit to Satan. The astrologer, the alchemist, the adept in natural magic, were in universal demand. Emperors and nobles, like Rudolph and Wallenstein, kept each his star-gazer in a turret chamber, surrounded by astrolabes and alembics, by ghastly preparations and mysterious instruments, and listened, with ill-concealed anxiety, as the zodiac-zoned and silver-bearded counsellor, bent with study and bleared with smoke, announced, in oracular jargon, the junction of the planets or his progress toward projection. The real perils of such pretenders now arose from the very confidence they had inspired. Such was the thirst for gold and the faith in alchemy, that no man supposed to possess the secret was secure from imprisonment and torture to compel its surrender. Setonius was broken on the wheel because the cruel avarice of the great could not wring out of him that golden process which had no existence. The few enquirers whose aim was of a nobler order were mortified to find their science so ill appreciated. They saw themselves valued only as casters of horoscopes and makers of cunning toys. Often, with a bitter irony, they assumed the airs of the charlatan for their daily bread. Impostors knavish as Sir Arthur Wardour's Dousterswivel, deceived and deceiving like Leicester's Alasco, swarmed at the petty court of every landgrave and elector.

Theurgic mysticism was practically admitted even within the Lutheran Church, while the more speculative or devotional mysticism of Sebastian Frank, Schwenkfeld, and Weigel, was everywhere proscribed. Lutheran doctors, believers in the Cabbala, which Reuchlin had vindicated against

the monks, were persuaded that theurgic art could draw the angels down to mortals. Had not the heaven-sent power of the Cabbala wrought the marvels of Old Testament history? Had not the power of certain mystic words procured for Hebrew saints the privilege of converse with angelic natures? Had not the Almighty placed all terrestrial things under the viceregency of the starry influences? Had He not united all things, animate and inanimate, by a subtle network of sympathies, and was not man the leading chord in this system of harmony—the central heart of this circulating magnetic force? Thus much assumed, a devout man, wise in the laws of the three kinds of vincula between the upper and lower worlds, might be permitted to attract to himself on earth those bright intelligences who were to be his fellows in heaven. Theurgy rested, therefore, on the knowledge of the *intellectual vinculum* (the divine potency inherent in certain words), the *astral* (the favourable conjunction of the planets), and the *elementary* (the sympathy of creatures). In the use of these was, of course, involved the usual hocus-pocus of magical performance—talismans, magic lights, incense, doves' blood, swallows' feathers, *et hoc genus omne*.[212]

CHAPTER IV.

For I am siker that there be sciences,
By which men maken divers apparences,
Swiche as thise subtil tregetoures play.

For oft at festes have I well herd say,
That tregetoures, within an halle large,
Have made come in a water and a barge,
And in the halle rowen up and down.
Sometime hath semed come a grim leoun,
And sometime floures spring as in a mede,
Sometime a vine and grapes white and rede,
Sometime a castel all of lime and ston,
And whan hem liketh voideth it anon.
Thus semeth it to every mannes sight.

CHAUCER.

Give me thy hand, terrestrial; so:—Give me thy
hand, celestial; so.

MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR.

WILLOUGHBY'S ESSAY—SECOND EVENING.

§ 2. *Cornelius Agrippa.*

Cornelius Agrippa, of Nettesheim, is a favourable specimen of that daring and versatile order of mind which, in the sixteenth century, sought adventure and renown in every province of philosophy. His restless life is picturesque with the contrast of every imaginable vicissitude. A courtier and a scholar, a soldier and a mystic, he made the round of the courts of Europe. Patronized and persecuted alternately, courted as a prodigy and hunted down as a heretic, we see him to-day a Plato, feasted by the Sicilian tyrant, to-morrow a Diogenes, crawling with a growl into his tub. He lectures with universal applause on the *Verbum Mirificum* of Reuchlin. He forms a

secret association for the promotion of occult science. He is besieged by swarming boors in some Garde Douloureuse, and escapes almost by miracle. He enters the service of Margaret, Regent of the Netherlands, then that of the Emperor, and is knighted on the field for heroic gallantry in the campaign against the Venetians. He is next to be heard of as a teacher of theology at Pavia. Plunged into poverty by the reverses of war, he writes for comfort a mystical treatise *On the Threefold Way of Knowing God*. The hand of the Marquis of Montferrat plucks him from his slough of despond, but ere long he is again homeless, hungering, often after bread, ever after praise and power. At the court of France, the Queen Mother shows him favour, but withholds the honour to which such gifts might well aspire. Then appears the famous book *On the Vanity of Arts and Sciences*.

It was wormwood to the proud spirit of Agrippa to be treated as a mere astrologer. To think that he must toil in obscurity like a gnome, calculating aspects, sextile and quartile, reckoning the cusps and hours of the houses of heaven, to subserve the ambition of an implacable intriguante, when his valour might adorn the tourney and his wisdom sway the council! He would fain have been in France what that great astrologer of the previous century, Martius Galeotti, had been in Hungary, to whom the Czar of Russia and the Khan of Tartary were said to have sent respectful presents of more than royal magnificence; who was ambassador alike of monarchs and the stars; who bore a share in the statecraft of the court at Buda, and charging abreast with the crowned helm of Matthias, rode down the ranks of the turbaned

infidel. So the gallant knight and the ‘courtier of most elegant thread,’ the archimage, the philosopher, the divine, became for awhile a sceptic and a Timon. The *De Vanitate Scientiarum* ravages, with a wild Berserker fury, the whole domain of knowledge. The monk Ilsan of mediæval fable did not more savagely trample the roses in the enchanted garden of Worms,—Pantagruel did not more cruelly roast with fire his six hundred and nine and fifty vanquished horsemen, than did Agrippa consume with satire every profession and every calling among men. With reason might he say in his preface, ‘The grammarians will rail at me—the etymologists will derive my name from the gout—the obstreperous rhetoricians will plague me with their big words and inimical gestures—the intricate geometrician will imprison me in his triangles and tetragonals—the cosmographer will banish me among the bears to Greenland.’ Scholastic fanaticism could never pardon the man whose sarcasm had left nothing standing, save the Holy Scriptures. The monks and doctors of Lyons hurled back his tongue-bolts with the dreaded cry of heresy. His disgrace and exile they could compass, but they could not arrest those winged words or bow that dauntless spirit.

The treatise *On the Threefold Way of Knowing God*, shows how, by Divine illumination, the Christian may discern the hidden meanings of the New Testament, as the Cabbalist evolves those of the Old. It teaches the way in which the devout mind may be united to God, and, seeing all things in Him, and participating in His power, may even now, according to the measure of faith, foretell the future and controul the elements.

The *De Occulta Philosophia*[213] (a youthful work re-written in his later years) treats of the three kinds of magic—the *Natural* (the science of sympathies and antipathies, whereby the adept accelerates or modifies the process of nature so as to work apparent miracles); the *Celestial*, or Mathematical (astrology); and the *Religious*, or ceremonial (theurgy).

Once on a time, the savans were sorely puzzled by certain irregular holes on the front of an ancient temple. One, more sagacious than the rest, suggested that these indentations might be the marks of nails used to fasten to the stone metallic plates representing Greek characters. And, in fact, lines drawn from one point to the next were found to form letters, and the name of the deity stood disclosed. In like manner, the student of natural magic sought to decipher the secret language of the universe, by tracing out those lines of sympathy which linked in a mysterious kindred objects the most remote. It was believed that the fields of space were threaded in every direction by the hidden highways of magnetic influence; traversed from all points by an intricate network of communication uniting the distant and the near —the celestial and terrestrial worlds. Science was charged with the office of discovering and applying those laws of harmony and union which connect the substances of earth with each other and with the operation of the stars. Through all the stages of creation men thought they saw the inferior ever seeking and tending towards the higher nature, and the order above shedding influence on that below. The paternal sun laid a hand of blessing on the bowed head of the corn. The longing dews passed heavenward, up the

Jacob's ladder of the sunbeams, and entering among the bright ministeries of the clouds, came down in kindly showers. Each planet, according to its mind or mood, shed virtues healing or harmful into minerals and herbs. All sweet sounds, moving by the mystic laws of number, were an aspiration towards the music of the spheres—a reminiscence of the universal harmonies. The air was full of phantasms or images of material objects. These, said Agrippa, entering the mind, as the air the body, produce presentiments and dreams. All nature is oracular. A cloudy chill or sultry lull are the Delphi and Dodona of birds and kine and creeping things. But the sense of sinful man is dull. The master of the hidden wisdom may facilitate the descent of benign influences, and aid the travailing creation, sighing for renewal. It is for him to marry (in the figurative language of the time) the 'lower and the higher potencies, the terrestrial and the astral, as doth the husbandman the vine unto the elm.' The sage can make himself felt in the upper realm, as on the earth, by touching some chord whose vibration extends into the skies. From the law of sympathy comes the power of amulets and philtres, images and ointments, to produce love or hate, health or sickness, to arrest the turning arms of the distant mill, or stay the wings of the pinnace on the Indian seas. Such was Agrippa's world.

According to Baptista Porta, a certain breath of life, or soul of the world, pervades the whole organism of the universe, determines its sympathies, and imparts, when received into the soul of the inquirer, the capacity for magical research. Similarly, in the theory of Agrippa, the fifth element, or æther, is the breath of this

World-Soul. Within the spirit thus animating the body of the world lie those creative powers, or qualities, which are the producers of all things visible. The instruments of this universal plastic Power are the stars and the spirits of the elements.

With all the theosophists man is a microcosm—the harmonized epitome of the universe: a something representative of all that is contained in every sphere of being, is lodged in his nature. Thus he finds sympathies everywhere, and potentially knows and operates everywhere. Since, therefore, the inmost ground of his being is in God, and the rest of his nature is a miniature of the universe,—a true self-knowledge is, proportionately, at once a knowledge of God and of creation. The sources of Religion and of Science are alike within him.

Agrippa borrows from the Phædrus four kinds of inspiration,—the Poetic, the Dionysian (revealing visions), the Apollinian (imparting hidden wisdom), and that of which ascendant Venus is the pure patroness—Rapturous Love, which carries us to heaven in ecstasy, and in the mystic union with Deity discloses things unutterable. He compares the soul, as ordinarily in the body, to a light within a dark lantern. In moments of mystical exaltation, it is taken out of its prison-house, the divine element is emancipated, and rays forth immeasurably, transcending space and time. His Platonism, like that of so many, led him from the sensual and the formal to the ideal. Greek was, with reason, accounted dangerous. Plato was a reformer side by side with Luther among the Germans. How loathsome was clerkly

vice beside the contemplative ideal of Plato.

In those days almost every great scholar was also a great traveller. The wanderings of Agrippa and his theosophic brethren contributed not a little to the progress and diffusion of occult science. These errant professors of magic, like those aërial travellers the insects, carried everywhere with them the pollen of their mystic Lily, the symbol of theosophy, and sowed the fructifying particles in minds of kindred growth wherever they came. Their very crosses and buffetings, if they marred their plans of study, widened their field of observation; were fertile in suggestions; compelled to new resources, and multiplied their points of view,—as a modern naturalist, interrupted during his observant morning's walk, and driven under a tree by a shower, may find unexpected compensation in the discovery of a new moss upon its bark, or a long-sought fly among its dropping-leaves.

GOWER. Agrippa's philosophy gives us a highly imaginative view of the world.

ATHERTON. A beautiful romance,—only surpassed by the actual results of modern discovery.

WILLOUGHBY. In those days every fancied likeness was construed into a law of relationship: every semblance became speedily reality;—somewhat as the Chinese believe that sundry fantastic rocks in one of their districts, which are shaped like rude sculptures of strange beasts, do actually enclose animals of corresponding form. And as for the links of connexion supposed to constitute bonds of mysterious sympathy, they are about as soundly deduced as that connexion which our old popular

superstition imagined, between a high wind on Shrove Tuesday night, and mortality among learned men and fish.

GOWER. And yet how fascinating those dreams of science. What a charm, for instance, in a botany which essayed to read in the sprinkled or veined colours of petals and of leaves, in the soft-flushing hues, the winding lines, the dashes of crimson, amethyst, or gold, in the tracery of translucent tissues empurpled or incarnadine,—the planetary cipher, the hieroglyph of a star, the secret mark of elementary spirits—of the gliding Undine or the hovering Sylph.

WILLOUGHBY. So too, in great measure, with anatomy and psychology; for man was said to draw life from the central sun, and growth from the moon, while imagination was the gift of Mercury, and wrath burned down to him out of Mars. He was fashioned from the stars as well as from the earth, and born the lord of both.

ATHERTON. This close connexion between the terrestrial and sidereal worlds was to aid in the approximation of man to God. The aim was noble—to marry Natural Science, the lower, to Revealed Religion, the higher; elevating at once the world and man—the physical and the spiritual; drawing more close the golden chain which binds the world to the footstool of the eternal throne. While a spirit dwelt in all nature, transforming and restoring, and benign influences, entering into the substances and organisms of earth, blessed them according to their capacities of blessing (transforming some with ease to higher forms of beauty, labouring long, and almost lost in the grossness and stubbornness of others), so also in the souls of men wrought the

Divine Spirit, gladly welcomed by the lowly-hearted, darkly resisted by the proud, the grace of God here an odour of life, and there made a deepening of death upon death.

WILLOUGHBY. How close their parallel between the laws of receptivity in the inner world and in the outer. They brought their best, faithfully—these magi,—gold and frankincense and myrrh.

GOWER. Talking of sympathies, I have felt myself for the last quarter of an hour rapidly coming into *rapport* with those old poet-philosophers. I seem to thirst with them to pierce the mysteries of nature. I imagine myself one of their aspiring brotherhood. I say, to the dead let nature be dead; to me she shall speak her heart. The changeful expression, the speechless gestures of this world, the languors and convulsions of the elements, the frowns and smiles of the twin firmaments, shall have their articulate utterance for my ear. With the inward eye I see—here more dim, there distinct—the fine network of sympathetic influences playing throughout the universe, as the dancing meshes of the water-shadows on the sides of a basin of marble——

WILLOUGHBY, (*to Atherton, with a grotesque expression of pity*.) He's off! Almost out of sight already.

GOWER, (*apparently unconscious of the interruption*.) Yes, I will know what legends of the old elemental wars are stored within yon grey promontory, about whose grandsire knees the waves are gambolling; and what is the story of the sea—what are the passions of the deep that work those enamoured sleeps and jealous madnesses; and what the meaning of that thunder-music which the hundred-handed surf smites out from the ebon or tawny keys of rock and of sand along so many far-winding solitary

shores. I will know what the mountains dream of when, under the summer haze, they talk in their sleep, and the common ear can perceive only the tinkle of the countless rills sliding down their sides. There shall be told me how first the Frost-King won his empire, and made the vanquished heights of earth to pass under those ice-harrows which men call glaciers.

ATHERTON. 'The truant Fancy was a wanderer ever!'

GOWER. On the commonest things I see astral influences raining brightness—no homeliness without some sparkle of the upper glory;—as the wain and shoon of the peasant on some autumn night grow phosphorescent, and are sown with electric jewellery. With purged eyesight I behold the nascent and unfledged virtues of herbs and minerals that are growing folded in this swaying nest named earth, look hungering up to their parent stars that hover ministering above, radiant in the topmost boughs of the Mundane Tree. I look into the heart of the Wunderberg, and see, far down, the palaces and churches of an under-world, see branching rivers and lustrous gardens where gold and silver flow and flower; I behold the Wild women, and the jealous dwarfs, and far away, the forlorn haunts of the cairn-people, harping under their mossy stones; while from the central depths sounds up to me the rolling litany of those giants who wait and worship till the Great Restitution-Day. There among those wilderness rocks I discern, under a hood of stone, a hermit Potency, waiting for one to lead him up to the sunny multitudinous surface-world, and send him forth to bless mankind. O long-tarrying Virtue, be it mine to open the doors of thy captivity! Thou mineral Might, thou fragment from the stones of the New Jerusalem,

thou shalt lodge no more in vain among us! I have felt thy secret growing up within my soul, as a shoot of the tree of life, and therewithal will I go forth and heal the nations![214]

ATHERTON. No, not till you have had some supper. I hear the bell.

GOWER. It is the nineteenth century, then? Ah, yes, I remember.

WILLOUGHBY. Away, you rogue!

CHAPTER V.

The reason that Men do not doubt of many things, is, that they never examine common Impressions; they do not dig to the Root, where the Faults and Defects lye; they only debate upon the Branches: They do not examine whether such and such a thing be true, but if it has been so and so understood. It is not inquir'd into, whether *Galen* has said anything to purpose, but whether he has said so or so.—MONTAIGNE.

WILLOUGHBY'S ESSAY—THIRD EVENING.

§ 3. *Theophrastus Paracelsus.*

Due place must be given to the influence of that medical Ishmael, Paracelsus. Born in 1493 at Einsiedeln, near Zurich, he studied medicine at Basle, and travelled Europe for fourteen years

from Sweden to Naples, and from France to Poland. The jealous hatred awakened by a most reasonable project of reform drove him from Basle soon after his return. Vituperated and vituperating, he became a wanderer throughout Germany, everywhere forming, or followed by, successive groups of disciples. He died at the age of forty-eight, in a little inn—but not, as report has long said, drunk on the taproom floor;—a victim, more probably, to the violence of assailants despatched against him by some hostile physicians.[215]

Paracelsus found the medical profession of those days more disastrously incompetent, if possible, than we see it in the pages of Le Sage and Molière. It was so easy of entrance, he complains, as to become the tempting resource of knavery and ignorance everywhere. With a smattering of Greek a doctor might be finished and famous. A dead language was to exorcise deadly maladies. Diseases were encountered by definitions, and fact and experiment unheeded amidst disputes about the sense of Galen, Hippocrates, and Avicenna. When a new life began to struggle to the light from beneath the ruins of scholasticism, the fearless vehemence of such a nature became its appropriate organ. Paracelsus was the first to lecture in the vernacular. Instead of reading and commenting on the text of Galen, or extracting fanciful specifics from Raymond Lully, or John de Rupecissa, he resolved to observe and judge for himself wherever the ravages of disease or war might furnish him with facts. Preposterous as many of his own remedies may have been, he merits the title of a reformer in effect as well as purpose. He applied, with great success, mineral

preparations before unknown, or little used; performed celebrated cures by the use of opium, and exposed the fraudulent pretensions of the alchemist and the astrologer. To the persecution and gross abuse of the profession he replied in torrents of undiluted and inexhaustible Billingsgate. While his velvet-cloaked brethren, with faces blandly inane or portentously inscrutable, mounted, with step of cat-like softness, to the chamber of the obese burgomaster or the fashionable lady, Paracelsus gloried in grandiloquent shabbiness and boisterous vulgarity. He boasted that he had picked up many a hint while chatting as an equal with pedlars, waggoners, and old women. He loved to drain his can on the ale-bench before wayside hostelries with boors such as Ostade has painted. Ragged and dusty, footing it with his knapsack on his back under a broiling sun, he would swear that there lay more wisdom in his beard than in all the be-doctored wiseacres of all the universities of Europe.

On the basis of principles substantially the same with those represented by Agrippa, Paracelsus developed, in his own way, the doctrine of signatures, and the relationships of the macrocosm and the microcosm.

The special illumination of the Holy Ghost was not more essential to the monastic perfection of preceding mystics, than to the success of the theosophist in that devout pursuit of science inculcated by Paracelsus. The true Physician—he who would be wise indeed in the mysteries of nature, must seek with ceaseless importunity the light that cometh from above. In the Scriptures,

and in the Cabbala, lies the key to all knowledge. Medicine has four pillars: (1) *Philosophy*, generally equivalent, as he uses it, to physiology,—the study of the true nature of material substances in their relation to the microcosm, man; (2) *Astronomy*, embracing especially the influences of the heavenly bodies on the human frame; (3) *Alchemy*, not gold-making, but the preparation of specifics—chemistry applied to medicine; (4) *Religion*, whereby the genuine professor of the healing art is taught of God, and works in reliance on, and union with, Him.[216] In the spirit of the ancient mystics he describes the exaltation of one whose soul is inwardly absorbed, so that the ordinary operation of the external senses is suspended. A man thus divinely intoxicated, lost in thoughts so profound, may seem, says Paracelsus, a mere fool to the men of this world, but in the eyes of God he is the wisest of mankind, a partaker of the secrecy of the Most High.[217] Like Agrippa (and with as good reason) Paracelsus lays great stress on Imagination, using the term, apparently, to express the highest realization of faith. Bacon observes that Imagination is with Paracelsus almost equivalent to Fascination. He speaks of the Trinity as imaged in man, in the Heart, (*Gemüth*), in Faith, and in Imagination,—the three forms of that spiritual nature in us which he declares a fiery particle from the Divine Substance. By the disposition of the Heart we come to God; by Faith to Christ; and by Imagination we receive the Holy Spirit. Thus blessed (did we but truly know our own hearts) nothing would be impossible to us. This is the true magic, the gift of Faith, which, were its strength sufficient, might even now cast out devils, heal

the sick, raise the dead, and remove mountains. [218]

In the sixteenth century we still trace the influence of that doctrine, so fertile in mysticism, which Anselm bequeathed to the schoolmen of the middle age. We are to know by ascending to the fount of being, and in the primal Idea, whence all ideas flow, to discern the inner potency of all actual existence. But in Paracelsus we see especial prominence given to two new ideas which greatly modify, and apparently facilitate the researches of theosophy. One of these is the theory of divine manifestation by *Contraries*,—teaching (instead of the old division of Being and Non-being) the development of the primal ground of existence by antithesis, and akin, in fact, to the principle of modern speculative philosophy, according to which the Divine Being is the absorption (*Aufhebung*) of those contraries which his self-evolution, or *lusus amoris*, has posited. This doctrine is the key-note in the system of Jacob Behmen. The other is the assumption that man—the micro-cosm, is, as it were, a miniature of the macro-cosm—the great outer world,—a little parliament to which every part of the universe sends its deputy,—his body a compound from the four circles of material existence,—his animal nature correspondent to, and dependent on, the upper firmament,—and his spirit, a divine efflux wherein, though fallen, there dwells a magnetic tendency towards its source, which renders redemption possible through Christ. There is nothing, accordingly, in the heavens above, or in the earth beneath, which may not be found in the minor world of man. On this principle, further, depends the whole system of signatures in its

application to the cure of human malady.[219]

Paracelsus defines true magic as the knowledge of the hidden virtues and operations of natural objects. The Cabbala imparts instruction concerning heavenly mysteries, and teaches the loftiest approximation to the Supreme. By the combination of these sources of knowledge we come to understand, and can partially produce, that marriage between heavenly influences and terrestrial objects, called, in the language of theosophy, Gamahea.[220] True magic is founded solely 'on the Ternary and Trinity of God,' and works in harmony with that universal life which, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, animates all nature,—even the granite, the ocean, and the flower. The magic of Paracelsus disclaims the use of all ceremonies, conjurations, bannings, and blessings, and will rest solely on the power of that faith to which the promise was given, that spirits should be subject to it, and mountains plucked up at its fiat.[221] We are here far enough from the theurgic ritual of Iamblichus. But large room still remained for superstitious practice, and Paracelsus could not refuse his faith to the potency of certain magical words, of waxen images, and of pentacula inscribed with magic characters. The universal life of nature was mythologically personified in the sylphs and gnomes, the salamanders and undines, somewhat as the thought of supernatural presence found its representation in the nymphs, the nereids, and the hamadryads, of ancient Grecian fable.[222]

In the chemistry of Paracelsus all matter is composed, in varying proportions, of salt—the firm coherent principle, of quicksilver—the fluid,

and of sulphur—the fiery, or combustible.[223]

The theory of signatures proceeded on the supposition that every creature bears, in some part of its structure or outward conformation, the indication of the character or virtue inherent in it—the representation, in fact, of its idea or soul. Southey relates, in his *Doctor*, a legend, according to which he who should drink the blood of a certain unknown animal would be enabled to hear the voice and understand the speech of plants. Such a man might stand on a mountain at sunrise, and hearken to their language, from the delicate voices of wild flowers and grass blades in the dew, to the large utterance of the stately trees making their obeisance in the fresh morning airs;—might hear each enumerating its gifts and virtues, and blessing the Creator for his bestowments. The knowledge thus imparted by a charm, the student of sympathies sought as the result of careful observation. He essayed to read the character of plants by signs in their organization, as the professor of palmistry announced that of men by the lines of the hand. Such indications were sometimes traced from the resemblance of certain parts of a plant to portions of the human frame, sometimes they were sought in the more recondite relations of certain plants to certain stars. Thus citrons, according to Paracelsus, are good for heart affections because they are heart-shaped; and because, moreover, they have the colour of the sun, and the heart is, in a sort, the sun of the body. Similarly, the *saphena riparum* is to be applied to fresh wounds, because its leaves are spotted as with flecks of blood. A species of *dentaria*, whose roots resemble teeth, is a cure for toothache and scurvy.[224]

The theosophists, working on principles very similar to those of the alchemists, though with worthier and larger purpose, inherited the extraordinary language of their predecessors. That wisdom of Gamahea, which was to explain and facilitate the union of the celestial and terrestrial in the phenomena and processes of nature, naturally produced a phraseology which was a confused mixture of theological, astrological, and chemical terms. To add to the obscurity, every agent or process was veiled under symbolic names and fantastic metaphors, frequently changing with the caprice of the adept. Thus the white wine of Lully is called by Paracelsus the glue of the eagle; and Lully's red wine is, with Paracelsus, the blood of the Red Lion. Often the metaphor runs into a kind of parable, as with Bernard of Treviso. He describes what is understood to be the solution of gold in quicksilver, under the regimen of Saturn, leaving a residuum of black paste, in the following oriental style:—

'The king, when he comes to the fountain, leaving all strangers behind him, enters the bath alone, clothed in golden robes, which he puts off, and gives to Saturn, his first chamberlain, from whom he receiveth a black velvet suit.'[225]

In like manner, in the *Secretum Magicum* attributed (to Paracelsus), we find mention of the chemical Virgin Mary, of chemical deaths and resurrections, falls and redemptions, adopted from theological phraseology. We read of the union of the philosophic Sol,—Quintessentia Solis, or Fifth Wisdom of Gold, with his Father in the Golden Heaven, whereby imperfect substances are brought to the perfection of the Kingdom of Gold. [226]

The conclusion of Weidenfeld's treatise on the Green Lion of Paracelsus may suffice as a specimen of this fanciful mode of expression, which can never speak directly, and which, adopted by Jacob Behmen, enwraps his obscure system in sevenfold darkness:—

'Let us therefore desist from further pursuit of the said Green Lion which we have pursued through the meads and forest of Diana, through the way of philosophical Saturn, even to the vineyards of Philosophy. This most pleasant place is allowed the disciples of this art to recreate themselves here, after so much pains and sweat, dangers of fortune and life, exercising the work of women and the sports of children, being content with the most red blood of the Lion, and eating the white or red grapes of Diana, the wine of which being purified, is the most secret secret of all the more secret Chymy; as being the white or red wine of Lully, the nectar of the ancients, and their only desire, the peculiar refreshment of the adopted sons, but the heart-breaking and stumblingblock of the scornful and ignorant.'[227]

CHAPTER VI.

Men. I pray thee tell me,
For thou art a great dreamer—

Chi. I can dream, sir,
If I eat well and sleep well.

Men. Was it never by dream or apparition opened to
thee—
What the other world was, or Elysium?
Didst never travel in thy sleep?

BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER: *The Mad Lover*.

WILLOUGHBY'S ESSAY—FOURTH EVENING.

§ 4. *Jacob Behmen and his Aurora.*

Let us now crave acquaintance with that most notable theosophist, Jacob Behmen.

It is evening, and in the little town of Görlitz the business of the day is over. The shopkeepers are chatting together before their doors, or drinking their beer at tables set out in the open air; and comfortable citizens are taking wife and children for a walk beyond the town. There is a shoemaker's shop standing close to the bridge, and under its projecting gable, among the signs and samples of the craft, may be read the name of Jacob Boehme. Within this house, in a small and scantily-furnished room, three men are seated at a table whereon lie a few books and papers and a great heap of newly-gathered plants and wild-flowers. The three friends have just returned from a long ramble in the fields which lie without the Neissethor. That little man, apparently about forty years of age, of withered, almost mean, aspect, with low forehead, prominent temples, hooked nose, short and scanty beard, and quick blue eyes, who talks with a thin, gentle voice, is Jacob.[228] On one side of him sits Dr. Kober, a medical man

of high repute in Görlitz. He it is who gathered in their walk these flowers, and now he takes up one of them from time to time, and asks Behmen to conjecture, from its form and colour, its peculiar properties. Often has he to exchange looks of wonder with his learned friend on the other side the table, at the marvellous insight of their uneducated host. This third member of the trio is Dr. Balthasar Walter, the Director of the Laboratory at Dresden, a distinguished chemist, who has travelled six years in the East, has mastered all the scientific wisdom of the West, and who now believes that his long search after the true philosophy has ended happily at last, beneath the roof of the Görlitz shoemaker. He, too, will sometimes pronounce a Greek or an Oriental word, and is surprised to find how nearly Behmen divines its significance, from the mere sound and the movement of the lips in the formation of its syllables.[229] When Walter utters the word *Idea*, Behmen springs up in a transport, and declares that the sound presented to him the image of a heavenly virgin of surpassing beauty. The conversation wanders on—about some theosophic question, it may be, or the anxious times, or the spread of Behmen's writings through Silesia and Saxony, with the persecutions or the praises following; while good Frau Behmen, after putting a youngster or two to bed, is busy downstairs in the kitchen, preparing a frugal supper.

Jacob Behmen was born at the village of Alt-Seidenberg, near Görlitz, in the year 1575. As a child, he was grave and thoughtful beyond his years. The wonders of fairy tradition were said to have become objects of immediate vision to the

boy, as were the mysteries of religion, in after years, to the man. Among the weather-stained boulders of a haunted hill, the young herd-boy discovered the golden hoard of the mountain folk —fled in terror, and could never again find out the spot.[230]

While not yet twenty, Behmen saw life as a travelling apprentice. The tender conscience and the pensive temperament of the village youth shrank from the dissolute and riotous companionship of his fellow-craftsmen. Like George Fox, whom at this period he strongly resembled, he found the Church scarcely more competent than the world to furnish the balm which should soothe a spirit at once excited and despondent. Among the clergy, the shameful servility of some, the immoral life of others, the bigotry of almost all, repelled him on every hand. The pulpit was the whipping-post of imaginary Papists and Calvinists. The churches were the fortified places in the seat of war. They were spiritually what ours were literally in King Stephen's days, when the mangonel and the cross-bow bolts stood ready on the battlemented tower, when military stores were piled in the crypt, and a moat ran through the churchyard. The *Augsburg Confession* and the *Formula Concordiæ* were appealed to as though of inspired authority. The names of Luther and Melanchthon were made the end of controversy and of freedom. The very principle of Protestantism was forsaken when ecclesiastics began to prove their positions, not by Scripture, but by Articles of Faith. So Behmen wandered about, musing, with his Bible in his hand, and grieved sore because of the strife among Christian brethren, because evil

everywhere was spreading and fruitful, and goodness so rare and so distressed; because he saw, both near and far away, such seeming waste and loss of human souls. A profound melancholy took possession of him—partly that the truth which would give rest was for himself so hard to find, but most for the sight of his eyes which he saw, when he looked abroad upon God's rational creatures. On his return from his travels he settled in Görlitz, married early, and worked hard at his trade. Everywhere these anxious questing thoughts about life's mystery are with him, disquieting. He reads many mystical and astrological books, not improbably, even thus early, Schwenkfeld and Paracelsus.[231] But the cloudy working of his mind is not soon to give place to sunshine and clear sky. He is to be found still with the pelican and the bittern in the desolate places where the salt-pits glisten, and the nettles breed, and the wild beasts lie down, and the cedar work is uncovered,—among the untimely ruins of that City of Hope which had almost won back Christendom in the resistless prime of Luther.

At last, upon an ever-memorable day, as he sat meditating in his room, he fell, he knew not how, into a kind of trance. The striving, climbing sorrows of his soul had brought him to this luminous table-land. A halcyon interval succeeded to the tempest. He did not seek, he gazed; he was surrounded by an atmosphere of glory. He enjoyed for seven days an unruffled soul-sabbath. He looked into the open secret of creation and providence. Such seemed his ecstasy. In Amadis of Greece an enchanter shuts up the heroes and princesses of the tale in the Tower of the

Universe, where all that happened in the world was made to pass before them, as in a magic glass, while they sat gazing, bound by the age-long spell. So Behmen believed that the principles of the Universal Process were presented to his vision as he sat in his study at Görlitz. We may say that it was the work of all his after days to call to mind, to develop for himself, and to express for others, the seminal suggestions of that and one following glorious dream.

Behmen was twenty-five years of age when the subject of this first illumination. He stated that he was thrown into his trance while gazing on the dazzling light reflected from a tin vessel, as the rays of the sun struck into his room. Distrusting at first the nature of the vision, he walked out into the fields to dissipate the phantasmagoria; but the strange hues and symbols were still present, and seemed to point him to the heart and secret of the universe. For several years his gift lay hidden. Behmen was known as a quiet, meditative, hard-working man, fond of books; otherwise scarcely distinguishable from other cobblers. Ten years after the first manifestation he believed himself the recipient of a second, not, like the former, mediated by anything external; and revealing, with greater fulness and order, what before lay in comparative confusion. To fix this communication in a form which might be of abiding service to him, he began to write his *Aurora*.

But he shall tell his own story, as he did tell it, one-and-twenty years later, to his friend Caspar Lindern.

'I saw and knew,' he says, 'the Being of all Beings, the Byss (*Grund*) and the Abyss: *item*, the birth of

the Holy Trinity; the origin and primal state of this world and of all creatures through the Divine Wisdom. I knew and saw in myself all the three worlds,—*i.e.* (1) the divine angelic or paradisiacal world; then, (2) the dark world, as the original of nature, as to the fire; and (3) this external visible world, as a creation and out-birth, or as a substance spoken forth out of the two inner spiritual worlds. Moreover, I saw and had cognizance of the whole Being in good and in evil —how each had its origin in the other, and how the Mother did bring forth;—and this all moved me not merely to the height of wonder, but made me to rejoice exceedingly. (Incredible as it may appear, this passage *has* a meaning, which may become apparent to some readers after a perusal of what is said farther on, in explanation of Behmen's system.)

'Soon it came strongly into my mind that I should set the same down in writing, for a memorial, albeit I could hardly compass the understanding thereof in my external man, so as to write it on paper. I felt that with such great mysteries I must set to work as a child that goes to school. In my inward man I saw it well, as in a great deep, for I saw right through as into a chaos in which everything lay wrapped, but the unfolding thereof I found impossible.

'Yet from time to time it opened itself within me, as in a growing plant. For the space of twelve years I carried it about within me—was, as it were, pregnant therewith, feeling a mighty inward impulse, before I could bring it forth in any external form; till afterwards it fell upon me, like a bursting shower that hitteth wheresoever it

lighteth, as it will. So it was with me, and whatsoever I could bring into outwardness that I wrote down.

'Thereafter the sun shone on me a good while, yet not steadily and without interval, and when that light had withdrawn itself I could scarce understand my own work. And this was to show man that his knowledge is not his own, but God's, and that God in man's soul knoweth what and how he will.

'This writing of mine I purposed to keep by me all my life, and not to give it into the hands of any man. But it came to pass in the providence of the Most High, that I entrusted a person with part of it, by whose means it was made known without my knowledge. Whereupon my first book, the *Aurora*, was taken from me, and because many wondrous things were therein revealed, not to be comprehended in a moment by the mind of man, I had to suffer no little at the hands of the worldly-wise—(*von den Vernunft-weisen*).

'For three years I saw no more of this said book, and thought it verily clean dead and gone, till some learned men sent me copies therefrom, exhorting me not to bury my talent. To this counsel my outward reason was in no wise willing to agree, having suffered so much already. My reason was very weak and timorous at that time, the more so as the light of grace had then been withdrawn from me some while, and did but smoulder within, like a hidden fire. So I was filled with trouble. Without was contempt, within, a fiery driving; and what to do I knew not, till the breath of the Most High came to my help again, and awoke within me a new life. Then it was that

I attained to a better style of writing, likewise to a deeper and more thorough knowledge. I could reduce all better to outward form—as, indeed, my book concerning *The Threefold Life through the Three Principles* doth fully show, and as the godly reader whose heart is opened will see.

'So, therefore, have I written, not from book-learning, or the doctrine and science of men, but from my own book which was opened within me, —the book of the glorious image of God, which it was vouchsafed to me to read: 'tis therein I have studied—as a child in its mother's house, that sees what its father doth, and mimics the same in its child's-play. I need no other book than this.

'My book has but three leaves—the three principles of Eternity. Therein I find all that Moses and the prophets, Christ and his apostles, have taught. Therein I find the foundation of the world and all mystery,—yet, not I, but the Spirit of the Lord doth it, in such measure as He pleaseth.

'For hundreds of times have I prayed him that if my knowledge were not for his glory and the edifying of my brethren, he will take it from me, only keeping me in his love. But I have found that with all my earnest entreaty the fire within me did but burn the more, and it is in this glow, and in this knowledge, that I have produced my works....

'Let no man conceive of me more highly than he here seeth, for the work is none of mine; I have it only in that measure vouchsafed me of the Lord; I am but his instrument wherewith he doeth what he will. This, I say, my dear friend, once for all, that none may seek in me one other than I am, as though I were a man of high skill and intellect,

whereas I live in weakness and childhood, and the simplicity of Christ. In that child's work which he hath given me is my pastime and my play; 'tis there I have my delight, as in a pleasure-garden where stand many glorious flowers; therewith will I make myself glad awhile, till such time as I regain the flowers of Paradise in the new man.'[232]

This letter alludes to the way in which the *Aurora* was made public without the knowledge of its author. The friend to whom he showed it was Karl von Endern, who, struck by its contents, caused a copy to be taken, from which others were rapidly multiplied. The book fell into the hands of Gregory Richter, the chief pastor in Görlitz. Well may Behmen say that the *Aurora* contained some things not readily apprehended by human reason. A charitable man would have forgiven its extravagances, catching some glimpses of a sincere and religious purpose; a wise man would have said nothing about it; a man the wisest of the wise would have been the last to pretend to understand it. But Richter—neither charitable nor wise exceedingly, nor even moderately stocked with good sense—fell into a blundering passion, and railed at Behmen from the pulpit, as he sat in his place at church, crimson, but patient, the centre of all eyes.

Behmen had already rendered himself obnoxious to Richter by a temperate but firm remonstrance against an act of ecclesiastical oppression. Now, his pretensions seem openly to militate against that mechanical religious monopoly with which Richter imagined himself endowed,—a privilege as jealously watched and as profitably exercised

by such men as that of the muezzins of the mosque of Bajazet, who are alone entitled to supply the faithful with the praying compasses that indicate the orthodox attitude. The insolent, heretical, blasphemous cobbler shall find no mercy. Richter loudly calls for the penalties of law, to punish a fanatic who has taught (as he declares) that the Son of God is Quicksilver! Görlitz magistrates, either of the Shallow family, or, it may be, overborne by the blustering Rector, pronounce Behmen 'a villain full of piety,' and banish him the town. But by the next day the tide would appear to have turned, and the exile is brought back with honour. The shoemaker's booth is the scene of a little ovation, while Richter fumes at the parsonage. Behmen, however, must give up the manuscript of the *Aurora*, and is required for the future to stick to his last.

His book, as it became known, procured him many influential friends among men of learning and men of rank throughout Lusatia. He was exhorted not to hide his talent, and the ensuing five years became a period of incessant literary activity.[233] The scholarship of friends like Kober and Walther assisted him to supply some of the defects of his education; the liberality of others provided for his moderate wants, and enabled him to forsake his business for his books.[234] Once more did his old enemy, the primarius Richter, appear against him, with a pamphlet of virulent pasquinades in Latin verse. Behmen issued an elaborate reply, entering minutely into every charge, sending the clerical curses 'home to roost,' and praying for the enlightenment of his persecutor with exasperating good temper.[235] The magistrates, fluttered and anxious, requested him

to leave Görlitz. Knightly friends opened their castle gates to him; he preferred retirement at Dresden. There, a public disputation he held with some eminent divines and men of science, was said to have excited general admiration. He returned to Görlitz in his last illness, to die in the midst of his family. He expired early on Sunday morning, on the twenty-first of November, 1624, in his fiftieth year. He asked his son Tobias if he heard the beautiful music, and bade those about him set the doors open that the sounds might enter. After receiving the sacrament, he breathed his last, at the hour of which a presentiment of dissolution had warned him. His last words were, 'Now I am going to Paradise!'[236]

Note to page 80.

Behmen's learned friends were accustomed thus to test the insight they so revered, and would occasionally attempt to mislead his sagacity by wrong terms and entrapping questions; but always, we are assured, without success. See *Ein Schreiben von einem vornehmen Patritio und Rathsverwandten zu Görlitz wegen seel. Jac. Behmen's Person und Schriften*, appended to Franckenberg's Life of Behmen.

The rationale of this peculiar significance of letters and syllables he gives in the following passage:—

When man fell into sin, he was removed from the inmost birth and set in the other two, which presently encompassed him, and mingled their influences with him and in him (*inqualireten mit ihme und in ihme*), as in their own peculiar possession; and man received the spirit and the whole generation of

the sidereal, and also of the external birth. Therefore he now speaks all words according to the indwelling generative principle of nature. For the spirit of man, which stands in the sidereal birth, and combines with all nature, and is as all nature itself, shapes the word according to the indwelling principle of birth. When he sees anything he gives it a name answering to its peculiar property or virtue; and if he does this he must fashion the word in the form, and generate it with his voice in the way in which the thing he names generates; and herein lies the kernel of the whole understanding of the Godhead.—*Aurora*, cap. xix. §§ 74-76. On this principle he examines, syllable by syllable, the opening words of Genesis—not those of the Hebrew, but the German version (!), as follows:—'*Am Anfang schuff Gott*,' &c. These words we must very carefully consider. The word AM takes its rise in the heart, and goes as far as the lips. There it is arrested, and goes sounding back to whence it came. Now, this shows that the sound went forth from the heart of God, and encompassed the entire *locus* of the world; but when it was found to be evil, then the sound returned to its place again. The word AN pushes forth from the heart to the mouth, and has a long stress. But when it is pronounced, it closes in its *sedes* in the midst with the roof of the mouth, and is half without and half within. This signifies that the heart of God felt repugnance at the corruption of the world, and cast the corrupt nature from him, but again seized and stayed it in the midst by his heart. Just as the tongue arrests the word, and retains it half without and half within, so the heart of God would not utterly reject the enflamed Salitter, but would defeat the schemes and malice of the Devil, and finally restore the other.—*Aurora*, cap. xviii. §§ 48-52. A similar precious piece of nonsense

is to be found, cap. xviii. §§ 72, &c. of which *Barmherzig* is the thema. He declares, in another place, that when the spiritual Aurora shall shine from the rising of the sun to the going-down of the same, RA. RA. R.P. shall be driven into banishment, and with him AM. R. P. These are secret words, he says, only to be understood in the language of nature.—*Aurora*, xxvi. 120.

Behmen was indebted to his conversations with men like Kober and Walther for much of his terminology, and probably to the suggestions awakened by such intercourse for much of the detailed application of his system. See *Lebens-lauff*, § 20; and compare the *Clavis*, or *Schlüssel etlicher vornehmen Puncten*, &c.

CHAPTER VII.

When I myself from mine own self do quit,
  And each thing else; then all-spreaden love
To the vast Universe my soul doth fit,
  Makes me half equall to all-seeing Jove.
My mighty wings high stretch'd then clapping light,
I brush the stars and make them shine more bright.

Then all the works of God with close embrace
  I dearly hug in my enlarged arms,
All the hid pathes of heavenly love I trace,
  And boldly listen to his secret charms.
Then clearly view I where true light doth rise,
And where eternal Night low-pressed lies.

HENRY MORE.

Willoughby's Essay—Fifth Evening.

§ 5. *Jacob Behmen—his Materials and Style of Workmanship.*

It has been too much the custom to regard Jacob Behmen as a kind of speculative Melchisedek—a prodigy without doctrinal father or mother. Let us endeavour to form a correct estimate of the debt he owes to his mystical predecessors.

The much-pondering shoemaker consulted the writings of Schwenkfeld and Weigel in his distress. He found these authors crying unceasingly, 'Barren are the schools; barren are all forms; barren—worse than barren, these exclusive creeds, this deadly polemic letter.' Weigel bids him withdraw into himself and await, in total passivity, the incoming of the divine Word, whose light reveals unto the babe what is hidden from the wise and prudent. By the same writer he is reminded that he lives in God, and taught that if God also dwell in him, then is he even here in Paradise—the state of regenerate souls. Paracelsus extols the power of faith to penetrate the mysteries of nature, and shows him how a plain man, with his Bible only, if he be filled with the Spirit and carried out of himself by divine communication, may seem to men a fool, but is in truth more wise than all the doctors. Weigel says that man, as body, soul, and spirit, belongs to three worlds—the terrestrial, the astral, and the celestial. Both Weigel and Paracelsus teach him the doctrine of the microcosm. They assure him that as divine illumination reveals to him the

mysteries of his own being, he will discern proportionately the secrets of external nature. They teach that all language, art, science, handicraft, exists potentially in man; that all apparent acquisition from without is in reality a revival and evolution of that which is within.

These instructors furnish the basis of Behmen's mysticism. Having drunk of this somewhat heady vintage, he is less disposed than ever to abandon his search. He will sound even those abysmal questions so often essayed, and so often, after all, resigned, as beyond the range of human faculties. If, according to the promise, importunate prayer can bring him light, then shall light be his. When he asks for an answer from above to his speculative enquiry into the nature of the Trinity, the processes of creation, the fall of angels, the secret code of those warring forces whose conflict produces the activity and vicissitudes of life, he does not conceive that he implores any miraculous intervention. Provision was made, he thought, for knowledge thus beyond what is written, in the very constitution of man's nature. Such wisdom was but the realization, by the grace of God, of our inborn possibilities. It was making actual what had otherwise been only potential. It was bringing into consciousness an implicit acquaintance with God and nature which was involved in the very idea of man as the offspring of the Creator and the epitome of creation.

But of what avail is light on any minor province of enquiry, while the fundamental perplexity is unsolved,—Whence and what is evil, and why so masterful? How could King Vortigern build his great fortress upon Salisbury Plain, when every

day's work was overthrown in the night by an earthquake—the result of that nocturnal combat in the bowels of the earth between the blood-red and the milk-white dragons? And how, pray, was Behmen to come to rest about his own doubts—far less erect a system,—till he had reconciled the contradiction at the root of all? The eternal opposites must harmonize in some higher unity. Here Paracelsus is Behmen's Merlin. The doctrine of Development by Contraries was passed, in the torch-race of opinion, from Sebastian Frank to Paracelsus, and from him to Weigel. According to this theory, God manifests himself in opposites. The peace of Unity develops into the strife of the Manifold. All things consist in Yea and Nay. The light must have shadow, day night, laughter tears, health sickness, hope fear, good evil, or they would not be what they are. Only by resistance, only in collision, is the spark of vitality struck out, is power realized, and progress possible. Of this hypothesis I shall have more to say hereafter. It is the chief estate of Behmen's inheritance. Theosophy bequeathed him, in addition, sundry lesser lands;—namely, the Paracelsian Triad of Sulphur, Salt, and Mercury; the doctrine of the vitality of the world, with the 'Fifth Element,' or 'Breath of Life,' for Mundane Soul; the theory of sympathies, stellar influence, signatures; and the alchemico-astrotheologico jargon of the day.

Such, then, were Behmen's principal materials. His originality is displayed in a most ingenious arrangement and development of them; especially in their application to theology and the interpretation of Scripture.

The description furnished us by Behmen himself

of the deciding epoch of his life, indicates the kind of illumination to which he laid claim. The light thus enjoyed was not shed upon a mind from which all the inscriptions of memory had been effaced, to produce that blank so coveted by the mystics of a former day. The cloud of glory magnified and refracted the results of those theosophic studies to which he confesses himself addicted.

The topographer of Fairyland, Ludwig Tieck, tells us that when the Elf-children scatter gold-dust on the ground, waving beds of roses or of lilies instantly spring up. They plant the seed of the pine, and in a moment mimic pine-trees rise under their feet, carrying upward, with the growth of their swaying arms, the laughing little ones. So swiftly, so magically—not by labouring experiment and gradual induction, but in the blissful stillness of one ecstatic and consummate week,—arose the Forms and Principles of Behmen's system, and with them rose the seer. But how, when the season of vision is over, shall he retain and represent the complex intricacies of the Universal Organism in the heart of which he found himself? Memory can only recal the mystery in fragments. Reflection can with difficulty supplement and harmonize those parts. Language can describe but superficially and in succession what the inner eye beheld throughout and at once. The fetters of time and space must fall once more on the recovered consciousness of daily life. We have heard Behmen describe the throes he underwent, the difficulties he overcame, as he persevered in the attempt to give expression to the suggestions he received.[237] How long it is before he sees

> The lovely members of the mighty whole—
> Till then confused and shapeless to his soul,—
> Distinct and glorious grow upon his sight,
> The fair enigmas brighten from the Night.

To us, who do not share Behmen's delusion, who see in his condition the extraordinary, but nowise the supernatural, it is clear that this difficulty was so great, not from the sublime character of these cosmical revelations, but because of the utter confusion his thoughts were in. Glimpses, and snatches, and notions of possible reply to his questions, raying through as from holes in a shutter, reveal the clouds of dust in that unswept brain of his, where medical recipes and theological doctrines, the hard names of alchemy and the super-subtile fancies of theosophy, have danced a whirlwind saraband. Yet he believed himself not without special divine aid in his endeavours to develop into speech the seed of thought deposited within him. He apologises for bad spelling, bad grammar, abbreviations, omissions, on the ground of the impetuosity with which the divine impulse hurried forward his feeble pen.[238] Unfortunately for a hypothesis so flattering, he improves visibly by practice, like ordinary folk.

It is scarcely necessary to observe that Behmen and the mystics are partly right and partly wrong in turning from books and schools to intuition, when they essay to pass the ordinary bounds of knowledge and to attain a privileged gnosis. It is true that no method of human wisdom will reveal to men the hidden things of the divine kingdom. But it is also true that dreamy gazing will not disclose them either. Scholarship may not scale

the heights of the unrevealed, and neither assuredly may ignorance. There is nothing to choose between far-seeing Lynceus and a common sailor of the Argo, when the object for which they look out together is not yet above the horizon. The latter, at all events, should not regard the absence of superior endowment as an advantage.

In the more high-wrought forms of theopathetic mysticism we have seen reason regarded as the deadly enemy of rapture. The surpassing union which takes place in ecstasy is dissolved on the first movement of reflection. Self-consciousness is the lamp whereby the ill-fated Psyche at once discerns and loses the celestial lover, whose visits cease with secrecy and night. But Behmen devoutly employs all the powers of a most active mind to combine, to order, to analyse, to develop, the heavenly data.

Protestant mysticism generally is, like Behmen's, communicative. The mysticism of the Reformation and of the Counter-Reformation afford, in this respect, a striking contrast. That of the Romanists is, for the most part, a veiled thing, not to be profaned by speech. It is an ineffable privilege which description would deprive of its awe. It is commonly a contrivance employed for effect—a flash, and darkness. It is a distinction, in some cases, for services past; an individual preparation, in others, for services to come. The special revelation of the Protestant is a message to some man for his fellow-men. It at least contemplates something practical. It is generally reformatory. The vision of the Romish saint is a private token of favour, or a scar of honour, or a decoration from the court of heaven, like a cross or star.

The illumination of Behmen differs, again, from that of Swedenborg, in that he does not profess to have held communication with spirits, or to have passed into other worlds and states of being. While his doctrine is, in many respects, less subjective than that of Swedenborg, his mode of vision, so entirely internal, is more so.

The three-leaved book, says Behmen, is within me; hence all my teaching. In man are the three gates opening on the three worlds. Behmen's heaven is not wholly above the sky. The subterranean regions cannot contain his hell. The inner and spiritual sphere underlies everywhere the material and outward.[239] As with those hollow balls of carved ivory that come to us from the East, one is to be discerned within the other through the open tracery. The world is like some kinds of fruit—a plum or apple, for instance,—and has its rind-men, its pulp-men, and its core, or kernel-men; yet all with the same faculties,—only the first live merely on the surface of things; the last perceive how the outer form is determined by the central life within. Man intersects the spiritual, sidereal, and terrestrial worlds, as a line from the centre to the outermost of three concentric circles. Behmen would say that his insight arose from his being aided by Divine Grace to live along the whole line of his nature, with a completeness attained by few. He travels to and fro on his radius. When recipient of celestial truth he is near the centre; when he strives to give utterance and form to such intimations, he approaches the circumference. When asked how he came to know so much about our cosmogony, and about the origin and œconomy of the angelic world, he would answer, 'Because I have lived in

that region of myself which opens out upon those regions. I need not change my place to have entrance into the heavenly sphere. I took no Mahomet's flight. The highest and the inmost, in the deepest sense, are one.'[240] So it is as though man stood at a spot where three rivers are about to join; as though to drink of the water of each was to give him knowledge of the kind of country through which each had passed; how one ran embrowned out of marshy lakes—through wealthy plains—under the bridges of cities,—washing away the refuse of manufactures; while the second came ruddy from rocks, red with their iron rust,—came carrying white blossoms and silver-grey willow leaves from glens far up the country, deepfolded in hanging woods; and the water of the third, ice-cold and hyaline, presented to the soul, as it touched the lips, visions of the glacier-portcullis from under whose icicles it leaped at first, and of those unsullied tracts of heavenward snow which fed its childhood at the bidding of the sun, and watched it from the heights of eternal silence.

The *Aurora* was the firstfruit of the illumination thus realized. He composed it, he reminds us, for himself alone, to give him a hold against any refluent doubt that might threaten to sweep him back into the waves. It is the worst written of all his treatises. With respect to it, the answer of Shakspeare's Roman shoemaker gives to Marullus may be adopted by our Teuton—'Truly, sir, in respect of a fine workman, I am but, as you would say, a cobbler.' Yet this botched performance best renders us the genuine Behmen, as he was when first the afflatus came, before greater leisure for

reading and study, and intercourse with men of station or scholarship had given him culture. This *Aurora*, then, over which Karl von Endern pored in his simplicity till he rose therefrom with a bewildered admiration and a sense of baffled amazement, physically expressed by a feverish headache,—over whose pages Gregory Richter galloped with scornful hoof, striking out pishes and pshaws and bahs over its flinty ruggedness,—this *Aurora*—a dawn opening for Behmen with such threatening weather within and without—what kind of book does it appear to us?

It is at first with curiosity, then with impatience, and ere long with the irritation of inevitable fatigue, that we read those wordy pages Behmen wrote with such a furious impetus. How wide the distance between him and his readers now! Behold him early in his study, with bolted door. The boy must see to the shop to-day; no sublunary cares of awl and leather, customers and groschen, must check the rushing flood of thought. The sunshine streams in—emblem, to his 'high-raised phantasy,' of a more glorious light. As he writes, the thin cheeks are flushed, the grey eye kindles, the whole frame is damp and trembling with excitement. Sheet after sheet is covered. The headlong pen, too precipitate for calligraphy, for punctuation, for spelling, for syntax, dashes on. The lines which darken down the waiting page are, to the writer, furrows into which heaven is raining a driven shower of celestial seed. On the chapters thus fiercely written the eye of the modern student rests, cool and critical, wearily scanning paragraphs digressive as Juliet's nurse, and protesting with contracted eyebrow, that this easy writing is abominably hard to read. We

survey this monument of an extinct enthusiasm,—this structure, many-chambered, intricate, covering so broad a space,—as does the traveller the remains of the Pompeian baths;—there are the cells and channels of the hypocaust, dusty and open to the day, the fires long since gone out, and all that made the busy echoing halls and winding passages so full of life—the laughter, the quarrel, the chatter of the vestibule, imagination must supply, while Signor Inglese, beneath a large umbrella and a straw hat, doth gaze and muse, with smarting eyes and liquefying body.

Behmen does not suffer much more in this respect than all minds of his class must suffer. Imagination, with its delicate sympathy, will know how to make allowance for him; but reason will not attempt to rescue him from condign sentence of unreadableness. It is obvious, after all, that the good man's inspiration was not born of the mania Plato describes as 'divine transport;' that it was akin rather to that morbid activity which is but 'human distemper.' It is the prerogative of genius to transmit through the dead page, with a glow that can never become quite cold, some rays of that central heat of heart which burned when the writer held the pen. The power of Behmen does not reach so far. That rapidity which was to him the witness of the Spirit, leaves for us only the common signs of unpardonable haste,—is tediously visible in negligence, disorder, repetitions, and diffuseness.

As might be expected, Behmen is often best in those parts of his writings to which he himself would have assigned less value. In many of his letters, in some of his prefaces, and interspersed

throughout all his works, exhortations are to be found which in their pungency and searching force recal the burning admonitions of Richard Baxter. These appeals, summoning to religious simplicity and thoroughness, exposing the treacheries of the heart, encouraging the feeble-minded, awakening the sleeper, would be as eloquent and pathetic as they are earnest and true, did he oftener know where to stop. Such passages, however, are preludes or interludes neighboured by heavy monologue, monotonous and protracted beyond all patience. We descend from those serene uplands, where the air is redolent of the cedars of Lebanon, and the voices we hear recal the sounds of Hebrew prophecy or psalm, to the poor flats of his mortal speculation —muddy, we must say it, in the finest weather, where chalky streams wind their slow length by stunted pollards, over levels of interminable verbiage.

The same ideas incessantly recur, sometimes almost in the same words. Such repetition contributes not a little to the discouragement and perplexity of the reader, even when most pertinaciously bent on exploring these recesses,— as in threading his dim way through the catacombs, the investigator loses count by the resemblance of so many passages to each other, and seems to be returning constantly to the same spot. With all his imagination, Behmen has little power of elucidation, scarcely any original illustration. The analogies suggested to him are seldom apt to his purpose, or such as really throw light on his abstractions. To a mind active in such direction illustrative allusions are like the breed of ponies celebrated in the *Pirate*, that graze wild on

the Shetland hills, from among which the islander catches, as he needs, the first that comes to hand, puts on the halter, canters it his journey, and lets it go, never to know it more. But Behmen, when he has laid hold of a similitude, locks the stable door upon it—keeps it for constant service—and at some times rides the poor beast to death. The obscurity of his writings is increased by his arbitrary chemico-theological terminology, and the hopeless confusion in which his philosophies of mind and matter lie entangled. His pages resemble a room heaped in disorder, with the contents of a library and laboratory together. In this apartment you open a folio divine, and knock over a bottle of nitric acid;—you go to look after the furnace, and you tumble over a pile of books. You cannot divest yourself of the suspicion that when you have left the place and locked the door behind you, these strange implements will assume an unnatural life, and fantastically change places, —that the books will some of them squeeze themselves into the crucible, and theology will simmer on the fire, and that the portly alembic will distil a sermon on predestination.

The *Aurora* is broken every here and there by headings in capital letters—promising and conspicuous sign-posts, on which are written, 'MARK!'—'NOW MARK!'—'UNDERSTAND THIS ARIGHT!'—'THE GATE OF THE GREAT MYSTERY!'—'MARK NOW THE HIDDEN MYSTERY OF GOD!'—'THE DEEPEST DEPTH!'—and similar delusive advertisements, pointing the wayfarer, alas! to no satisfactory path of extrication,—places rather of deeper peril,—spots like those in the lowlands of Northern Germany, verdurous and seemingly solid, but concealing beneath their

trembling crust depths of unfathomable mire, whence (like fly from treacle-jar) the unwary traveller is happy to emerge, miserably blinded and besmeared, with a hundred-weight of mud weighing down either limb. Often does it seem as though now, surely, a goodly period were at hand, and Behmen were about to say something summary and transparent: the forest opens—a little cleared land is discernible—a solitary homestead or a charcoal-burner's hut appears to indicate the verge of this interminable Ardennes forest of words—but only a little further on, the trees shut out the sky again; it was but an interstice, not the limit; and the wild underwood and press of trunks embarrass and obscure our course as before. It is some poor relief when Behmen pauses and fetches breath to revile the Devil, and in homely earnest calls him a damned stinking goat, or asks him how he relishes his prospects; when he stops to anticipate objections and objurgate the objectors, dogmatizing anew with the utmost *naïveté*, and telling them to take care, for they will find him right to a certainty at the last day; or, finally, when he refreshes himself by a fling at the Papists, quite Lutheran in its heartiness. For in Behmen's mysticism there was nothing craven, effeminate, or sentimental. He would contend to the death for the open Bible. All spiritual servitude was his abhorrence. Very different was the sickly mysticism for a short time in vogue in Germany at a later period of the seventeenth century. Behmen was no friend to what was narrow or corrupt in the Lutheranism of his day. But a Lutheran he remained, and a genuine Protestant. Sickly and servile natures could only sigh over the grand religious battle of

those days, and would have made away their birthright—liberty, for that mess of pottage—peace. They began by regarding the strife between tyranny and freedom with unmanly indifference. They ended by exercising for the last time their feeble private judgment, and securing themselves with obsequious haste in the shackles of the infallible Church.

CHAPTER VIII.

Μύστας δὲ νόος
Τά τε καὶ τά λέγει,
Βυθὸν ἄρρητον
Ἀμφιχορεύων.
Σὺ τὸ τίκτον ἔφυς,
Σὺ τὸ τικτόμενον,
Σὺ τὸ φωτίζον,
Σὺ τὸ λαμπόμενον.
Σὺ τὸ φαινόμενον,
Σὺ τὸ κρυπτόμενον
Ἰδιαις α γαῖς.
Ἐν καὶ πάντα
Ἐν καθ᾽ ἑαυτὸ,
Κα διὰ πάντων.[241]

SYNESIUS.

WILLOUGHBY'S ESSAY—SIXTH EVENING.

§ 6. *Jacob Behmen.—Sketch and Estimate of his System.*

So our Behmen, rejoicing in his supernatural light, is prepared to answer more questions than ever the Northern hero, Ganglar, put to the throned phantoms in the palace roofed with golden shields. Let us listen to some of his replies. We have been long in the penumbra—now for the

depth of the shadow.

To begin with, Behmen must have an 'immanent,' as distinguished from the revealed Trinity. He attempts to exhibit the *principle* of that threefold mode of the divine existence, concerning which we could have known nothing, apart from Revelation, and which Revelation discloses only in its practical connexion with the salvation of man. His theory of the Trinity is not one whit more unsubstantial than many suggested by modern philosophical divines of high repute. In the Abyss of the divine nature, the Nothing of unrevealed Godhead, Behmen supposes that there exists Desire—a going forth, on the part of what is called the Father. The object and realization of such tendency is the Son. The bond and result of this reciprocal love is the Holy Spirit.[242]

Here a marked difference must be noted between Behmen and recent German speculation. With Hegel, for example, humanity is an indispensable link in the Trinitarian process. God depends on man for his self-consciousness and development. The deity of Behmen, on the contrary, is self-sufficing, and the circle of the divine blessedness does not stand indebted to man for its completion.

But does not every inward suppose an outward? As, therefore, there is an Eternal Spirit, so also is there an Eternal Nature. God is not mere being; He is Will. This Will manifests itself in an external universe.

The Eternal Nature, or *Mysterium Magnum*, may be described as the external correlative of the divine Wisdom. In other words, what are Ideas in the divine Wisdom, assume external form, as natural properties, in the Eternal Nature. Suso and

Spenser sing the praises of the heavenly Wisdom. Behmen, too, personifies this attribute as the eternal Virgin. But Nature is distinguished from the maiden Wisdom as the prolific Mother of the Universe.

In the Eternal Nature, are seven 'Forms of Life,' or 'Active Principles,' or 'Fountain-Spirits' (*Quellgeister*), or 'Mothers of Existence,'—typified in the seven golden candlesticks of the Apocalypse, and in the many examples of that significant number. These Forms reciprocally generate and are generated by each other. Each one of them is at once the parent and offspring of all the rest. As King Arthur for his knights, so Behmen has a kind of round table for them, that no one may hold precedence. He compares them to a skeleton globe, or a system of wheels revolving about a common centre. This heart or centre is the Son of God, as the sun is the heart and lord of the seven planets. The antitheses which these various qualities present to each other, in their action and reaction, are harmonized in the Supreme Unity. The opposition and reconciliation of ideal principles manifest the divine fulness,—constitute a play of love and life in the Divine Nature, the blessedness of Godhead. But the simultaneous action of these qualities becomes concrete in the visible universe. On our planet their operation has been corrupted by moral evil, and is therefore accompanied by painful strife; so that, with harsh clangour, the great wheel of life is turned by hostile forces.

The shortest method will be at once to catalogue the mighty Seven—the besiegers of that Thebes, your patience.

I. *The Astringent Quality.*

This first Fountain-Spirit is the principal of all contractive force. It is desire, and draws, producing hardness, solidity, &c. Rocks are hard because this quality is dominant, or *primus* in them, as Behmen phrases it. In organic nature it produces the woody fibre. It predominates in the planet Saturn, in salt, in bone, in wolves.

II. *The Sweet Quality.*

The second is the antagonist of the first,—the principle of expansion and movement. The pliant forms of plants, fluids, quicksilver,—and, among animals, the subtle fox, are examples of its characteristic supremacy.

III. *The Bitter Quality.*

This is the principle generated from the conflict of those two contraries, the first and second. It is manifest in the anguish and strife of being,—in the alterations of the revolving wheel of life. It may become heavenly rapture or hellish torment. Its influence is dominant in sulphur, in the planet Mars, in war, in dogs. It produces red colours, and reigns in choleric temperaments.

IV. *The Quality of Fire.*

The first three qualities belong more especially to

the kingdom of the Father—of wrath, necessity, death. The last three to the kingdom of the Son—of love, freedom, life. The fourth quality is the intermediate or transition point between the two members of this antithesis of evolution. In the quality of Fire, light and darkness meet; it is the root of the soul of man; the source, on either side, of heaven and hell, between which our nature stands. In this lower material world, it is manifest in the principle of growth. In the sidereal world, its planet is the central sun. It produces yellow colours; reigns, among metals, in gold,—among animals, in the lion.

V. *The Quality of Love.*

This principle, in its higher operations, is the source of wisdom and glory. It predominates in all sweet things, in birds, in the intercourse of the sexes; and its star is Venus. Behmen, in some places, assigns this quality especially to the gracious Son.

VI. *The Quality of Sound.*

Hence, in heaven, the songs of the angels, the harmony of the spheres; in man, the five senses, understanding, and the gift of speech. This quality is *primus* in jovial temperaments, and produces blue colours.

VII. *The Quality of Corporeity, or Essential Substance.*

This is the quality by which all the rest come to manifestation. It falls, with the preceding, more peculiarly under the province of the Holy Spirit, as the searching and formative principle. It is the source in the heavenly world of the beautiful forms of Paradise, as the preceding is of its sweet sounds. On earth it is the plastic power ruling matter—the operative spirit of nature.[243]

It is curious to observe how Behmen's theory takes hold of Chemistry with one hand, and Theology with the other. Paracelsus pronounced all matter composed of salt, mercury, and sulphur. Behmen adds, 'It is even so, considering salt as the representative of the astringent or attractive principle—mercury, of the fluent or separative,—and sulphur, of nature's pain in the resultant process of production.' Again, the Father is the dark or fiery principle; the Son, the principle of light or grace; and the Holy Ghost, the creative, formative, preserving principle—the outbirth or realization of the two former. There are no materials so incongruous that a dexterous use of imaginative or superficial analogies cannot combine them. In this way, a medley of terms from the nomenclature of every science may be catalogued and bracketed in symmetrical groups of twos and threes. Behmen was too much in earnest, however, to carry such artificial method very far. He was more concerned about thought than orderly form. He could not postulate a fact to fill a gap in a synopsis. Though he mingles in much confusion the sciences of mind and matter, he does not confound their subjects, and regard them as different states of one substance. He would not affirm, with Schelling, that matter was

mind dormant; and mind, matter realized and self-conscious.

We have seen that Behmen assigns the first three principles to the dark kingdom of the Father. When he describes that as a realm of wrath and darkness, he speaks chiefly from the human point of view. God is love. The Father regarded as the wrath-principle, cannot strictly be called God. But the very principle which makes love what it is, becomes, in respect to sin, so much wrath.

Yet, independently of man, and of such wrath as he may know, God would still have manifested himself in contraries. The divine One, the unmanifested Subject, seeking an object—desiring, as it were, to find himself, becomes what, for lack of better terms, Behmen has to call a craving darkness, or burning sense of want. Not that Deity suffers pain; but a certain passion must form the base of action. Realizing that object, the darkness becomes light. That light—the Son—had not been, but for the darkness—the Father. Then from the two, which are one, arise, in the Holy Spirit, the archetypal Forms of the universe. Thus, from the depth of the divine nature itself spring these opposites, Power and Grace, Wrath and Love, Darkness and Light; and thence, by a combination of forces, the manifestation of God in the quickened, changeful universe. But for such antithesis God had remained unrevealed. Without so much of antagonism as is essential to action, the Divine Being had not realized the glory of his nature.

At the same time, Behmen carefully excludes the notion of modern pantheism, that the Divine Idea develops itself by a process, and grows as the

world grows.[244] 'I have to relate in succession,' he would say, 'what takes place simultaneously in God,—to describe separately what is one in Him. He needs no method, no medium. The Eternal Nature is not his instrument for creating the visible universe. Thought and realization, with God, take place together, and are in Him identical.' So, in describing a landscape, we have to relate severally the sounds and appearances of birds and clouds, hills and waters. But to him who is on the spot, the birds sing, the waters shine, the clouds fly, the trees bow on the hill, and the corn waves along the valley, at one and the same time. His senses are the focus of the whole: he sits in the centre. But description must travel the circumference.

We now arrive once more at Behmen's 'Yea and Nay'—that theory of antithesis before noticed: his explanation of the origin of Evil. These Contraries are his trade-winds, whereby he voyages to and fro, and traverses with such facility the whole system of things. He teaches that the Divine Unity, in its manifestation or self-realization, parts into two principles, variously called Light and Darkness, Joy and Sorrow, Fire and Light, Wrath and Love, Good and Evil. Without what is termed the Darkness and the Fire, there would be no Love and Light. Evil is necessary to manifest Good. Not that anything is created by God for evil. In everything is both good and evil: the predominance decides its use and destiny. What is so much pain and evil in hell, is, in heaven, so much joy and goodness. The bitter fountain and the sweet flow originally from one divine Source. The angels and the devils are both in God, of whom, and in whom, all live and move. But from

their divine basis, or root, the former draw joy and glory, the latter shame and woe. The point of collision is the gate of anguish and of bliss.

Thus Behmen, from far away, echoes Heraclitus, and declares Strife the father of all things. What were Virtue, he would ask, without temptation? In life's warfare lies its greatness. Our full wealth of being is only realized by a struggle for very life. Not till the height of the conflict between Siegfried and the dragon—not till the mountain is all flames and earthquake with that fearful fight, do the dwarfs bring out their hoard, and untold riches glitter round the victor.

Behmen was by no means the first to devise a hypothesis so plausible. We meet with it in quarters widely remote—in the pantheism of Jelaleddin Rumi and of John Scotus Erigena. But nowhere does it occupy so central a place, undergo such full development, receive such copious illustration, as in the theosophy of the Görlitz shoemaker.

Like most of those attempts to explain the inexplicable which have proved more than usually attractive, this theory has its truth and its falsehood. It is true that the harmonious development of life is neither more nor less than a successive reconciliation of contraries. The persistent quality, representing our individuality and what is due to the particular self, must not exist alone. The diffusive quality, or fluent, having regard only to others, must not exist alone. The extreme of either defeats itself. Each is necessary to, or, as Behmen would say, lies in the other. The two factors are reconciled, and consummated in a higher unity when the command is obeyed

—'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.' Towards this standard all moral development must tend. Pairs of principles, like the Personal and the Relative, the Ideal and the Actual, &c.—at once twin and rival—where each is the complement of the other, are very numerous. They are designed for union, as heat and cold combine to produce a temperate or habitable clime. Had Behmen confined his theory of contraries within such limits, we might have questioned his expressions;—we must, I think, have admitted his principle.

But when he takes good and evil as the members of such an antithesis, he is deceived by an apparent likeness. It would be a strange thing should any one declare courage and meekness, lowliness and aspiration, the work of God and the work of man, incapable of harmony. It is still more strange to hear any man pronounce any harmony possible between good and evil, sin and holiness. The former set of terms belong to one family, the latter are reciprocally destructive, totally incompatible. Here lies Behmen's fallacy.

To regard goodness as a quality which would remain inert and apathetic were it not endowed with individuality and consistence by evil, and goaded to activity by temptation, is altogether to mistake its nature. An adequate conception of Virtue must require that it be benignly active within its allotted range.

The popular saying that a man should have enough of the devil in him to keep the devil from him, expresses Behmen's doctrine. But the proverb has truth only as it means that of two evils we should choose the less: supposing imperfection

inevitable, better too much self-will than too much pliability. It is true that greatness of soul is never so highly developed or so grandly manifest as amid surrounding evils. But it is not true that the good is intrinsically dependent on the evil for its very being as goodness. No one will maintain that He in whom there was no sin lacked individuality and character, or that he was indebted to the hostility of scribes and Pharisees for his glorious perfectness. Indeed, such a position would subvert all our notions of right and wrong; for Evil—the awakener of dormant virtue—would be the great benefactor of the universe. Sin would be the angel troubling that stagnant Bethesda—mere goodness, and educing hidden powers of blessing.

Moreover, we must not argue from the present to the original condition of man. Nor can any one reasonably rank among the causes by which he professes to account for sin, that which God has seen fit to do in order to obviate its consequences. To say, 'where sin abounded, grace did much more abound,' is not to explain the origin of evil.

Once more, if evil be a necessary factor in our development, that world from which all evil will be banished cannot be an object of desire. Heaven seems to grow wan and insipid. To exhort us to root out the evil of our nature is to enjoin a kind of suicide. It is to bid us annihilate the animating, active seed of moral progress. So death is life, and life death. Again, if man's nature be progressive and immortal, his immortality must be one of unending conflict. Modern Pantheism escapes this conclusion by annihilating personality, and by resolving the individual into the All. A poor

solution, surely—*dis*-solution. To Behmen, no consequence could have been more repugnant. No man could hold more strongly than did he, the doctrine of a future and eternal state, determined by the deeds done in the body. Yet such a cessation of personality might be logically urged from the theory which seemed to him triumphantly to remove so much perplexity.[245]

A tale of chivalry relates how fair Astrid wandered in the moonlight, seeking flowers for the wreath she was twining, but always, when the last had just been woven in, the garland would drop asunder in her hands, and she must begin again her sad endeavour, ever renewed and ever vain. Human speculation resembles that ghostly maiden. Each fresh attempt has all but completed the circuit of our logic. But one link remains, and in the insertion of that the whole fabric falls to pieces. It is a habit with fevered Reason to dream that she has solved the great mystery of life. And when Reason does so dream, her wild-eyed sister, Imagination, is sober and self-distrustful in comparison.

Neither the theist nor the pantheist can claim Behmen as exclusively his own. He would perhaps have reckoned their dispute among those which he could reconcile. Certain it is, that he holds, in combination, the doctrine which teaches a God *within* the world, and the doctrine which proclaims a God *above* it.

Says the pantheist, ‘Do you believe in a God who is the heart and life of the universe, the soul of that vast body, the world?’ Behmen answers, ‘Yes; but I do not believe in a God who is a mere vital force—a God of necessary process—a God lost in

the matter He has evolved.'

Says the theist, 'Do you believe in a God who has Personality and Character; who creates of self-conscious free-will; who rules, as He pleases, the work of his hands?' Behmen answers, 'Yes; but I do not relegate my Deity beyond the skies. I believe that He is the life of all creatures, all substance; that He dwelleth in me; that I am in His heaven, if I love Him, wherever I go; that the universe is born out of Him and lives in Him.'

Like Erigena, Behmen supposed that the 'Nothing,' out of which God made all things, was his own unrevealed abstract nature, called, more properly, Non-being.

And, now, to Behmen's version of the story of our world. He tells us how God created three circles, or kingdoms of spirits, corresponding to the three persons of the Trinity. To each a monarch and seven princes were assigned, corresponding to the seven Qualities or Fountain-Spirits. One of these angelic sovereigns, Lucifer, fell, through pride, and all his kingdom with him. Straightway, as the inevitable consequence of sin, the operation of all the seven Qualities throughout his dominion became perverted and corrupt. The Fiery principle, instead of being the root of heavenly glory, became a principle of wrath and torment. The Astringent quality, instead of ministering due stability, or coherence, became hard and stubborn; the Sweet, foul and putrescent; the Bitter, fierce and raging. So with all the rest. Now, it so happened that the seventh Quality of Lucifer's realm coincided, in space, with this world of ours. This earth, therefore,—once a province of the heavenly world,—was broken up

into a chaos of wrath and darkness, roaring with the hubbub of embattled elements. Before man was created, nature had fallen. The creative word of God brought order into the ruins of this devastated kingdom. Out of the chaos He separated sun and planets, earth and elements.[246]

In the Black Forest lies a lake, bordered deep with lilies. As the traveller gazes on that white waving margin of the dark waters, he is told that those lilies, on the last moonlighted midnight, assumed their spirit-forms,—were white-robed maidens, dancing on the mere; till, at a warning voice, they resumed, ere daybreak, the shape of flowers. Similarly, on Behmen's strange theory, all our natural has been previously spiritual beauty. The material of this world was, erewhile, the fine substance of an angel realm. All our fair scenes are as much below the higher forms of celestial fairness, as are the material flowers of lower rank in loveliness than the phantom dancers of that haunted lake. The 'Heavenly Materiality,' or 'Glassy Sea,' of the angelic kingdom, was a marvellous mirror of perfect shapes and colours, of sounds and virtues. Therein arose, in endless variety, the ideal Forms of heaven—jubilant manifestations of the divine fulness, gladdening the spirits of the praising angels with a blessedness ever new. All the growth and productive effort of our earth is an endeavour to bring forth as then it brought forth. Every property of nature, quickened from its fall by the divine command—'Be fruitful and multiply,' strives to produce in time as it did in eternity.[247] But for that fall, this earth had never held perilous sands nor cruel rocks; never put forth the poisonous herb, nor bred the ravenous beast; and

never would earthquake, pestilence, or tempest, the deadly outbreaks of water or of fire, have accompanied the warfare of disordered elements. The final fires will redeem nature, purging away the dross, and closing the long strife of time.

Adam was created to be the restoring angel of this world. His nature was twofold. Within, he had an angelic soul and body, derived from the powers of heaven. Without, he had a life and body derived from the powers of earth. The former was given him that he might be separate from, and superior to the world. He was endowed with the latter, that he might be connected with, and operative in the world. His external nature sheltered his inner from all acquaintance with the properties of our corrupted earth. His love and his obedience surrounded him with a perpetual paradise of his own. He could not feel the fierceness of fire, the rigour of cold; he was inaccessible to want or pain. He was designed to be the father of a like angelic-human race, who should occupy and reclaim the earth for God,—keeping down the ever-emerging Curse, and educing and multiplying the Blessing which God had implanted.

But the will of Adam gradually declined from the inward paradisiacal life towards the life of this world. He commenced his downward course by desiring to know the good and evil of the world about him. Then Eve was fashioned out of him, and the distinction of sex introduced. This was a remedial interposition to check his descent. It was deemed better that he should love the feminine part of his own nature rather than the external world.[248] Each step of decline was mercifully met

by some new aid on the part of God, but all in vain. He ate of the earthly tree, and the angelic life within him became extinct.

Behmen contends stoutly that no arbitrary trial or penalty was imposed on Adam. No divine wrath visited his sin on his descendants. His liability to suffering and death was the natural consequence (according to the divine order) of his breaking away from God, and falling from the angel to the animal life. It is characteristic of Behmen's theology to resolve acts of judgment, or of sovereign intervention, as much as possible, into the operation of law. Thus, he will not believe that God inflicts suffering on lost souls or devils. Their own dark and furious passions are their chain and flame. He shares this tendency in common with most of the Protestant mystics. And I am by no means prepared to say that our mystics are altogether wrong on this matter.

No sooner had man fallen, than the mercy of God implanted in him the seed of redemption. He lodged in the depths of our nature a hidden gift of the Spirit, the inner light, the internal 'serpent-bruiser,' the light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world. All our beginnings of desire towards God and heaven are the working of this indwelling seed of life. Thus, salvation is wholly of grace. At the same time, it rests with us whether we will realize or smother the nascent blessing. Man is the arbiter of his own destiny, and voluntarily develops, from the depths of his nature, his heaven or his hell.

Lessons of self-abandonment, similar to those of the *Theologia Germanica*, are reiterated by Jacob Behmen. We are never to forget the 'Nothingness'

of man, the ‘All’ of God. He pronounces means and ordinances good only as they lead us directly to God,—as they prepare us to receive the divine operation. With Behmen, as with the mystics of the fourteenth century, redemption is our deliverance from the restless isolation of Self, or Ownhood, and our return to union with God. It is a new birth, a divine life, derived from Christ, the true vine.[249]

But to this idea the theosophists add another. They have a physical as well as a spiritual regeneration, and believe in the revival, within the regenerate, of a certain internal or angelic body. The Lutheran doctrine of consubstantiation gave much encouragement to such fancies. According to Weigel, Christ had a twofold body—one truly human; another, called the heavenly, a procession from the divine nature. Furthermore, theosophy extends the influence of redemption to external nature. In the latter-day, ‘the time of the Lilies,’ all men will be the true servants of Christ, our race will have recovered its lost lordship over nature, and the Philosopher’s Stone will be discovered. That is, man will be able to extract from every substance its hidden perfectness and power.

The strongly subjective bent of Behmen’s mind has its good as well as its evil. He never long loses sight of his great aim—the awakening and sustenance of the inward life. That life was imperilled by formalism, by fatalism, by dogmatical disputes, by the greedy superstition of the gold-seeker. So Behmen warns men incessantly, that no assent to orthodox propositions can save them.[250] He argues against

the Hyper-Calvinist, and against what he regarded as the Antinomian consequence of the doctrine of 'imputed righteousness.'[251] He was a man of peace,—little disposed to add one more to so many controversies; seldom entering the lists unless challenged.[252] He justly condemned as profitless the Millenarian speculations in which some about him were entangled.[253] He had no sympathy with those who endeavoured to make ancient Jewish prophecy the fortune-teller of the present day. He declared that the true Philosopher's Stone, to be coveted by all, was 'the new life in Christ Jesus.'[254] Only by victory over Self could any win victory over nature. To the selfish and the godless no secrets would be revealed. Such men were continually within reach of wonders they might not grasp. So the sinful Sir Launcelot slept by the ruined chapel, and had neither grace nor power to awake, though before him stood the holy vessel of the Sangreall on its table of silver. The treatise on the *Three Principles* abounds in counsels and exhortation designed to promote practical holiness. The *Büchlein vom heiligen Gebet* is a collection of prayers for the private use of 'awakened and desirous souls,' somewhat after the manner of those in Doddridge's *Rise and Progress of Religion*.

When Behmen finds that Scripture contradicts his scheme, on some minor point, he will frequently, instead of resorting to a forced allegorical interpretation, break away without disguise from the authority of its text. Thus, he says more than once, concerning passages in the Mosaic account of the creation, 'It is evident that the dear man Moses did not write this, for it is contrary to,' &c., &c.[255]

Such, then, is the track of Behmen's journeying across the speculative wilderness, following the fiery pillar of an imaginary illumination—a pillar, be it observed, much like that column of glory which, as we stand upon the sea-shore, descends to us from the setting sun,—a luminous line which moves as we move, and which, whatever point we occupy, glows from the ripples at our feet up to the fiery horizon beneath which day is sinking. Behmen's work was done chiefly among the educated. Had his mission been to the lower orders, we should probably have heard of him as the founder of a sect. His object was, however, at once to awaken the life and expound the philosophy of religion, within the Lutheran Church. He called attention to aspects of Christian truth which the systematic theology of that day had too much overlooked. The extensive circulation of his books, and the general welcome given to the main positions of his doctrine, show that his teaching supplied a real want in those times. There can be little doubt that one considerable class of minds, repelled by the assumption or the harshness of the current orthodoxy, was attracted once more to religion under the more genial form in which Behmen presented it. Others were shaken from the sleep of formalism by his vehement expostulations. When the Creed had so largely superseded the Word,—when Protestants were more embittered against each other than brave against the common foe, the broader, deeper doctrine of Behmen would offer to many a blessed refuge. For gold and precious stones shine among his wood and stubble. The darker aspect which some theologians had given to the Divine Sovereignty

seemed to pass away, as the trembler studied Behmen's reassuring page. Apart from scientific technicalities, and the nomenclature of his system, Behmen's style and spirit were mainly moulded upon Luther's *German Bible*. Any one who will take the trouble to look, not into the Aurora, but into the *Book of the Three Principles*, will find, along with much clouded verbosity and a certain crabbed suggestiveness, a racy idiomatic cast of expression, a hearty manliness of tone, indicating very plainly that Behmen had studied man, and the book which manifests man.

Though his voice is, for us, so faint and distant, we feel how near he must have come to the hearts of his time. Through volumes of speculative vapour, glance and glow the warm emotions of the man, in his apostrophes, appeals, and practical digressions. His philosophy is never that of the artificial abstraction-monger, or the pedantic book-worm. He writes of men and for them as though he loved them. Modern idealism expresses itself with a grace to which the half-educated craftsman was a total stranger. But its rhetorical adornment is a painted flame compared with Behmen's fire. Unlike the earlier mystics, his theosophy embraces the whole of man. Unlike so much recent speculation, it is wrought out more by the aspiration of the soul than the ambition of the intellect. Amidst the fantastic disorder of his notions, and the strange inequalities of his insight —now so clear and piercing, now so puerile or perverse,—a single purpose stands unquestionable,—he desired to justify the ways of God to men. His life was a waking dream; but never did mystical somnambulist more sincerely intend service to man and praise to God.

Note to page 107.

Behmen derives *Qualität* from *quallen*, or *quellen* (our *well*), and understands by it the characteristic virtue or operation of anything. Thus the seven Qualities are the seven *Fountain*-Spirits—the prolific sources of their several species of influence. *Aurora*, i. § 3. The notion of pain (*qual*) in giving birth enters also into his conception of Quality.

The description of these seven Qualities occupies (amidst many digressions) a considerable portion of the *Aurora*, and is repeated, with additions and varieties of expression, throughout all his larger works. The summary here given is derived principally from the account in the *Aurora*, and the *Tabula Principiorum*, *Wercke*, vol. iv. p. 268. Similar classifications and definitions are contained in the three first chapters of the *Drei Principien*, and with more clearness and precision in the *Mysterium Magnum*, cap. vi. Compare also especially *Aurora*, cap. iv. §§ 8, 9; xiv. §§ 89, &c.; and xiii. 70-78.

These seven Fountain-Spirits, or Mothers of Nature, are a contrivance really novel. Paracelsus bequeathed to Behmen the term *Mysterium Magnum*, applying it to the Chaos whence he supposed light and darkness, heaven and hell, to derive their origin. But Behmen's furniture or fitting-up of the idea is wholly original. Of the early Gnostics he could know nothing, and his Heptarchy of Nature is totally distinct from theirs. Basilides has seven intellectual and moral impersonations,—the first rank of successive emanations of seven, comprised in his mystical Abraxas. Saturninus has seven star-spirits—the lowest emanations in his scheme, and bordering on matter. Ancient Gnosticism devised these agencies

to bridge the space between the supreme Spirit and Hyle. But Behmen recognises no such gulph, and requires no such media. With him, the thought becomes at once the act of God. Matter is not a foreign inert substance, on which God works, like a sculptor. The material universe exhibits, incorporate, those very attributes which constitute the divine glory. Nature is not merely of, but out of, God. Did there lie no divineness in it, the Divine Being would (on Behmen's theory) be cut off from contact with it. With the Sephiroth of the Cabbala Behmen may possibly have had acquaintance. But, in the Cabbala, each Sephira is dependent on that immediately above it, as in the hierarchies of Proclus and Dionysius Areopagita. Behmen's seven equal Qualities, reciprocally producing and produced, are not links in a descending chain,—they are expressions for the collective possibilities of being. Compare with them the seven lower Sephiroth of the Cabbala, called Might, Beauty, Triumph, Glory, Foundation, and Kingdom. Here we have mere arbitrary personifications of the magnificence displayed in creation. Behmen's qualities are arbitrary, it is true. They might have been different in name, in nature, in number, and the fundamental principles of the system still retained. But who could have resisted the obvious advantages of the sacred planetary number, seven? Behmen, however, goes much deeper than the Cabbalists. He does not idly hypostatise visible attributes. His attractive and diffusive Qualities are the results of generalisation. His Fountain-Spirits are the seminal principles of all being. They are, he believes, the vital laws of universal nature. They are Energies operative, through innumerable transformations, in every range of existence,—in heaven, on earth, and under the

earth.

Note to page 108.

In the following passage, Behmen endeavours to explain himself, and repels the charge of material pantheism.

‘I know the sophist will accuse me for saying that the power of God is in the fruits of the earth, and identifies itself with the generative processes of nature. But, harkye, friend, open thine eyes a moment. I ask thee—How hath Paradise existence in this world?.... Is it in this world or without it? In the power of God, or in the elements? Is the power of God revealed or hidden?.... Tell me, doth not God live in time also? Is He not all in all? Is it not written, “Am not I He that filleth all things,” and “Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever?”

‘Here I bethink myself. I would stand clear of all blame from your misconception. I say not that Nature is God, far less that the fruits of the earth are He. I say God gives to all life its power—be that power used for good or evil,—gives power to every creature according to its desire. He Himself is all, yet is not in all natures to be called God, but only where there is light, in respect of that (*nach dem Liechte*) wherein He Himself dwells, and shines with power throughall his nature. He communicates his power to all his nature and works (*allen seinen Wesen und Wercken*), and everything appropriates that power of his according to its property. One appropriates darkness, another light: the appetite of each demands what is proper to it, and the whole substance is still

all of God, whether good or evil. For from Him, and through Him, are all things; and what is not of his love is of his wrath.

'Paradise is still in the world, but man is not in Paradise, unless he be born again of God; in that case he stands therein in his new birth, and not with the Adam of the four elements,' &c., &c.—*De Signatura Rerum*, cap. viii. §§ 45-47.

Note to page 117.

In his practical writings, and especially in his letters, Behmen handles well the great theme of the life of Christ in us. The prayer of salutation in most of his letters is—'The open fountain in the heart of Christ Jesus refresh and illumine us ever.'

Hear him, on this matter, in a letter to N. N., dated 1623:—

'That man is no Christian who doth merely comfort himself with the suffering, death, and satisfaction of Christ, and doth impute it to himself as a gift of favour, remaining still himself a wild beast, and unregenerate.... I say, therefore, that no show of grace imputed from without can make a true Christian. Sin is not forgiven him by the speaking of a word once for all from without, as a lord of this world may give a murderer his life by an outward act of favour. No, this availeth nothing with God.

'There is no grace whereby we can come to adoption, save simply in the blood and death of Christ. For Him alone hath God appointed to be a throne of grace in His own love, which He hath set in Him, in the sweet name Jesus (from Jehovah). He is the only

sacrifice God accepteth to reconcile His anger.

'But if this said sacrifice is to avail for me, it must be wrought *in* me. The Father must communicate or beget His Son in my desire-of-faith (*Glaubensbegierde*), so that my faith's hunger may apprehend Him in His word of promise. Then I put Him on, in His entire process of justification, in my inward ground; and straightway there begins in me the killing of the wrath of the devil, death, and hell, from the inward power of Christ's death.

'For I can do nothing; I am dead to myself; but Christ worketh in me when He ariseth within. So am I inwardly dead, as to my true man; and He is my life; the life I live, I live in Him, and not in mine-hood (*Meinheit*), for grace slays my will and establisheth itself lord in place of my self-hood (*Ichheit*), so that I am an instrument of God wherewith He doth what He will.

'Henceforth I live in two kingdoms;—with my outward mortal man, in the vanity of time, wherein the yoke of sin yet liveth, which Christ taketh on Himself in the inward kingdom of the divine world, and helpeth my soul to bear it.... The Holy Scripture everywhere testifieth that we are justified from sin, not by meritorious works of ours, but through the blood and death of Christ. Many teach this, but few of them rightly understand it.'

The other kingdom which, in his haste, Behmen forgot to specify, is the inward world of spiritual and eternal life, which he calls Paradise.—*Theosophische Sendbriefe*, xlvi. §§ 7, &c. He inveighs frequently against an antinomian Calvinism. But if any one will compare this letter with Calvin's *Institutes* III. i. and III. ii. 24, he will find that, on the doctrine of union with Christ, Calvin and Behmen, in spite of all their

differences, hold language precisely similar.

Note to page 117.

Behmen was well entitled to teach that lesson of tolerance which his age had so forgotten. In one of his letters he says, 'I judge no man; that anathematizing one of another is an empty prating. The Spirit of God Himself judgeth all things. If He be in us, why need we trouble ourselves about such idle chatter? On the contrary, I rejoice much rather in the gifts of my brethren, and if any of them have received another gift to utter than have I, why should I therefore condemn them? Doth one herb, or flower, or tree, say to another, Thou art sour and dark; I cannot stand in thy neighbourhood? Have they not all one common Mother, whence they grow? Even so do all souls, all men, proceed from One. Why boast we of ourselves as the children of God, if we are no wiser than the flowers and herbs of the field,' &c.—*Theos. Sendbr.* 12, §§ 35, 36. Again, in the same letter (§ 61), 'Doth not a bee gather honey out of many flowers; and though some flowers be far better than others, what cares the bee for that? She takes what serves her purpose. Should she leave her sting in the flower, if its juices are not to her taste, as man doth in his disdainfulness? Men strive about the husk, but the noble life-juice they forsake.'

Exhortations to try the spirits, and warnings like those adverted to, not lightly to take whatever fancies may enter the brain, for special revelation, are given in *Theos. Send.* xi. § 64. The test he gives for decision between a true and a false claim to revelation, is the sincerity of desire for the divine—

not self-glory; a genuine charity towards man; a true hunger, ‘not after bread, but God.’-Compare *Aurora*, cap. xix. § 77.

Note to page 118.

Carriere, in an excellent summary of Behmen’s doctrine, is inclined to idealize his expressions on this point. He would regard Behmen’s language concerning the fall and restitution of nature as symbolical, and understand him only in a subjective sense. But such, I feel persuaded, was not Behmen’s meaning. The idea that man, himself disordered, sees nature and the world as out of joint,—that the restoration of light within him will glorify the universe without, is comparatively modern. The original design of man, in Behmen’s system, requires a restitution in which man shall be once more the angelic lord of life,—the summoner and monarch of all its potencies. Carriere has pointed out, with just discrimination, the distinction between Behmen’s position and that of German pantheism in our times. But on some points he seems to me to view him too much with the eyes of the nineteenth century, and his judgment is, on the whole, too favourable. See his *Phil. Weltanschauung der Reformationzeit*, chap. xi.

The *De Signatura Rerum* abounds in examples of that curious admixture of chemical or astrological processes and phenomena with the facts of the gospel narrative, to which allusion has been made. The following specimen may suffice:—

‘Adam had brought his will into the poison of the external Mercury. So, then, must Christ, as Love, yield up his will also in the venomous Mercury.

Adam ate of the evil tree; Christ must eat of the wrath of God; and as it came to pass inwardly in the spirit, so must it also outwardly in the flesh. And even thus is it in the philosophic work. Mercury, in the philosophic work, signifieth the Pharisees, who cannot endure the dear child. When he sees it, it gives him trembling and anguish. Thus trembles Venus also, before the poison of the wrathful Mercury: they are, one with the other, as though a sweat went from them, as the Artista will see. Mars saith, 'I am the fire-heart in the body: Saturn is my might, and Mercury is my life: I will not endure Love. I will swallow it up in my wrath.' He signifies the Devil, in the wrath of God; and because he cannot accomplish his purpose, he awakens Saturn, as the Impression, who signifies the secular government, and therewith seeks to seize Venus, but cannot succeed; for she is to him a deadly poison. Mercury can still less bear the prospect of losing his dominion,—as the high priests thought Christ would take away their dominion, because He said He was the Son of God. So Mercury is greatly troubled about the child of Venus,' &c., &c.—*De Signatura Rerum*, cap. xi. §§ 18-22.

Note to page 118.

A word or two should find place here concerning the fate of Behmen's doctrine. His friends, Balthasar Walther and Abraham von Franckenberg, were indefatigably faithful to his memory. The son of the very Richter who had so persecuted him, became their fellow-labourer in the dissemination of his writings. Throughout the latter half of the seventeenth century, Germans, Swiss, Hollanders,

Englishmen, were busy with translations, commentaries, or original works, in exposition and development of his philosophy. Gichtel published the first complete edition of his writings in 1682, and afterwards went off on his own account into one of the craziest phases of mysticism. Orthodox Lutheranism long continued to assail the doctrine, as it had assailed the man. But the genial piety of Spener, and the large charity of Arnold—that generous advocate of ecclesiastical outcasts—did justice to the devout earnestness of the theosophist. In France, St. Martin became at once a translator and a disciple. His best representative in England is William Law. That nonjuring clergyman was elevated and liberalised by his intercourse with the mind of the German mystic, and well did he repay the debt. Law may be said to have introduced Behmen to the English public, both by his services as a translator, and by original writings in advocacy of his leading principles. As might be expected, the educated and more practical Englishman frequently expresses the thoughts of the Teuton with much more force and clearness than their originator could command. Several other Englishmen, then and subsequently, speculated in the same track. But they met with small encouragement, and their names are all but forgotten. Here and there some of their books are to be found among literary curiosities, whose rarity is their only value. If any would make acquaintance with Behmen's theology, unvexed by the difficulties of his language or the complexity in which he involves his system, let them read Law. The practical aspect of Behmen's doctrines concerning the fall and redemption are well exhibited in his lucid and searching treatise entitled *The Spirit of Prayer*; or, *The Soul rising out of the Vanity of Time into the Riches of*

Eternity.

In Germany Behmen became the great mystagogue of the Romantic school. Novalis and Tieck are ardent in their admiration; but they are cold to Frederick Schlegel. This unconscious caricature of Romanticism (always in some frantic extreme or other) places Behmen above Luther and beside Dante. A plain translation of the Bible, like that of Luther, he could scarcely account a benefit. But a symbolical interpretation, like that of Behmen, was a Promethean gift. Christian art was defective, he thought, because it wanted a mythology. In Behmen's theosophy he saw that want supplied. Alas, that Thorwaldsen did not execute a statue of the Astringent Quality—that Cornelius did not paint the Fiery—that Tieck has never sung the legend of the Mysterium Magnum—and that a Gallery of the Seven Mothers should be still the desideratum of Europe! Hegel condescends to throw to Behmen some words of patronising praise, as a distant harbinger of his own philosophical Messiahship. Carriere declares that Schelling borrowed many choice morsels from his terminology without acknowledgment. Franz Baader published a course of lectures on Behmen—revived and adapted him to modern thought, and developed a theosophy, among the most conspicuous of recent times, altogether upon Behmen's model. Baader assures us that had Schelling thought less of Spinosa and more deeply studied Behmen, his philosophy would have been far more rich in valuable result than we now find it. Carriere, pp. 721-725.—Hegel's *Encyclopœdie, Vorr. z. zweiten Aufl.* p. 22. Hoffman's *Franz Baader im Verhältnisse zu Spinosa*, &c. p. 23.

The judgment of Henry More concerning Behmen is

discriminating and impartial. ‘But as for Jacob Behmen I do not see but that he holds firm the fundamentals of the Christian religion, and that his mind was devoutly united to the Head of the Church, the crucified Jesus, to whom he breathed out this short ejaculation with much fervency of spirit upon his death-bed,—Thou crucified Lord Jesus, have mercy on me, and take me into thy kingdom....

‘But the case seems to me to stand thus:—There being two main ways whereby our mind is won off to assent to things: viz., the guidance of reason, or the strength and vigour of fancy; and according to the complexion or constitution of the body, we being led by this faculty rather than by that, suppose, by the strength or fulness of fancy rather than the closeness of reason (neither of which faculties are so sure guides that we never miscarry under their conduct; insomuch that all men, even the very best of them that light upon truth, are to be deemed rather fortunate than wise), Jacob Behmen, I conceive, is to be reckoned in the number of those whose imaginative faculty has the pre-eminence above the rational; and though he was an holy and good man, his natural complexion, notwithstanding, was not destroyed, but retained its property still; and therefore his imagination being very busy about divine things, he could not without a miracle fail of becoming an enthusiast, and of receiving divine truths upon the account of the strength and vigour of his fancy: which being so well qualified with holiness and sanctity, proved not unsuccessful in sundry apprehensions, but in others it fared with him after the manner of men, the sagacity of his imagination failing him, as well as the anxiety of reason does others of like integrity with himself.

‘Which things I think very worthy of noting, that no man’s writings may be a snare to any one’s mind; that none may be puzzled in making that true which of itself is certainly false; nor yet contemn the hearty and powerful exhortations of a zealous soul to the indispensable duties of a Christian, by any supposed deviations from the truth in speculations that are not so material nor indispensable. Nay, though something should fall from him in an enthusiastic hurricane that seems neither suitable to what he writes elsewhere, nor to some grand theory that all men in their wits hitherto have allowed for truth, yet it were to be imputed rather to that pardonable disease that his natural complexion is obnoxious to, than to any diabolical design in the writer; which rash and unchristian reproach is as far from the truth, if not further, as I conceive, than the credulity of those that think him in everything infallibly inspired.—*Mastix, his Letter to a private Friend*, appended to the *Enthusiasmus Triumphatus*, &c., p. 294 (1656).

It will be sufficient to enumerate the mere names of several minor mystics, whose fancies are of little moment in the history of mystical doctrine. In the sixteenth century appeared David Joris, a Dutchman, who had almost fatal ecstasies and visions, and wrote and exhorted men, in mystical language, to purity and self-abandonment. Also Postel, a Frenchman, more mad than the former, who believed in a female devotee, named Johanna, as the second Eve, through whom humanity was to be regenerated. Guthmann, Lautensack, and Conrad Sperber, were theosophists who mingled, in hopeless confusion, religious doctrine and alchemic process, physics and scripture, tradition, vision, fancy, fact. During the first half of the seventeenth century, Brunswick was agitated by

one Engelbrecht, a sickly hypochondriacal weaver, who imagined himself translated to heaven and hell, and commissioned to expound and preach incessantly. During the latter part of the same century, the madman Kuhlmann roved and raved about Europe, summoning sovereigns to his bar: Conrad Dippel improvised a medley of Paracelsus, Schwenkfeld, and Behmen; and John George Gichtel, a fanatical Quietist, bathed his soul in imaginary flames, believed himself destined to illumine all mankind, founded the sect of the Angel-Brethren, and seems to have ended in sheer madness. An account of these and other mystics, even less notable, will be found in Arnold's *Kirchen-undKetzergeschichte*, Th. iii.

CHAPTER IX.

O sola, mica, rama lamahi,
Volase, cala, maja, mira, salame,
Viemisa molasola, Rama, Afasala.
Mirahel, Zorabeli, Assaja!

Citation for all Spirits, from the BLACK RAVEN.

A strict regard for historical accuracy compels me to state that the following conversation took place in the drawing-room, and not in the library. By such an arrangement, that bright feminine presence was secured which, according to Gower, deprived mysticism itself of half its obscurity.

'Did Jacob Behmen frighten you away?' asked Willoughby of Mrs. Atherton, somewhat remorsefully. 'I think Atherton and Gower will bear me out in saying that it was not easy to render the worthy shoemaker entertaining.'

MRS. ATHERTON. Mr. Gower was telling us just before you came in, that he found him, from your account, a much more imaginative personage than he had supposed—quite a poetical philosopher.

GOWER. Behmen holds a poet's doctrine, surely, when he represents all nature as struggling towards an ideal,—striving to bring forth now, as it once did —ere Lucifer had fallen,—longing and labouring, in fellowship with our human aspiration.

WILLOUGHBY. Such a notion must tend to remove from the mind that painful sense we sometimes have of the indifference of nature to our thoughts and doings.

ATHERTON. To remove that feeling from the imagination, at least.

WILLOUGHBY. And that is enough; for only in imagination can it have existence. Man is so much greater than nature.

GOWER. It does, indeed, make all the difference to poets and artists, whether they read sympathy or apathy in the face of creation. Think of the various forms and agencies of nature—of the swart Cyclopean forces under the earth—of the deftly-woven threadwork of the tissues—of vapour-pageantries, and cloud-cupolas, and fairy curls of smoke—of the changeful polity of the seasons, advancing and disgracing frost or sunshine—of the waves lashing at the land, and the land growing into the waves,—of all these ministries as working, like

thoughtful man, toward a divine standard; as rejoicing, in their measure, through every descending range of being, under the restoring hand of the Divine Artificer, and panting to recover the order and the beauty of the Paradise which shines above,—of the Eden which once blossomed here below. Think of the earth, resigning herself each winter to her space of sleep, saying inwardly, 'I have wrought another year to bring the offspring of my breast nearer to the heavenly pattern hidden in my heart. I rest, another circuit nearer to the final consummation.' Then there is that upper Paradise—substantial, yet ethereal,—as full of beauty, for finer senses, as earth's fairest spots for more gross, without aught that is hurtful or discordant. Fill up Behmen's outline. Picture the heavenly hills and valleys, whispering one to another in odorous airs,—a converse only broken sweetly, from time to time, by the floating tones of some distant angel-psalm, as the quiet of a lake by a gliding swan. There run rivers of life—the jubilant souls of the meditative glens through which they wend. There are what seem birds, gorgeous as sunset clouds, and less earthly,—animal forms, graceful as the antelope, leaping among crags more lustrous than diamond,—creatures mightier than leviathan; and mild-eyed as the dove couching among immortal flowers, or bathing in the crystal sea. The very dust is dazzling and priceless, intersown with the sapphire, the sardonyx, the emerald of heaven; and all the ground and pavement of that world branching with veins as of gold and silver, an arborescent glory, instinct with mysterious life.

WILLOUGHBY. Thank you, Gower.

GOWER. Thank you, Willoughby. You are my

informant. I never read a line of Behmen on my own account, and, what is more, never will.

KATE. Helen and I want you very much to tell us something about the Rosicrucians.

ATHERTON. You have read *Zanoni*——

KATE. And we are all the more curious in consequence. How much of such a story may I think true?

ATHERTON. As an ideal portraiture of that ambition which seeks lordship within the marches of the unseen world, I think *Zanoni* perfect.

MRS. ATHERTON. The Rosicrucians pretended, did they not, that they could prolong life indefinitely,—laid claim to all sorts of wonderful power and knowledge? Have you not once or twice met with a person, or heard of one, who would certainly have been suspected of being a Rosicrucian by superstitious people? I mean, without any pretence on his part, merely from a singular appearance, or a mysterious manner, or uncommon cleverness.

ATHERTON. Oh, yes; such men would keep up the Rosicrucian tradition bravely among the common folk.

WILLOUGHBY. And among great folk, too, if they took the pains.

MRS. ATHERTON. I was thinking of Colonel Napier's description of George Borrow, which we were reading the other day. He pictures him youthful in figure, yet with snow-white hair; inscrutable, therefore, as to age, as the Wandering Jew; he has deep-black mesmeric eyes, terrible to dogs and Portuguese; he is silent about himself to the most tantalizing height of mystery, no man knowing his

whence or whither; he is master of information astoundingly various, speaks with fluency English, French, German, Spanish, Greek, Hindee, Moultanee, the gipsy tongue, and more beside, for aught I know. So equipped, within and without, he might have set up for a Zanoni almost anywhere, and succeeded to admiration.

ATHERTON. How small the charlatans look beside such a specimen of true manhood. But where shall we find the distance wider between the ideal and the actual than in this very province of supernatural pretension? What a gulf between the high personage our romance imagines and that roving, dare-devil buccaneer of science, or that shuffling quacksalver which our matter-of-fact research discovers. Don't you agree with me, Willoughby?

WILLOUGHBY. Altogether. Only compare the two sets of figures—what we fancy, and what we find. On the one side you picture to yourself a man Platonically elevated above the grossness and entanglement of human passions, disdaining earth, dauntlessly out-staring the baleful eyes of that nameless horror—the Dweller on the Threshold; commanding the prescience and the power of mightiest spirits; and visited, like Shelley's Witch of Atlas, as he reads the scrolls of some Saturnian Archimage, by universal Pan, who comes with homage 'out of his everlasting lair,'—

> 'Where the quick heart of the great world doth pant.'

This is the theurgist, as imagination paints him. Now turn, on the other side, to the actual gallery of theosophic and theurgic worthies, as history reveals them. Baptista Porta dwells in a house which is the triumph of legerdemain,—the palace of Puck, the

most intricate nest of traps, surprises, optical delusions, grotesque transformations,—throwing host and guests into paroxysms of laughter or of fear. You see Cornelius Agrippa, in threadbare bravery, with his heart upon his sleeve, and every expression by turns upon his brow, save that of the Platonic serenity. Paracelsus swears worse than my uncle Toby's comrades in Flanders, and raves about his Homunculus. But from such men we cannot withhold sympathy, respect, even a certain admiration. In that eighteenth century, behold that grand magnet for all the loose and dupable social particles in every class and country—the soi-disant Count Cagliostro, with his Seraphina, his Egyptian Lodge, his elixirs and red powder, his magical caraffes, his phosphorous glories, his Pentagon and Columbs, his Seven Planetary Spirits, his Helios, Mene, Tetragrammaton. In that age of professed Illuminism, in the times of Voltaire and Diderot, when universal *Aufklärung* was to banish every mediæval phantasm, you see Father Gassner, with his miraculous cures, followed by crowds through Swabia and Bavaria;—Mesmer attracting Paris and Vienna to his darkened rooms and hidden music, to be awe-stricken by the cataleptic horrors there achieved;—the Count St. Germain declaring himself three hundred years old, and professing the occult science of diamond-manufacturing Brahmins;—the coffee-house keeper, Schröpfer, deluding Leipsic and Frankfort with his pretended theurgic art;—and St. Maurice, swindling the sceptical wits and *roués* who flutter in the drawing-rooms of Mesdames Du Maine and De Tencin, pretending to open converse for them with sylphs and Salamanders, invoking the genius Alaël, and finally subsiding into the Bastille. Such are some among the actual caricatures of the artistic

conception embodied in the character of Zanoni.

ATHERTON. Truly a bad symptom of the general disease, when men grow unable to see that the highest dignity lies close at hand.

WILLOUGHBY. As though man could never exhibit magnanimity unless in some thrilling dramatic 'situation.'

GOWER. Or could not believe in the unseen world save by help of necromancers, miracle-mongers, and clairvoyantes.

ATHERTON. The ancient saying abides true,—He that ruleth his own spirit is greater than he that taketh a city,—greater than even he who should carry the cloud-capital of the whole world of spirits, pull down its meteor-flag, and make all the weird garrison his thralls. I think, if I were a preacher, I should some day take up the phase of man's mental history we have now reviewed as a practical exposition of Christ's words—'Nevertheless, in this rejoice not that the spirits are subject unto you, but rather that your names are written in heaven.'

KATE. I should like to know, after all, precisely who and what these Rosicrucians were. When did they make their first appearance?

WILLOUGHBY. They were originally neither more nor less than the 'Mrs. Harris' of a Lutheran pastor.

MRS. ATHERTON. Mr. Willoughby!

ATHERTON. Fact, Lily. Willoughby never said anything truer.

WILLOUGHBY. Allow me to tell you the story.—About the year 1610, there appeared anonymously a little book, which excited great sensation throughout

Germany. It was entitled, *The Discovery of the Brotherhood of the Honourable Order of the Rosy Cross*, and dedicated to all the scholars and magnates of Europe.[256]

It commenced with an imaginary dialogue between the Seven Sages of Greece, and other worthies of antiquity, on the best method of accomplishing a general reform in those evil times. The suggestion of Seneca is adopted, as most feasible, namely, a secret confederacy of wise philanthropists, who shall labour everywhere in unison for this desirable end. The book then announces the actual existence of such an association. One Christian Rosenkreuz, whose travels in the East had enriched him with the highest treasures of occult lore, is said to have communicated his wisdom, under a vow of secresy, to eight disciples, for whom he erected a mysterious dwelling-place called The Temple of the Holy Ghost. It is stated further, that this long-hidden edifice had been at last discovered, and within it the body of Rosenkreuz, untouched by corruption, though, since his death, one hundred and twenty years had passed away. The surviving disciples of the institute call on the learned and devout, who desire to co-operate in their projects of reform, to advertise their names. They themselves indicate neither name nor place of rendezvous. They describe themselves as true Protestants. They expressly assert that they contemplate no political movement in hostility to the reigning powers. Their sole aim is the diminution of the fearful sum of human suffering, the spread of education, the advancement of learning, science, universal enlightenment, and love. Traditions and manuscripts in their possession have given them the power of gold-making, with other potent secrets; but by their wealth they set little store. They have

arcana, in comparison with which the secret of the alchemist is a trifle. But all is subordinate, with them, to their one high purpose of benefiting their fellows both in body and soul.

MRS. ATHERTON. No wonder the book made some noise.

WILLOUGHBY. I could give you conclusive reasons, if it would not tire you to hear them, for the belief that this far-famed book was written by a young Lutheran divine named Valentine Andreä. He was one of the very few who understood the age, and had the heart to try and mend it. You see him, when his college days are over, starting on his travels—his old mother giving him her tearful 'God bless you,' as she puts into his hand all the treasure of her poverty,—a rusty old coin, and twelve kreuzer. From the cottage-door her gaze follows with many a prayer the good son, whose beloved form lessens along the country road. Years after, he comes back, bringing with him the same old coin, and with it several hundred gulden. He has seen the world, toiling, with quick observant eye and brave kindly heart, through south and western Germany, among the Alps, through Italy and France. He has been sometimes in clover as a travelling tutor, sometimes he has slept and fared hard, under vine-hedges, in noisy, dirty little inns, among carriers, packmen, and travelling apprentices. The candidate becomes pastor, and proves himself wise in men as well as books. A philanthropist by nature, he is not one of those dreamers who hate all that will not aid their one pet scheme, and cant about a general brotherhood which exempts them from particular charity. Wherever the church, the school, the institute of charity have fallen into ruin or disorder by stress of war, by fraud, or selfish

neglect, there the indefatigable Andreä appears to restore them. He devises new plans of benevolence, —appealing, persuading, rebuking. He endures the petulence of disturbed indolence, the persecution of exposed abuse; bearing with, and winning over, all sorts of hopeless crabbed people, thrusting men's hands into their pockets, they know not how. He is an arch bore in the eyes of miserly burgomasters and slumberous brother clergy—a very patron-saint for the needy and distressed, the orphan and the widow. To this robust practical benevolence was added a genial humour, not uncommon in minds of strength like his, and a certain trenchant skill in satirical delineation which renders some of his writings among the most serviceable to the historian of those times.

GOWER. Oh, how I love that man!

WILLOUGHBY. Well, this Andreä writes the *Discovery of the Rosicrucian Brotherhood*, a *jeu-d'esprit* with a serious purpose, just as an experiment to see whether something cannot be done by combined effort to remedy the defect and abuses—social, educational, and religious, so lamented by all good men. He thought there were many Andreäs scattered throughout Europe—how powerful would be their united systematic action!

KATE. But why mix up with his proposal all this idle fabling about Rosenkreuz and his fraternity?

WILLOUGHBY. But for that spice of romance, this notion of his could never have done more than chip the shell or sprawl helpless in the nest. The promise of supernatural powers awakened universal attention —fledged, and gave it strength to fly through Europe.

MRS. ATHERTON. But the hoax could not last long, and would, after all, encourage those idle superstitions which were among the most mischievous of the errors he was trying to put down.

WILLOUGHBY. So indeed it proved. But his expectation was otherwise. He hoped that the few nobler minds whom he desired to organize would see through the veil of fiction in which he had invested his proposal; that he might communicate personally with some such, if they should appear; or that his book might lead them to form among themselves a practical philanthropic confederacy, answering to the serious purpose he had embodied in his fiction. Let the empty charlatan and the ignoble gold-seeker be fooled to the top of their bent, their blank disappointment would be an excellent jest; only let some few, to whom humanity was more dear than bullion, be stimulated to a new enterprise.

GOWER. The scheme was certain, at any rate, to procure him some amusement.

WILLOUGHBY. Many a laugh, you may be sure, he enjoyed in his parsonage with his few friends who were in the secret, when they found their fable everywhere swallowed greedily as unquestionable fact. On all sides they heard of search instituted to discover the Temple of the Holy Ghost. Printed letters appear continually, addressed to the imaginary brotherhood, giving generally the initials of the candidate, where the invisibles might hear of him, stating his motives and qualifications for entrance into their number, and sometimes furnishing samples of his cabbalistic acquirements. Still, no answer. Not a trace of the Temple. Profound darkness and silence, after the brilliant flash which had awakened so many hopes. Soon the mirth grew

serious. Andreä saw with concern that shrewd heads of the wrong sort began to scent his artifice, while quacks reaped a rogue's harvest from it. The reality was ridiculed as fiction, and the fiction hailed as reality. Society was full of the rotten combustible matter which his spark had kindled into a conflagration he could not hope to stay. A cloud of books and pamphlets issued from the press, for and against the fraternity, whose actual house lay beneath the Doctor's hat of Valentine Andreä. Medical practitioners of the old school, who denounced the spagiric method, and to whom the name of Paracelsus was an abomination, ridiculed the Rosicrucian secrets, and scoffed at their offer of gratuitous cures. Orthodox divines, like Libavius, swinging a heavy club, cruelly demolished the little book,—which, of a truth, was not fit to sustain rough handling. They called down fire from heaven on its unknown authors, and declared that their *rosa* should be *rota*—their rose, the wheel. Meanwhile a number of enthusiasts became volunteer expositors of the principle and aim of this undiscoverable brotherhood. Andreä saw his scheme look as ridiculous in the hands of its credulous friends as it seemed odious in those of its enemies. A swarm of impostors pretended to belong to the Fraternity, and found a readier sale than ever for their nostrums. Andreä dared not reveal himself. All he could do was to write book after book to expose the folly of those whom his handiwork had so befooled, and still to labour on, by pen and speech, in earnest aid of that reform which his unhappy stratagem had less helped than hindered.

MRS. ATHERTON. And was no society ever actually formed?

WILLOUGHBY. I believe not; nothing, at least, answering in any way to Andreä's design. Confederacies of pretenders appear to have been organized in various places; but Descartes says he sought in vain for a Rosicrucian lodge in Germany. The name Rosicrucian became by degrees a generic term, embracing every species of occult pretension,—arcana, elixirs, the philosopher's stone, theurgic ritual, symbols, initiations. In general usage the term is associated more especially with that branch of the secret art which has to do with the creatures of the elements.

ATHERTON. And from this deposit of current mystical tradition sprang, in great measure, the Freemasonry and Rosicrucianism of the eighteenth century,—that golden age of secret societies. Then flourished associations of every imaginable kind, suited to every taste. The gourmand might be sure of a good dinner in one; the alchemist might hope to catch his secret in a second; the place-hunter might strengthen his interest in the brotherhood of a third; and, in all, the curious and the credulous might be fleeced to their hearts' content. Some lodges belonged to Protestant societies, others were the implements of the Jesuits. Some were aristocratic, like the Strict Observance; others democratic, seeking in vain to escape an Argus-eyed police. Some—like the Illuminati under Weishaupt, Knigge, and Von Zwackh, numbering (among many knaves) not a few names of rank, probity, and learning—were the professed enemies of mysticism and superstition. Others existed only for the profitable juggle of incantations and fortune-telling. The lodges contended with each other and among themselves; divided and subdivided; modified and remodified their constitutions; blended and dispersed; till, at last, we almost cease to hear of

them. The best perished at the hands of the Jesuits, the worst at the hands of the police.

WILLOUGHBY. At Vienna, the Rosicrucians and Freemasons were at one time so much the rage that a modification of the mason's apron became a fashionable part of female dress, and chatelaines were made of miniature hammers, circles, and plumblines.

KATE. Very pretty, some of them, I dare say.

ATHERTON. Do you remember, Gower, that large old house we saw at Vienna, called the Stift?

GOWER. Perfectly, and the Stift-gasse, too, leading to it, for there I got wet through.

ATHERTON. That building is the relic of a charity founded by a professed Rosicrucian. He took the name of Chaos (after their fashion)—every brother changing his name for some such title as Sol, Aureus, Mercurius, and so on, according to his taste. He came to Vienna in the seventeenth century, and somehow, whether by his alchemy or not I cannot say, acquired both fortune and nobility. Ferdinand III. made him Hofkammerath, and prefixed a Von to the Chaos. This good man founded an institution for orphans, who were once educated in that house, since converted into a military academy, and bearing still, in its name and neighbourhood, traces of the original endowment.

MRS. ATHERTON. Andreä would have taken some comfort could he but have seen at least that practical fruit of his Rosicrucian whim. How his heart would have rejoiced to hear the hum of the orphan school-room, and to see their smoking platters!

KATE. My curiosity is not yet satisfied. I should like

to know something more about those most poetical beings, the creatures of the elements,—Sylph, Undine, and Co.

ATHERTON. On this subject, Kate, I am happy to be able to satisfy you. I can conduct you at once to the fountain-head. I will read you the process enjoined in the *Comte de Gabalis* for attaining to converse with some of these fanciful creations. (*Taking down a little book.*) Here is the passage.[257] (*Reads.*)

'If we wish to recover our empire over the salamanders, we must purify and exalt the element of fire we have within us, and restore the tone of this chord which desuetude has so relaxed. We have only to concentrate the fire of the world, by concave mirrors, in a globe of glass. This is the process all the ancients have religiously kept secret; it was revealed by the divine Theophrastus. In such a globe is formed a solar powder, and this, self-purified from the admixture of other elements, and prepared according to the rules of art, acquires, in a very short time, a sovereign virtue for the exaltation of the fire within us, and renders us, so to speak, of an igneous nature. Henceforth the inhabitants of the fiery sphere become our inferiors. Delighted to find our reciprocal harmony restored, and to see us drawing near to them, they feel for us all the friendship they have for their own species, all the respect they owe to the image and vicegerent of their Creator, and pay us every attention that can be prompted by the desire of obtaining at our hands that immortality which does not naturally belong to them. The salamanders, however, as they are more subtile than the creatures of the other elements, live a very long time, and are therefore less urgent in seeking from the sage that affection which endows them with

immortality....

‘It is otherwise with the sylphs, the gnomes, and the nymphs. As they live a shorter time, they have more inducement to court our regard, and it is much easier to become intimate with them. You have only to fill a glass vessel with compressed air, with earth, or with water, close it up, and leave it exposed to the sun’s rays for a month. After that time, effect a scientific separation of the elements, which you will easily accomplish, more especially with earth or water. It is wonderful to see what a charm each of the elements thus purified possesses for attracting nymphs, sylphs, and gnomes. After taking the smallest particle of this preparation every day for a few months, you see in the air the flying commonwealth of the sylphs, the nymphs coming in crowds to the waterside, and the guardians of hidden treasure displaying their stores of wealth. Thus, without magical figures, without ceremonies, without barbarous terms, an absolute power is acquired over all these people of the elements. They require no homage from the philosopher, for they know well that he is their superior.... Thus does man recover his natural empire, and become omnipotent in the region of the elements, without aid of dæmon, without illicit art.’

Of course you have all learnt from Undine that the creatures of the elements are supposed to obtain a soul, and become immortal by alliance with one of our race. There is a double advantage, too, for these happy philosophers may not only raise their nymph or sylphide to a share with them in the happiness of heaven, if they reach it, but if the sage should be so unfortunate as not to be predestined to an immortality of blessedness, his union with one of

these beings will operate on himself conversely,—that is, will render his soul mortal, and deliver him from the horrors of the endless second death. So Satan misses his prey in either sphere.

WILLOUGHBY. I never knew before that these cabbalists were Calvinists.

ATHERTON. This touch of Jansenism excites the same astonishment in the author of the *Comte de Gabalis*. A delightful wag, that Abbé Villars!

The philosophers are described by the Count as the instructors and the saviours of the poor elementary folk, who, but for their assistance in forming *liaisons* with mortals, would inevitably at last fall into the hands of their enemy, the devil. As soon, he says, as a sylph has learnt from us how to pronounce cabbalistically the potent name NEHMAHMIHAH,[258] and to combine it, in due form, with the delicious name ELIAEL, all the powers of darkness take to flight, and the sylph enjoys, unmolested, the love he seeks!

WILLOUGHBY. How universal seems to have been the faith in the magical efficacy of certain words, from the earliest to the latest times, among the more sober as well as the most extravagant theurgists. A long list of them might be drawn up. There is the Indian O-U-M; there are the Ephesian letters; with Demogorgon, 'dreaded name,' as Milton reminds us; the barbarous words, too, which the Chaldean oracles and Psellus declare must on no account be Hellenised.

GOWER. And the word AGLA, I remember, in Colin de Plancy, which, when duly pronounced, facing the east, makes absent persons appear, and discovers lost property.[259] I suppose the potency is in proportion to the unintelligibility of the terms.

ATHERTON. The Comte de Gabalis tells us how the Salamander Oramasis enabled Shem and Japhet to restore the patriarch Noah to his former vigour by instructing them how to pronounce six times alternately, walking backward, the tremendous name JABAMIAH.

But the word above every word is the SHEMHAMPHORASH of the Talmud.[260] The latter rabbins say that Moses was forty days on Mount Sinai, to learn it of the angel Saxael. Solomon achieved his fiend-compelling wonders by its aid. Jesus of Nazareth, they say, stole it from the Temple, and was enabled by its virtue to delude the people. It is now, alas! lost; but could any one rightly and devoutly pronounce it, he would be able to create therewith a world. Even approximate sounds and letters, supplied by rabbinical conjecture, give their possessor power over the spirit-world, from the first-class archangel to the vulgar ghost: he can heal the sick, raise the dead, and destroy his enemies.

WILLOUGHBY. It is curious to see some of these theosophists, who cry out so against the letter, becoming its abject bondsmen among the puerilities of the Cabbala. They protest loudly that the mere letter is an empty shell—and then discover stupendous powers lying intrenched within the curves and angles of a Hebrew character.

ATHERTON. Our seventeenth century mystics, even when most given to romancing, occupied but a mere corner of that land of marvel in which their Jewish contemporaries rejoiced. The Jews, in their dæmonology, leave the most fantastic conceptions of all other times and nations at an immeasurable distance. Their affluence of devils is amazing. Think of it!—Rabbi Huna tells you that every rabbi has a

thousand dæmons at his left hand, and ten thousand at his right: the sensation of closeness in a room of Jewish assembly comes from the press of their crowding multitudes: has a rabbi a threadbare gabardine and holes in his shoes, it is from the friction of the swarming devilry that everywhere attends him.[261]

GOWER. To return to societies—did you ever hear, Willoughby, of the Philadelphian Association?[262]

WILLOUGHBY. That founded by Pordage, do you mean—the doctor who fought the giant so stoutly one night?

GOWER. The same. I picked up a book of his at a stall the other day.

KATE. Who was he? Pray tell us the story of the battle.

GOWER. A Royalist clergyman who took to medicine under the Protectorate. The story is simply this.—Pordage, whose veracity even his enemies do not impugn, declares that he woke from sleep one night, and saw before his bed a giant 'horrible and high,' with an enormous sword drawn in one hand, and an uprooted tree in the other. The monster evidently means mischief. The Doctor seizes his walking-stick. Round swings the lumbering tree-trunk, up goes the nimble staff——

ATHERTON. What became of the bedposts?

GOWER. Hush, base materialist! The weapons were but the symbols of the conflict, and were symbolically flourished. The real combat was one of spirit against spirit—wholly internal; what would now be called electro-biological. Each antagonist bent against his foe the utmost strength of will and

imagination.

WILLOUGHBY. Somewhat after the manner of the Astras which the Indian gods hurled at each other—spells of strong volition, which could parch their object with heat, freeze him with cold, lash him with hail, shut him up in immobility, though hundreds of miles away.

ATHERTON. Surpassing powers those, indeed; not even requiring the present eye and will of the operator to master the imagination of the subject mind.

KATE. And the battle in the bedroom?

GOWER. Lasted half an hour; when the giant, finding Dr. Pordage a tough customer, took his departure.

WILLOUGHBY. Pordage was a great student and admirer of Behmen; but, unlike his master, an inveterate spirit-seer. I dare say he actually had a dream to the effect you relate.

GOWER. But he and the whole Philadelphian Society —a coterie of some twenty ghost-seers—profess to have seen apparitions of angels and devils, in broad daylight, every day, for nearly a month.

MRS. ATHERTON. What were they like?

GOWER. The chief devils drove in chariots of black cloud, drawn by inferior dæmons in the form of dragons, bears, and lions. The spirits of wicked men were the ugliest of all,—cloven-footed, cats-eared, tusked, crooked-mouthed, bow-legged creatures.

ATHERTON. Did the Philadelphians profess to see the spirits with the inward or the bodily eye?

GOWER. With both. They saw them in whole armies and processions, gliding in through wall or window-

pane—saw them as well with the eyes shut as open. For, by means of the sympathy between soul and body, the outer eye, says Pordage, is made to share the vision of the inner. When we cease to use that organ, the internal vision is no less active. I should add that the members were conscious of a most unpleasant smell, and were troubled with a sulphurous taste in the mouth while such appearances lasted.

WILLOUGHBY. Mrs. Leade is one of the most conspicuous of their number,—a widow of good family from Norfolk, who forsook the world and retired into her inmost self, holding intercourse with spirits and writing her revelations.

GOWER. She, I believe, carried to its practical extreme the Paracelsian doctrine concerning the magical power of faith.

WILLOUGHBY. That is her one idea. By union with the divine will, she says, the ancient believers wrought their miracles. Faith has now the same prerogative: the will of the soul, wholly yielded to God, becomes a resistless power, can bind and loose, bless and ban, throughout the universe. Had any considerable number among men a faith so strong, rebellious nature would be subdued by their holy spells, and Paradise restored.

ATHERTON. Some of the German Romanticists have revived this idea—never, perhaps, wholly dead. Some stir was made for awhile by the theory that the power of miracle was native in man—and haply recoverable.

WILLOUGHBY. Such a doctrine is but one among the many retrogressions of the mediæval school.

BOOK THE NINTH
THE SPANISH MYSTICS

CHAPTER I.

It is no flaming lustre, made of light,
No sweet concert nor well-timed harmony,
Ambrosia, for to feast the appetite,
Of flowery odour mixed with spicery,—
No soft embrace, or pleasure bodily;
And yet it is a kind of inward feast,
A harmony that sounds within the breast,
An odour, light, embrace, in which the soul doth rest.

A heavenly feast no hunger can consume;
A light unseen yet shines in every place;
A sound no time can steal; a sweet perfume
No winds can scatter; an entire embrace
That no satiety can e'er unlace;
Engraced into so high a favour there,
The saints with all their peers whole worlds outwear,
And things unseen do see, and thing unheard do hear.

GILES FLETCHER.

Gower fulfilled his promise, and read, on two successive evenings, the following paper on the Mysticism of the Counter-Reformation, as illustrated principally by its two Spanish champions, St. Theresa and St. John of the Cross:—

I. *Saint Theresa.*

On the revival of letters the mysticism of Alexandria reappeared in Florence. That lamp which, in the study of Ficinus, burnt night and day before the bust of Plato, proclaimed, in reality, the worship of Plotinus. The erudite feebleness of Alexandrian eclecticism lived again in Gemisthus Pletho,—blended, as of old, Platonic ideas, oriental emanations, and Hellenic legend,—dreamed of a philosophic worship, emasculated and universal, which should harmonize in a common vagueness all the religions of the world. Nicholas of Cusa re-adapted the allegorical mathematics which had flourished beneath the Ptolemies and restored the Pythagoras of the Neo-Platonists. Pico of Mirandola (the admirable Crichton of his time) sought to reconcile the dialectics of Aristotle with the oracles of Chaldæa, and to breathe into withered scholasticism the mysterious life of Cabbalistic wisdom. An age so greedy of antiquity was imposed on by the most palpable fabrications; and Greece beheld the servile product of her second childhood reverenced as the vigorous promise of her first. Patricius sought the sources of Greek philosophy in writings attributed to Hermes and Zoroaster. He wrote to Gregory XIV. proposing that authors such as these should be substituted for Aristotle in the schools, as the best means of advancing true

religion and reclaiming heretical Germany.

The position of these scholars with regard to Protestantism resembles, not a little, that of their Alexandrian predecessors when confronted by Christianity. They were the philosophic advocates of a religion in which they had themselves lost faith. They attempted to reconcile a corrupt philosophy and a corrupt religion, and they made both worse. The love of literature and art was confined to a narrow circle of courtiers and literati. While Lutheran pamphlets in the vernacular set all the North in a flame, the philosophic refinements of the Florentine dilettanti were aristocratic, exclusive, and powerless. Their intellectual position was fatal to sincerity; their social condition equally so to freedom. The despotism of the Roman emperors was more easily evaded by a philosopher of ancient times than the tyranny of a Visconti or a D'Este, by a scholar at Milan or Ferrara. It was the fashion to patronise men of letters. But the usual return of subservience and flattery was rigorously exacted. The Italians of the fifteenth century had long ceased to be familiar with the worst horrors of war, and Charles VIII., with his ferocious Frenchmen, appeared to them another Attila. Each Italian state underwent, on its petty scale, the fate of Imperial Rome. The philosophic and religious conservatism of Florence professed devotion to a church which reproduced, with most prolific abundance, the superstitions of by-gone Paganism,—of that very Paganism in whose behalf the Neo-Platonist philosopher entered the lists against the Christian father. To such men, the earnest religious movement of the North was the same mysterious, barbaric, formidable foe which

primitive Christianity had been to the Alexandrians. The old conflict between Pagan and Christian—the man of taste and the man of faith —the man who lived for the past, and the man who lived for the future, was renewed, in the sixteenth century, between the Italian and the German. The Florentine Platonists, moreover, not only shared in the weakness of their prototypes, as the occupants of an attitude radically false; they failed to exhibit in their lives that austerity of morals which won respect for Plotinus and Porphyry, even among those who cared nothing for their speculations. Had Romanism been unable to find defenders more thoroughly in earnest, the shock she then received must have been her deathblow. She must have perished as Paganism perished. But, wise in her generation, she took her cause out of the hands of that graceful and heartless Deism, so artificial and so self-conscious, —too impalpable and too refined for any real service to gods or men. She needed men as full of religious convictions as were these of philosophical and poetic conceits. She needed men to whom the bland and easy incredulity of such symposium-loving scholars was utterly inconceivable—abhorrent as the devil and all his works. And such men she found. For by reason of the measure of truth she held, she was as powerful to enslave the noblest as to unleash the vilest passions of our nature. It was given her, she said, to bind and to loose. It was time, she knew, to bind up mercy and to loose revenge. A succession of ferocious sanctities fulminated from the chair of St. Peter. Science was immured in the person of Galileo. The scholarship, so beloved by Leo, would have been flung into the jaws of the

Inquisition by Caraffa. Every avenue, open once on sufferance, to freer thought and action, was rigorously blocked up. Princes were found willing to cut off the right hand, pluck out the right eye of their people, that Rome might triumph by this suicide of nations. But nowhere did she find a prince and a people alike so swift to shed blood at her bidding, as among that imperious race of which Philip II. was at once the sovereign and the type. In Spain was found, in its perfection, the chivalry of persecution: there dwelt the aristocracy of fanaticism. It was long doubtful whether the Roman or the Spanish Inquisition was the more terrible for craft, the more ingenious in torments, the more glorious with blood.

But Spain was not merely the political and military head of the Counter-Reformation. She contributed illustrious names to relume the waning galaxy of saints. Pre-eminent among these luminaries shine Ignatius Loyola, Theresa, and John of the Cross. The first taught Rome what she had yet to learn in the diplomacy of superstition. Education and intrigue became the special province of his order: it was the training school of the teachers: it claimed and merited the monopoly of the vizard manufacture. Rome found in Theresa her most famous seeress; in John, her consummate ascetic. It was not in the upper region of mysticism that the narrow intellect and invincible will of Loyola were to realize distinction. He had his revelations, indeed,—was rapt away to behold the mystery of the Trinity made manifest, and the processes of creation detailed. But such favours are only the usual insignia so proper to the founder of an order. Compared with St. Francis the life of Ignatius is

poor in vision and in miracle. But his relics have since made him ample amends. Bartoli enumerates a hundred miraculous cures.[263] John and Theresa were mystics *par excellence*: the former, of the most abstract theopathetic school; the latter, with a large infusion of the theurgic element, unrivalled in vision—angelic and dæmoniacal.

But one principle is dominant in the three, and is the secret of the saintly honours paid them. In the alarm and wrath awakened by the Reformation, Rome was supremely concerned to enforce the doctrine of blind obedience to ecclesiastical superiors. These Spanish saints lived and laboured and suffered to commend this dogma to the Church and to all mankind. Summoned by the Rule of Obedience, they were ready to inflict or to endure the utmost misery. Their natures were precisely of the kind most fitted to render service and receive promotion at that juncture. They were glowing and ductile. Their very virtues were the dazzle of the red-hot brand, about to stamp the brow with slavery. Each excellence displayed by such accomplished advocates of wrong, withered one of the rising hopes of mankind. Their prayers watered with poisoned water every growth of promise in the field of Europe. Their Herculean labours were undertaken, not to destroy, but to multiply the monsters which infested every highway of thought. Wherever the tears of Theresa fell, new weeds of superstition sprang up. Every shining austerity endured by John gilded another link in the chain which should bind his fellows. The jubilant bells of their devotion rang the knell of innumerable martyrs.

In the fourteenth century, mysticism was often synonymous with considerable freedom of thought. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, it was allowed to exist only as it subserved the ecclesiastical scheme. The problem was,—how to excite the feeling and imagination of the devotee to the highest pitch, and yet to retain him in complete subjection to the slightest movement of the rein. Of this problem John and Theresa are the practical and complete solution. All their fire went off by the legitimate conducting-rod: every flash was serviceable: not a gleam was wasted. Once mysticism was a kind of escape for nature. The mystic left behind him much of the coarse externalism necessary to his Church, and found refuge in an inner world of feeling and imagination. But now the Church, by means of the confessor, made mysticism itself the innermost dungeon of her prison-house. Every emotion was methodically docketed; every yearning of the heart minutely catalogued. The sighs must always ascend in the right place: the tears must trickle in orthodox course. The prying calculations of the casuist had measured the sweep of every wave in the heaving ocean of the soul. The instant terrible knife cut off the first spray of love that shot out beyond the trimly-shaven border of prescription. Strong feelings were dangerous guests, unless they knew (like the old Romans) when to go home and slay themselves, did that Tiberius, the director, but bestow on them a frown.

In France, too, mysticism was to fall under the same yoke; but the Frenchman could never reach the hard austerity of the Spaniard. The sixteenth century produced St. Francis de Sales on the

north, and St. John of the Cross on the south, of the Pyrénées. With the former, mysticism is tender, genial, graceful; it appeals to every class; it loves and would win all men. With the latter, it is a dark negation—a protracted suffering—an anguish and a joy known only to the cloister. De Sales was to John, as a mystic, what Henry IV. was to Philip as a Catholic King. Even in Italy, the Counter-Reformation was comparatively humane and philanthropic with Carlo Borromeo. In Spain alone is it little more, at its very best, than a fantastic gloom and a passionate severity.

But everywhere the principle of subserviency is in the ascendant. The valetudinarian devotee becomes more and more the puppet of his spiritual doctor. The director winds him up. He derives his spiritless semblance of life wholly from the priestly mechanism. It may be said of him, as of the sick man in Massinger's play,

> That he lives he owes
> To art, not Nature; she has given him o'er.
> He moves, like the fairy king, on screws and
> wheels
> Made by his doctor's recipes, and yet still
> They are out of joint, and every day repairing.

Theresa was born at Avila, in the year 1515, just two years (as Ribadeneira reminds us) before 'that worst of men,' Martin Luther.[264] The lives of the saints were her nursery tales. Cinderella is matter of fact; Jack and the Beanstalk commonplace, beside the marvellous stories that must have nourished her infantine faculty of wonder. At seven years old she thinks eternal bliss cheaply bought by martyrdom; sets out with her little

brother on a walk to Africa, hoping to be despatched by the Moors, and is restored to her disconsolate parents by a cruel matter-of-fact uncle, who meets them at the bridge. Her dolls' houses are nunneries. These children construct in the garden, not dirt pies, but mud-hermitages; which, alas! will always tumble down.

As she grows up, some gay associates, whose talk is of ribbons, lovers, and bull-fights, secularise her susceptible mind. She reads many romances of chivalry, and spends more time at the glass. Her father sends her, when fifteen, to a convent of Augustinian nuns in Avila, to rekindle her failing devotion. A few days reconcile her to the change, and she is as religious as ever.

Then, what with a violent fever, Jerome's Epistles, and a priest-ridden uncle, she resolves on becoming a nun. Her father refuses his consent; so she determines on a pious elopement, and escapes to the Carmelite convent. There she took the vows in her twentieth year.[265]

We find her presently vexed, like so many of the Romanist female saints, with a strange complication of maladies,—cramps, convulsions, catalepsies, vomitings, faintings, &c. &c. At one time she lay four days in a state of coma; her grave was dug, hot wax had been dropped upon her eyelids, and extreme unction administered; the funeral service was performed; when she came to herself, expressed her desire to confess, and received the sacrament.[266] It is not improbable that some of the trances she subsequently experienced, and regarded as supernatural, may have been bodily seizures of a similar kind. But at this time she was not good enough for such

favours; so the attacks are attributed to natural causes. It is significant that the miraculous manifestations of the Romish Church should have been vouchsafed only to women whose constitution (as in the case of the Catharines and Lidwina) was thoroughly broken down by years of agonizing disease. After three years (thanks to St. Joseph) Theresa was restored to comparative health, but remained subject all her life, at intervals, to severe pains.[267]

On her recovery, she found her heart still but too much divided between Christ and the world. That is to say, she was glad when her friends came to see her, and she enjoyed witty and agreeable chat, through the grating, with ladies whose conversation was not always confined to spiritual topics. Grievously did her conscience smite her for such unfaithfulness, and bitterly does she regret the laxity of her confessors, who failed to tell her that it was a heinous crime.

In her twenty-fourth year she resumed the practice of mental prayer, and for the next twenty years continued it, with many inward vicissitudes, and alternate tendernesses and desertions on the part of the Divine Bridegroom. Her forty-fourth year is memorable as the season of her entrance on those higher experiences, which have made her name famous as the great revivalist of supernatural prayer and mystical devotion in the sixteenth century.

The Saint Bartholomew's day of 1562 was a day of glory for our saint. Then was consecrated the new Convent of St. Joseph, at Avila, established in spite of so much uproar and opposition; that convent wherein the primitive austerity of the

Carmelite Order was to be restored,—where Theresa is presently appointed prioress (against her will, as usual),—where there shall be no chats at the grating, no rich endowment; but thirteen 'fervent virgins' shall dwell there, discalceated (that is sandalled not shod), serge-clad, flesh-abhorring, couched on straw, and all but perpetually dumb.[268] The remainder of her life, from about her fiftieth year, would appear to have been somewhat less fertile in marvellous experiences. She was now recognised as the foundress of the Reformed Carmelites, and could produce warrant from Rome, authorizing her to found as many convents of the Bare-footed as she pleased. She was harassed by the jealous intrigues of the old 'mitigated' Order, but indefatigably befriended by John of the Cross, and other thorough-going ascetics. She lived to see established sixteen nunneries of the Reformed, and fourteen monasteries for friars of the same rule. She has left us a long history of her foundations, of all the troubles and difficulties she overcame; showing how funds were often not forthcoming, but faith was; how apathy and opposition were done away; and how busy she must have been (too busy for many visions); all of which let whomsoever read that can.

In the year 1562, when Theresa had successfully commenced the reformation of her Order, she wrote her life, at the bidding of her confessor. In this autobiography her spiritual history is laid bare without reserve. The narrative was published by her superiors, and therein the heretic may listen to what she whispered in the ear of her director during the years most prolific in

extravagance. We can thus discern the working of the confessional. Commanded to disclose her most secret thoughts, we see her nervously afraid of omitting to indicate the minutest variations of the religious thermometer, of approaching the committal of that sin which Romanist devotees only can commit—concealment from a confessor. She searches for evil in herself, and creates it by the search. The filmiest evanescence of the feeling has to be detained and anatomized, and changes into something else under the scrutiny. It is as though she had let into her crucifix a piece of looking-glass, that she might see reflected every transport of devotion, and faithfully register the same in her memory against the next shrift. After some excess of rapture, she must set to work at her technical analysis; observe what faculties were dormant, and what still active—what regions of the mind were tenanted by divinity, and what still left to the possession of her sinful self. Her intellect was never strong. She confesses that she found her understanding rather in the way than otherwise.[269] Under this omnipresent spiritual despotism it fell prostrate utterly. When she has been favoured with a vision, she is not to know whether it has steamed up from hell or been let down from heaven, until the decision of her confessor fills her with horror or delight. The cloister is her universe. Her mind, unformed, and uninformed, is an empty room, papered with leaves from her breviary. She knew little of that charity which makes gracious inroads on the outer world; which rendered human so many of her sister-saints; which we admire and pity in Madame de Chantal, admire and love in Madame Guyon. No feet-washing do we read of, open or

secret; no hospital-tending, no ministry among the poor. The greater activity of her later years brought her in contact with scarcely any but 'religious' persons. Her ascetic zeal was directed, not for, but against, the mitigation of suffering. It made many monks and nuns uncomfortable; but I am not aware that it made any sinners better, or any wretched happy. Peter of Alcantara is her admiration; he who for forty years never slept more than one hour and a half in the twenty-four, and then in a sitting posture, with his head against a wooden peg in the wall; who ate in general only every third day; and who looked, she says, as if he were made of the roots of trees (*hecho de reyzes de arboles*[270]). Lodged in her monastic cranny of creation, she convulses herself with useless fervours, absolutely ignorant of all things and persons non-ecclesiastical. Her highest ambition is to reduce the too-palpable reality of herself to the minutest possible compass, and to hide herself—a kind of parasitical insect or entozoön—in the personality of her confessor. Yet, complete as is this suicide, she is never sure that she is sufficiently dead, and incessantly asks him if *he* is quite sure that she is sincere. Such a life is an object of compassion more than blame. She was herself the victim of the wicked system to which her name was to impart a new impulse. The spasmodic energy she at last displays about her Reformation is not native strength. She was surrounded from the first by those who saw clearly what Rome needed at that time, who beheld in her first almost accidental effort the germ of what they desired, and in herself a fit instrument. A whisper from one of these guides would be translated by such an imagination into a

direct commission from heaven. They had but to touch a spring, and her excitable nature was surrounded with the phantasmagoria of vision; one scene produced another, and that unfolded into more—all, the reiteration and expansion of the bent once given to her fixed idea.

Theresa experienced her first rapture while reciting the *Veni Creator*, when she heard these words spoken in the interior of her heart—'I will have thee hold converse, not with men, but angels.'[271] She had been conscious, on several previous occasions, of supernatural excitements in prayer, and was much perplexed thereby, as indeed were several of her confessors. Here were irresistible devotional seizures for which they had no rule ready. They suspected an evil spirit, advised a struggle against such extraordinary influences. But the more she resists, the more does the Lord cover her with sweetnesses and glories, heap on her favours and caresses. At last the celebrated Francis Borgia comes to Avila. The Jesuit bids her resist no more; and she goes on the mystical way rejoicing. The first rapture took place shortly after her interviews with the future General of the Society of Jesus.

A word on this system of spiritual directorship. It is the vital question for mystics of the Romish communion. Nowhere is the duty of implicit self-surrender to the director or confessor more constantly inculcated than in the writings of Theresa and John of the Cross, and nowhere are the inadequacy and mischief of the principle more apparent. John warns the mystic that his only safeguard against delusion lies in perpetual and unreserved appeal to his director. Theresa tells us

that whenever our Lord commanded her in prayer to do anything, and her confessor ordered the opposite, the Divine guide enjoined obedience to the human; and would influence the mind of the confessor afterwards, so that he was moved to counsel what he had before forbidden![272] Of course. For who knows what might come of it if enthusiasts were to have visions and revelations on their own account? The director must draw after him these fiery and dangerous natures, as the lion-leaders of an Indian pageantry conduct their charge, holding a chain and administering opiates. The question between the orthodox and the heterodox mysticism of the fourteenth century was really one of theological doctrine. The same question in the sixteenth and seventeenth was simply one of ecclesiastical interests.[273] The condemned quietists were merely mystics imperfectly subservient—unworkable raw material, and as such flung into the fire. Out of the very same substance, duly wrought and fashioned, might have come a saint like Theresa. By the great law of Romish policy, whatever cannot be made to contribute to her ornament or defence is straightway handed over to the devil. Accordingly, the only mysticism acknowledged by that Church grows up beneath her walls, and invigorates, with herbs of magic potency, her garrison,—resembles the strip of culture about some eastern frontier town, that does but fringe with green the feet of the ramparts; all the panorama beyond, a wilderness;—for Bedouin marauders render tillage perilous and vain. Thus, O mystic, not a step beyond that shadow; or hell's black squadrons, sweeping down, will carry thee off captive to their home of dolour!

The confessions of Theresa are a continual refutation of her counsels. She acknowledges that she herself had long and grievously suffered from the mistakes of her early directors. She knew others also who had endured much through similar incompetency. The judgment of one conductor was reversed by his successor. She exhorts her nuns to the greatest care in the selection of a confessor,—on no account to choose a vain man or an ignorant. She vindicates their liberty to change him when they deem it desirable.[274] John of the Cross, too, dilates on the mischief which may be done by an inexperienced spiritual guide. At one time Theresa was commanded to make the sign of the cross when Christ manifested Himself to her, as though the appearance had been the work of some deceiving spirit.[275] Her next guide assured her that the form she beheld was no delusion. Dreadful discovery, yet joyful! She had attempted to exorcise her Lord; but the virtue of obedience had blotted out the sin of blasphemy. Thus does each small infallibility mould her for his season, and then pass her on to another. Her soul, with despair stamped on one side and glory imaged on the other, spins dizzy in the air; and whether, when it comes down, heaven or hell shall be uppermost, depends wholly upon the twist of the ecclesiastical thumb.

But to return to her marvellous relations; and, first of all, to those of the infernal species. On one occasion, she tells us, she was favoured with a brief experience of the place she merited in hell: —a kind of low oven, pitch dark, miry, stinking, full of vermin, where sitting and lying were alike impossible; where the walls seemed to press in

upon the sufferer—crushing, stifling, burning; where in solitude the lost nature is its own tormentor, tearing itself in a desperate misery, interminable, and so intense, that all she had endured from racking disease was delightful in comparison.[276]

At another time, while smitten for five hours together with intolerable pains, the Lord was pleased to make her understand that she was tempted by the devil; and she saw him at her side like a very horrible little negro, gnashing his teeth at her. At last she contrived to sprinkle some holy water on the place where he was. That moment he and her pains vanished together, and her body remained as though she had been severely beaten. It is as well to know that holy water will be found incomparably your best weapon in such cases. The devils will fly from the cross, but may presently return. The drops the Church has blest, do their business effectually. Two nuns, who came into the room after the victory just related, snuffed up the air of the apartment with manifest disgust, and complained of a smell of brimstone. Once the sisters heard distinctly the great thumps the devil was giving her, though she, in a 'state of recollection,' was unconscious of his belabouring. The said devil squatted one day on her breviary, and at another time had all but strangled her.[277] She once saw, with the eye of her soul, two devils, encompassing, with their meeting horns, the neck of a sinful priest; and at the funeral of a man who had died without confession, a whole swarm of devils tearing and tossing the body and sporting in the grave.

But much more numerous, though as gross as

these, are her visions of celestial objects. ‘Being one day in prayer,’ she tells us, ‘our Lord was pleased to show me his sacred hands, of excessive and indescribable beauty; afterwards his divine face, and finally, at mass, all his most sacred humanity.’ At one of his appearances, he drew out with his right hand, the nail which transfixed his left, some of the flesh following it. Three times did she behold in her raptures the most sublime of all visions—the humanity of Christ in the bosom of the Father; very clear to her mind, but impossible to explain. While reciting the Athanasian Creed the mystery of the Trinity was unfolded to her, with unutterable wonderment and comfort. Our Lord paid her, one day, the compliment of saying, that if He had not already created heaven, He would have done so for her sake alone.[278]

Some of her ‘Memorable Relations’ are among the most curious examples on record of the materialization of spiritual truth. With all the mystics, she dwells much on the doctrine of Christ in us. But while some of them have exaggerated this truth till they bury under it all the rest, and others have authenticated by its plea every vagary of special revelation, in scarcely any does it assume a form so puerile and so sensuous as with St. Theresa. Repeatedly does she exhort religious persons to imagine Christ as actually within the interior part of their soul. The superstition of the mass contributed largely in her case to render this idea concrete and palpable. In a hymn, composed in a rapturous inspiration after swallowing the consecrated wafer, she describes God as her prisoner.[279] She relates in the following passage how she saw the figure of Christ in a kind of

internal looking-glass.

‘When reciting the hours one day with the nuns, my soul suddenly lapsed into a state of recollection, and appeared to me as a bright mirror, every part of which, back and sides, top and bottom, was perfectly clear. In the centre of this was represented to me Christ our Lord, as I am accustomed to see him. I seemed to see him in all the parts of my soul also, distinctly as in a mirror, and at the same time this mirror (I do not know how to express it) was all engraven in the Lord himself, by a communication exceeding amorous which I cannot describe. I know that this vision was of great advantage to me, and has been every time I have called it to mind, more especially after communion. I was given to understand, that when a soul is in mortal sin, this mirror is covered with a great cloud, and grows very dark, so that the Lord cannot be seen or represented in us, though he is always present as the Author of our being. In heretics, this mirror is as it were broken, which is much worse than to have it obscured.’[280]

Here the *simplicitas* and *nuditas* of other mystics become a kind of concrete crystal, inhabited by a divine miniature. In a Clara de Montfaucon, this sensuous supra-naturalism goes a step further, and good Catholics read with reverence, how a Lilliputian Christ on the cross, with the insignia of the passion, was found, on a *post-mortem* examination, completely formed inside her heart. [281]

Similar in its character was a vision with which Theresa was sometimes favoured, of a pretty little angel, with a golden dart, tipped with fire, which

he thrust (to her intolerable pain) into her bowels, drawing them out after it, and when thus eviscerated, she was inflamed with a sweet agony of love to God.[282]

A multitude more of such favours might be related:—how the Lord gave her a cross of precious stones—a matchless specimen of celestial jewellery to deck his bride withal; how, after communion one day, her mouth was full of blood, that ran out over her dress, and Christ told her it was his own—shed afresh, with great pain, to reward her for the gratification her devotion had afforded him; how (doubtless in imitation of Catherine of Siena) she saw and heard a great white dove fluttering above her head; and how, finally, she repays the attentions of the Jesuit Borgia, by repeated praises of the Order; by recording visions of Jesuits in heaven bearing white banners,—of Jesuits, sword in hand, with resplendent faces, gloriously hewing down heretics; and by predicting the great things to be accomplished through the zeal of that body.[283] Enough!

Note to page 159.

The dispute which agitated the Romish Church for more than half a century (1670-1730), concerning the *Mistica Ciudad de Dios*, attributed to Maria d'Agreda, furnishes a striking instance in proof of the character here ascribed to the controversies of the period. This monstrous book was given to the world as the performance of a Spanish nun, at the dictation of the Virgin, or of God;—both assertions are made,

and the difference is not material. Its object is to establish, by pretended special revelation, all the prerogatives assigned to the Queen of Heaven, on the basis of her Immaculate Conception. It is replete with the absurdities and indecencies of prurient superstition. Dufresnoy applies to it, with justice, the words of John of Salisbury,—'Erumpit impudens et in facie erubescentium populorum genialis thori revelat et denudat arcana.' It states that the embryo of the Virgin was formed on a Sunday, seventeen days before the ordinary time,—relates how, at eighteen months, the infant demands a nun's habit from St. Anna, of the colour worn by the Franciscans, —how she sweeps the house, and has nine hundred angels to wait upon her. The partizans of the book maintained, not only that the work itself was a miracle from beginning to end, but that its translation was miraculous also,—a French nun receiving instantaneously the gift of the Spanish tongue, that these disclosures from heaven might pass the Pyrenees. Such was the mass of corruption about which the gadflies and the 'shard-borne beetles' of the Church settled in contending swarms. This was the book on whose wholesomeness for the flock of Christ his Vicars could not venture to decide —eventually, rather evading reply than pronouncing sentence. No such scruple concerning the unwholesomeness of the Bible.

The Abbé Dufresnoy handles the question broadly, but most of the combatants are furious, this side or that, from some small party motive. The French divines censure the book, for fear it should encourage Quietism—their great bugbear at that time. The Spanish ecclesiastics, jealous of the honour done their countrywoman, retorted with a *Censura Censuræ*. But about the habit the battle was hottest.

Every Carmelite must reject the book with indignation, for had they not always believed, on the best authority, that the Virgin wore a dress of *their* colour? The Franciscans again, and the religious of St. Clare, would defend it as eagerly, for did not its pages authorize anew from heaven their beloved ashen hue? Again, did not these revelations represent the Almighty as adopting the Scotist doctrine? On this great question, of course, Scotist and Thomist would fight to the death. Some account of the controversy, and an examination of the book, will be found in Dufresnoy, *Traité Historique et Dogmatique sur les Apparitions, les Visions et les Révélations particulières*, tom. II. chap. xi. (1751).

The same spirit betrays itself in the instance of Molinos. Even after he had written his *Guida Spirituale*, he was patronized by the Jesuits because he had employed his pen against Jansenism, and the Franciscans approved his book, while the Dominicans rejected it, because he had delighted the one party and disgusted the other by speaking somewhat disparagingly of Thomas Aquinas.

CHAPTER II.

Indeed, when persons have been long softened with the continual droppings of religion, and their spirits made timorous and apt for impression by the assiduity of prayer, and perpetual alarms of death, and the continual dyings of mortification, —the fancy, which is a very great instrument of devotion, is kept continually warm, and in a

disposition and aptitude to take fire, and to flame out in great ascents; and when they suffer transportations beyond the burdens and support of reason, they suffer they know not what, and call it what they please.—JEREMY TAYLOR.

I. *Saint Theresa*—(CONTINUED).

What disinterested love is to the mysticism of Fénelon, that is supernatural passive prayer to the mysticism of St. Theresa. She writes to describe her experience in the successive stages of prayer; to distinguish them, and to lay down directions for those who are their subjects. She professes no method whereby souls may be conducted from the lowest to the highest degree. On the contrary, she warns all against attempting to attain, by their own efforts, that blissful suspension of the powers which she depicts in colours so glowing. Unlike Dionysius, she counsels no effort to denude the soul of thought: she does not, with Tauler, bid the mystic laboriously sink into the ground of his being. She is emphatically a Quietist; quite as much so as Molinos, far more so than Fénélon. Spiritual consolation and spiritual desertion are to be alike indifferent. By a singular inconsistency, while tracing out the way of perfection, she forbids the taking of a step in that path.[284] You will be borne along, she would say, if you wait, as far as is fitting. Her experience receives its complexion, and some of her terminology is borrowed from the *Lives of the Saints*. Of the past career of Mystical Theology she is utterly ignorant. She hears, indeed, of a certain time-honoured division of the mystical process into

Purgative, Illuminative, and Unitive; but she does not adopt the scheme. The Platonic and philosophic element is absent altogether from her mysticism. Her metaphysics are very simple:—the soul has three powers—Understanding, Memory, and Will. Now one, now another, now all of these, are whelmed and silenced by the incoming flood of Divine communication.

In addition to sundry chapters in her *Life* on the various kinds of prayer, she has left two treatises, *The Way of Perfection* (Camino de Perfecion) and *The Castle of the Soul* (Castillo Interior)—verbose, rambling, full of repetitions. For the conventual mind there is no rotation of crops; and the barrenness which limits such monotonous reproduction supervenes very soon. From these sources, then, we proceed to a brief summary of her theopathy.

There are in her scale four degrees of prayer. The first is *Simple Mental Prayer*,—fervent, inward, self-withdrawn; not exclusive of some words, nor unaided by what the mystics called discursive acts, *i.e.*, the consideration of facts and doctrines prompting to devotion. In this species there is nothing extraordinary. No mysticism, so far.

SECOND DEGREE:—*The Prayer of Quiet* called also *Pure Contemplation*. In this state the Will is absorbed, though the Understanding and Memory may still be active in an ordinary way. Thus the nun may be occupied for a day or two in the usual religious services, in embroidering an altar-cloth, or dusting a chapel; yet without the Will being engaged. That faculty is supposed to be, as it were, bound and taken up in God. This stage is a supernatural one. Those who are conscious of it

are to beware lest they suffer the unabsorbed faculties to trouble them. Yet they should not exert themselves to protract this 'recollection.' They should receive the wondrous sweetness as it comes, and enjoy it while it lasts, absolutely passive and tranquil. The devotee thus favoured often dreads to move a limb, lest bodily exertion should mar the tranquillity of the soul. But happiest are those who, as in the case just mentioned, can be Marys and Marthas at the same time.[285]

THIRD DEGREE:—*The Prayer of Union*, called also *Perfect Contemplation*. In this prayer, not the Will only, but the Understanding and Memory also, are swallowed up in God. These powers are not absolutely inactive; but we do not work them, nor do we know how they work. It is a kind of celestial frenzy—'a sublime madness,' says Theresa. In such a transport she composed her ecstatic hymn, without the least exercise of the understanding on her part. At this stage the contemplatist neither thinks nor feels as a human being. The understanding is stunned and struck dumb with amazement. The heart knows neither why it loves, nor what. All the functions of the mind are suspended. Nothing is seen, heard, or known. And wherefore this sudden blank? That for a brief space (which seems always shorter than it really is) the Living God may, as it were, take the place of the unconscious spirit—that a divine vitality may for a moment hover above the dead soul, and then vanish without a trace; restoring the mystic to humanity again, to be heartened and edified, perhaps for years to come, by the vague memory of that glorious nothingness.[286]

Some simple nun might ask, 'How do you know that God did so plenarily enter into you, if you were conscious of nothing whatever?'

'My daughter,' replies the saint, 'I know it by an infallible certainty (*una certidumbre*) that God alone bestows.'[287]

After this nothing remains to be said.

FOURTH DEGREE:—*The Prayer of Rapture, or Ecstasy*. This estate is the most privileged, because the most unnatural of all. The bodily as well as mental powers are sunk in a divine stupor. You can make no resistance, as you may possibly, to some extent, in the Prayer of Union. On a sudden your breath and strength begin to fail; the eyes are involuntarily closed, or, if open, cannot distinguish surrounding objects; the hands are rigid; the whole body cold.

Alas! what shall plain folk do among the rival mystics! Swedenborg tells us that bodily cold is the consequence of defective faith: Theresa represents it as the reward of faith's most lofty exercise.

Were you reading, meditating, or praying, previous to the seizure, the book, the thought, the prayer, are utterly forgotten. For that troublesome little gnat, the memory (*esta maraposilla importuna de la memoria*), has burnt her wings at the glory. You may look on letters—you cannot read a word; hear speech—you understand nothing. You cannot utter a syllable, for the strength is gone. With intense delight, you find that all your senses are absolutely useless—your spiritual powers inoperative in any human mode. The saint is not quite certain whether the understanding, in this

condition, understands; but she is sure that, if it does, it understands without understanding, and that its not understanding cannot be understood. Time of this beatific vacuum,—very long, if half an hour; though obviously a difficult point to decide, as you have no senses to reckon by.

Remarkable were the effects of the rapture on the body of the saint. An irrepressible lifting force seemed to carry her off her feet (they preserve the right foot in Rome to this day): it was the swoop of an eagle; it was the grasp of a giant. In vain, she tells us, did she resist. Generally the head, sometimes the whole body, was supernaturally raised into the air! On one occasion, during a sermon on a high day, in the presence of several ladies of quality, the reckless rapture took her. For in vain had she prayed that these favours might not be made public. She cast herself on the ground. The sisters hastened to hold her down; yet the upward struggling of the divine potency was manifest to all. Imagine the rush of the sisterhood, the screams of the ladies of quality, the pious ejaculations from the congregation,—watching that knot of swaying forms, wrestling with miracle, and the upturned eyes, or open-mouthed amazement, of the interrupted preacher! [288]

The state of rapture is frequently accompanied by a certain ‘great pain’ (*gran pena*), a sweet agony and delicious torment, described by Theresa in language as paradoxical as that which Juliet in her passion applies to the lover who has slain her cousin—

> Beautiful tyrant! fiend angelical!
> Dove-feathered raven! wolfish-ravening lamb!

After some two or three hours' endurance of this combined spiritual and corporeal torture, the sisters would find her almost without pulsation, the bones of the arms standing out (*las canillas muy abiertas*), her hands stiff and extended: in every joint were the pains of dislocation: she was apparently at the point of death.[289]

This mysterious 'pain' is no new thing in the history of mysticism. It is one of the trials of mystical initiation. It is the depth essential to the superhuman height. With St. Theresa, the physical nature contributes towards it much more largely than usual; and in her map of the mystic's progress it is located at a more advanced period of the journey. St. Francis of Assisi lay sick for two years under the preparatory miseries. Catharine of Siena bore five years of privation, and was tormented by devils beside. For five years, and yet again for more than three times five, Magdalena de Pazzi endured such 'aridity,' that she believed herself forsaken of God. Balthazar Alvarez suffered for sixteen years before he earned his extraordinary illumination.[290] Theresa, there can be little doubt, regarded her fainting-fits, hysteria, cramps, and nervous seizures, as divine visitations. In their action and reaction, body and soul were continually injuring each other. The excitement of hallucination would produce an attack of her disorder, and the disease again foster the hallucination. Servitude, whether of mind or body, introduces maladies unknown to freedom. Elephantiasis and leprosy—the scourge of modern Greece—were unknown to ancient Hellas. The cloister breeds a family of mental distempers, elsewhere unheard of.

The mystics generally, from Dionysius downward, inculcate earnest endeavours to denude the mind of images, to suspend its reflex or discursive operations. Theresa goes a step farther, and forbids her pupils to strive towards such a state. If such a favour is to be theirs, it will be wrought in them as by enchantment. Passivity here reaches its extreme. On this ground a charge of Quietism might have been brought against Theresa with more justice than against Fénélon, or even Molinos. The *Guida Spirituale* of Molinos was designed to assist the mystic in attaining that higher contemplation of God which rises above the separate consideration of particular attributes. This indistinct and dazzled apprehension of all the perfections together is the very characteristic of Theresa's *Prayer of Rapture*. Molinos cites her very words. The introduction to his condemned manual contains some very strong expressions. But nothing of his own is so extravagant as the passages from Dionysius and Theresa.

Who then is the Quietist—Molinos or Theresa? Both write books to mark out the mystic's pathway. Theresa adds the caution, 'Sit still.' Manifestly, then, the excess of passivity lies with her. The oars of Molinos are the sails of Theresa, —erected, like the broad paddles of the Indian, to catch the breeze, and urge onward the canoe without an effort.[291] But the followers of Molinos were found guilty of neglecting ceremonial gewgaws for devout abstraction,—of escaping those vexatious observances so harassing to patients and so lucrative to priests. So Rome condemned him, and not Theresa, as the Quietist heretic. For his head the thundercloud; for hers the halo.[292]

Here the reader may naturally ask, 'How do these mystics reconcile such extremes of abstraction and such extremes of sensuousness? If the state above symbols and above reasoning—above all conscious mental operations, distinctions, or figures, be so desirable (as they all admit),—must not crucifixes, images, and pictures of saints, yea, the very conception of our Saviour's humanity itself, be so many hindrances?'

To this Theresa would answer, 'I thought so once. But I was happily led to see my error ere long. In the *Prayer of Rapture*, all recognition of Christ's humanity—as, indeed, of everything else—is doubtless obliterated. But, then, *we* do not effect this. There is no effort on our part to remove from our minds the conception of Christ's person. The universal nescience of Rapture is supernaturally wrought, without will of ours.'[293] John of the Cross, who carries his negative, imageless abstraction so far, is fain (as a good son of the Church) to insert a special chapter in commendation of images, pictures, and the sensuous aids to devotion generally. It was unfortunate for the flesh and blood of Molinos that he failed to do the same.[294]

In the seventeenth century the Quietists were accused of rejecting the idea of Christ's humanity, as a corporeal image which would only mar their supersensuous contemplation of abstract deity. Bossuet attempted to fasten the charge on Fénélon: it was one of the hottest points of their controversy. Fénélon completely clears himself. From the evidence within my reach, I am disposed to acquit Molinos also.[295]

Theresa relates with peculiar pleasure those

passages in the marvellous history of the soul in which surpassing heights of knowledge, or of virtue, are supposed to be realized, on the instant, without processes or media. No transition is too violent for her faith. She is impatient of all natural growth; will acknowledge no conditions of development. The sinner turns into a seraph in the twinkling of an eye. The splendid symmetry of all the Christian virtues can arise, like the palace of Aladdin, in a single night. In one particular kind of Rapture—the Flight of the Soul (*Buelo del Espiritu*), the soul is described by her as, in a manner, blown up. It is discharged heavenwards by a soundless but irresistible explosive force from beneath, swift as a bullet (*con la presteza que sale la pelota de un arcabuz*). Thus transported the spirit is taught without the medium of words, and understands mysteries which long years of search could not even have surmised.[296]

Visions are intellectual or representative. The former is a consciousness of spiritual proximity, indescribable, unaccompanied by any appearances. The representative or imaginative vision, presents some definite form or image.[297]

There is a kind of supernatural tuition, she tells us, in which the Lord suddenly places in the centre of the soul, what he wishes it to understand, without words or representation of any kind. This privilege Theresa compares very truly to an ability to read without having learnt letters, or to nutriment derived from food without eating it.[298] In other instances certain efficacious words (the ‘substantial words’ of John), are spoken divinely in the centre of the soul, and immediately produce there the actual effects

proper to their significance.[299] If something is thus inwardly spoken about humility, for example, the subject of such words is that moment completely humble. So the soul is supplied with virtues as the *tables volantes* of Louis XV. with viands,—a spring is touched, and presto! the table sinks and re-appears—spread.

Note to page 168.

Theresa compares the four degrees of prayer to four ways of watering the soul-garden: the first, to drawing water out of a well; the second, to raising it by means of a rope with buckets (less laborious and more plentiful); the third, to the introduction of a rivulet; and the fourth, to a copious shower, whereby God Himself abundantly waters the garden, without any effort of ours.—Cap. xi. p. 67. The second degree is fully described in the fourteenth chapter of her life, and in the thirty-first of the *Camino de Perfecion*.

The difference between the first degree and the three others is simply that generic distinction between Meditation and Contemplation with which the earlier mystics have made us familiar. Theresa's second, third, and fourth degrees of prayer are her more loose and practical arrangement of the species of contemplation. She identifies Mystical Theology with Prayer, employing the latter term in a very comprehensive sense. So also does St. Francis de Sales:—En somme, l'oraison et théologie mystique n'est autre chose qu'une conversation par laquelle l'âme s'entretient amoureusement avec Dieu de sa très-aimable bonté pour s'unir et joindre à icelle.—*Traité de l'Amour de Dieu*, livre vi. chap. i. He likens

the soul in the prayer of Quiet when the will is engaged but the other powers free, to an infant which can see and hear and move its arms, while adhering to the breast. The babe which removes its little mouth from the bosom to see where its feet are, resembles those who are distracted in the prayer of Quiet by self-consciousness, and disturb their repose by curiosity as to what the mind is doing the while. —*Ibid.* chap. x.

Note to page 170.

Vida, capp. xviii. xix.:—Estandoassi el alma buscando a Dios, siente con un deleyte grandissimo y suave casi desfallecerse toda con una manera de desmayo, que le va faltando el huelgo, y todas las fuerças corporales, demanera que sino es con mucha pena, no puede aun menear las manos; los ojos se le cierran sin querer, los cerrar, y si los tiene abiertos no vee casi nada; ni si lee, acierta a dezir letra ni casi atina a conocerla bien; vee que ay letra, mas como el entendimiento no ayuda, no sabe leer, aunque quiera. Oye, mas no entiende lo que oye. Assi que de los sentidos no se aprovecha nada, sino es para no la acabar de dexar a su plazer, y assi antes la dañan. Hablar, es por de mas, que no atina a formar palabra; ni ay fuerça ya que atinasse, para poderla pronunciar: porque toda la fuerça exterior se pierde, y se aumenta en las del alma, para mejor poder gozar de su gloria. El deleyte exterior que se siente es grande, y muy conocido.—P. 118.

As to the elevation of the body in the air during rapture, it is common enough in the annals of Romish saintship, and a goodly page might be filled

with the mere names of the worthies who are represented as overcoming not only sin, but gravitation. Maria d'Agreda was seen, times without number, poised on nothing in a recumbent attitude, in an equilibrium so delicate, that by blowing, even at a distance, she was made to waft this way or that, like a feather. Dominic of Jesu Maria had the honour of being blown about, while in this soap-bubble condition, by the heretic-slaying breath of Philip II. Görres furnishes a long list of examples, and believes them all; *Die Christliche Mystik*, Buch. v. iv. § 2.

It is curious to see how Francis de Sales, who follows Theresa somewhat closely in his chapter on the Prayer of Quietude, grows wisely cautious as he treats of Rapture, softens down extravagance, avoids theurgy, and keeps to piety, and admirably substitutes practical devotion for the unintelligibility and the materialism of the Spanish saint. He enumerates three kinds of Rapture or ecstasy (ravissement and extase are identical),—that of the intellect, that of the affection, and that of action,—manifested, respectively, by glory, by fervour, and by deed,—realized by admiration, by devotion, and by operation. On the last he dwells most fully; on that he concentrates all his exhortations. To live without profaneness, he says, without falsehood, without robbery, to honour parents, to obey law, to reverence God,—this is to live according to the natural reason of man. But to embrace poverty, to hail reproach and persecution as blessings, and martyrdom as joy, by unceasing self-renunciation, to forsake the world, surmount its opinion, deny its rule,—this is to live, not humanly, but superhumanly;—to live out of ourselves and above ourselves, by supernatural energy,—this is to enjoy the noblest ecstasy, not of a moment, but of a life-time. Many saints have died

without enjoying ecstatic trance—all have lived the ecstatic life.—*Traité de l'Amour de Dieu*, livre vii. chapp. iii. and vii.

Note to page 170.

This pain is described by Theresa in the twentieth chapter of the *Life*, and in the *Castillo Interior, Morada* vi. capp. 1 and 2. In the former place she gives a kind of rationale thereof, in the following words:—Parece me que esta assi el alma, que ni del cielo le viene consuelo, ni esta en el; ni de la tierra le quiere, ni esta en ella; sino como crucificada entre el cielo y la tierra, padeciendo sin venirle socorro di ningun cabo. Porque el que le viene del cielo (que es como he dicho una noticia de Dios tan admirable, muy sobre todo lo que podemos dessear) es para mas tormento, porque acreciento el desseo de manera que a mi parecer la gran pena algunas vezes quita el sentido, sino que dura poco sin el. Parecen unos transitos de la muerte, salvo que trae consigo un tan contento este padecer, que no se yo a que lo comparar.—P. 135.

The *Castillo Interior* describes the mystic's progress under the emblem of a Castle, divided into seven apartments; the inmost, where God resides, representing the centre of the soul (termed the *apex* by some; the *Ground* by others); and each of these successive abodes, from the outermost to the central, corresponding to the advancing stages of discipline and privilege through which the mystic passes. The liability to the pain in question supervenes at the sixth apartment, prior to the last and most glorious stage attainable on earth.

Victor Gelenius of Treves (writing 1646) has seven degrees, and places this stage of misery and privation in the fourth, as the transition between the human and superhuman kinds of devotion. It is the painful weaning-time, wherein the soul passes (in an agony of strange bewilderment) from a religion which employs the faculties we possess, to that which is operated in us in a manner altogether incomprehensible and divine. Whatever division be adopted, such alone is the legitimate locality for this portion of the mystical experience. Here Gelenius and John of the Cross are perfectly agreed, though their graduation and nomenclature are different.

Note to page 171.

This pain is the ‘pressura interna’ of Tauler: the ‘horribile et indicibile tormentum’ of Catharine of Genoa; the ‘purgatory’ of Thomas à Jesu; the ‘languor infernalis’ of Harphius; the ‘terrible martyrium’ of Maria Vela, the Cistercian; the ‘divisio naturæ ac spiritus’ of Barbanson; the ‘privation worse than hell’ of Angela de Foligni. See Card. Bona’s *Via Compendii ad Deum*, cap. 10. *Angelæ de Fulginio Visiones*, cap. xix.

These sufferings are attributed by the mystics to the surpassing nature of the truths manifested to our finite faculties (as the sun-glare pains the eye),—to the anguish involved in the surrender of every ordinary religious support or enjoyment, when the soul, suspended (as Theresa describes it) between heaven and earth, can derive solace from neither,—to the intensity of the aspirations awakened, rendering those limitations of our condition here

which detain us from God an intolerable oppression, —and to the despair by which the soul is tried, being left to believe herself forsaken by the God she loves.

On this subject John of the Cross and Theresa are most extravagant. In contrast with their folly stands the good sense of Fénélon. The middle ground is occupied by the comparative moderation of Francis de Sales. The privation described by John is preparatory to a state of complete de-humanization, in which we shall know, feel, do, nothing in the mortal manner, as our whole nature suffers a divine transformation. The privation of which Fénélon speaks is simply a refining process, to purify our love more thoroughly from self. The causes and the various species of this pain are detailed at length by John of the Cross in the *Nuit Obscure*, liv. ii. chapp. v. vi. vii.

De Sales says speaking of the 'blessure d'amour:'—Mais, Theotrine, parlant de l'amour sacré, il y a en la practique d'iceluy une sorte de blesseure que Dieu luy-meme faict quelquesfois pour sa souveraine bonté, comme la pressant et solicitant de l'aymer; et lors elle s'eslance de force comme pour voler plus haut vers son divin object; mais demeurant courte parce qu'elle ne peut pas tant aymer comme elle desire, o Dieu! elle sent une douleur qui n'a point d'esgale.... La voilà donc rudement tourmentée entre la violence de ses eslans et celle de son impuissance. —*Traité de l'Amour de Dieu*, liv. vi. ch. xiii.

Theresa declares that the intensity of this delicious agony is such as frequently to endanger life.—*Castillo Int.* vi. c. xi.

Francis de Sales, in whom the sufferings in question assume a highly sentimental character, adduces instances in which they proved fatal. The soul,

springing forward to obey the attraction of the Well-beloved, sooner than be detained by the body amid the miseries of this life, tears herself away, abandons it, and mounts alone, like a lovely little dove, to the bosom of her celestial spouse. St. Theresa herself, he says, made it known, after her departure, that she died of an impetuous assault of love, too violent for nature to sustain.—*Traité de l'Amour de Dieu*, liv. vii. chapp x.-xii.

We may contrast the obscure and feverish utterances of Theresa, and the amorous phraseology of De Sales, on this topic, with the lucid and cautious language of Fénélon.

La sainte indifférence, qui n'est jamais que le désintéressement de l'amour, devient dans les plus extrêmes épreuves ce que les saints mystiques ont nommé abandon, c'est-à-dire, que l'âme désintéressée s'abandonne totalement et sans réserve à Dieu pour tout ce qui regarde son intérêt propre; mais elle ne renonce jamais ni à aucune des choses qui intéressent la gloire et le bon plaisir du bien-aimé.... Cette abnégation de nous-mêmes n'est que pour l'intérêt propre, et ne doit jamais empêcher l'amour désintéressé que nous nous devons à nous-mêmes comme au prochain, pour l'amour de Dieu. Les épreuves extrêmes où cet abandon doit être exercé sont les tentations par lesquelles Dieu jaloux veut purifier l'amour, en ne lui faisant voir aucune ressource ni aucune espérance pour son intérêt même éternel. Ces épreuves sont représentées par un très-grand nombre des saints comme un purgatoire terrible, qui peut exempter du purgatoire de l'autre vie les âmes qui le souffrent avec une entière fidélité.... Ces épreuves ne sont que pour un temps. Plus les âmes y sont fidèles à la grâce pour se laisser

purifier de tout intérêt propre par l'amour jaloux, plus ces épreuves sont courtes. C'est d'ordinaire la résistance secrète des âmes à la grâce sous des beaux prétextes, c'est leur effort intéressé et empressé pour retenir les appuis sensibles dont Dieu veut les priver, qui rend leurs épreuves si longues et si douloureuses: car Dieu ne fait point souffrir sa créature pour la faire souffrir sans fruit, ce n'est que pour la purifier et pour vaincre ses résistances.—*Explic. des Maximes des Saints*, Art. VIII.

Note to page 172.

See the passage already cited (page 166, note), where Theresa expressly forbids any attempt on our part to suspend the powers of the mind. Effort to produce inaction appears to her a contradiction in terms. Yet such effort Dionysius expressly enjoins; and, indeed, without it, how can the swarming words or images that float about the mind be excluded? The 'phantasmata irruentia,' to be barred out, are the images of sensible objects, according to the old theory of perception—the 'imagines rerum sensibilium et corporearum.' Bona expresses the spirit of the old Platonist mysticism in the Romish Church, when he says, 'Hæc omnia abdicanda et extirpanda prorsus sunt, ut Deum inveniamus.'—*Via Compendii ad Deum*, p. 26. Theresa is quite agreed with all the mystics as to the previous heart-discipline, and the ascetic process essential to the higher forms of contemplation.

The mystics generally rank the 'contemplatio caliginosa' much above the 'contemplatio pura:' the more indistinct our apprehensions, the more divine.

John of the Cross comes next, in this respect, after Dionysius. Molinos borrows his doctrine, that as the distance between the Infinite and all our sensuous images, conclusions, and finite conceptions must be infinite after all, such things embarrass rather than aid our contemplation. But even he does not soar into a darkness so absolute as that of Dionysius. He says expressly, in the introduction to his *Spiritual Guide*:—'In answer to the objection that the will must be inactive where no clear conception is given to the understanding,—that a man cannot love what he can take no cognizance of, my reply is this: Although the understanding does not distinctively recognise certain images and conceptions, by a discursive act or mental conclusion, it apprehends, nevertheless, by a dim and comprehensive faith. And though this knowledge be very cloudy, vague, and general, yet it is far more clear and perfect than any sensuous or scientific apprehensions that man can devise in this life, since all corporeal images must be immeasurably remote from God.' See Arnold's *Kirchen-und-Ketzergeschichte*, th. III. ch. xvii., where the Introduction is inserted entire.

Theresa also admits that during the ecstatic pain the soul adores no particular attribute of God, but, as it were, all his perfections collectively. Bien entiende que no quiere sino a su Dios, mas no ama cosa particular del, sino todo junto lo quiere, y no sabe lo que quiere.—*Vida*, cap. xx. p. 135. But it is a sore trial to her when her fancy is limed, and the key to her chamber of vision, for a season, lost.

When we leave Dionysius and John, and come to the French mystics, how great the difference! The soul hangs no longer in a lightless void, trembles no more on the verge of swooning ecstacy. This 'Visio

caliginosa' becomes, not merely a comprehensible thing, but so clarified, humanized, and we may say Christianized, as to come within the range of every devout consciousness. The 'indistinct contemplation' of St. Francis de Sales is a summary and comprehensive view of Divine truth or the Divine Nature,—simple, emotional, jubilant, as distinguished from the detailed and partial views of searching Meditation. As he fancifully expresses it, this simplicity of contemplation does not pluck the rose, the thyme, the jessamine, the orange-flower, inhaling the scent of each separately,—this the flower-gatherer Meditation does;—Contemplation rejoices in the fragrance distilled from them all. An example perfectly explains his meaning. O que bien-heureux sont ceux qui, après avoir discouru (the discursive acts above spoken of) sur la multitude des motifs qu'ils ont d'aymer Dieu, reduisans tous leurs regards en une seule veuë et toutes leurs pensées en une seule conclusion, arrestant leur esprit en l'unité de la contemplation, à l'exemple de S. Augustin ou de S. Bruno, prononçant secrettement en leur ame, par une admiration permanente, ces paroles amoureuses: O bonté! bonté! bonté! tousjours ancienne et tousjours nouvelle!—*Traité de l'Amour de Dieu*, liv. vi. chap. v.

Every religious man must remember times when he was the subject of some such emotion, when the imagination bodied forth no form, the reason performed no conscious process, but, after some train of thought, at the sight of some word, or while gazing on some scene of beauty, an old truth seemed to overwhelm him (as though never seen till then) with all its grandeur or endearment,—times when he felt the poverty of words, and when utterance, if left at all, could only come in the fervid, broken syllables

of reiterated ejaculation. In such melting or such tumult of the soul, there is no mysticism. Even Deism, in a susceptible Rousseau, cannot escape this passion. He speaks of a bewildering ecstasy awakened by nature, which would overcome him with such force, that he could but repeat, in almost delirious transport, 'O Great Being! O Great Being!' Neither is it mystical to prefer the kindling masterful impulse of a faith which possesses us, rather than we it, to the frigid exactitude of lifeless prescription. The error of the mystics lay in the undue value they attached to such emotions, and their frequent endeavours to excite them for their own sake; in transferring what was peculiar to those seasons to the other provinces of life; and in the constant tendency of their religionism to underrate the balanced exercise of all our faculties, neglecting knowledge and action in a feverish craving for evanescent fervours.

Fénélon, speaking of the negative character of pure and direct contemplation, teaches a doctrine widely different from that of Dionysius, even while referring with reverence to his name. He is careful to state that the attributes of God do not, at such times, cease to be present to the mind, though no sensible image be there, no discursive act performed; that the essence, without the attributes, would be the essence no longer; that, in the highest contemplation, the truths of revelation do not cease to be admissible to the mind; that the humanity of Christ, and all his mysteries, may then be distinctly present,—seen simply, lovingly, as faith presents them, only that there is no systematic effort to impress the several details on the imagination, or to draw conclusions from them.—*Explic. des Maximes des Saints*, art. xxvii.

Note to page 173.

See the clear and guarded language of the twenty-eighth article in the *Maximes des Saints*, and the *Troisième Lettre en réponse à divers Ecrits, Seconde Partie*.

The language of Molinos on this point is as follows:—'Although the humanity of Christ is the most perfect and most holy mean of access to God, the highest mean of our salvation, yea the channel through which alone we receive every blessing for which we hope, yet is the humanity not the supreme good, for that consists in the contemplation of God. But as Jesus Christ is what he is more through his divine nature than his human, so that man contemplates Christ continually and thinks of Him, who thinks on God, and hath regard constantly to Him. And this is the case more especially with the contemplative man, who possesses a faith more purified, clear, and experimental.'—*Arnold, loc. cit.*, p. 183.

Such a passage proves merely thus much, that Molinos shared in the general tendency of the authorised mediæval mysticism,—a tendency leading the contemplatist to see Christ in God, rather than God in Christ, and placing him in danger of resolving Redemption into self-loss in the abstract Godhead. Similar expressions are frequent in Tauler, in Ruysbroek, in Suso, in the German theology. Now we know by what these same men say at other times, that it was not their intention to disparage or discard the humanity of Christ. Similar allowance must be made for Molinos—quite as far from such practical Docetism as they were. The words just quoted should be compared with the title of the sixteenth chapter in

his first book: 'How in the inward recollection, or drawing in of our powers, we may enter into the internal Ground, *through the most holy Humanity of Jesus Christ*.' A gross and materialised apprehension of the bodily sufferings of the Saviour had become general in the Romish Church. They were dramatized in imagination and in fact, into a harrowing spectacle of physical anguish. The end was lost sight of in the means. To such sensible representations—such excesses of over-wrought sentiment, Molinos was doubtless unfriendly; and so, also, the more refined and elevated mysticism of that communion has generally been. Molinos is nearer to the spiritual Tauler than to the sensuous Theresa. Where he speaks of passivity and acquiescence in desertion (§ 5), of contemplation (§§ 17, 18), of self-abandonment (§ 30), of the divine vocation and elevation necessary to the attainment of the contemplative heights, where he says that we must not, without the direction of an experienced adviser, seek to raise ourselves from one stage to a higher (§ 24), he does but repeat what the most orthodox mystics had said before him. Holy indifference to spiritual enjoyments and manifestations, and complete passivity, are not more earnestly enjoined by John of the Cross than by Molinos. Yet one main charge against the Quietists was, that they made mysticism a human method, and proposed to raise to mystical perfection all who were ready to go through their process. The accusations brought against Quietism by Berthier in his *Discours sur le Non-Quiétisme de S. Theresa*, and in his tenth letter on the works of John of the Cross, are self-destructive. In one place he finds the Quietists guilty of making 'their pretended spiritual man' an insensible kind of being, who remains always apathetic—dans une

inaltération et une inaction entiere en la présence de Dieu. In another, he represents them as offering to teach contemplation to all (irrespective of the director's consent, he fears) by reducing it to a method. Either way the unhappy Quietists cannot escape: they must always do too much or too little. It was against the artificial methods of devotion, so much in vogue, that Molinos protested, when he called his readers away from the puerile manuals and bead-counting of the day, to direct and solitary communion with God. Several of the articles of condemnation are such as would have been drawn out against a man suspected of Protestantism. On the question of the humanity of Christ, the proposition professedly deduced from the doctrines of Molinos, and censured accordingly, runs thus—'We must do no good works of our own motion, and render no homage to Our Lady, the Saints, or Christ's humanity,' &c.—Art. xxxv.

CHAPTER III.

> And those that endeavour after so still, so silent, and demure condition of minde, that they would have the sense of nothing there but peace and rest, striving to make their whole nature desolate of all *Animal Figurations* whatsoever, what do they effect but a clear Day, shining upon a barren Heath, that feeds neither Cow nor Horse,—neither Sheep nor Shepherd is to be seen there, but only a waste, silent Solitude, and one uniform parchednesse and vacuity. And yet while a man

fancies himself thus wholly divine, he is not aware how he is even then held down by his *Animal Nature*; and that it is nothing but the stillnesse and fixednesse of *Melancholy* that thus abuses him, instead of the true divine Principle.—HENRY MORE.

II. *St. John of the Cross.*

Little John of the Cross—a hero, like Tydeus, small in body, but great in soul—was in the prime of life when Theresa was growing old. Early distinguished by surpassing austerity and zeal, he was selected by the Saint as her coadjutor in the great work of Carmelite reform. The task was no easy one, though sanctioned by the highest spiritual authority. This troculus service—the picking the teeth of the gorged ecclesiastical crocodile—has always been a somewhat delicate and dangerous affair. The great jaws closed with a horrible crash one day on poor Madame Guyon, as she was working away with her solitary bill and the best intentions. On John, too, busy at a little scavenger's work, those jaws had once almost met, and at least knocked him fluttering into a hollow tooth,—in other words, a dark and noisome dungeon at Toledo. But what between St. Theresa's intercession and that of the Mother of God, he is let fly again. Vicar-provincial of Andalusia, he plies his task anew, with admirable intrepidity and self-devotion; courts hatred and opprobrium on every side; flourishes his whip; overturns secularities; and mouses for flaws of regulation. He succeeds in excavating in every direction spiritual catacombs and mummy-caves, where, swathed up in long rows, the religious

dumb and withered line the cloister-walls—motionless—satisfactorily dead. Next to Ignatius Loyola, he was, perhaps, the greatest soul-sexton that ever handled shovel.

John of the Cross obtained this distinctive name through his love of crosses. He was consumed by an insatiable love of suffering. It was his prayer that not a day of his life might pass in which he did not suffer something. Again and again does he exhort the monk, saying—'Whatsoever you find pleasant to soul or body, abandon; whatsoever is painful, embrace it.' 'Take pains,' he says, 'to give your name an ill savour; burrow deep and deeper under heaped obloquy, and you are safe.'[300] Thus is the odour of sanctity best secured; and the disguised saint resembles that eastern prince who concealed himself from his pursuers beneath a heap of onions, lest the fragrance of his perfumes should betray him. The man who is truly dead and self-abandoned will not only thus disguise his virtues before others; he will be unconscious of them himself. The whole life of John was an attempt towards a practical fulfilment of such precepts. The party of his enemies gained the upper hand in the chapter, and the evening of his days was clouded by the disgrace of which he was covetous. He passed existence in violent extremes, now gazing with delight on some celestial mirage, swimming in seas of glory that waft him to the steps of the burning throne,—and anon hurled down into the abyss, while vampyre wings of fiends 'darken his fall, with victory,' and his heart itself is a seething hell-cauldron, wherein demon talons are the raking fleshhooks.

The piety of John is altogether of the Romanist

type. In his doctrine of humility, truth is not to be considered, but expediency,—that is, an edifying display of self-vilification. On his own principles, John ought to have persuaded himself, and assured others, that he was a self-indulgent, pleasure-loving drone,—though perfectly aware of the contrary. St. Paul is content to bid men think of themselves not more highly than they ought to think. John of the Cross is not satisfied unless they think worse than they ought,—unless they think untruly, and labour to put a pious fraud upon themselves. John disturbs the equilibrium of Quietism. There is quite as much self-will in going out of the way of a blessing to seek a misery, as in avoiding a duty for the sake of ease. Many men will readily endure a score of mortifications of their own choosing, who would find it hard to display tolerable patience under a single infliction from a source beyond their control. This extreme of morbid asceticism is more easy, because more brilliant in its little world, than the lowly fortitude of ordinary Christian life. How many women, at this hour, in poverty, in pain, in sorrow of heart, are far surpassing St. Theresa in their self-sacrifice and patience, unseen and unpraised of men.

Banished to the little Convent of Pegnuela, he completed among the crags of the Sierra Morena his great mystical treatises, *The Obscure Night*, and *The Ascent of Carmel*. He follows in the steps of the Pseudo-Dionysius. He describes the successive denudations of the soul as it passes,—the shadow of itself, into the infinite shade of the Divine Dark. [301] We have seen how instantaneously Theresa could attain at times this oblivious self-reduction. Her soul falls prostrate, with the ordinary attire of faculties, but rises, stripped of all in a moment.

Not more dexterously was the fallen Andrew Fairservice stripped in a twinkling by the Highlanders, so that he who tumbled down a well-clothed, decent serving-man, stood up 'a forked, uncased, bald-pated, beggarly-looking scarecrow.' John of the Cross describes with almost scientific method the process of spiritual unclothing,—preaches a series of sermons on the successive removal of each integument,—and perorates on the blessed reduction of the soul to a supernatural state of nature.

The 'Obscure Night,' would be the most fitting title for both treatises; for the night of mysticism is their sole subject, and Mount Carmel does but figure as a frontispiece, in compliment to the Order probably. Sundry verses head the works as texts; the first of these, with its exposition, will sufficiently indicate the character of the whole.

En una noche escura
Con ansias en amores inflammada
¡O dichosa ventura!
Salí sin ser notada
Estando ya mi casa sosegada.

''Twas in a darksome night, inflamed with restless love, O fortune full of bliss, I ventured forth unmarked, what time my house was still.'

The Saint interprets his stanza, in substance, as follows:—

Here the soul says, 'I went out unhindered by sensuality or the devil. I went out, that is, of myself—out from my own poor and feeble manner of knowing, loving, and tasting God. I went out, unassisted by any action of my own powers; while my understanding was wrapped in

darkness; while will and memory were overwhelmed by affliction. I went out, abandoning myself in pure faith to darkness—that is, to the night of my spirit and my natural powers.

'This going forth has crowned me with happiness; for I have been straightway elevated to operations entirely divine—to most familiar intercourses with God; in other words, my understanding has passed from a human to a divine condition. Uniting myself to God by this purgation, my knowledge is no longer weak and limited as formerly; but I know by the divine wisdom, to which I am conjoined.

'My will also has gone out of itself, and become in a sort divine; for being united to the Divine Love, it does not love any longer by its own former powers, but by the powers of the Divine Spirit. Thus, its acts of love towards the Creator are rendered no more in a human manner.

'My memory is filled with images of heavenly glory. All my powers, in short, and all my affections, are renovated by the Night of the spirit and the despoliation of the old man, in such sort that their very nature seems changed, and they can relish only spiritual and divine delights.'[302]

Thus, the soul is to resemble the wondrous eastern tree of the old travellers, which by daylight stands leafless and flowerless, but after sundown puts forth countless white blossoms, shining in the darkness like the drops of a silver fountain; and when the sun is risen again, sheds all its beauty, and stands bare and barren as before. When all our natural powers, slain and buried, lie dead under the midnight;—then arise,

instead of them, certain divine substitutes, which will, and love, and know, as the Infinite does, not as men.

The FIRST NIGHT is that of the *Sense*: the long process of vigil and austerity which, with the caduceus of asceticism, tames and lulls to slumber the Argus-eyed monster of the flesh.[303] A painful work, but not without meet recompence. New pleasures, even of the sense, are supernaturally vouchsafed to the steadfast votary. The wearied eye and the unvisited ear are regaled by glorious visions and seraphic melody; yea, the parched tongue, and haggard, bleeding flesh, are made to know delights of taste and touch, that melt with most delicious pleasure through the frame, and beggar with their transport all the joys of banquets or of love.

But rejoice not, O mystic! for even now, lest thou shouldst grow greedy of these high luxuries, there strides towards thee the darkness of—

The SECOND NIGHT—the Night of the *Spirit*. Here all caresses are withdrawn. The deserted soul cannot think, or pray, or praise, as of old. The great pains are to begin. Pitiless purgation and privation absolute are about to make the second night not night only, but midnight. You seem to descend, God-abandoned, alive into hell. Make no resistance: utter no cry for comfort. Solace is a Tantalus' bough, which will wave itself away as you stretch forth your hand. Acquiesce in all: be in your desertion as absolutely passive as in your rapture. So, from the bright glassy edge and summit of this awful fall, you shoot down helpless, blind, and dizzy,—down through the surging cataract, among the giant vapour

columns, amid the eternal roar, to awake at the boiling foot, and find that you yet live, in your tossing shallop,—or rather, you no longer, for you yourself are dead—so much mere ballast in the bottom of the boat: a divine and winged Radiance has taken your place, who animates rather than steers, guiding, in your stead, by mysterious impulse.[304]

To the higher faculty, then, there are already visible, after the first horrors, breaking gleams of a super-celestial dawn. Visions are seen; forms of glory come and go: gifts of subtlest discernment are vouchsafed: substantial words are spoken within, which make you, in that moment, all they mean.[305]

But all such particular and special manifestations you are peremptorily to reject, come they from God or come they from the Devil;—not even to reflect upon and recall them afterwards, lest grievous harm ensue. For the philosophy of John is summary. Two ideas alone have room there—All and Nothing. Whatsoever is created is finite: whether actual or ideal, it bears no proportion to the All,—it cannot therefore be helpful to any on their way to the All. The Something is no link between the opposites of All and Nothing. Therefore, if any view of a particular divine perfection, any conception of Deity, or image of saint or angel, be even supernaturally presented to the mind, reject it. You are aiming at the highest—at loss in the All. Everything definite and particular—all finite apprehension, must be so much negation of the Infinite,—must limit that All. You should pass beyond such things to blend immediately with the Universal,—to attain that

view of God which is above means—is unconditioned—is, from its illimitable vastness, an anguish of bliss,—a glory which produces the effect of darkness.[306]

But why, it will be asked, does God grant these favours of vision to the saints at all, if it is their duty to disregard them?

John answers, 'Because some transition stage is unavoidable. But the higher you attain, the less of such manifestation will you meet with. This portion of your progress is a grand stair-case hung with pictures;—hurry up the steps, that you may enter the darkened chamber above, where divine ignorance and total darkness shall make you blest. If in doubt about a vision, there is always your confessor, to whom, if you have not constant resort, woe be to you! But you are safe, at any rate, in not receiving and cherishing such inferior bestowments. To reject them will be no sin—no loss. For the beneficial effects they are designed to produce will be wrought by God internally, if you only abide passive, and refuse to exert about such signs those lower faculties which can only hinder your advance.'[307]

Such a reply is but a fence of words against a serious difficulty. He should be the last to talk of necessary intermediate steps who proclaims the rejection of everything mediate,—who will have the mystic be reduced to the Nothing and rapt to the All, by a single entrancing touch.[308]

But much higher than any visions of the picture-gallery are certain manifestations (sometimes granted in this state) of divine truth in its absolute nakedness. These are glimpses of the *veritas essentialis nude in se ipsa*, beyond all men, and

angels, and heavenly splendours, which Tauler bids the mystic long for. John forbids us to seek them—for effort would unseal our slumber. They come altogether without consent of ours. Though we are not to hold ourselves so negative towards them as we should towards more palpable and inferior favours.

The Quietists were charged with excluding all human co-operation in the mystical progress. John must plead guilty on this count. His writings abound with reiterated declarations that the soul does absolutely nothing in its night,—with prohibitions against seeking any supernatural favour or manifestation whatever.[309]

Urganda the fairy could find no way of raising the paladins she loved above the common lot of mortals, save that of throwing them into an enchanted sleep. So Galaor, Amadis, and Esplandian, sink into the image of death beneath her kindly wand. Such is the device of John—and so does he lull and ward venturous Understanding, learned Memory, and fiery Will. Faith is the night which extinguishes Understanding; Hope, Memory; and Love, Will. The very desire after supernatural bestowments, (though for no other purpose has everything natural been doomed to die) would be a stirring in the torpor—a restless, not a perfect sleep. The serenest Quiet may be ruffled by no such wish.

This, therefore, is John's fundamental principle. All faculties and operations not beyond the limits of our nature must cease, that we may have no natural knowledge, no natural affection; but find, magically substituted, divine apprehensions and divine sentiments quite foreign to ourselves. Then,

still farther, we are desired to ignore even supernatural manifestations, if they represent to us anything whatever; that we may rise, or sink (it is the same), to that swooning gaze on the Infinite Ineffable, wherein our dissolving nature sees, hears, knows, wills, remembers nothing.[310]

The THIRD NIGHT—that of the *Memory* and the *Will*.[311] Here, not only do all the 'trivial fond records' that may have been inscribed upon remembrance vanish utterly, but every trace of the divinest tokens and most devout experience. The soul sinks into profound oblivion. The flight of time is unmarked, bodily pain unfelt, and the place of Memory entirely emptied of its stored 'species and cognitions,'—of everything particular and distinct. The patient forgets to eat and drink,—knows not whether he has done or not done, said or not said, heard or not heard this or that.

'Strange exaltation this,' cries the objector, 'which imbrutes and makes a blank of man—sinks him below idiotic ignorance of truth and virtue!'

John is ready with his answer. This torpor, he replies, is but transitory. The perfect mystic, the adept established in union, has ceased to suffer this oblivion. Passing through it, he acquires a new and divine facility for every duty proper to his station. He is in the supernatural state, and his powers have so passed into God that the Divine Spirit makes them operate divinely,—all they do is divine. The Spirit makes such a man constantly ignorant of what he ought to be ignorant; makes him remember what he ought to remember; and love what is to be loved—God only. Transformed in God, these powers are human no more.[312]

In the same way the night of will extinguishes joy,

—joy in sensible good, in moral excellence, in supernatural gifts, that the soul may soar to a delight above delight, be suspended as in a limitless expanse of calm, far beyond that lower meteoric sky which is figured over with wonders and with signs.

Thus John's desired *contemplatio infusa* is always, at the same time, a *contemplatio confusa*.

At his culminating point the mystic is concealed as 'on the secret top of Horeb;' he ascends by a hidden scale, cloaked with darkness (*por la secreta escala—a escuras y enzelada*).

Mark the advantage of this enclouded state. The Devil, it is said, can only get at what is passing in our mind by observing the operations of the mental powers. If, therefore, these are inactive and absorbed, and a divine communication goes on, in which they have no part whatever, Satan is baffled. These highest manifestations, absolutely pure, nude, and immediate he cannot counterfeit or hinder. The soul is then blissfully incognito and anonymous. This secrecy preserves the mystic from malign arts, as the concealment of their real names was thought the safeguard of ancient cities, since hostile sooth-sayers, ignorant of the true name to conjure by, could not then entice away their tutelary gods.[313]

Such then is the teaching of the *Mount Carmel* and the *Obscure Night*, starred with numerous most irrelevant quotations from the psalms and the prophecies, as though David and Isaiah were Quietists, and spent their days in trying to benumb imagination, banish the sensuous images which made them poets, and tone down all distinct ideas to a lustreless, formless neutral tint.

The Spanish painters have not more anachronisms than the Spanish mystics; and I think of Murillo's 'Moses striking the Rock,' where Andalusian costumes make gay the desert, Andalusian faces stoop to drink, and Andalusian crockery is held out to catch the dashing streams.

In John of the Cross we behold the final masterpiece of Romanist mysticism, and the practice (if here the term be applicable) of supernatural theopathy is complete. The Art of Sinking in Religion—the divinity of diving, could go no deeper. The natives of South America say that the lobo or seal has to swallow great stones when he wishes to sink to the river-bed—so little natural facility has he that way. We sinners, too, have no native alacrity for the mystical descent: our gravitation does not tend towards that depth of nothing; and huge and hard are the stones (not bread) with which this mystagogue would lade us to bring us down. And when, in imagination at least, at the bottom, we are smothered in an obscure night of mud. What a granite boulder is this to swallow,—to be told that the faintest film of attachment that links you with any human being or created thing will frustrate all your aim, and be stout as a cable to hold back your soul,—that with all your mind, and soul, and strength, you must seek out and adore the Uncomfortable, for its own sake—that, drowned and dead, you must lie far down, hidden, not from the pleasant sunshine only, but from all sweet gladness of faith and hope and love—awaiting, in obstruction, an abstraction. This resurrection to a supersensuous serenity, wherein divine powers supersede your own, is a mere imagination—a change of words; the old hallucination of the mystic. After going

through a certain amount of suffering, the devotee chooses to term whatever thoughts or feelings he may have, his own no longer: he fancies them divine. It is the same man from first to last.

Admitting its great fundamental error—this unnaturalness,—as though grace came in to make our flesh and blood a senseless puppet pulled by celestial wires,—it must be conceded that the mysticism of John takes the very highest ground. It looks almost with contempt upon the phantoms, the caresses, the theurgic toys of grosser mystics. In this respect, John is far beyond Theresa. He has a purpose; he thinks he knows a way to it; and he pursues it, unfaltering, to the issue. He gazes steadily on the grand impalpability of the Areopagite, and essays to mount thither with a holy ardour of which the old Greek gives no sign. And this, too, with the vision-craving sentimental Theresa at his side, and a coarsely sensuous Romanism all around him. No wonder that so stern a spiritualism was little to the taste of some church-dignitaries in soft raiment. It is impossible not to recognize a certain grandeur in such a man. Miserably mistaken as he was, he is genuine throughout as mystic and ascetic. Every bitter cup he would press to the lips of others he had first drained himself. His eagerness to suffer was no bravado—no romancing affectation, as with many of his tribe. In his last illness at Pegnuela he was allowed his choice of removal between two places. At one of them his deadly enemy was prior. He bade them carry him thither, for there he would have most to endure. That infamous prior treated with the utmost barbarity the dying saint, on whom his implacable hatred had already heaped every wrong within his power.[314] Let,

then, a melancholy admiration be the meed of John—not because the mere mention of the cross was sufficient, frequently, to throw him into an ecstasy,—not because his face was seen more than once radiant with a lambent fire from heaven,—these are the vulgar glories of the calendar,—but because, believing in mystical death, he did his best to die it, and displayed in suffering and in action a self-sacrificing heroism which could only spring from a devout and a profound conviction. We find in him no sanctimonious lies, no mean or cruel things done for the honour of his Church—perhaps he was not thus tempted or commanded as others have been,—and so, while he must have less merit with Rome as a monk, let him have the more with us as a man.

Note to page 188.

Montée du Carmel, liv. II. ch. ii. and iv.; also *La Nuit Obscure*, I. viii. and II. ch. v.-ix. This night is far more dark and painful than the first and third; and while the first is represented as common to many religious aspirants, the second is attained but by a few.

Si quelqu'un demande pourquoi l'âme donne le nom de nuit obscure à la lumière divine qui dissipe ses ignorances, je réponds que cette divine sagesse est non-seulement la nuit de l'âme, mais encore son supplice, pour deux raisons: la première est, parce que la sublimité de la sagesse divine surpasse de telle sorte la capacité de l'âme, que ce n'est que nuit et ténèbres pour elle; la seconde, la bassesse et l'impureté de l'âme sont telles, que cette sagesse la remplit de peines et d'obscurités.—P. 593.

Mais le plus grand supplice de l'âme est de croire que Dieu la hait, la délaisse, et la jette pour cette raison dans les ténèbres.... En effet, lorsque la contemplation dont Dieu se sert pour purifier l'âme la mortifie en la dépouillant de tout, l'âme éprouve, avec une vivacité pénétrante, toute l'horreur que cause la mort, et toutes les douleurs et tous les gémissements de l'enfer, &c.... On peut dire avec probabilité, qu'une âme qui a passé par ce purgatoire spirituel, ou n'entrera pas dans le purgatoire de l'autre monde, ou n'y demeurera pas longtemps.—P. 597.

But the most characteristic passage on this subject is the following: it contains the essence of his mysticism:—Les affections et les connaissances de l'esprit purifié et élevé à la perfection sont d'un rang supérieur aux affections et aux connaissances naturelles, elles sont surnaturelles et divines; de sorte que, pour en acquérir les actes ou les habitudes, il est nécessaire que celles *qui ne sortent point des bornes de la nature* soient éteintes. C'est pourquoi il est d'une grande utilité en cette matière que l'esprit perde dans cette nuit obscure ses connaissances naturelles, pour être revêtu de cette lumière très-subtile et toute divine, et pour devenir lui-même, en quelque façon, tout divin dans son union avec la sagesse de Dieu. Cette nuit ou cette obscurité doit durer autant de temps qu'il en faut pour contracter l'habitude dans l'usage qu'on fait de cette lumière surnaturelle. On doit dire la même chose de la volonté: elle est obligée de se défaire de toutes ses affections qui l'attachent aux objets naturels, pour recevoir les admirables effets de l'amour qui est extrêmement spirituel, subtil, délicat, intime, qui surpasse tous les sentiments naturels et toutes les affections de la volonté, qui est enfin tout divin; et afin qu'elle soit

toute transformée en cette amour par l'union qui lui est accordée dans la perte de tous ses biens naturels.

Il faut encore que la mémoire soit dénuée des images qui lui forment les connaissances douces et tranquilles des choses dont elle se souvient, afin qu'elle les regarde comme des choses étrangères, et que ces choses lui paraissent d'une manière différente de l'idée qu'elle en avait auparavant. Par ce moyen, cette nuit obscure retirera l'esprit du sentiment commun et ordinaire qu'il avait des objets créés, et lui imprimera *un sentiment tout divin*, qui lui semblera étranger; en sorte que l'âme vivra comme hors d'elle-même, et élevée au-dessus de la vie humaine; elle doutera quelquefois si ce qui se passe en elle n'est point un enchantement, ou une stupidité d'esprit; elle s'étonnera de voir et d'entendre des choses qui lui semblent fort nouvelles, quoiqu'elles soient les mêmes que celles qu'elle avait autrefois entre les mains. *La cause de ce changement est parce que l'âme doit perdre entièrement ses connaissances et ses sentiments humains, pour prendre des connaissances et des sentiments divins; ce qui est plus propre de la vie future que de la vie présente.*—P. 601.

Note to page 191.

'Pour répondre à cette objection, je dis que plus la mémoire est unie à Dieu, plus elle perd ses connaissances distinctes et particulières, jusqu'à ce qu'elle les oublie entièrement: ce qui arrive lorsque l'âme est établie dans l'union parfaite. C'est pourquoi elle tombe d'abord dans un grand oubli, puisque le souvenir des espèces et des connaíssances s'évanouit en elle. Ensuite elle se comporte à l'égard des choses

extérieures avec une négligence si notable et un si grand mépris d'elle-même, qu'étant toute abîmée en Dieu, elle oublie le boire et le manger, et elle ne sait si elle a fait quelque chose ou non, si elle a vu ou non; si on lui a parlé ou non. Mais lorsqu'elle est affermie dans l'habitude de l'union, qui est son souverain bien, elle ne souffre plus ces oublianees dans les choses raisonnables, dans les choses morales, ni dans les choses naturelles: au contraire, elle est plus parfaite dans les opérations convenables à son état, quoiqu'elle les produise par le ministère des images et des connaissances que Dieu excite d'une façon particulière dans la mémoire. Car lorsque l'habitude de l'union, qui est un état surnaturel, est formée, la mémoire et les autres puissances quittent leurs opérations naturelles et passent jusqu'à Dieu, qui est à leur égard un terme surnaturel. En sorte que la mémoire étant toute transformée en Dieu, ses opérations ne lui sont plus imprimées, et ne demeurent plus attachées à elle. La mémoire et les autres facultés de l'âme sont occupées de Dieu avec un empire si absolu, qu'elles semblent être toutes divines, et que c'est lui-même qui les meut par son esprit et par sa volonté divine, et qui les fait opérer en quelque façon divinement: "Puisque celui," dit l'Apôtre, "qui s'unit au Seigneur, devient un même esprit avec lui" (1 Cor. vi. 17). Il est donc véritable que les opérations de l'âme, étant unies totalement à Dieu, sont toutes divines.'—*Montée du Carmel*, liv. III. ch. i.

Note to page 192.

La Nuit Obscure, liv. II. ch. xvii. xviii.:—'L'esprit malin ne peut connaître ce qui se passe dans la volonté que

par les opérations de ces puissances. Ainsi, plus les communications de Dieu son spirituelles, intérieures, et éloignées des sens, moins il peut découvrir et les pénétrer'.—P. 621.

Evil angels may counterfeit those supernatural communications which are vouchsafed through the agency of the good. But the infused passive contemplation, in which neither the understanding, the imagination, nor the sense, exercise their representative office, is secret and safe. 'Quand Dieu la (l'âme) comble immédiatement par lui-même de ses grâces spirituelles, elle se dérobe entièrement à la vue de son adversaire, parce que Dieu, qui est son souverain Seigneur, demeure en elle, et ni les bons ni les mauvais anges ne peuvent y avoir entrée, ni découvrir les communications intimes et secrètes qui se font entre Dieu et l'âme. Elles sont toutes divines, elles sont infiniment élevées, elles sont en quelque sorte les sacrés attouchements des deux extrémités qui se trouvent entre Dieu et l'âme dans leur union: et c'est là où l'âme reçoit plus de biens spirituels qu'en tous les autres degrés de la contemplation (*Cant.* I. 1). C'est aussi ce que l'épouse demandait, quand elle priait l'Epoux divin de lui donner un saint baiser de sa bouche'.—Chap. xxiii. p. 623.

Thus, this culminating point of negation is at least, to some extent, a safeguard. The extinction of knowledge, by confining ourselves to the incomprehensible (*Lettres Spirituelles*, p. 724), and of joy, by renouncing spiritual delights, the refusal to entertain any extraordinary manifestations that assume a definite form or purport, does at the same time shut out all that region of visionary hallucination in which many mystics have passed their days. It is indisputably true that the more the

mystic avoids, rather than craves, the excitements of imagination, sentiment, and miracle, the safer must he be from the delusions to which he is exposed, if not by the juggle of lying spirits, by the fever of his own distempered brain. No one who obeys John's great maxim, 'Il ne faut pas voyager pour voir, mais pour ne pas voir,' will trouble the holy darkness of his church by any erratic novelties of light. Indeed, against such danger careful provision is made by that law which is with him the *sine quâ non* of mystical progress,—Ne regardez jamais votre supérieur, quel qu'il soit, que comme Dieu même, puisqu'il vous est donné comme lieutenant de Dieu.'—*Précautions Spirituelles*, p. 734.

BOOK THE TENTH
QUIETISM.

CHAPTER I.

Love! if thy destined sacrifice am I,
  Come, slay thy victim, and prepare thy fires;
Plunged in thy depths of mercy let me die
  The death which every soul that lives desires!

MADAME GUYON.

'Do you remember,' said Atherton to Willoughby, when he had called to see him one morning, 'the hunt we once had after that passage in Jeremy Taylor, about Bishop Ivo's adventure? Coleridge relates the story without saying exactly where it is, and his daughter states in a note that she had been unable to find the place in Taylor.'

'I recollect it perfectly; and we discovered it, I think, in the first part of his sermon *On the Mercy of the Divine Judgments*. Ivo, going on an embassy for St. Louis, meets by the way a grave, sad woman, doesn't he?—with fire in one hand, and water in the other; and when he inquires what these symbols may mean,

she answers, “My purpose is with fire to burn Paradise, and with my water to quench the flames of hell, that men may serve God without the incentives of hope and fear, and purely for the love of God.”

‘Well, Gower has painted her portrait for us,—Queen Quietude, he calls her: and it is to be hung up here over my chimney-piece, by the next evening we meet together.’

The evening came. Atherton was to read a paper on ‘Madame Guyon and the Quietist Controversy,’ and Gower was to exhibit and explain his allegorical picture.

This painting represented a female figure, simply clad in sombre garments, sitting on a fragment of rock at the summit of a high hill. On her head hung a garland, half untwined, from neglect, which had been fantastically woven of cypress, bound about with heart’s-ease. Many flowers of the heart’s-ease had dropped off, withered; some were lying unheeded in her lap. Her face was bent downward; its expression perfectly calm, and the cast of sadness it wore rather recorded a past, than betrayed a present sorrow. Her eyes were fixed pensively, and without seeming to see them, on the thin hands which lay folded on her knees. No anxious effort of thought contracted that placid brow; no eager aspiration lifted those meekly-drooping eyelids.

At her feet lay, on her right, the little brazier in which she had carried her fire, still emitting its grey curls of smoke; and, on her left, the overturned water-urn—a Fortunatus-purse of water,—from whose silver hollow an inexhaustible stream welled out, and leaping down, was lost to sight among the rocks.

Behind her lay two wastes, stretching from east to west. The vast tracts, visible from her far-seeing mountain, were faintly presented in the distance of the picture. But they were never looked upon; her back was toward them; they belonged to a past never remembered. In the east stretched level lands, covered far as the eye could reach with cold grey inundation. Here and there coal-black ridges and dots indicated the highest grounds still imperfectly submerged; and in some places clouds of steam, water-spouts, and jets of stones and mire,—even boulders of rock, hurled streaming out of the waters into the air,—betrayed the last struggles of the Fire-Kingdom with the invasion of those illimitable tides. So have her enchantments slain the Giant of Fire, and laid him to rest under a water-pall. The place of dolours and of endless burning—so populous with Sorrows—is to be a place of great waters, where the slow vacant waves of the far-glittering reaches will come and go among the channels and the pools, and not even the bittern shall be there, with his foot to print the ooze, with his wing to shadow the sleeping shallows, with his cry to declare it all a desolation.

In the western background, the saintly art of Queen Quietude has made a whole burnt-offering of the cedar shades, and flowery labyrinths, and angel-builded crystal domes of Paradise. Most fragrant holocaust that ever breathed against the sky! Those volumes of cloud along the west, through which the sun is going down with dimmed and doubtful lustre (as though his had been the hand which put the torch to such a burning)—they are heavy with spicy odours. Such sweet wonders of the Eden woodlands cannot but give out sweetness in their dying. The heavens grow dusk and slumbrous with so much incense. A dreamy faintness from the laden air

weighs down the sense. It seems time to sleep—for us, for all nature, to sleep, weary of terrestrial grossness and of mortal limitation,—to sleep, that all may awake, made new; and so, transformed divinely to the first ideal, have divine existence only, and God be all and in all. For God is love, and when hope and fear are dead, then love is all.

Somewhat thus did Gower describe his picture; whereon, in truth, he had expended no little art,—such a haze of repose, and likewise of unreality, had he contrived to throw over this work of fancy; and such a tone had he given, both to the work of the fire on the one side, and to that of the water on the other. The fire did not seem a cruel fire, nor the water an inhospitable water. Golden lines of light from the sun, and rose-red reflections from clouds whose breasts were feathered with fire, rested on the heads of the waves, where the great flood lay rocking. The very ruins of Paradise,—those charred tree-trunks—those dusty river-beds—that shrivelled boskage and white grass,—did not look utterly forlorn. Some of the glassy walls still stood, shining like rubies in the sunset, and glittering at their basements and their gateways with solid falls and pools of gold and silver, where their rich adornment had run down molten to their feet. The Destroyer was the Purifier; and the waiting sigh for renewal was full of trust.

‘A better frontispiece,’ said Atherton, ‘I could not have for my poor paper. I might have been raised to a less prosaic strain, and omitted some less relevant matter, had I been able to place your picture before me while writing. For upon this question of disinterested love, and so of quietude, our mysticism now mainly turns. With Fénélon and Madame

Guyon, mysticism hovers no longer on the confines of pantheism. It deals less with mere abstractions. It is less eager to have everything which is in part done away, that the perfect may come, even while we are here. It is more patient and lowly, and will oftener use common means. Its inner light is not arrogant—for submissive love is that light; and it flames forth with no pretension to special revelations and novel gospels; neither does it construct any inspired system of philosophy. It is less feverishly ecstatic, less grossly theurgic, than in the lower forms of its earlier history. Comparative health is indicated by the fact that it aspires chiefly to a state of continuous resignation,—covets less starts of transport and instantaneous transformations. It seeks, rather, a long and even reach of trustful calm, which shall welcome joy and sorrow with equal mind,—shall live in the present, moment by moment, passive and dependent on the will of the Well-Beloved.

WILLOUGHBY. With Madame Guyon, too, I think the point of the old antithesis about which the mystics have so much to say is shifted;—I mean that the contrast lies, with her, not between Finite and Infinite—the finite Affirmation, the infinite Negation,—between sign and thing signified—between mode and modelessness—mediate and immediate,—but simply between God and Self.

ATHERTON. And so mysticism grows somewhat more clear, and reduces itself to narrower compass.

GOWER. And, just as it does so, is condemned by Rome.

ATHERTON. No doubt the attempt to reach an unattainable disinterestedness was less dangerous and less unwholesome than the strain after superhuman knowledge and miraculous vision.

MRS. ATHERTON. I have just opened on one of her verses in Cowper here, which exactly expresses what Mr. Willoughby was suggesting:—

> The love of Thee flows just as much
> As that of ebbing self subsides;
> Our hearts, their scantiness is such,
> Bear not the conflict of two rival tides.

Stay; here is one I marked, which goes farther still. It is an allegorical poem. Love has bidden her embark, and then withdraws the vessel,—leaves her floating on the rushes and water-flowers, and spreads his wings for flight, heedless of her cries and prayers. At last she says,—

> Be not angry; I resign
> Henceforth all my will to thine:
> I consent that thou depart,
> Though thine absence breaks my heart;
> Go then, and for ever too;
> All is right that thou wilt do.
>
> This was just what Love intended,
> He was now no more offended;
> Soon as I became a child,
> Love returned to me and smiled:
> Never strife shall more betide
> 'Twixt the bridegroom and his bride.

ATHERTON. Yes, this is the pure love, the holy indifference of Quietism.

WILLOUGHBY. May not this imaginary surrender of eternal happiness—or, at least, the refusal to cherish ardent anticipations of heaven, really invigorate our spiritual nature, by concentrating our religion on a *present* salvation from sin?

ATHERTON. I think it possibly may, where contemplation of heaven is the resource of spiritual indolence or weariness in well-doing,—where the mind is prone to look forward to the better world, too much as a place of escape from the painstaking, and difficulty, and discipline of time. But where the hope of heaven is of the true sort—to put it out of sight is grievously to weaken, instead of strengthening, our position. I think we should all find, if we tried, or were unhappily forced to try, the experiment of sustaining ourselves in a religion that ignored the future, that we were lamentably enfeebled in two ways. First of all, by the loss of a support—that heart and courage which the prospect of final victory gives to every combatant; and then, secondly, by the immense drain of mental energy involved in the struggle necessary to reconcile ourselves to that loss. There can be no struggle so exhaustive as this, for it is against our nature,—not as sin has marred (so Madame Guyon thought), but as God has made it. Fearful must be the wear and tear of our religious being, in its vital functions,—and this, not to win, but to abandon an advantage. 'He that hath this hope purifieth himself.' So far from being able to dispense with it, we find in the hope of salvation, the helmet of our Christian armour. It is no height of Christian heroism, but presumption rather, to encounter, bare-headed, the onslaughts of sin and sorrow—even though the sword of the Spirit may shine naked in our right hand. But we should, at the same time, remember that our celestial citizenship is realised by *present* heavenly-mindedness:—a height and purity of temper, however, which grows most within as we have the habit of humbly regarding that kingdom as a place prepared for us. We should not limit our foretastes of heaven to intervals of calm.

We may often be growing most heavenly amid scenes most unlike heaven.

WILLOUGHBY. In persecution, for example.

ATHERTON. We should not think that we catch its glory only in happy moments of contemplation, though such musing may well have its permitted place. Let us say also that every victory over love of ease, over discontent, over the sluggish coldness of the heart, over reluctance to duty, over unkindly tempers, is in fact to us an earnest and foretaste of that heaven, where we shall actively obey with glad alacrity, where we shall be pleased in all things with all that pleases God, where glorious powers shall be gloriously developed, undeadened by any lethargy, unhindered by any painful limitation; and where that Love, which here has to contend for very life, and to do battle for its rightful enjoyments, shall possess us wholly, and rejoice and reign among all the fellowships of the blest throughout the everlasting day.

GOWER. But all this while we have been very rude. Here is Madame Guyon come to tell us her story, and we have kept her, I don't know how long, standing at the door.

KATE. Yes, let us hear your paper first, Mr. Atherton: we can talk afterwards, you know.

So Atherton began to read.

QUIETISM.

Part I.—Madame Guyon.

I.

Jeanne Marie Bouvières de la Mothe was born on Easter-eve, April 13th, 1648, at Montargis. Her sickly childhood was distinguished by precocious imitations of that religious life which was held in honour by every one around her. She loved to be dressed in the habit of a little nun. When little more than four years old, she longed for martyrdom. Her school-fellows placed her on her knees on a white cloth, flourished a sabre over her head, and told her to prepare for the stroke. A shout of triumphant laughter followed the failure of the child's courage. She was neglected by her mother, and knocked about by a spoiled brother. When not at school, she was the pet or the victim of servants. She began to grow irritable from ill-treatment, and insincere from fear. When ten years old, she found a Bible in her sick room, and read it, she says, from morning to night, committing to memory the historical parts. Some of the writings of St. Francis de Sales, and the Life of Madame de Chantal, fell in her way. The latter work proved a powerful stimulant. There she read of humiliations and austerities numberless, of charities lavished with a princely munificence, of visions enjoyed and miracles wrought in honour of those saintly virtues, and of the intrepidity with which the famous enthusiast wrote with a red-hot iron on her bosom, the characters of the holy name Jesus. The girl of twelve years old was bent on copying these achievements on her little scale. She relieved, taught, and waited on the poor; and, for lack of the red-hot iron or the courage, sewed on to her breast with a large needle a piece of paper containing the name of Christ. She even

forged a letter to secure her admission to a conventual establishment as a nun. The deceit was immediately detected; but the attempt shows how much more favourable was the religious atmosphere in which she grew up, to the prosperity of convents than to the inculcation of truth.

With ripening years, religion gave place to vanity. Her handsome person and brilliant conversational powers fitted her to shine in society. She began to love dress, and feel jealous of rival beauties. Like St. Theresa, at the same age, she sat up far into the night, devouring romances. Her autobiography records her experience of the mischievous effects of those tales of chivalry and passion. When nearly sixteen, it was arranged that she should marry the wealthy M. Guyon. This gentleman, whom she had seen but three days before her marriage, was twenty-two years older than herself.

The faults she had were of no very grave description, but her husband's house was destined to prove for several years a pitiless school for their correction. He lived with his mother, a vulgar and hard-hearted woman. Her low and penurious habits were unaffected by their wealth; and in the midst of riches, she was happiest scolding in the kitchen about some farthing matter. She appears to have hated Madame Guyon with all the strength of her narrow mind. M. Guyon loved his wife after his selfish sort. If she was ill, he was inconsolable; if any one spoke against her, he flew into a passion; yet, at the instigation of his mother, he was continually treating her with harshness. An artful servant girl,

who tended his gouty leg, was permitted daily to mortify and insult his wife. Madame Guyon had been accustomed at home to elegance and refinement,—beneath her husband's roof she found politeness contemned and rebuked as pride. When she spoke, she had been listened to with attention,—now she could not open her mouth without contradiction. She was charged with presuming to show them how to talk, reproved for disputatious forwardness, and rudely silenced. She could never go to see her parents without having bitter speeches to bear on her return. They, on their part, reproached her with unnatural indifference towards her own family for the sake of her new connexions. The ingenious malignity of her mother-in-law filled every day with fresh vexations. The high spirit of the young girl was completely broken. She had already gained a reputation for cleverness and wit—now she sat nightmared in company, nervous, stiff, and silent, the picture of stupidity. At every assemblage of their friends she was marked out for some affront, and every visitor at the house was instructed in the catalogue of her offences. Sad thoughts would come—how different might all this have been had she been suffered to select some other suitor! But it was too late. The brief romance of her life was gone indeed. There was no friend into whose heart she could pour her sorrows. Meanwhile, she was indefatigable in the discharge of every duty, —she endeavoured by kindness, by cheerful forbearance, by returning good for evil, to secure some kinder treatment—she was ready to cut out her tongue that she might make no passionate reply—she reproached herself bitterly for the tears she could not hide. But these coarse, hard

natures were not so to be won. Her magnanimity surprised, but did not soften minds to which it was utterly incomprehensible.[315]

Her best course would have been self-assertion and war to the very utmost. She would have been justified in demanding her right to be mistress in her own house—in declaring it incompatible with the obligations binding upon either side, that a third party should be permitted to sow dissension between a husband and his wife—in putting her husband, finally, to the choice between his wife and his mother. M. Guyon is the type of a large class of men. They stand high in the eye of the world—and not altogether undeservedly—as men of principle. But their domestic circle is the scene of cruel wrongs from want of reflection, from a selfish, passionate inconsiderateness. They would be shocked at the charge of an act of barbarity towards a stranger, but they will inflict years of mental distress on those most near to them, for want of decision, self-control, and some conscientious estimate of what their home duties truly involve. Had the obligations he neglected, the wretchedness of which he was indirectly the author, been brought fairly before the mind of M. Guyon, he would probably have determined on the side of justice, and a domestic revolution would have been the consequence. But Madame Guyon conceived herself bound to suffer in silence. Looking back on those miserable days, she traced a father's care in the discipline she endured. Providence had transplanted Self from a garden where it expanded under love and praise, to a highway where every passing foot might trample it in the dust.

A severe illness brought her more than once to the brink of the grave. She heard of her danger with indifference, for life had no attraction. Heavy losses befel the family—she could feel no concern. To end her days in a hospital was even an agreeable anticipation. Poverty and disgrace could bring no change which would not be more tolerable than her present suffering. She laboured, with little success, to find comfort in religious exercises. She examined herself rigidly, confessed with frequency, strove to subdue all care about her personal appearance, and while her maid arranged her hair—how, she cared not—was lost in the study of Thomas à Kempis. At length she consulted a Franciscan, a holy man, who had just emerged from a five years' solitude. 'Madame,' said he, 'you are disappointed and perplexed because you seek without what you have within. Accustom yourself to seek God in your heart, and you will find Him.'

II.

These words of the old Franciscan embody the response which has been uttered in every age by the oracle of mysticism. It has its truth and its falsehood, as men understand it. There is a legend of an artist, who was about to carve from a piece of costly sandal-wood an image of the Madonna; but the material was intractable—his hand seemed to have lost its skill—he could not approach his ideal. When about to relinquish his efforts in despair, a voice in a dream bade him shape the figure from the oak-block which was about to feed his hearth. He obeyed, and

produced a masterpiece. This story represents the truth which mysticism upholds when it appears as the antagonist of superstitious externalism. The materials of religious happiness lie, as it were, near at hand—among affections and desires which are homely, common, and of the fireside. Let the right direction, the heavenly influence, be received from without; and heaven is regarded with the love of home, and home sanctified by the hope of heaven. The far-fetched costliness of outward works—the restless, selfish bargaining with asceticism and with priestcraft for a priceless heaven, can never redeem and renew a soul to peace. But mysticism has not stopped here; it takes a step farther, and that step is false. It would seclude the soul too much from the external; and, to free it from a snare, removes a necessary help. Like some overshadowing tree, it hides the rising plant from the force of storms, but it also intercepts the appointed sunshine—it protects, but it deprives—and beneath its boughs hardy weeds have grown more vigorously than precious grain. Removing, more or less, the counterpoise of the letter, in its zeal for the spirit, it promotes an intense and morbid self-consciousness. Roger North tells us that when he and his brother stood on the top of the Monument, it was difficult for them to persuade themselves that their weight would not throw down the building. The dizzy elevation of the mystic produces sometimes a similar overweaning sense of personality.

Often instead of rising above the infirmities of our nature, and the common laws of life, the mystic becomes the sport of the idlest phantasy, the victim of the most humiliating reaction. The excited and overwrought temperament mistakes

every vibration of the fevered nerves for a manifestation from without; as in the solitude, the silence, and the glare of a great desert, travellers have seemed to hear distinctly the church bells of their native village. In such cases an extreme susceptibility of the organ, induced by peculiarities of climate, gives to a mere conception or memory the power of an actual sound; and, in a similar way, the mystic has often both tempted and enraptured himself—his own breath has made both the 'airs from heaven,' and the 'blasts from hell;' and the attempt to annihilate Self has ended at last in leaving nothing but Self behind. When the tide of enthusiasm has ebbed, and the channel has become dry, simply because humanity cannot long endure a strain so excessive, then that magician and master of legerdemain, the Fancy, is summoned to recal, to eke out, or to interpret the mystical experience; then that fantastic acrobat, Affectation, is admitted to play its tricks—just as, when the waters of the Nile are withdrawn, the canals of Cairo are made the stage on which the jugglers exhibit their feats of skill to the crowds on either bank.

III.

To return to Madame Guyon. From the hour of that interview with the Franciscan she was a mystic. The secret of the interior life flashed upon her in a moment. She had been starving in the midst of fulness; God was near, not far off; the kingdom of heaven was within her. The love of God took possession of her soul with an

inexpressible happiness. Beyond question, her heart apprehended, in that joy, the great truth that God is love—that He is more ready to forgive, than we to ask forgiveness—that He is not an austere being whose regard is to be purchased by rich gifts, tears, and penance. This emancipating, sanctifying belief became the foundation of her religion. She raised on this basis of true spirituality a mystical superstructure, in which there was some hay and stubble, but the corner stone had first been rightly laid, never to be removed from its place.

Prayer, which had before been so difficult, was now delightful and indispensable; hours passed away like moments—she could scarcely cease from praying. Her trials seemed great no longer; her inward joy consumed, like a fire, the reluctance, the murmur, and the sorrow, which had their birth in self. A spirit of confiding peace, a sense of rejoicing possession, pervaded all her days. God was continually present with her, and she seemed completely yielded up to God. She appeared to feel herself, and to behold all creatures, as immersed in the gracious omnipresence of the Most High. In her adoring contemplation of the Divine presence, she found herself frequently unable to employ any words, or to pray for any particular blessings.[316] She was then little more than twenty years of age. The ardour of her devotion would not suffer her to rest even here. It appeared to her that self was not yet sufficiently suppressed. There were some things she chose as pleasant, other things she avoided as painful. She was possessed with the notion that every choice which can be referred to self is selfish, and therefore criminal.

On this principle, Æsop's traveller, who gathered his cloak about him in the storm, and relinquished it in the sunshine, should be stigmatized as a selfish man, because he thought only of his own comfort, and did not remember at the moment his family, his country, or his Maker. It is not regard for self which makes us selfish, but regard for self to the exclusion of due regard for others. But the zeal of Madame Guyon blinded her to distinctions such as these. She became filled with an insatiable desire of suffering.[317] She resolved to force herself to what she disliked, and deny herself what was gratifying, that the mortified senses might at last have no choice whatever. She displayed the most extraordinary power of will in her efforts to annihilate her will. Every day she took the discipline with scourges pointed with iron. She tore her flesh with brambles, thorns, and nettles. Her rest was almost destroyed by the pain she endured. She was in very delicate health, continually falling ill, and could eat scarcely anything. Yet she forced herself to eat what was most nauseous to her; she often kept wormwood in her mouth, and put coloquintida in her food, and when she walked she placed stones in her shoes. If a tooth ached she would bear it without seeking a remedy; when it ached no longer, she would go and have it extracted. She imitated Madame Chantal in dressing the sores of the poor, and ministering to the wants of the sick. On one occasion she found that she could not seek the indulgence offered by her Church for remitting some of the pains of purgatory. At that time she felt no doubt concerning the power of the priest to grant such absolution, but she thought it wrong to desire to escape any suffering. She was afraid

of resembling those mercenary souls, who are afraid not so much of displeasing God, as of the penalties attached to sin. She was too much in earnest for visionary sentimentalism. Her efforts manifest a serious practical endeavour after that absolute disinterestedness which she erroneously thought both attainable and enjoined. She was far from attaching any expiatory value to these acts of voluntary mortification, they were a means to an end. When she believed that end attained, in the entire death of self, she relinquished them.

IV.

Situated as Madame Guyon was now, her mind had no resource but to collapse upon itself, and the feelings so painfully pent up became proportionately vehement. She found a friend in one Mère Granger; but her she could see seldom, mostly by stealth. An ignorant confessor joined her mother-in-law and husband in the attempt to hinder her from prayer and religious exercises. She endeavoured in everything to please her husband, but he complained that she loved God so much she had no love left for him. She was watched day and night; she dared not stir from her mother-in-law's chamber or her husband's bedside. If she took her work apart to the window, they followed her there, to see that she was not in prayer. When her husband went abroad, he forbade her to pray in his absence. The affections even of her child were taken from her, and the boy was taught to disobey and insult his mother. Thus utterly alone, Madame Guyon, while apparently engaged in ordinary matters, was

constantly in a state of abstraction; her mind was elsewhere, rapt in devout contemplation. She was in company without hearing a word that was said. She went out into the garden to look at the flowers, and could bring back no account of them, the eye of her reverie could mark nothing actually visible. When playing at piquet, to oblige her husband, this 'interior attraction' was often more powerfully felt than even when at church. In her *Autobiography* she describes her experience as follows:—

'The spirit of prayer was nourished and increased from their contrivances and endeavours to disallow me any time for practising it. I loved without motive or reason for loving; for nothing passed in my head, but much in the innermost of my soul. I thought not about any recompence, gift, or favour, or anything which regards the lover. The Well-beloved was the only object which attracted my heart wholly to Himself. I could not contemplate His attributes. I knew nothing else but to *love* and to *suffer*. Oh, ignorance more truly learned than any science of the Doctors, since it so well taught me Jesus Christ crucified, and brought me to be in love with His holy cross! In its beginning I was attracted with so much force, that it seemed as if my head was going to join my heart. I found that insensibly my body bent in spite of me. I did not then comprehend from whence it came; but have learned since, that as all passed in the will, which is the sovereign of the powers, *that* attracted the others after it, and reunited them in God, their divine centre and sovereign happiness. And as these powers were then unaccustomed to be united, it required the more violence to effect that

union. Wherefore it was the more perceived. Afterwards it became so strongly riveted as to seem to be quite natural. This was so strong that I could have wished to die, in order to be inseparably united without any interstice to Him who so powerfully attracted my heart. As all passed in the will, the imagination and the understanding being absorbed in it, in a union of enjoyment, I knew not what to say, having never read or heard of such a state as I experienced; for, before this, I had known nothing of the operations of God in souls. I had only read *Philothea* (written by St. Francis de Sales), with the *Imitation of Christ* (by Thomas à Kempis), and the Holy Scriptures; also the *Spiritual Combat*, which mentions none of these things.'[318]

In this extract she describes strange physical sensations as accompanying her inward emotion. The intense excitement of the soul assumes, in her over-strained and secluded imagination, the character of a corporeal seizure. The sickly frame, so morbidly sensitive, appears to participate in the supernatural influences communicated to the spirit. On a subsequent occasion, she speaks of herself as so oppressed by the fulness of the Divine manifestations imparted to her, as to be compelled to loosen her dress. More than once some of those who sat next her imagined that they perceived a certain marvellous efflux of grace proceeding from her to themselves. She believed that many persons, for whom she was interceding with great fervour, were sensible at the time of an extraordinary gracious influence instantaneously vouchsafed, and that her spirit communicated mysteriously, 'in the Lord,' with the spirits of those dear to her when far away. She traced a

special intervention of Providence in the fact, that she repeatedly ‘felt a strong draught to the door’ just when it was necessary to go out to receive a secret letter from her friend, Mère Granger; that the rain should have held up precisely when she was on her road to or from mass; and that at the very intervals when she was able to steal out to hear it, some priest was always found performing, or ready to perform the service, though at a most unusual hour.[319]

V.

Imaginary as all this may have been, the Church of Rome, at least, had no right to brand with the stigma of extravagance any such transference of the spiritual to the sensuous, of the metaphysical to the physical. The fancies of Madame Guyon in this respect are innocent enough in comparison with the monstrosities devised by Romish marvel-mongers to exalt her saints withal. St. Philip Neri was so inflamed with love to God as to be insensible to all cold, and burned with such a fire of devotion that his body, divinely feverish, could not be cooled by exposure to the wildest winter night. For two-and-fifty years he was the subject of a supernatural palpitation, which kept his bed and chair, and everything moveable about him, in a perpetual tremble. For that space of time his breast was miraculously swollen to the thickness of a fist above his heart. On a post-mortem examination of the holy corpse, it was found that two of the ribs had been broken, to allow the sacred ardour of his heart more room to play! The doctors swore solemnly that the phenomenon

could be nothing less than a miracle. A divine hand had thus literally 'enlarged the heart' of the devotee.[320] St. Philip enjoyed, with many other saints, the privilege of being miraculously elevated into the air by the fervour of his heavenward aspirations. The *Acta Sanctorum* relates how Ida of Louvain—seized with an overwhelming desire to present her gifts with the Wise Men to the child Jesus—received, on the eve of the Three Kings, the distinguished favour of being permitted to swell to a terrific size, and then gradually to return to her original dimensions. On another occasion, she was gratified by being thrown down in the street in an ecstacy, and enlarging so that her horror-stricken attendant had to embrace her with all her might to keep her from bursting. The noses of eminent saints have been endowed with so subtile a sense that they have detected the stench of concealed sins, and enjoyed, as a literal fragrance, the well-known odour of sanctity. St. Philip Neri was frequently obliged to hold his nose and turn away his head when confessing very wicked people. In walking the streets of some depraved Italian town, the poor man must have endured all the pains of Coleridge in Cologne, where, he says,

> 'I counted two-and-seventy stenches,
> All well-defined, and several stinks!'

Maria of Oignys received what theurgic mysticism calls the gift of jubilation. For three days and nights upon the point of death, she sang without remission her ecstatic swan-song, at the top of a voice whose hoarseness was miraculously healed. She felt as though the wing of an angel were spread upon her breast, thrilling her heart with

the rapture, and pouring from her lips the praises, of the heavenly world. With the melodious modulation of an inspired recitative, she descanted on the mysteries of the Trinity and the incarnation—improvised profound expositions of the Scripture—invoked the saints, and interceded for her friends.[321] A nun who visited Catharina Ricci in her ecstasy, saw with amazement her face transformed into the likeness of the Redeemer's countenance. St. Hildegard, in the enjoyment and description of her visions, and in the utterance of her prophecies, was inspired with a complete theological terminology hitherto unknown to mortals. A glossary of the divine tongue was long preserved among her manuscripts at Wiesbaden. [322] It is recorded in the life of St. Veronica of Binasco, that she received the miraculous gift of tears in a measure so copious, that the spot where she knelt appeared as though a jug of water had been overset there. She was obliged to have an earthen vessel ready in her cell to receive the supernatural efflux, which filled it frequently to the weight of several Milan pounds! Ida of Nivelles, when in an ecstasy one day, had it revealed to her that a dear friend was at the same moment in the same condition. The friend also was simultaneously made aware that Ida was immersed in the same abyss of divine light with herself. Thenceforward they were as one soul in the Lord, and the Virgin Mary appeared to make a third in the saintly fellowship. Ida was frequently enabled to communicate with spiritual personages, without words, after the manner of angelic natures. On one occasion, when at a distance from a priest to whom she was much attached, both she and the holy man were

entranced at the same time; and, when wrapt to heaven, he beheld her in the presence of Christ, at whose command she communicated to him, by a spiritual kiss, a portion of the grace with which she herself had been so richly endowed. To Clara of Montfaucon allusion has already been made. In the right side of her heart was found, completely formed, a little figure of Christ upon the cross, about the size of a thumb. On the left, under what resembled the bloody cloth, lay the instruments of the passion—the crown of thorns, the nails, &c. So sharp was the miniature lance, that the Vicar-General Berengarius, commissioned to assist at the examination by the Bishop of Spoleto, pricked therewith his reverend finger. This marvel was surpassed in the eighteenth century by a miracle more piquant still. Veronica Giuliani caused a drawing to be made of the many forms and letters which she declared had been supernaturally modelled within her heart. To the exultation of the faithful—and the everlasting confusion of all Jews, Protestants, and Turks—a post-mortem examination disclosed the accuracy of her description, to the minutest point. There were the sacred initials in a large and distinct Roman character, the crown of thorns, two flames, seven swords, the spear, the reed, &c.—all arranged just as in the diagram she had furnished.[323] The diocese of Liège was edified, in the twelfth century, by seeing, in the person of the celebrated Christina Mirabilis, how completely the upward tendency of protracted devotion might vanquish the law of gravitation. So strongly was she drawn away from this gross earth, that the difficulty was to keep her on the ground. She was continually flying up to the tops of lonely towers and trees,

there to enjoy a rapture with the angels, and a roost with the birds. In the frequency, the elevation, and the duration of her ascents into the air, she surpassed even the high-flown devotion of St. Peter of Alcantara, who was often seen suspended high above the fig-trees which overshadowed his hermitage at Badajos—his eyes upturned, his arms outspread—while the servant sent to summon him to dinner, gazed with open mouth, and sublunary cabbage cooled below. The limbs of Christina lost the rigidity, as her body lost the grossness, common to vulgar humanity. In her ecstasies she was contracted into the spherical form—her head was drawn inward and downward towards her breast, and she rolled up like a hedgehog. When her relatives wished to take and secure her, they had to employ a man to hunt her like a bird. Having started his game, he had a long run across country before he brought her down, in a very unsportsmanlike manner, by a stroke with his bludgeon which broke her shin. When a few miracles had been wrought to vindicate her aërostatic mission, she was allowed to fly about in peace.[324] She has occupied, ever since, the first place in the ornithology of Roman-catholic saintship. Such are a few of the specimens which might be collected in multitudes from Romanist records, showing how that communion has bestowed its highest favour on the most coarse and materialised apprehensions of spiritual truth. Extravagant inventions such as these—monstrous as the adventures of Baron Münchausen, without their wit—have been invested with the sanction and defended by the thunder of the Papal chair. Yet this very Church of Rome incarcerated Molinos and Madame Guyon as dangerous

enthusiasts.

VI.

Madame Guyon had still some lessons to learn. On a visit to Paris, the glittering equipages of the park, and the gaieties of St. Cloud, revived the old love of seeing and being seen. During a tour in the provinces with her husband, flattering visits and graceful compliments everywhere followed such beauty, such accomplishments, and such virtue, with a delicate and intoxicating applause. Vanity —dormant, but not dead—awoke within her for the last time. She acknowledged, with bitter self-reproach, the power of the world, the weakness of her own resolves. In the spiritual desertion which ensued, she recognised the displeasure of her Lord, and was wretched. She applied to confessors —they were miserable comforters, all of them. They praised her while she herself was filled with self-loathing. She estimated the magnitude of her sins by the greatness of the favour which had been shown her. The bland worldliness of her religious advisers could not blind so true a heart, or pacify so wakeful a conscience. She found relief only in a repentant renewal of her self-dedication to the Saviour, in renouncing for ever the last remnant of confidence in any strength of her own.

It was about this period that she had a remarkable conversation with a beggar, whom she found upon a bridge, as, followed by her footman, she was walking one day to church. This singular mendicant refused her offered alms—spoke to her of God and divine things—and then of her own

state, her devotion, her trials, and her faults. He declared that God required of her not merely to labour as others did to secure their salvation, that they might escape the pains of hell, but to aim at such perfection and purity in this life, as to escape those of purgatory. She asked him who he was. He replied, that he had formerly been a beggar, but now was such no more;—mingled with the stream of people, and she never saw him afterwards.[325]

The beauty of Madame Guyon had cost her tender conscience many a pang. She had wept and prayed over that secret love of display which had repeatedly induced her to mingle with the thoughtless amusements of the world. At four-and-twenty the virulence of the small-pox released her from that snare. M. Guyon was laid up with the gout. She was left, when the disorder seized her, to the tender mercies of her mother-in-law. That inhuman woman refused to allow any but her own physician to attend her, yet for him she would not send. The disease, unchecked, had reached its height, when a medical man, passing that way, happened to call at the house. Shocked at the spectacle Madame Guyon presented, he was proceeding at once to bleed her, expressing, in no measured terms, his indignation at the barbarity of such neglect. The mother-in-law would not hear of such a thing. He performed the operation in spite of her threats and invectives, leaving her almost beside herself with rage. That lancet saved the life of Madame Guyon, and disappointed the relative who had hoped to see her die. When at length she recovered, she refused to avail herself of the cosmetics generally used to conceal the ravages of the disorder. Throughout her suffering

she had never uttered a murmur, or felt a fear. She had even concealed the cruelty of her mother-in-law. She said, that if God had designed her to retain her beauty, He would not have sent the scourge to remove it. Her friends expected to find her inconsolable—they heard her speak only of thankfulness and joy. Her confessor reproached her with spiritual pride. The affection of her husband was visibly diminished; yet the heart of Madame Guyon overflowed with joy. It appeared to her, that the God to whom she longed to be wholly given up had accepted her surrender, and was removing everything that might interpose between Himself and her.[326]

VII.

The experience of Madame Guyon, hitherto, had been such as to teach her the surrender of every earthly source of gratification or ground of confidence. Yet one more painful stage on the road to self-annihilation remained to be traversed. She must learn to give up cheerfully even spiritual pleasures. In the year 1674, according to the probable calculation of Mr. Upham, she was made to enter what she terms a state of desolation, which lasted, with little intermission, for nearly seven years.[327] All was emptiness, darkness, sorrow. She describes herself as cast down, like Nebuchadnezzar, from a throne of enjoyment, to live among the beasts. ‘Alas!’ she exclaimed, ‘is it possible that this heart, formerly all on fire, should now become like ice?’ The heavens were as brass, and shut out her prayers; horror and trembling took the place of tranquillity;

hopelessly oppressed with guilt, she saw herself a victim destined for hell. In vain for her did the church doors open, the holy bells ring, the deep-voiced intonations of the priest arise and fall, the chanted psalm ascend through clouds of azure wandering incense. The power and the charm of the service had departed. Of what avail was music to a burning wilderness athirst for rain? Gladly would she have had recourse to the vow, to the pilgrimage, to the penance, to any extremity of self-torture. She felt the impotence of such remedies for such anguish. She had no ear for comfort, no eye for hope, not even a voice for complaint.

During this period the emotional element of religion in her mind appears to have suffered an almost entire suspension. Regarding the loss of certain feelings of delight as the loss of the divine favour, she naturally sank deeper and deeper in despondency. A condition by no means uncommon in ordinary Christian experience assumed, in her case, a morbid character. Our emotions may be chilled, or kindled, in ever-varying degrees, from innumerable causes. We must accustom ourselves to the habitual performance of duty, whether attended or not with feelings of a pleasurable nature. It is generally found that those powerful emotions of joy which attend, at first, the new and exalting consciousness of peace with God, subside after awhile. As we grow in religious strength and knowledge, a steady principle supplies their place. We are refreshed, from time to time, by seasons of heightened joy and confidence, but we cease to be dependent upon feeling. At the same time, there is nothing in Scripture to check our desire for

retaining as constantly as possible a sober gladness, for finding duty delightful, and the ‘joy of the Lord’ our strength. These are the truths which the one-sided and unqualified expressions of Madame Guyon at once exaggerate and obscure.

During this dark interval M. Guyon died. His widow undertook the formidable task of settling his disordered affairs. Her brother gave her no assistance; her mother-in-law harassed and hindered to her utmost; yet Madame Guyon succeeded in arranging a chaos of papers, and bringing a hopeless imbroglio of business matters into order, with an integrity and a skill which excited universal admiration. She felt it was her duty; she believed that Divine assistance was vouchsafed for its discharge. Of business, she says, she knew as little as of Arabic; but she knew not what she could accomplish till she tried. Minds far more visionary than hers have evinced a still greater aptitude for practical affairs.

The 22nd of July, 1680, is celebrated by Madame Guyon as the happy era of her deliverance. A letter from La Combe was the instrument of a restoration as wonderful, in her eyes, as the bondage. This ecclesiastic had been first introduced by Madame Guyon into the path of mystical perfection. His name is associated with her own in the early history of the Quietist movement. He subsequently became her Director, but was always more her disciple than her guide. His admiration for her amounted to a passion. Incessant persecution and long solitary imprisonment combined, with devotional extravagance, to cloud with insanity at last an

intellect never powerful. This feeble and affectionate soul perished, the victim of Quietism, and perhaps of love. It should not be forgotten, that before the inward condition of Madame Guyon changed thus remarkably for the better, her outward circumstances had undergone a similar improvement. She lived now in her own house, with her children about her. That Sycorax, her mother-in-law, dropped gall no longer into her daily cup of life. Domestic tormentors, worse than the goblins which buffeted St. Antony, assailed her peace no more. An outer sky grown thus serene, an air thus purified, may well have contributed to chase away the night of the soul, and to give to a few words of kindly counsel from La Combe the brightness of the day-star. Our simple-hearted enthusiast was not so absolutely indifferent as she thought herself to the changes of this transitory world.

VIII.

Madame Guyon had now triumphantly sustained the last of those trials, which, like the probation of the ancient mysteries, made the porch of mystical initiation a passage terrible with pain and peril. Henceforward, she is the finished Quietist: henceforward, when she relates her own experience, she describes Quietism. At times, when the children did not require her care, she would walk out into a neighbouring wood, and there, under the shade of the trees, amidst the singing of the birds, she now passed as many happy hours as she had known months of sorrow. Her own language will best indicate the thoughts

which occupied this peaceful retirement, and exhibit the principle there deepened and matured. She says here in her Autobiography—

'When I had lost all created supports, and even divine ones, I then found myself happily necessitated to fall into the pure divine, and to fall into it through all which seemed to remove me farther from it. In losing all the gifts, with all their supports, I found the Giver. Oh, poor creatures, who pass along all your time in feeding on the gifts of God, and think therein to be most favoured and happy, how I pity you if ye stop here, short of the true rest, and cease to go forward to God, through resignation of the same gifts! How many pass all their lives this way, and think highly of themselves therein! There are others who, being designed of God to die to themselves, yet pass all their time in a dying life, and in inward agonies, without ever entering into God through death and total loss, because they are always willing to retain something under plausible pretexts, and so never lose *self* to the whole extent of the designs of God. Wherefore, they never enjoy God in his fulness,—a loss that will not perfectly be known until another life.'[328]

She describes herself as having ceased from all self-originated action and choice. To her amazement and unspeakable happiness, it appeared as though all such natural movement existed no longer,—a higher power had displaced and occupied its room. 'I even perceived no more (she continues) the soul which He had formerly conducted by His rod and His staff, because now He alone appeared to me, my soul having given up its place to Him. It seemed to me as if it was

wholly and altogether passed into its God, to make but one and the same thing with Him; even as a little drop of water cast into the sea receives the qualities of the sea.' She speaks of herself as now practising the virtues no longer *as virtues*—that is, not by separate and constrained efforts. It would have required effort *not* to practise them. [329]

Somewhat later she expresses herself as follows:—

'The soul passing out of itself by dying to itself necessarily passes into its divine object. This is the law of its transition. When it passes out of self, which is limited, and therefore is not God, and consequently is *evil*, it necessarily passes into the unlimited and universal, which is God, and therefore is the true good. My own experience seemed to me to be a verification of this. My spirit, disenthralled from selfishness, became united with and lost in God, its Sovereign, who attracted it more and more to Himself. And this was so much the case, that I could seem to see and know God only, and not myself.... It was thus that my soul was lost in God, who communicated to it His qualities, having drawn it out of all that it had of its own.... O happy poverty, happy loss, happy nothing, which gives no less than God Himself in his own immensity,—no more circumscribed to the limited manner of the creation, but always drawing it out of that to plunge it wholly into His divine Essence. Then the soul knows that all the states of self-pleasing visions, of intellectual illuminations, of ecstasies and raptures, of whatever value they might once have been, are now rather obstacles than advancements; and that they are not of service in the state of experience which is far above them;

because the state which has props or supports, which is the case with the merely illuminated and ecstatic state, rests in them in some degree, and has pain to lose them. But the soul cannot arrive at the state of which I am now speaking, without the loss of all such supports and helps.... The soul is then so submissive, and perhaps we may say so passive,—that is to say, is so disposed equally to receive from the hand of God either good or evil, —as is truly astonishing. It receives both the one and the other without any selfish emotions, letting them flow and be lost as they came.'[330]

These passages convey the substance of the doctrine which, illustrated and expressed in various ways, pervades all the writings of Madame Guyon. This is the principle adorned by the fancy of her *Torrents* and inculcated in the practical directions of her *Short Method of Prayer*. Such is the state to which Quietism proposes to conduct its votaries. In some places, she qualifies the strength of her expressions,—she admits that we are not at all times equally conscious of this absolute union of the soul with its centre,—the lower nature may not be always insensible to distress. But the higher, the inmost element of the soul is all the while profoundly calm, and recollection presently imparts a similar repose to the inferior nature. When the soul has thus passed, as she phrases it, out of the Nothing into the All, when its feet are set in 'a large room' (nothing less, according to her interpretation, than the compass of Infinity), 'a substantial or essential word' is spoken there. It is a continuous word—potent, ineffable, ever uttered without language. It is the immediate unchecked operation of resident Deity. What it speaks, it

effects. It is blissful and mysterious as the language of heaven. With Madame Guyon, the events of Providence are God, and the decisions of the sanctified judgment respecting them are nothing less than the immediate voice of God in the soul. She compares the nature thus at rest in God to a tablet on which the divine hand writes,—it must be held perfectly still, else the characters traced there will be distorted or incomplete. In her very humility she verges on the audacity which arrogates inspiration. If she, passive and helpless, really acts no more, the impulses she feels, her words, her actions, must all bear the impress of an infallible divine sanction. It is easy to see that her speech and action—always well-meant, but frequently ill-judged,—were her own after all, though nothing of her own seemed left. She acknowledges that she was sometimes at a loss as to the course of duty. She was guided more than once by random passages of the Bible, and the casual expressions of others, somewhat after the fashion of the *Sortes Virgilianæ* and the omens of ancient Rome. Her knowledge of Scripture, the native power of her intellect, and the tenderness of her conscience, preserved her from pushing such a view of the inward light to its worst extreme.

IX.

The admixture of error in the doctrine which Madame Guyon was henceforward to preach with so much self-denying love, so much intrepid constancy, appears to us to lie upon the surface. The passages we have given convey,

unquestionably, the idea of a practical substitution of God for the soul in the case of the perfectly sanctified. The soul within the soul is Deity. When all is desolate, silent, the divine Majesty arises, thinks, feels, and acts, within the transformed humanity. It is quite true that, as sanctification progresses, Christian virtue becomes more easy as the new habit gains strength. In many respects it is true, as Madame Guyon says, that effort would be requisite to neglect or violate certain duties or commands rather than to perform them. But this facility results from the constitution of our nature. We carry on the new economy within with less outcry, less labour, less confusion and resistance than we did when the revolution was recent, but we carry it on still—working with divine assistance. God works *in* man, but not *instead* of man. It is one thing to harmonize, in some measure, the human will with the divine, another to substitute divine volitions for the human. Every man has within him Conscience—the judge often bribed or clamoured down; Will—the marshal; Imagination—the poet; Understanding—the student; Desire—the merchant, venturing its store of affection, and gazing out on the future in search of some home-bound argosy of happiness. But all these powers are found untrue to their allegiance. The ermine—the baton—the song—the books—the merchandize, are at the service of a usurper—Sin. When the Spirit renews the mind, there is no massacre—no slaughterous sword filling with death the streets of the soul's city, and making man the ruin of his former self. These faculties are restored to loyalty, and reinstated under God. Then Conscience gives verdict, for the most part,

according to the divine statute-book, and is habitually obeyed. Then the lordly Will assumes again a lowly yet noble vassalage. Then the dream of Imagination is a dream no longer, for the reality of heaven transcends it. Then the Understanding burns the magic books in the market-place, and breaks the wand of its curious arts—but studies still, for eternity as well as time. The activity of Desire amasses still, according to its nature,—for *some* treasure man must have. But the treasure is on earth no longer. It is the advantage of such a religion that the very same laws of our being guide our spiritual and our natural life. The same self-controul and watchful diligence which built up the worldly habits towards the summits of success, may be applied at once to those habits which ripen us for heaven. The old experience will serve. But the mystic can find no common point between himself and other men. He is cut off from them, for he believes he has another constitution of being, inconceivable by them—not merely other tastes and a higher aim. The *object* of Christian love may be incomprehensible, but the affection itself is not so. It is dangerous to represent it as a mysterious and almost unaccountable sentiment, which finds no parallel in our experience elsewhere. Our faith in Christ, as well as our love to Christ, are similar to our faith and love as exercised towards our fellow-creatures. Regeneration imparts no new faculty, it gives only a new direction to the old.

X.

Quietism opposed to the mercenary religion of the

common and consistent Romanism around it, the doctrine of disinterested love. Revolting from the coarse machinery of a corrupt system, it took refuge in an unnatural refinement. The love inculcated in Scripture is equally remote from the impracticable indifference of Quietism and the commercial principle of Superstition. Long ago, at Alexandria, Philo endeavoured to escape from an effete and carnal Judaism to a similar elevation. The Persian Sufis were animated with the same ambition in reaction against the frigid legalism of the creed of Islam. Extreme was opposed to extreme, in like manner, when Quietism, disgusted with the unblushing inconsistencies of nominal Christianity, proclaimed its doctrine of *perfection*—of complete sanctification by faith. This is not a principle peculiar to mysticism. It is of little practical importance. It is difficult to see how it can be applied to individual experience. The man who has reached such a state of purity must be the last to know it. If we do not, by some strange confusion of thought, identify ourselves with God, the nearer we approach Him the more profoundly must we be conscious of our distance. As, in a still water, we may see reflected the bird that sings in an overhanging tree, and the bird that soars towards the zenith—the image deepest as the ascent is highest—so it is with our approximation to the Infinite Holiness. Madame Guyon admits that she found it necessary jealously to guard humility, to watch and pray—that her state was only of '*comparative* immutability.' It appears to us that perfection is prescribed as a goal ever to be approached, but ever practically inaccessible. Whatever degree of sanctification any one may have attained, it must

always be possible to conceive of a state yet more advanced,—it must always be a duty diligently to labour towards it.

Quietist as she was, few lives have been more busy than that of Madame Guyon with the activities of an indefatigable benevolence. It was only self-originated action which she strove to annihilate. In her case, especially, Quietism contained a reformatory principle. Genuflexions and crossings were of little value in comparison with inward abasement and crucifixion. The prayers repeated by rote in the oratory, were immeasurably inferior to that Prayer of Silence she so strongly commends—that prayer which, unlimited to times and seasons, unhindered by words, is a state rather than an act, a sentiment rather than a request,—a continuous sense of submission, which breathes, moment by moment, from the serene depth of the soul, 'Thy will be done.'[331]

As contrasted with the mysticism of St. Theresa, that of Madame Guyon appears to great advantage. She guards her readers against attempting to form any image of God. She aspires to an intellectual elevation—a spiritual intuition, above the sensuous region of theurgy, of visions, and of dreams. She saw no Jesuits in heaven bearing white banners among the heavenly throng of the redeemed. She beheld no Devil, 'like a little negro,' sitting on her breviary. She did not see the Saviour in an ecstasy, drawing the nail out of His hand. She felt no large white dove fluttering above her head. But she did not spend her days in founding convents—a slave to the interests of the clergy. So they made a saint of Theresa, and a

confessor of Madame Guyon.

XI.

In the summer of 1681, Madame Guyon, now thirty-four years of age, quitted Paris for Gex, a town lying at the foot of the Jura, about twelve miles from Geneva. It was arranged that she should take some part in the foundation and management of a new religious and charitable institution there. A period of five years was destined to elapse before her return to the capital. During this interval, she resided successively at Gex, Thonon, Turin, and Grenoble. Wherever she went, she was indefatigable in works of charity, and also in the diffusion of her peculiar doctrines concerning self-abandonment and disinterested love. Strong in the persuasion of her mission, she could not rest without endeavouring to influence the minds around her. The singular charm of her conversation won a speedy ascendency over nearly all with whom she came in contact. It is easy to see how a remarkable natural gift in this direction contributed both to the attempt and the success. But the Quietest had buried nature, and to nature she would owe nothing,—these conversational powers could be, in her eyes, only a special gift of utterance from above. This mistake reminds us of the story of certain monks upon whose cloister garden the snow never lay, though all the country round was buried in the rigour of a northern winter. The marvellous exemption, long attributed by superstition to miracle, was discovered to arise simply from certain thermal springs which had their source

within the sacred inclosure. It is thus that the warmth and vivacity of natural temperament has been commonly regarded by the mystic, as nothing less than a fiery impartation from the altar of the celestial temple.

At Thonon her apartment was visited by a succession of applicants from every class, who laid bare their hearts before her, and sought from her lips spiritual guidance or consolation. She met them separately and in groups, for conference and for prayer. At Grenoble, she says she was for some time engaged from six o'clock in the morning till eight at evening in speaking of God to all sorts of persons,—'friars, priests, men of the world, maids, wives, widows, all came, one after another, to hear what I had to say.'[332] Her efforts among the members of the House of the Novitiates in that city, were eminently successful, and she appears to have been of real service to many who had sought peace in vain, by the austerities and the routine of monastic seclusion. Meanwhile, she was active, both at Thonon and Grenoble, in the establishment of hospitals. She carried on a large and continually increasing correspondence. In the former place she wrote her *Torrents*, in the latter, she published her *Short Method of Prayer*, and commenced her *Commentaries on the Bible*.[333]

But alas! all this earnest, tireless toil is unauthorized. Bigotry takes the alarm, and cries the Church is in danger. Priests who were asleep —priests who were place-hunting—priests who were pleasure-hunting, awoke from their doze, or drew breath in their chase, to observe this woman whose life rebuked them—to observe and to assail her; for rebuke, in their terminology, was scandal.

Persecution hemmed her in on every side; no annoyance was too petty, no calumny too gross, for priestly jealousy. The inmates of the religious community she had enriched were taught to insult her—tricks were devised to frighten her by horrible appearances and unearthly noises—her windows were broken—her letters were intercepted. Thus, before a year had elapsed, she was driven from Gex. Some called her a sorceress; others, more malignant yet, stigmatized her as half a Protestant. She had indeed recommended the reading of the Scriptures to all, and spoken slightingly of mere bowing and bead-counting. Monstrous contumacy—said, with one voice, spiritual slaves and spiritual slave-owners—that a woman desired by her bishop to do one thing, should discover an inward call to do another. At Thonon the priests burnt in the public square all the books they could find treating of the inner life, and went home elated with their performance. One thought may have embittered their triumph—had it only been living flesh instead of mere paper! She inhabited a poor cottage that stood by itself in the fields, at some distance from Thonon. Attached to it was a little garden, in the management of which she took pleasure. One night a rabble from the town were incited to terrify her with their drunken riot,—they trampled down and laid waste the garden, hurled stones in at the windows, and shouted their threats, insults, and curses, round the house the whole night. Then came an episcopal order to quit the diocese. When compelled subsequently, by the opposition she encountered, to withdraw secretly from Grenoble, she was advised to take refuge at Marseilles. She arrived in that city at ten

o'clock in the morning, but that very afternoon all was in uproar against her, so vigilant and implacable were her enemies.

Note to page 214.

Autobiography, chapp. viii. and x. In describing her state of mind at this time, she says,—'This immersion in God immerged all things. I could no more see the saints, nor even the blessed Virgin, out of God; but I beheld them all in Him. And though I tenderly loved certain saints, as St. Peter, St. Paul, St. Mary Magdalen, St. Theresa, with all those who were spiritual, yet I could not form to myself images of them, nor invoke any of them out of God.' Here a genuine religious fervour, described in the language of mystical theology, has overcome superstition, and placed her, unconsciously, in a position similar to that of Molinos with regard to these professedly subordinate objects of Romanist worship. It may be observed, in passing, that while Rome pretends to subordinate saint-worship, she denounces those of her children who really do so, as heretical, *i.e.*, reformatory, in their tendency.

Madame Guyon was enabled at this period to enjoy a habitual inward prayer,—'a prayer of rejoicing and possession, wherein the taste of God was so great, so pure, unblended, and uninterrupted, that it drew and absorbed the powers of the soul into a profound recollection, without act or discourse. For I had now no sight but of Jesus Christ alone. All else was excluded, in order to love with the greater extent, without any selfish motives or reasons for loving.' With much good sense, she declares this continual

and immediate sense of the Divine presence far safer and higher than the sensible relish of ecstasies and ravishments,—than distinct interior words or revelations of things to come,—so often imaginary, so apt to divert our desires from the Giver to the gifts;—this is the revelation of Jesus Christ, which makes us new creatures, the manifestation of the Word within us, who cannot deceive,—the life of true and naked faith, which darkens all self-pleasing lights, and reveals the minutest faults, that pure love may reign in the centre of the soul. Thus, while inheriting the phraseology of the mystics (and we discern in these accounts of her early experience the influence of her later readings in mystical theology), she is less sensuous than Theresa, less artificial than John. Like the latter, she assigns to love the office of annihilating the will, to faith that of absorbing the understanding, 'so as to make it decline all reasonings, all particular brightnesses and illustrations.' The Annihilation of the Will, or the Union in the Will of God, consists, with her, simply in a state of complete docility, the soul yielding itself up to be emptied of all which is its own, till it finds itself by little and little detached from every self-originated motion, and placed 'in a holy indifference for willing;—wishing nothing but what God does and wills.'—P. 70.

Note to page 218.

She describes herself, when at Thonon, as causing sundry devils to withdraw with a word. But the said devils, like some other sights and sounds which terrified her there, were probably the contrivance of the monks who persecuted her, with whom

expertness in such tricks was doubtless reckoned among the accomplishments of sanctity. When at the same place (she was then a little past thirty), Madame Guyon believed that a certain virtue was vouchsafed her—a gift of spiritual and sometimes of bodily healing, dependent, however, for its successful operation, on the degree of susceptibility in the recipients.—*Autobiography*, part II. c. xii.

There also she underwent some of her most painful and mysterious experiences with regard to Father La Combe. She says,—'Our Lord gave me, with the weaknesses of a child, such a power over souls, that with a word I put them in pain or in peace, as was necessary for their good. I saw that God made Himself to be obeyed, in and through me, like an absolute Sovereign. I neither resisted Him nor took part in anything.... Our Lord had given us both (herself and La Combe) to understand that He would unite us by faith and by the cross. Ours, then, has been a union of the cross in every respect, as well as by what I have made him suffer, as by what I have suffered for him.... The sufferings which I have had on his account were such as to reduce me sometimes to extremity, which continued for several years. For though I have been much more of my time far from him than near him, that did not relieve my suffering, which continued till he was perfectly emptied of himself, and to the very point of submission which God required of him.... He hath occasioned me cruel pains when I was near a hundred leagues from him. I felt his disposition. If he was faithful in letting SELF be destroyed, I was in a state of peace and enlargement. If he was unfaithful in reflection or hesitation, I suffered till that was passed over. He had no need to write me an account of his condition, for I knew it; but when he did write, it proved to be

such as I had felt it.'—*Ibid.* p. 51.

She says that frequently, when Father La Combe came to confess her, she could not speak a word to him; she felt take place within her the same silence toward him, which she had experienced in regard to God. I understood, she adds, that God wished to teach me that the language of angels might be learnt by men on earth,—that is, converse without words. She was gradually reduced to this wordless communication alone, in her interviews with La Combe; and they imagined that they understood each other, 'in a manner ineffable and divine.' She regarded the use of speech, or of the pen, as a kind of accommodation on her part to the weakness of souls not sufficiently advanced for these internal communications.

Here Madame Guyon anticipates the Quakers. Compare Barclay's *Apology*, Prop. xi. §§ 6, 7.

Shortly after her arrival in Paris, she describes herself as favoured, from the plenitude which filled her soul, with 'a discharge on her best-disposed children to their mutual joy and comfort, and not only when present, but sometimes when absent.' 'I even felt it,' she adds, 'to flow from me into their souls. When they wrote to me, they informed me that at such times they had received abundant infusions of divine grace.'—*Ibid.* part III. c. i.

Note to page 223.

Autobiography, part I. c. xiii. Here Madame Guyon has found confessors blind guides, and confessions profitless; and furthermore, she is encouraged and instructed in the inward life by a despised layman.

There is every reason to believe that the experience of Madame Guyon, and the doctrines of the beggar, were shared to some extent by many more. Madame Guyon speaks as Theresa does of the internal pains of the soul as equivalent to those of purgatory. (c. xi.) The teaching of the quondam mendicant concerning an internal and present instead of a future purgatory, was not in itself contrary to the declarations of orthodox mysticism. But many were beginning to seek in this perfectionist doctrine a refuge from the exactions of the priesthood. With creatures of the clergy like Theresa, or with monks like John of the Cross, such a tenet would be retained within the limits required by the ecclesiastical interest. It might stimulate religious zeal—it would never intercept religious obedience. But it was not always so among the people—it was not so with many of the followers of Molinos. The jealous vigilance of priestcraft saw that it had everything to fear from a current belief among the laity, that a state of spiritual perfection, rendering purgatory needless, was of possible attainment—might be reached by secret self-sacrifice, in the use of very simple means. If such a notion prevailed, the lucrative traffic of indulgences might totter on the verge of bankruptcy. No devotee would impoverish himself to buy exemption hereafter from a purifying process which he believed himself now experiencing, in the hourly sorrows he patiently endured. It was at least possible—it had been known to happen, that the soul which struggled to escape itself—to rise beyond the gifts of God, to God—to ascend, beyond words and means, to repose in Him,—which desired only the Divine will, feared only the Divine displeasure,—which sought to ignore so utterly its own capacity and power, might come to attach paramount importance no longer to the

powers of the priesthood and the ritual of the Church. Those aspirations which had been the boast of Rome in the few, became her terror in the many. The Quietest might believe himself sincere in orthodoxy, might choose him a director, and might reverence the sacraments. But such abasement and such ambition—distress so deep, and aims so lofty—would often prove alike beyond the reach of the ordinary confessional. The oily syllables of absolution would drop in vain upon the troubled waves of a nature thus stirred to its inmost depths. And if it could receive peace only from the very hand of God, priestly mediation must begin with shame to take a lower place. The value of relics and of masses, of penances and paternosters, would everywhere fall. An absolute indifference to self-interest would induce indifference also to those priestly baits by which that self-interest was allured. Such were the presentiments which urged the Jesuits of Rome to hunt down Molinos, with all the implacability of fear. The craft was in danger. *Hinc illæ lachrymæ.*

Note to page 224.

See the *Life and Religious Opinions and Experience of Madame de la Mothe Guyon*, &c., by Thomas C. Upham (New York, 1851); vol. i. p. 153. Mr. Upham, in this and in some other parts of his excellent biography, appears to me to have fallen into the same error with Madame Guyon. He perceives her mistake in regarding the absence of joy as evidence of the absence of the divine favour. But he contrasts the state in which we are conscious of alacrity and joy in religion—as one in which we still live comparatively by *sight*, with that condition of

privation in which all such enjoyment is withdrawn —a state wherein we are called to live, not by sight, but by pure and naked *faith*. Now, faith and sight are not thus opposed in Scripture. In the New Testament, faith is always practical belief in what God has revealed; and sight, as the opposite course of life, always so much unbelief—undue dependence on things seen and temporal. It is quite true that too much stress should not be laid by us on the intensity or the displays of mere emotion,—since religion is a principle rather than a sentiment. But not a few have been nursed in dangerous delusion by supposing that when they feel within them scarce a trace of any of those desires or dispositions proper to every Christian heart—when they have no glimpse of what they incorrectly term 'sight'—then is the time to exercise what they suppose to be faith,—that is, to work themselves up to the obstinate persuasion that they personally are still the children of God.

It may well be questioned, moreover, whether we have any scriptural ground for believing that it is usual with the Almighty, for the growth of our sanctification, to withdraw Himself,—the only source of it. To these supposed hidings of His face Madame Guyon, and every Quietist, would patiently submit, as to the sovereign and inscrutable caprice of the divine Bridegroom of the soul. Rather should we regard such obscurations as originating with ourselves and not with Him, and at once make the lost sense of His gracious nearness the object of humble and earnest search. 'Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation!'

Madame Guyon describes her 'state of total privation' in the twenty-first chapter of the *Autobiography*, part I.

CHAPTER II.

O Mensch wiltu geimpffet werdn,
  Und sein versetzt in d'himlisch erdn!
So mustu vor dein ästen wilt,
Gantz hawen ab, das früchte milt
Fürkommen nach Gotts ebenbildt.[334]

HYMN OF THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY.

Part II.—The Quietist Controversy.

I.

In the year 1686, Madame Guyon returned to Paris, and entered the head-quarters of persecution. Rumours reached her, doubtless, from beyond the Alps, of cruel measures taken against opinions similar to her own, which had spread rapidly in Italy. But she knew not that all these severities originated with Louis XIV. and his Jesuit advisers,—that her king, while revoking the Edict of Nantes, and dispatching his dragoons to extirpate Protestantism in France, was sending orders to D'Estrées, his ambassador at Rome, to pursue with the utmost rigour Italian Quietism—and that the monarch, who shone and smiled at Marly and Versailles, was crowding with victims the dungeons of the Roman Inquisition.

The leader of Quietism in Italy was one Michael de Molinos, a Spaniard, a man of blameless life, of eminent and comparatively enlightened piety. His book, entitled *The Spiritual Guide*, was published in 1675, sanctioned by five famous doctors, four

of them Inquisitors, and one a Jesuit, and passed, within six years, through twenty editions in different languages. His real doctrine was probably identical in substance with that of Madame Guyon.[335] It was openly favoured by many nobles and ecclesiastics of distinguished rank; by D'Etrees among the rest. Molinos had apartments assigned him in the Vatican, and was held in high esteem by Infallibility itself. But the Inquisition and the Jesuits, supported by all the influence of France, were sure of their game. The audacity of the Inquisitors went so far as to send a deputation to examine the orthodoxy of the man called Innocent XI.; for even the tiara was not to shield the patron of Molinos from suspicions of heresy. The courtier-cardinal D'Etrees found new light in the missives of his master. He stood committed to Quietism. He had not only embraced the opinions of Molinos, but had translated into Italian the book of Malaval, a French Quietist, far more extreme than Molinos himself.[336] Yet he became, at a moment's notice, the accuser of his friend. He produced the letter of Louis rebuking the faithless sloth of the pontiff who could entertain a heretic in his palace, while he, the eldest son of the Church, toiled incessantly to root out heresy from the soil of France. He read before the Inquisitorial Tribunal extracts from the papers of Molinos. He protested that he had seemed to receive, in order at the proper juncture more effectually to expose, these abominable mysteries. If these professions were false, D'Etrees was a heretic; if true, a villain. The Inquisitors, of course, deemed his testimony too valuable to be refused. In the eyes of such men, the enormous crime which he pretended was natural, familiar,

praiseworthy. Depths of baseness beyond the reach of ordinary iniquity, are heights of virtue with the followers of Dominic and Loyola. Guilt, which even a bad man would account a blot upon his life, becomes, in the annals of their zeal, a star. The Spanish Inquisitor-General, Valdes, who raised to the highest pitch his repute for sanctity, secured the objects of his ambition, averted the dangers which threatened him, and preserved his ill-gotten wealth from the grasp of the crown, simply by his activity as a persecutor, made a practice of sending spies to mix (under pretence of being converts or inquirers) among the suspected Lutherans of Valladolid and Seville. Desmarets de St. Sorlin denounced, and caused to be burnt, a poor harmless madman, named Morin, who fancied himself the Holy Ghost. Counselled by the Jesuit confessor of Louis, Father Canard, he pretended to become his disciple, and then betrayed him. This Desmarets, be it remembered, had written a book called *Les Délices de l'Esprit*, happily characterised by a French wit, when he proposed for *délices* to read *délires*. Those immoral consequences which the enemies of Madame Guyon professed to discern in her writings are drawn openly in the sensual and blasphemous phraseology of this religious extravaganza. But because Desmarets was a useful man to the Jesuits —because he had drawn away some of the nuns of the Port Royal—because he had given the flames a victim—because he was protected by Canard,—the same Archbishop of Paris who imprisoned Madame Guyon, honoured with his sanction the ravings of the licentious visionary. [337] So little had any sincere dread of spiritual extravagance to do with the hostility concentrated

on the disciples of Quietism. The greater portion of the priesthood feared only lest men should learn to become religious on their own account. The leaders of the movement against Madame Guyon were animated by an additional motive. They knew they should delight his Most Christian Majesty by affording him another opportunity of manifesting his zeal for orthodoxy; and they wished to strike at the reputation of Fénélon through Madame Guyon. The fate of Molinos decided hers, and hers that of the Archbishop of Cambray.

The only crime brought home to the followers of Molinos was a preference for the religion of the heart to that of the rosary; the substitution of a devout retirement for the observance of certain superstitious forms and seasons. His condemnation was determined. After an imprisonment of two years he was exhibited in the Temple of Minerva, his hands bound, and a lighted taper between them. A plenary indulgence was granted to all who should be present; a vast concourse listened to the sentence; hired voices cried, ‘To the fire! to the fire!’ the mob was stirred to a frenzy of fanaticism. His last gaze upon the world beheld a sea of infuriate faces, the pomp of his triumphant adversaries,—then to the gloom and solitude of the dungeon in which he was to languish till death bestowed release.[338]

II.

At Paris, Madame Guyon became the centre of a small but illustrious circle, who listened with

delight to her exposition of that Quietism to which the tender earnestness of her language, and her manner lent so indescribable a charm. There were the Duke and Duchess of Beauvilliers, the Duke and Duchess of Chevreuse, the Duchess of Bethune, and the Countess of Guiche. The daughters of Colbert and of Fouquet forgot the long enmity of their fathers in a religious friendship, whose tie was yet more closely drawn by their common admiration for Madame Guyon. [339] But letters filled with complaints against La Combe and Madame Guyon poured in upon Harlay, Archbishop of Paris.[340] He procured the arrest of La Combe, who spent the remainder of his days in various prisons. A little calumny and a forged letter obtained from the king a *lettre de cachet* confining Madame Guyon to an apartment in the Convent of St. Marie. The sisters were strongly prejudiced against her, but her gentle patience won all hearts, and her fair jailors soon vied with each other in praises of their fascinating prisoner. An examination elicited nothing decidedly unfavourable. Not a stain could be detected in her character; she offered to submit all her papers and her writings to investigation. The intercession of Madame Miramion and other friends with Madame de Maintenon, procured her release, after a captivity of eight months.

The most dangerous enemy Madame Guyon had as yet was her own half-brother, Père La Mothe. He had calumniated her in secret while in Switzerland; he was still more active now she was in Paris. He wished to become her Director, but La Combe was in the way. The artifices of La Mothe procured his arrest. He advised Madame Guyon, with hypocritical protestations of friendship, to

flee to Montargis from the scandalous reports he himself had circulated, and from adversaries he himself had raised up. Then she would have been at his mercy—he would have pointed to her flight as a proof of guilt, and her own property and the guardianship of her children might have been secured for himself. He injured her as a relation only could. People said her cause must be a bad one, since her own brother was constrained, from regard to the credit of religion, to bear witness against her. A woman who had committed sacrilege at Lyons, and had run away from the Convent of Penitents at Dijon, was employed by him to forge letters which should damage the character of Madame Guyon; to personate one of her maids, and to go from confessor to confessor throughout Paris, asserting that after living sixteen or seventeen years with her mistress, she had quitted her at last, in disgust at her abominable life.

III.

Released from the Convent of St. Marie, Madame Guyon was conducted by her court friends to express her thanks to Madame de Maintenon at St. Cyr. This institution had been founded, ten years previously, for the education of the daughters of noble but impoverished families. The idea originated with Madame de Maintenon: it was executed with royal speed and magnificence by Louis, and St. Cyr became her favourite resort. In fifteen months two thousand six hundred workmen raised the structure, on a marshy soil, about half a league from Paris. The genius of

Mansart presided over the architecture. The style of the ordinances was revised by Boileau and Racine. There three hundred young ladies of rank, dressed in gowns of brown crape, with white quilted caps, tied with ribbons whose colour indicated the class to which they belonged in the school, studied geography and drawing, heard mass, sang in the choir, and listened to preachments from the lips of Madame Brinon—who discoursed, so swore some of the courtiers, as eloquently as Bourdaloue himself. Tired out with the formal splendours of Versailles, Madame de Maintenon was never so happy as when playing the part of lady abbess at St. Cyr. Often she would be there by six in the morning, would herself assist at the toilette of the pupils, would take a class throughout the day, would give the novices lessons on spiritual experience; nothing in its routine was dull, nothing in its kitchen was mean. She hated Fontainebleau, for it tore her from her family at St. Cyr. For the private theatricals of St. Cyr, Racine wrote *Esther*, at the request of Madame de Maintenon. Happy was the courtier who could obtain permission to witness one of these representations, who could tell with triumph to envious groups of the excluded, what an admirable Ahasuerus Madame de Caylus made, what a spirited Mordecai was Mademoiselle de Glapion, how the graceful Mademoiselle de Veillenne charmed the audience in the prayer of Esther—in short, how far the Esther surpassed the Phedra; and the actresses excelled the Raisins and the Chammelés of the Parisian boards. Louis himself drew up the list of admissions, as though it were for a journey to Marly—he was the first to enter—and stood at the door, with the catalogue

of names in one hand and his cane held across as a barrier in the other, till all the privileged had entered.[341] But the fashion of asceticism which grew with every year of Maintenon's reign threw its gloom over St. Cyr. The absolute vows were introduced, and much of the monotonous austerity of conventual life. Religious excitement was the only resource left to the inmates if they would not die of ennui. This relief was brought them by Madame Guyon.

Madame de Maintenon was touched with pity for the misfortunes of Madame Guyon, with admiration for such patience, such forgetfulness of self,—she found in the freshness and fervour of her religious conversation, a charm which recalled the warmer feelings of youth; which was welcome, for its elevation, after the fatigue and anxiety of state, for its sweetness, as contrasted with the barren minutiæ of rigid formalism. She invited her constantly to her table—she encouraged her visits to St. Cyr—she met with her, and with Fénélon, at the Hôtels de Chevreuse and Beauvilliers, where a religious coterie assembled three times a week to discuss the mysteries of inward experience. Thus, during three or four years of favour with Madame de Maintenon, Madame Guyon became in effect the spiritual instructress of St. Cyr, and found herself at Paris surrounded by disciples whose numbers daily increased, and whom she withdrew from the licentious gaieties of the capital. At St. Cyr the young ladies studied her books, and listened to her as an oracle—the thoughtless grew serious—the religious strained every faculty to imitate the attainments of one in whom they saw the ideal of devotion. In Paris, mystical terminology became

the fashionable language—it was caught up and glibly uttered by wits and roués—it melted from the lips of beauties who shot languishing glances at their admirers, while they affected to be weary of the world, and who coquetted while they talked significantly of holy indifference or pure love. Libertines, like Treville, professed reform, and wrote about mysticism,—atheists turned Christians, like Corbinelli, now became Quietists, and might be seen in the salon of Madame le Maigre, where Corbinelli shone, the brilliant expositor of the new religious romanticism.[342]

IV.

During this period, Madame Guyon became acquainted with Fénélon. At their first interview she was all admiration, he all distrust. 'Her mind,' she says, 'had been taken up with him with much force and sweetness;' it seemed to be revealed to her that he should become one of her spiritual children. Fénélon, on his part, thought she had neglected her duty to her family for an imaginary mission. But he had inquired concerning her life at Montargis, and heard only praise. After a few conversations his doubts vanished: he had proposed objections, requested explanations, pointed out unguarded expressions in her books—she was modest, submissive, irresistible.[343] There was a power in her language, her manner, her surviving beauty, which mysteriously dissipated prejudice; which even Nicole, Bossuet, Boileau, Gaillard, could not withstand when they conversed with her,—which was only overcome when they had ceased to behold her face, when

her persuasive accents sounded no longer in their ears. She recalled to the thoughts of Fénélon his youthful studies at St. Sulpice;—there he had perused the mystical divines in dusty tomes, clasped and brazen-cornered,—now he beheld their buried doctrine raised to life in the busy present, animating the untaught eloquence of a woman, whom a noble enthusiasm alone had endowed with all the prerogatives of genius, and all the charms of beauty. This friendship, which events rendered afterwards so disastrous for himself, was beneficial to Madame Guyon. Fénélon taught her to moderate some of her spiritual excesses. Her extravagance reached its culminating point at Thonon. At Paris, influenced doubtless by Fénélon, as well as by more frequent intercourse with the world, she no longer enjoys so many picturesque dreams, no more heals the sick and casts out devils with a word, and no longer—as in her solitude there—suffers inward anguish consequent on the particular religious condition of Father La Combe when he is three hundred miles off.[344] It is curious to observe how the acquaintance of Fénélon with Madame Guyon began with suspicion and ripened into friendship, while that of Bossuet, commencing with approval, and even admiration, ended in calumny and persecution. Bossuet declared to the Duc de Chevreuse that while examining her writings, for the first time, he was astonished by a light and unction he had never before seen, and, for three days, was made to realize the divine Presence in a manner altogether new. Bossuet had never, like Fénélon, studied the mystics.[345]

V.

The two most influential Directors at St. Cyr were Godet des Marais, Bishop of Chartres, and Fénélon. These two men form a striking contrast. Godet was disgusting in person and in manners—a sour ascetic—a spiritual martinet—devoted to all the petty austerities of the most formal discipline. Fénélon was dignified and gentle, graceful as a courtier, and spotless as a saint—the most pure, the most persuasive, the most accomplished of religious guides. No wonder that most of the young inmates of St. Cyr adored Fénélon, and could not endure Godet. Madame de Maintenon wavered between her two confessors; if Fénélon was the more agreeable, Godet seemed the more safe. Godet was miserably jealous of his rival. He was not sorry to find that the new doctrines had produced a little insubordination within the quiet walls of St. Cyr—that Fénélon would be compromised by the indiscretion of some among his youthful admirers. He brought a lamentable tale to Madame de Maintenon. Madame du Peron, the mistress of the novices, had complained that her pupils obeyed her no longer. They neglected regular duties for unseasonable prayers. They had illuminations and ecstasies. One in the midst of sweeping her room would stand, leaning on her broom, lost in contemplation: another, instead of hearing lessons, became inspired, and resigned herself to the operation of the Spirit. The under-mistress of the classes stole away the enlightened from the rest, and they were found in remote corners of the house, feasting in secret on the sweet poison of Madame Guyon's doctrine. The precise and methodical Madame de Maintenon was horrified. She had hoped to realize in her institute the ideal

of her Church, a perfect uniformity of opinion, an unerring mechanism of obedience. We wished, said she, to promote intelligence, we have made orators; devotion, we have made Quietists; modesty, we have made prudes; elevation of sentiment, and we have pride. She commissioned Godet to reclaim the wanderers, to demand that the books of Madame Guyon should be surrendered, setting herself the example by publicly delivering into his hand her own copy of the *Short Method*. She requested Madame Guyon to refrain from visiting St. Cyr. She began to doubt the prudence or the orthodoxy of Fénélon. [346] What would the king say, if he heard of it—he, who had never liked Fénélon—who hated nothing so much as heresy—who had but the other day extinguished the Quietism of Molinos? She had read to him some of Madame Guyon's exposition of the Canticles; and he called it dreamy stuff. Doctrines really dangerous to purity were insinuated by some designing monks, under the name of Quietism. The odium fell on the innocent Madame Guyon; and her friends would necessarily share it. Malicious voices charged her with corrupting the principles of the Parisian ladies. Madame Guyon replied with justice, —'When they were patching, and painting, and ruining their families by gambling and by dress, not a word was said against it; now that they have withdrawn from such vanities, the cry is, that I have ruined them.' Rumour grew more loud and scandalous every day: the most incredible reports were most credited. The schools, too, had taken up the question of mysticism, and argued it with heat. Nicole and Lami had dissolved an ancient friendship to quarrel about it,—as Fénélon and

Bossuet were soon to do. No controversy threatened to involve so many interests, to fan so many passions, to kindle so many hatreds, as this variance about disinterestedness, about indifference, about love.

The politic Madame de Maintenon watched the gathering storm, and became all caution. At all costs, she must free herself from the faintest suspicion of fellowship with heresy. She questioned, on the opinions of Madame Guyon, Bossuet and Noailles, Bourdaloue, Joly, Tiberge, Brisacier, and Tronson; and the replies of these esteemed divines, uniformly unfavourable, decided her. It would be necessary to disown Madame Guyon: her condemnation would become inevitable. Fénélon must be induced to disown her too, or his career was at a close; and Madame de Maintenon could smile on him no longer.[347]

Madame Guyon, alarmed by the growing numbers and vehemence of her adversaries, had recourse to the man who afterwards became her bitterest enemy. She proposed to Bossuet that he should examine her writings. He complied; held several private interviews with her, and expressed himself, on the whole, more favourably than could have been expected. But these conferences, which did not altogether satisfy Bossuet, could do nothing to allay the excitement of the public.[348]

VI.

Madame Guyon now requested the appointment of commissioners, who should investigate, and pronounce finally concerning her life and

doctrine.[349] Three were chosen—Bossuet; Noailles, Bishop of Chalons; and Tronson, Superior of St. Sulpice. Noailles was a sensible, kind-hearted man; Tronson, a worthy creature, in poor health, with little opinion of his own; Bossuet, the accredited champion of the Gallican Church, accustomed to move in an atmosphere of flattery—the august dictator of the ecclesiastical world—was absolute in their conferences. They met, from time to time, during some six months, at the little village of Issy, the country residence of the Superior of St. Sulpice. When Madame Guyon appeared before them, Bossuet alone was harsh and rude; he put the worst construction on her words; he interrupted her; now he silenced her replies, now he burlesqued them; now he affected to be unable to comprehend them; now he held up his hands in contemptuous amazement at her ignorance; he would not suffer to be read the justification which had cost her so much pains; he sent away her friend, the Duke of Chevreuse. This ominous severity confused and frightened her.[350] She readily consented to retire to a convent in the town of Meaux, there to be under the surveillance of Bossuet. She undertook this journey in the depth of the most frightful winter which had been known for many years; the coach was buried in the snow, and she narrowly escaped with life. The commissioners remained to draw up, by the fireside, certain propositions, which should determine what was, and what was not, true mysticism. These constitute the celebrated Articles of Issy.

Bossuet repeatedly visited Madame Guyon at Meaux. The great man did not disdain to approach the sick-bed of his victim, as she lay in

the last stage of exhaustion, and there endeavour to overreach and terrify her. He demanded a submission, and promised a favourable certificate. The submission he received, the certificate he withheld. He sought to force her, by threats, to sign that she did not believe in the Incarnation. The more timid she appeared, the more boisterous and imperative his tone. One day, he would come with words of kindness, on another, with words of fury; yet, at the very time, this Pilate could say to some of his brethren, that he found no serious fault in her. He declared, on one occasion, that he was actuated by no dislike—he was urged to rigorous measures by others; on another, that the submission of Madame Guyon, and the suppression of Quietism, effected by his skill and energy, would be as good as an archbishopric or a cardinal's hat to him. Justice and ambition contended within him; for a little while the battle wavered, till presently pride and jealousy brought up to the standard of the latter, reinforcements so overwhelming, that justice was beaten for ever from the field. After six months' residence at Meaux, Madame Guyon received from Bossuet a certificate attesting her filial submissiveness to the Catholic faith, his satisfaction with her conduct, authorizing her still to participate in the sacrament of the Church, and acquitting her of all implication in the heresy of Molinos.[351]

Meanwhile, Fénélon had been added to the number of the commissioners at Issy. He and Bossuet were still on intimate terms; but Bossuet, like all vain men, was a dangerous friend. He knew how to inspire confidence which he did not scruple to betray. Madame Guyon, conscious of the purity of her life, of the orthodoxy of her

intention, persuaded that such a man must be superior to the meaner motives of her persecutors, had placed in the hands of Bossuet her most private papers, not excluding the *Autobiography*, which had not been submitted even to the eye of Fénélon. To Bossuet, Fénélon had, in letters, unfolded his most secret thoughts—the conflicts and aspirations of his spiritual history, so unbounded was his reliance on his honour, so exalted his estimate of the judgment of that powerful mind in matters of religion. The disclosures of both were distorted and abused to crush them; both had to rue the day when they trusted one who could sacrifice truth to glory. At Issy, the deference and the candour of Fénélon were met by a haughty reserve on the part of Bossuet. The meekness of Fénélon and the timidity of Madame Guyon only inflamed his arrogance; to bow to him was to be overborne; to confront him was at once to secure respect, if not fairness. The Articles were already drawn up when the signature of Fénélon was requested. He felt that he should have been allowed his fair share in their construction; as they were, he could not sign them; he proposed modifications; they were acceded to; and the thirty-four Articles of Issy appeared in March, 1695, with the name of Fénélon associated with the other three.[352]

VII.

To any one who reads these Articles, and the letter written by Fénélon to Madame de la Maisonfort, after signing them, it will be obvious that the Quietism of Fénélon went within a

moderate compass. When he comes to explain his meaning, the controversy is very much a dispute about words. He did not, like Madame Guyon, profess to conduct devout minds by a certain method to the attainment of perfect disinterestedness. He only maintained the possibility of realizing a love to God, thus purified from self. He was as fully aware as his opponents, that to evince our love to God by willingness to endure perdition, was the same thing as attesting our devotion to Him by our readiness to hate Him for ever. This is the standing objection against the doctrine of disinterested love. The great Nonconformist divine, John Howe, urges it with force. It is embodied in the thirty-second of the Articles in question. But it does not touch Fénélon's position. His assertion is, that we should will our own salvation only because God wills it; that, supposing it possible for us to endure hell torments, retaining the grace of God and our consciousness that such suffering was according to His will, and conducive to His glory, the soul, animated by pure love, would embrace even such a doom.[353] It is but the supposition of an impossible case,—a supposition, moreover, which involves a very gross and external conception of hell. It could find no place in a mysticism like that of Behmen or Swedenborg, where hell is regarded, much more truly, less as an infliction from without, than as the development of dominant evil from within. The Quietism of Fénélon does not preclude the reflex actions of the mind, or confine the spirit of the adept to the sphere of the immediate. It forbids only the introspection of self-complacency.[354] It does not merge distinct acts in a continuous operation, nor discourage

effort for self-advancement in holiness, or for the benefit of others—it only teaches us to moderate that impatience which has its origin in self, and declares that our own co-operation becomes, in certain cases, unconscious—is, as it were, lost in a 'special facility.'[355] The indefatigable benevolence of his life abundantly repudiates the slanderous conclusion of his adversaries, that the doctrine of indifference concerning the future, involves indifference likewise to moral good and evil in the present. Bossuet himself is often as mystical as Fénélon, sometimes more so.[356] St. Francis de Sales and Madame de Chantal said the very same things,—not to mention the unbridled utterances of the earlier and the mediæval mystics canonized by the Church of Rome. Could the controversy have been confined to the real question, no harm would have been done. It would have resembled the duel, in Ben Jonson's play, between Fastidious Brisk and Signor Puntarvolo, where the rapiers cut through taffeta and lace, gold embroidery and satin doublets, but nowhere enter the skin. Certain terms and certain syllogisms, a well-starched theory, or an argument trimmed with the pearls of eloquence—might have been transfixed or rent by a dexterous pen, on this side or on that, but the prize of the conqueror would not have been court favour, nor the penalty of the conquered, exile. Theologians might have written, for a few, the learned history of a logical campaign, but the eyes of Europe would never have been turned to a conflict for fame and fortune raging in the Vatican and at Versailles, enlisting every religious party throughout Roman-catholic Christendom, and involving the rise or fall of some of the most

illustrious names among the churchmen and nobility of France.

VIII.

The writings of Madame Guyon had now been condemned, though without mention of her name; Bossuet had intimated that he required nothing further from her; she began to hope that the worst might be over, and returned with her friends from Meaux to Paris, to live there as much retired as possible. This flight, which he chose to call dishonourable, irritated Bossuet. She had suffered him to see that she could trust him no longer. He endeavoured to recover the certificate he had given. An order was procured for her arrest. The police observed that a house in the Faubourg St. Antoine was always entered by a pass-key. They made their way in, and found Madame Guyon. They brought away their prisoner, ill as she was, and the king was induced, with much difficulty, to sign an order for her incarceration at Vincennes. The despot thought a convent might suffice,—not so the persecutors.[357]

Bossuet had been for some time occupied in writing a work which should demolish with a blow the doctrine of Madame Guyon, and hold her up to general odium. It consisted of ten books, and was entitled *Instructions on the States of Prayer*. He showed the manuscript to Fénélon, desiring him to append a statement, approving all it contained, which should accompany the volume when published. Fénélon refused. Six months ago he had declared that he could be no party to a

personal attack on Madame Guyon: the *Instructions* contained little else. That tremendous attack was no mere exposure of unguarded expressions—no mere deduction of dangerous consequences, possibly unforeseen by a half-educated writer; it charged Madame Guyon with having for her sole design the inculcation of a false spirituality, which abandoned, as an imperfection, faith in the divine Persons and the humanity of Christ; which disowned the authority of Scripture, of tradition, of morality; which dispensed with vocal prayer and acts of worship; which established an impious and brutal indifference between vice and virtue, between everlasting hate of God and everlasting love; which forbade resistance to temptation as an interruption to repose; which taught an imaginary perfection extinguishing the nobler desires only to inflame the lower, and clothing the waywardness of self-will and passion with the authority of inspiration and of prophecy. Fénélon knew that this accusation was one mass of falsehood. If Bossuet himself believed it, why had he suffered such a monster still to commune; why had he been so faithless to his high office in the Church, as to give his testimonials declaring the purity of her purpose and the soundness of her faith, when he had not secured the formal retraction of a single error? To sign his approval of that book, would be not merely a cowardly condemnation of a woman whom he knew to be innocent—it would be the condemnation of himself. His acquaintance with Madame Guyon was matter of notoriety. It would be to say that he—a student of theology, a priest, an archbishop, the preceptor of princes—had not only refrained from denouncing,

but had honoured with his friendship, the teacher of an abominable spiritualism which abolished the first principles of right and wrong. It would be to declare, in fact, such a prelate far more guilty than such a heretic. And Bossuet pretended to be his friend—Bossuet, who had laid the snare which might have been the triumph of the most malignant enemy. It was not a mere question of persons—Madame Guyon might die in prison—he himself might be defamed and disgraced—he did not mean to become her champion—surely that was enough, knowing what he knew,—let her enemies be satisfied with his silence—he could not suffer another man to take his pen out of his hand to denounce as an emissary of Satan one whom he believed to be a child of God.[358]

Such was Fénélon's position. He wished to be silent concerning Madame Guyon. To assent to the charges brought against her would not have been even a serviceable lie, if such a man could have desired to escape the wrath of Bossuet at so scandalous a price. Every one would have said that the Archbishop of Cambray had denounced his accomplice out of fear. Neither was he prepared to embrace the opposite extreme and to defend the personal cause of the accused, many of whose expressions he thought questionable, orthodox as might be her explanation, and many of whose extravagances he disapproved. His enemies wished to force him to speak, and were prepared to damage his reputation whether he appeared for or against the prisoner at Vincennes. At length it became necessary that he should break silence; and when he did, it was not to pronounce judgment concerning the oppressed or her oppressors, it was to investigate the abstract

question,—the teaching of the Church on the doctrine of pure love. He wrote the *Maxims of the Saints*.

IX.

This celebrated book appeared in January, 1697, while Fénélon was at Cambray, amazing the Flemings of his diocese by affording them, in their new archbishop, the spectacle of a church dignitary who really cared for his flock, who consigned the easier duties to his vicars, and reserved the hardest for himself; who entered their cottages like a father, listened with interest to the story of their hardships or their griefs; who consoled, counselled, and relieved them; who partook of their black bread as though he had never shared the banquets of Versailles, and as though Paris were to him, as to themselves, a wonderful place far away, whose streets were paved with gold. Madame Guyon was in confinement at the village of Vaugirard, whither the compassion of Noailles had transferred her from Vincennes, resigned and peaceful, writing poetry and singing hymns with her pious servant-girl, the faithful companion of her misfortunes. Bossuet was visiting St. Cyr—very busy in endeavouring to purify the theology of the young ladies from all taint of Quietism—but quite unsuccessful in reconciling Madame de la Maisonfort to the loss of her beloved Fénélon.

The *Maxims of the Saints* was an exposition and vindication of the doctrines of pure love, of mystical union, and of perfection, as handed

down by some of the most illustrious and authoritative names in the Roman-catholic Church, from Dionysius, Clement, and Augustine, to John of the Cross and Francis de Sales;—it explained their terminology;—it placed in juxtaposition with every article of legitimate mysticism its false correlative—the use and the abuse;—and was, in fact, though not expressly, a complete justification (on the principles of his Church) of that moderate Quietism held by himself, and in substance by Madame Guyon.[359] The book was approved by Tronson, by Fleury, by Hébert, by Pirot, a doctor of the Sorbonne, by Père La Chaise, the King's Confessor, by the Jesuits of Clermont,—but it was denounced by Bossuet; it was nicknamed the Bible of the Little Church; Pontchartrain, the comptroller-general, and Maurice Le Tellier, Archbishop of Reims, told the King that it was fit only for knaves or fools. Louis sent for Bossuet. The Bishop of Meaux cast himself theatrically at the feet of majesty, and, with pretended tears, implored forgiveness for not earlier revealing the heresy of his unhappy brother. A compromise was yet possible; for Fénélon was ready to explain his explanations, and to suppress whatever might be pronounced dangerous in his pages. But the eagle of Meaux had seen the meek and dove-like Fénélon—once almost more his disciple than his friend—erect the standard of independence, and assume the port of a rival. His pride was roused. He was resolved to reign alone on the ecclesiastical Olympus of the Court, and he would not hear of a peace that might rob him of a triumph. Did Fénélon pretend to shelter himself by great names,—he, Bossuet, would intrench himself within the awful

sanctuary of the Church; he represented religion in France; he would resent every attack upon his own opinions as an assault on the Catholic faith; he had the ear of the King, with whom heresy and treason were identical; success was all but assured, and, if so, war was glory. Such tactics are not peculiar to the seventeenth century. In our own day, every one implicated in religious abuses identifies himself with religion,—brands every exposure of his misconduct as hostility to the cause of God,—invests his miserable personality with the benign grandeur of the Gospel,—and stigmatizes as troublers in Israel all who dare to inquire into his procedure,—while innumerable dupes or cowards sleepily believe, or cautiously pretend to do so, that those who have management in a good object must themselves be good.

X.

Fénélon now requested the royal permission to appeal to Rome; he obtained it, but was forbidden to repair thither to plead in person the cause of his book, and ordered to quit the Court and confine himself to his diocese. The King went to St. Cyr, and expelled thence three young ladies, for an offence he could not in reality comprehend, —the sin of Quietism.[360] Intrigue was active, and the Duke de Beauvilliers was nearly losing his place in the royal household because of his attachment to Fénélon. The Duke—noble in spirit as in name, and worthy of such a friendship,—boldly told *Le Grand Monarque* that he was ready to leave the palace rather than to forsake his

friend. Six days before the banishment of Fénélon, Louis had sent to Innocent XII. a letter, drawn up by Bossuet, saying in effect that the *Maxims* had been condemned at Paris, that everything urged in its defence was futile, and that the royal authority would be exerted to the utmost to execute the decision of the pontifical chair. Bossuet naturally calculated that a missive, thus intimating the sentence Infallibility was expected by a great monarch to pronounce,—arriving almost at the same time with the news of a disgrace reserved only for the most grave offences,—would secure the speedy condemnation of Fénélon's book.

At Rome commenced a series of deliberations destined to extend over a space of nearly two years. Two successive bodies of adjudicators were impanelled and dissolved, unable to arrive at a decision. A new congregation of cardinals was selected, who held scores of long and wearisome debates, while rumour and intrigue alternately heightened or depressed the hopes of either party. [361] To write the *Maxims of the Saints* was a delicate task. It was not easy to repudiate the mysticism of Molinos without impugning the mysticism of St. Theresa. But the position of these judges was more delicate yet. It was still less easy to censure Fénélon without rendering suspicious, at the least, the orthodoxy of the most shining saints in the Calendar. On the one hand, there might be risk of a schism; on the other pressed the urgency and the influence of a powerful party, the impatience, almost the menaces of a great king.

The real question was simply this,—Is disinterested love possible? Can man love God for

His own sake alone, with a love, not excluding, but subordinating all other persons and objects, so that they shall be regarded only in God who is All in All? If so, is it dangerous to assert the possibility, to commend this divine ambition, as Fénélon has done? But the discussion was complicated and inflamed by daily slander and recrimination, by treachery and insinuation, and by the honest anger they provoke; by the schemes of personal ambition, by the rivalry of religious parties, by the political intrigues of the State, by the political intrigues of the Church; by the interests of a crew of subaltern agents, who loved to fish in muddy waters; and by the long cherished animosity between Gallican and Ultramontanist. Couriers pass and repass continually between Rome and Cambray, between Rome and Paris. The Abbé Bossuet writes constantly from Rome to the Bishop of Meaux; the Abbé de Chanterac from the same city to the Archbishop of Cambray. Chanterac writes like a faithful friend and a good man; he labours day and night in the cause of Fénélon; he bids him be of good cheer and put his trust in God. The letters of the Abbé Bossuet to his uncle are worthy a familiar of the Inquisition. After circulating calumnies against the character of Madame Guyon, after hinting that Fénélon was a partaker of her immoralities as well as of her heresy, and promising, with each coming post, to produce fresh confessions and new discoveries of the most revolting licentiousness, he sits down to urge Bossuet to second his efforts by procuring the banishment of every friend whom Fénélon yet has at Court; and to secure, by a decisive blow in Paris, the ruin of that ‘wild beast,’ Fénélon, at

Rome. Bossuet lost no time in acting on the suggestion of so base an instrument.[362]

XI.

At Paris a hot war of letters, pamphlets, and treatises, was maintained by the leaders, whose quarrel everywhere divided the city and the court into two hostile encampments. Fénélon offered a resistance Bossuet had never anticipated, and the veteran polemic was deeply mortified to see public opinion doubtful, whether he or a younger rival had won the laurels in argument and eloquence. In an evil hour for his fame he resolved to crush his antagonist at all costs; he determined that the laws of honourable warfare should be regarded no more, that no confidence should be any longer sacred. In the summer of 1698 the storm burst upon the head of the exile at Cambray. Early in June, Fénélon heard that the Abbé de Beaumont, his nephew, and the Abbé de Langeron, his friend, had been dismissed in disgrace from the office of sub-preceptors to the young Duke of Burgundy; that Dupuy and De Leschelles, had been banished the Court because of their attachment to him; that his brother had been expelled from the marine, and a son of Madame Guyon from the guards; that the retiring and pacific Fleury had narrowly escaped ignominy for a similar cause: that the Dukes of Beauvilliers, Chevreuse, and Guiche, were themselves menaced, and the prospect of their downfall openly discussed; and that to correspond with him was hereafter a crime against the State. Within a month, another Job's messenger brought

him tidings that Bossuet had produced a book entitled *An Account of Quietism*—an attack so terrible that the dismay of his remaining friends had almost become despair. Bossuet possessed three formidable weapons—his influence as a courtier, his authority as a priest, his powers as an author. He wielded them all at once, and all of them dishonourably. If he was unfair in the first capacity, when he invoked the thunders of royalty to ruin the cause of a theological opponent—if he was unfair in the second, when he denounced forbearance and silenced intercession as sins against God,—he was yet more so in the third, when he employed all his gifts, to weave into a malignant tissue of falsehood and exaggeration the memoirs of Madame Guyon, the correspondence of Fénélon with Madame de Maintenon, and his former confidential letters to himself—letters on spiritual matters to a spiritual guide—letters which should have been sacred as the secresy of the Confessional. The sensation created by the *Account of Quietism* was prodigious. Bossuet presented his book to the King, whose approval was for every parasite the authentication of all its slanders. Madame de Maintenon, with her own hand, distributed copies among the courtiers; in the salon of Marly nothing else was talked of; in the beautiful gardens groups of lords and ladies, such as Watteau would have loved to paint, were gathered on the grass, beside the fountains, beneath the trees, to hear it read; it was begged, borrowed, stolen, greedily snatched, and delightedly devoured; its anecdotes were so piquant, its style so sparkling, its bursts of indignant eloquence so grand; gay ladies, young and old, dandies, wits, and libertines, found its

scandal so delicious,—Madame Guyon was so exquisitely ridiculous,—La Combe, so odious a Tartuffe,—Fénélon, so pitiably displumed of all his shining virtues; and, what was best of all, the insinuations were worse than the charges,—the book gave much and promised more,—it hinted at disclosures more disgraceful yet, and gave free scope to every malicious invention and every prurient conjecture.[363]

XII.

The generous Fénélon, more thoughtful for others than for himself, at first hesitated to reply even to such a provocation, lest he should injure the friends who yet remained to him at Versailles. But he was soon convinced that their position, as much as his, rendered an answer imperative. He received Bossuet's book on the 8th of July, and by the 13th of August his defence had been written, printed, and arrived at Rome, to gladden the heart of poor Chanterac, to stop the mouth of the enemy, and to turn the tide once more in behalf of his failing party. This refutation, written with such rapidity, and under such disadvantages, was a masterpiece,—it redeemed his character from every calumny,—it raised his reputation to its height,—it would have decided a fair contest completely in his favour. It was composed when his spirit was oppressed by sorrow for the ruin of his friends, and darkened by the apprehension of new injuries which his justification might provoke,—by a proscribed man at Cambray, remote from the assistance and appliances most needful,—without a friend to guide or to relieve

the labour of arranging and transcribing documents and of verifying dates, where scrupulous accuracy was of vital importance,—when it was difficult to procure correct intelligence from Paris, and hazardous to write thither lest he should compromise his correspondents,—when even his letters to Chanterac were not safe from inspection,—when it would be difficult to find a printer for such a book, and yet more so to secure its circulation in the metropolis. As it was, D'Argenson, the lieutenant of police,—a functionary pourtrayed by his contemporaries as at once the ugliest and most unprincipled of men,—seized a package of seven hundred copies at the gates of Paris. The *Reply* appeared, however, and was eagerly read. Even the few who were neutral, the many who were envious, the host who were prejudiced, could not withhold their admiration from that lucid and elegant style—that dignified and unaffected eloquence; numbers yielded, in secret, at least, to the force of such facts and such arguments; while all were astonished at the skill and self-command with which the author had justified his whole career without implicating a single friend; and leaving untouched the shield of every other adversary, had concentrated all his force on exposing the contradictions, the treachery, and the falsehood of Bossuet's accusation.[364]

The controversy now draws to a close. Bossuet published *Remarks* on the *Reply* of Fénélon, and Fénélon rejoined with *Remarks* on the *Remarks* of Bossuet. Sixty loyal doctors of the Sorbonne censured twelve propositions, in the *Maxims*, while Rome was yet undecided. Towards the close of the same year (1698) Louis wrote a letter to the

Pope, yet more indecently urgent than his former one, demanding a thorough condemnation of so dangerous a book; and this epistle he seconded by depriving Fénélon, a few weeks afterwards, of the title and pension of preceptor—that pension which Fénélon had once nobly offered to return to a treasury exhausted by ambitious wars.[365]

Innocent XII. had heard, with indignant sorrow, of the arbitrary measures adopted against Fénélon and his friends. He was mortified by the arrogance of Louis, by the attempts so openly made to forestall his judgment. He was accustomed to say that Cambray had erred through excess of love to God; Meaux, by want of love to his neighbour. But Louis was evidently roused, and it was not safe to provoke him too far. After a last effort at a compromise, the Pope yielded; and the cardinals pronounced a condemnation, far less complete, however, than the vehemence of the accusers had hoped to secure. Twenty-three propositions extracted from the *Maxims*, were censured, but the Pontiff openly declared that such censure did not extend to the explanations which the Archbishop of Cambray had given of his book. This sentence was delivered on the 12th of March, 1699. The submission of Fénélon is famous in history. He received the intelligence as he was about to ascend the pulpit; he changed his subject, and preached a sermon on the duty of submission to superiors.[366] Bossuet endeavoured, in vain, to represent the obedience which was the first to pronounce the sentence of self-condemnation, as a profound hypocrisy.

XIII.

Madame Guyon lingered for four years a solitary prisoner in the dungeons of the Bastille. In the same tower was confined the Man of the Iron Mask, and she may have heard, in her cell, the melancholy notes of the guitar with which her fellow-prisoner beguiled a captivity whose horrors had then lasted seven-and-thirty years. There, a constitution never strong, was broken down by the stony chill of rigorous winters, and by the noxious vapours which steamed from the stagnant moat in summer.[367] She was liberated in 1702, and sent to Blois,—a picturesque old city, whose steep and narrow streets, cut into innumerable steps, overlook the Loire,—crowned on the one side by its fine church, and on the other by the royal chateau, memorable for the murder of the Guises; its massive proportions adorned by the varying tastes of successive generations, then newly beautified after the designs of Mansart, and now a ruin, the delight of every artist. There she lived in quiet, sought out from time to time by visitors from distant provinces and other lands,—as patient under the infirmity of declining age as beneath the persecutions of her earlier years,—finding, as she had always done, some sweet in every bitter cup, and a theme for praise in every trial, purified by her long afflictions, elevated by her hope of glory, full of charity and full of peace, resigned and happy to the last. Her latest letter is dated in 1717,—Bossuet had departed, and Fénélon,—and before the close of that year, she also, the subject of such long and bitter strife, had been removed beyond all the tempests of this lower world.

In the judicial combats of ancient Germany, it was the custom to place in the centre of the lists a bier, beside which stood the accuser and the accused, at the head and at the foot, leaning there for some time in solemn silence before they laid lance in rest and encountered in the deadly shock. Would that religious controversialists had oftener entered and maintained their combat as alike in view of that final appeal in the unseen world of truth—with a deeper and more abiding sense of that supreme tribunal before which so many differences vanish, and where none but he who has striven lawfully can receive a crown. Bossuet was regarded as the champion of Hope, and drew his sword, it was said, lest sacrilegious hands should remove her anchor. Fénélon girded on his arms to defend the cause of Charity. Alas! said the Pope—heart-sick of the protracted conflict—they forget that it is Faith who is in danger. Among the many witty sayings which the dispute suggested to the lookers-on, perhaps one of the most significant is that attributed to the daughter of Madame de Sévigné. 'M. de Cambray,' said she, 'pleads well the cause of God, but M. de Meaux yet better that of religion, and cannot fail to win the day at Rome.' Fénélon undertook to show that his semi-Quietism was supported by the authority of ecclesiastical tradition, and he was unquestionably in the right. He might have sustained, on Romanist principles, a doctrine much less moderate, by the same argument. But it was his wish to render mysticism as rational and as attractive as possible; and no other advocate has exhibited it so purified from extravagance, or secured for it so general a sympathy. The principle of 'holy indifference,' however, must be

weighed, not by the virtues of Fénélon, but according to the standard of Scripture,—and such an estimate must, we believe, pronounce it mistaken.

XIV.

The attempt to make mysticism definite and intelligible must always involve more or less of inconsistency. Nevertheless, the enterprise has been repeatedly undertaken; and it is a remarkable fact, that such efforts have almost invariably originated in France. Mysticism and scholasticism—the spirit of the cloud and the spirit of the snow—reign as rivals throughout the stormy region of the Middle Age. The reaction against the extreme of each nourished its antagonist. Hugo and Richard of St. Victor endeavoured to effect a union, and to reconcile these contending products of the heart and brain. In that ascetic abstraction, which hides in darkness all the objects of sense, they sought to develop, from the dull and arid stem of school divinity, the most precious blossoms of the feeling; and their mysticism resembles those plants of the cactus-tribe which unfold, from their lustreless and horny leaves, gorgeous flowers, that illumine, with phosphoric radiance, the darkness of the tropical night. The Victorines were succeeded in the same path by Bonaventura, a Frenchman by education, if not by birth, more a schoolman than a mystic; and, in the fifteenth century, by Gerson. These are mystics who have no tales to tell of inspiration and of vision—their aim is to legitimize rapture, to define ecstasy, to

explain the higher phenomena of the spirit on the basis of an elaborate psychology, to separate the delusive from the real in mysticism, and to ascertain the laws of that mystical experience, of which they acknowledged themselves to be but very partially the subjects. With this view, Gerson introduced into mysticism, strange to say, the principle of induction; and proposed, by a collection and comparison of recorded examples, to determine its theory, and decide its practice. In the *Maxims of the Saints*, Fénélon carries out the idea of Gerson, as far as was requisite for his immediate purpose. Both are involved in the same difficulty, and fall into the same contradiction. What Molinos was to Fénélon, Ruysbroek was to Gerson. Fénélon wished to stop short of the spiritualism condemned as heretical in Molinos; Gerson, to avoid the pantheism he thought he saw in Ruysbroek. Both impose checks, which, if inefficacious, amount to nothing; if effective, are fatal to the very life of mysticism,—both hold doctrines, to which they dare not give scope; and both are, to some extent, implicated in the consequences they repudiate by the principles they admit.

Mysticism in France contrasts strikingly, in this respect, with mysticism in Germany. Speaking generally, it may be said that France exhibits the mysticism of sentiment, Germany the mysticism of thought. The French love to generalize and to classify. An arrangement which can be expressed by a word, a principle which can be crystallized into a sparkling maxim, they will applaud. But with them conventionalism reigns paramount—society is ever present to the mind of the individual—their sense of the ludicrous is

exquisitely keen. The German loves abstractions for their own sake. To secure popularity for a visionary error in France, it must be lucid and elegant as the language—it must be at least an ingenious and intelligible falsehood; but in Germany, the most grotesque inversions of thought and of expression will be found no hindrance to its acceptability, and the most hopeless obscurity may be pronounced its highest merit. In this respect, German philosophy sometimes resembles Lycophron, who was so convinced that unintelligibility was grandeur, as to swear he would hang himself if a man were found capable of understanding his play of *Cassandra*. Almost every later German mystic has been a secluded student—almost every mystic of modern France has been a brilliant conversationalist. The genius of mysticism rises, in Germany, in the clouds of the solitary pipe; in France, it is a fashionable Ariel, who hovers in the drawing-room, and hangs to the pendants of the glittering chandelier. If Jacob Behmen had appeared in France, he must have counted disciples by units, where in Germany he reckoned them by hundreds. If Madame Guyon had been born in Germany, rigid Lutheranism might have given her some annoyance; but her earnestness would have redeemed her enthusiasm from ridicule, and she would have lived and died the honoured precursor of modern German Pietism. The simplicity and strength of purpose which characterize so many of the German mystics, appear to much advantage beside the vanity and affectation which have so frequently attended the manifestations of mysticism in France. In Germany, theosophy arose with the Reformation,

and was as much a theology as a science. In France, where the Reformation had been suppressed, and where superstition had been ridiculed with such success, the same love of the marvellous was most powerful with the most irreligious—it filled the antechamber of Cagliostro with impatient dandies and grandees, trembling, and yet eager to pry into the future—too enlightened to believe in Christ, yet too credulous to doubt the powers of a man before whose door fashion drew, night after night, a line of carriages which filled the street.

Note to page 245.

A full account of the proceedings against the Quietists will be found in the narrative above referred to and in Arnold's *Kirchen-und-Ketzer Geschichte*, th. III. cap. xvii.

The motive of Père La Chaise in urging this prosecution appears to have been twofold: partly, to start heretics whom his Most Christian Majesty might magnificently hunt, and still more to weaken the Spanish party and embarrass the Pope, who was suspected of leaning toward the house of Austria. The audacity of the Jesuits—so formidable always, from their numbers, their union, their unscrupulousness, and now emboldened by support so powerful, struck all Rome with terror. A man widely reputed for sanctity, throughout a period of twenty years—an honoured guest within the walls of the Vatican—who had long enjoyed, and not yet forfeited, the warm friendship of the Head of the Church—was suddenly declared the most dangerous

enemy to the faith of Christendom. To accomplish the ruin of this victim, a venerable pontiff was threatened with the most grievous insult which infallibility could suffer. Within a month, two hundred persons were thrown into the dungeons of the Inquisition,—and many of these were eminent for rank, for learning, or for piety. Only the grossly stupid or the scandalously dissolute could feel themselves secure. To hint a question concerning the justice of a single step in prosecutions remarkable, even at Rome, for the baseness and illegality of their agents and their acts—to live a quiet and retiring life —to appear infrequently at confession or at mass,— these were circumstances sufficient to render any man suspected of Quietism; and if the informer were hungry, or a private enemy alert, from suspicion to conviction was but a step.

But the persecutors were destined to meet with many mortifications in their course. Molinos and his friend Petrucci—a bishop, and afterwards a cardinal— defended themselves, on their first summons, with such skill and intrepidity, that the writings which had been circulated against them were condemned as libellous. The case of Petrucci represents that of the great majority against whom the charge of Quietism was brought. Not an accusation could be substantiated, save this,—that blameless as his life might be, he had grown remiss in some of those outward observances which are the pride of Pharisaic sanctity. Thus defeated at the outset, the Jesuits were reinforced and rendered victorious by the falsehoods of D'Etrees, who refused to hear a word Molinos had to say in defence of his own writings. The Count and Countess Vespiniani were arrested, with other persons, to the number of seventy. They were accused of omitting the exterior

practices of religion, and of giving themselves to solitude and prayer. The Countess bravely answered, that she had discovered her manner of devotion only to her confessor; he must have betrayed her; who but idiots would confess, if confession was made the engine of the persecutor—if no secret was sacred—if to confess might be to lie at the mercy of a villain? Henceforward she would confess to God alone. A rank so high must be respected. Words so bold were dangerous. So the Vespiniani were set free. The circular letter sent out against the Quietists was treated with indifference by most of the Italian bishops—not unleavened, many of them, by this obnoxious kind of piety. Nay, worse! for once, an epistle from the Inquisition was published. The unfortunate letter escaped somehow—was translated into Italian—all Rome was reading it. The world looked in on the procedure of the Holy Office, to the shame and bitter vexation of its holy men. It was said that the Inquisition collected some twenty thousand letters, or copies of letters, sent and received by Molinos, and that when he was arrested, twenty crowns' worth of letters addressed to him were seized at the post-office. So extended was the influence of the heretic—so little likely, therefore, to perish with him. Some ecclesiastics had the candour to admit that most of the Quietists showed themselves better instructed than their accusers, and confronted their judges so ably, with passages, authorities, and arguments, that they could only be silenced by authority and force.

The letter of Cardinal Caraccioli to Innocent, about the Quietists, represents them as persons who attempt passive mental prayer and 'contemplatio,' without the previous preparation of the 'via purgativa.' Dreadful to relate, some of them had

been known to leave their rosaries unfingered, to refuse to make the sign of the cross, to declare crucifixes rather in their way than otherwise! They trusted rather to their inward attraction than to directors. Some, though laymen, and though married, communed daily—an ominous sign—for it betokened the lowering (in their minds, at least) of that high partition wall, which Rome had made so strong, between clergy and laity—between the religious *par excellence* and the vulgar herd of Christians, who were to be saved only through the former. See *Bausset's Histoire de Fénélon*, liv. ii.; *Pièces Justificatives*, No. II.

Note to page 259.

Fénélon could with ease bring from the arsenal of tradition even more proofs than he needed for the establishment of his doctrine. No prevarication or sophistry could conceal the fact that Bernard, Albertus Magnus, Francis de Sales, Theresa, Catharine of Genoa, and other saints, had used language concerning pure love, authenticating more than all that Fénélon was solicitous to defend. Thus much was proven,—even subtracting those passages which Fénélon unwittingly cited from an edition of De Sales' *Entretiens*, said to be full of interpolations. The spiritual history of Friar Laurent and of Francis de Sales furnished actual examples of the most extreme case Fénélon was willing to put. Bossuet's true answer was the reply he gave on the question to Madame de la Maisonfort,—such rare and extraordinary cases should be left out of our consideration, they should not be drawn within the range of possible experience, even for Christians

considerably advanced. (*Phelipeaux*, liv. i. pp. 165-176.) In dispute with Fénélon, instead of admitting the fact, as with La Maisonfort, the polemic gets uppermost, and he tries very dishonestly to explain away the language of De Sales, while he misrepresents and garbles that of Fénélon. See *Cinquième Lettre en Réponse à divers Ecrits*; *Première Lettre en Réponse à celle de M. L'Evêque de Meaux*; *Maximes des Saints*, art. v.

Fénélon draws a subtile distinction between the object of love and the motive of love. That love in God which renders him our eternal blessedness, is among the *objects* of our love—for God has so revealed himself, but is not the *motive* of it. (*Max. des Saints*, art. iv.) Do we desire happiness less, he asks, because we desire it from a worthy motive,—*i.e.*, as desired by God? Do we extinguish hope by exalting and regulating it? (*Entretiens sur la Religion*; Œuvres, tom. i. p. 35.) If any one of us knew that he should be annihilated at death, ought he less to love the infinitely Good? Is not eternal life a gift which God is free to grant or to withhold? Shall the love of the Christian who is to have eternal life be *less* than that of him who anticipates annihilation, just because the love of God to him is so much *more*? Shall such a gift serve only to make love interested? (*Sur le Pur Amour*, xix. Compare also *Max. des Saints*, art. 10, 11, 12; *Correspondance*, let. 43.)

Fénélon is very careful to state that disinterested love is put to its most painful proof only in rare and extreme cases,—that the love which is interested is not a sin, only a lower religious stage, and that he who requires that staff is to beware how he throws it aside prematurely, ambitious of a spiritual perfection which may be beyond his reach. Bossuet

endeavoured to show that if Fénélon's doctrine were true, any love except the disinterested was a crime. (*Instructions et Avis*, &c., xx.; *Sur le Pur Amour*, p. 329; *Max. des Saints*, art. iii., and sundry qualifications of importance, concerning self-abandonment in the 'épreuves extrêmes,' art. ix.)

Note to page 259.

Such is the explanation in the letter to La Maisonfort. But Fénélon is not always—perhaps, could not possibly be—quite consistent with himself on this most delicate of questions. Beyond a doubt, the attempt practically to apply this doctrine concerning reflex acts constitutes the morbid element in his system—is the one refinement above all others fatally unnatural. There is great truth in Fénélon's warnings against nervous, impatient introspection. Against an evil so prevalent, and so constantly fostered by the confessional and the directors, it was high time that some one should protest. But, alas! not only does Fénélon himself uphold, most zealously, that very directorship, but this strain after a love perfectly disinterested tempts the aspirant to be continually hunting inwardly after traces of the hated self, which will never quite vanish. Happy, according to Fénélon, is that religionist who can sacrifice, not only himself, but the sacrifice of himself—who burns the burnt offering—who gives up the consciousness of having given himself up—and who has reached, without knowing it, the pinnacle of Christian perfection. The reader will find specimens of his more guarded language in the letter referred to in the *Instructions et Avis*, &c. xx.; *Max. des Saints*, art. xiii.; *Lettres Spirituelles*, xiii. This last, a

letter to Sœur Charlotte de St. Cyprien, is of importance, as containing definitions of mystical terms, similar in substance to those given in the *Maximes*, and moreover, highly approved by Bossuet, a year after the conferences at Issy. The strongest expressions are found in the *Instructions et Avis*, xxii. xxiii. He says,—Pour consommer le sacrifice de purification en nous des dons de Dieu, il faut donc achever de détruire l'holocauste; il faut tout perdre, même l'abandon aperçu par lequel on se voit livré à sa perte.—P. 342. Compare the allusion to the unconscious prayer of St. Anthony, *Max. des Saints*, art. xxi.

Note to page 259.

L'activité que les mystiques blâment n'est pas l'action réelle et la co-opération de l'âme à la grâce; c'est seulement une crainte inquiète, ou une ferveur empressée qui recherche les dons de Dieu pour sa propre consolation.—*Lettres Spirituelles*, xiii. So also, in the letter to La Maisonfort, he shows that the state of passivity does not preclude a great number of distinct acts. This is what the mystics call co-operating with God without activity of our own—a subtlety which those may seek to understand who care. Fénélon means to forbid a selfish isolation, which, on pretence of quietude, neglects daily duty. True repose in God calmly discharges such obligations as they come. We have seen an example of this in St. Theresa. Fénélon is not prepared to go the length of John of the Cross, who denies our co-operation altogether.—*Maximes des Saints*, art. xxx. and xxix. Ils ne font plus d'actes empressés et marqués par une secousse inquiète: ils font des actes

si paisibles et si uniformes, que ces actes, quoique très-réels, très-successifs, et même interrompus, *leur paraissent* ou un seul acte sans interruption, ou un repos continuel.

Fénélon is at any time ready to endorse all the counsels of John of the Cross, as to the duty of leaving behind (*outre-passer*) all apparitions, sounds, tastes, everything visionary, sensuous, or theurgic. With the grosser forms of mysticism he has no sympathy. He even endeavours to represent St. Theresa as an advocate of the purer and more refined mysticism, adducing the scarce-attainable seventh *Morada*, and overlooking the sensuous character of the preceding six. Theresa might, in the abstract, rate the visionless altitude above the valley of vision; but she preferred, for herself, unquestionably, the valley to the mountain. (*Max. des Saints*, xix.; *Lettres Spirituelles*, xiv. xvi. xvii.) In a letter on extraordinary gifts, he repeats the precept of John—'Aller toujours par le non-voir;' and 'outre-passer les grands dons, et marcher dans la pure foi comme si on ne les avait pas reçus.' He consigns the soul, in like manner, to a blank abstraction—to what Luther would have called 'a void tedium.' Tout ce qui est goût et ferveur sensible, image créée, lumière distincte et aperçue, donne une fausse confiance, et fait une impression trop vive; on les reçoit avec joie, et on les quitte avec peine. Au contraire, dans la nudité de la pure foi, on ne doit rien voir; on n'a plus en soi ni pensée ni volonté; on trouve tout dans cette simplicité générale, sans s'arrêter à rien de distinct; on ne possède rien, mais on est possédé.—*Lettre* xxiii. The very acts of which Contemplation is made up, are, says Fénélon—'Si simples, si directs, si paisibles, si uniformes, qu'ils n'ont rien de marqué par où l'âme puisse les distinguer.'—*Max. des Saints*, art. xxi. What

such acts can be, must remain for ever a mystery unfathomable. It is for these inexplicable '*actes distincts*' that the convenient '*facilité spéciale*' is provided. (*Correspondance*, lettre 43; comp. *Lettres Spirituelles*, xiii. 448.)

Fénélon is also careful to guard his mysticism against the pretences of special revelation and any troublesome insubordination on the part of the 'inner light,' or l'attrait intérieur. The said 'attrait,' he justly observes, 'n'est point une inspiration miraculeuse et prophétique, qui rende l'âme infaillible, ni impeccable, ni indépendante, de la direction des pasteurs; ce n'est que la grâce, qui est sans cesse prévenante dans tous les justes, et qui est plus spéciale dans les âmes élevées par l'amour désintéressé,' &c.—*Loc. cit.* p. 450; *Max. des Saints*, art. xxix. and vii.

Note to page 262.

Fénélon gives his reasons for refusing to affix his approval to Bossuet's book, in letters to Tronson and Madame de Maintenon, and in the *Réponse*. (*Correspondance*, lettres 52, 53, 57; *Réponse à la Relation*, chap, v.) It was a strong point for Fénélon against Bossuet that the latter had administered to Madame Guyon the sacraments, and granted her a favourable certificate, after reading the very books in which he professed afterwards to discover the most flagitious designs. In thinking better, therefore, of her intentions than of her language, Fénélon was no more her partisan or defender than Bossuet himself had been, up to that point. The act of submission Bossuet made her sign was not a retractation of

error, but simply a declaration that she had never held any of the errors condemned in the pastoral letter,—that she always meant to write in a sense altogether orthodox, and had no conception that any dangerous interpretation could be put upon the terms which, in her ignorance, she had employed. (*Réponse à la Relation*, chap. i.) Phelipeaux sees in everything Fénélon wrote—the notes for the *Maxims* —the memoranda he sent to Bossuet, only one purpose—an insane resolve to defend Madame Guyon at all costs. He chooses to imagine that every step taken by her was secretly dictated by Fénélon. In fact, however, from the time the first suspicions arose, Fénélon began to withdraw from Madame Guyon his former intimacy. Nothing could exceed his caution in the avoidance of all implication with one whose language was susceptible of such fatal misconstruction. He could probably have taken no better course. He endeavoured to retain the controversy about the real question, that she might be forgotten. But it soon became evident that he himself was the party attacked, and with a virulence for which the scandals attributed to Madame Guyon furnished an instrument too tempting to be neglected. The charges against Madame Guyon increased in magnitude—not with her resistance, for she made none—but with that of Fénélon. (*Réponse*, xxiii. lxxxiv. lx.)

Note to page 264.

The motives with which Fénélon wrote and published the *Maxims* are fully stated by himself. It was not to defend Madame Guyon, but to rescue the doctrine of pure love, threatened with destruction by

the growing prejudice against the religion of the ‘inward way.’ It was not to excuse the Quietists, but to preserve, by due distinctions, souls attached to the true mysticism, from the illusions of the false. It was to give their full and legitimate scope to those venerable principles which a heretical Quietism was said to have abused. Mysticism was not to be extinguished by denying the truth it contained. Let, then, the true be separated from the false. The *Maxims* were believed by Fénélon to contain no position contrary to the articles of Issy. The passages which cannot be reconciled with the limitations imposed by those articles are not his own, but quotations from De Sales and others. The Andalusian Illuminati had rendered the greatest saints suspected. Theresa, Alvarez, John of the Cross, stood in need of defenders. Ruysbroek, whom Bellarmine called the great contemplatist; Tauler, the Apostle of Germany, had required and had found champions, the one in Dionysius the Carthusian, the other in Blosius. The Cardinal Berulle felt compelled to enter the lists on behalf of St. Francis de Sales, for suspicions had been cast upon the wisdom of that eminent saint. Such examples might well alarm all those whose religion was embued with mysticism,—all those to whom a faith of that type was a necessity. Let it be openly declared where the path of safety lies, and where the dangers commence. The *Maxims* were to furnish a *via media* between the extreme of those who repudiated mystical theology altogether, and the excesses of the false mystics. The doctrines stigmatized as false throughout the *Maxims*, are what Fénélon supposed to be the tenets of Molinos, judging from the sixty-eight propositions condemned at Rome. The *Faux*, therefore, which opposes to the *Vrai* is, for the most part, a mere chimera—made up of doctrines really

believed by scarcely any one,—only taught, perhaps, now and then, by designing priests to women, for the purposes of seduction. See the 'Avertissement' to the *Maxims*; *Première Lettre en Réponse*, &c. p. 111; *Correspondance*, lettre 59; and the letter on the *Maxims*, to the Pope, *Phelipeaux*, p. 239.

Note to page 265.

Among the expelled was the brilliant, unmanageable Madame de la Maisonfort—the last woman in the world to have been shut up in the small monotony of St. Cyr. The history of mysticism at St. Cyr is a miniature of its history at large. The question by which it is tried is simply practical. Will it subordinate itself? If so, let it flourish. If not, root it out. Jean d'Avila, in his *Audi, Filia, et Vide*, has a section entitled *Des Fausses Révélations*. The whole question turns on this point. Is the visionary obedient to director, superior, &c.? If so, the visions are of God. If not, the visions are of the Devil. (*Œuvres du B. Jean D'Avila, Audi, Filia, et Vide*, chapp. 50-55.)

Madame Guyon, in becoming a religious instructress, as she did, only followed examples honoured by the Romish Church. Angela de Foligni, the two Catharines of Siena and of Genoa, St. Theresa, and others, had become the spiritual guides of numbers, both men and women, lay and ecclesiastic. At another juncture the kind of revival introduced by Madame Guyon might have met with encouragement. But her tendency was precisely that of which the times were least tolerant, and her disposition to follow her inward attraction rather than the counsels of prelates was magnified to

proportions so portentous as to exclude all hope. The mysticism of Fénélon, judged by the test of obedience, should certainly have been spared. With an anxiety almost nervous, he inculcates wherever he can, those precepts of abject servility towards the director which are so agreeable to his Church. Wherever the director is in question, we lose sight of Fénélon, we see only the priest. But neither his own sincere professions of submission, nor his constant effort to place every one else under the feet of some ecclesiastic or other, could save him from a condemnation pronounced, not on religious, but political grounds.

In this respect Fénélon was anything but the *esprit fort* which the scepticism of a later age so fervently admired. His letters on religious subjects abound in directions for absolute obedience, and in warnings against the exercise of thought and judgment on our own account. Though Madame de la Maisonfort knew herself utterly unfit for the religious vocation which Madame de Maintenon wished her to embrace, Fénélon could tell her that her repugnance, her anguish, her tears, were nothing, opposed to the decision of five courtly ecclesiastics, affirming that she had the vocation. He writes to say, La vocation ne se manifeste pas moins par la décision d'autrui que par notre propre attrait.—*Correspondance*, lettre 19. See also *Lettres Spirituelles*, 18, 19, 169. The inward attraction presents some perplexity. In one instance it is only another word for taste (*Ibid.* 35), and in another place the attraction of grace is equivalent to an act of observation and judgment (*Ibid.* 176). Here, with so many mystics, Fénélon can only follow the '*moi*,' from which he fancies he escapes (441). The knot of these interior difficulties is cut by the directorship.

If Fénélon speaks uncertainly as to what is the inward attraction, and what is not, much more would the majority of mystics be sorely perplexed in their own case. The mystic, bewildered and wearied with intense self-scrutiny, sees all swim before his eyes. He can be sure of nothing. Whatever alternative he chooses, he has no sooner acted on the choice than he finds self in the act, and fancies the other road the right one. He is distressed by finding inclination and inward attraction changing, while he gazes, into each other, and back again, times without number. He is afraid to do what he likes—this may be self-pleasing. He is afraid to do what he does not like—for this may be perverseness—some culpable self-will, at least. The life of a devotee, so conscientious and so unfortunate, is rendered tolerable only by the director. The man who can put an end to this inward strife about trifles—which are anything but trifles to the sufferer—is welcomed as an angel from heaven. Casuistry, the creature of the confessional, renders its parent a necessity. Fénélon laments the abuses of the system, but he will rather believe that miracles will be continually wrought, to rescue the faithful from such mischiefs, than question (as bolder mystics, like Harphius had done) the institution itself. Even the mistakes and bad passions of superiors will be wrought into blessings for the obedient. (*Sur la Direction*, pp. 677, 678.)

CHAPTER III.

> All opinions and notions, though never so true, about things spiritual, may be the very matter of heresy, when they are adhered to as the principle and end, with obstinacy and acquiescence; and, on the contrary, opinions and speculations, however false, may be the subject of orthodoxy, and very well consist with it, when they are not stiffly adhered to, but only employed in the service of disposing the soul to the faith of entire resignation, which is the only true orthodoxy wherein there can be no heresy nor capital errours.—POIRET.

WILLOUGBY. I think, Atherton, you have been somewhat too indulgent on that question of disinterested love. To me it appears sheer presumption for any man to pretend that he loves God without any regard to self, when his very being, with its power to know and love, is a gift—when he has nothing that he did not receive,—when his salvation is wholly of favour, and not of merit,—and when, from the very first, he has been laid under an ever-increasing weight of obligation beyond all estimate. On this matter Oliver Cromwell appears to me a better divine than Fénélon, when he writes, 'I have received plentiful wages beforehand, and I know that I shall never earn the least mite.'

GOWER. Yet Fénélon bases disinterested love on the doctrine which denies to man all possibility of merit.

ATHERTON. I think Willoughby looks at Fénélon's teaching concerning disinterested love too much apart from his times and his Church. Grant that this disinterestedness is a needless and unattainable refinement, savouring of that high-flown, ultra-human devotion so much affected by Romish saintship—still it has its serviceable truth, as opposed to the servile and mercenary religionism which the Romanist system must ordinarily produce.

WILLOUGHBY. It is the less of two evils, perhaps; but, let divines say what they will, men cannot abjure self as such a doctrine requires. Man may ask it of his fellow-men, but God does not require it of them, when he tells them He would have all men to be saved. That inalienable desire of individual well-being, to which God appeals, these theologians disdain.

GOWER. But man comes into this world to live for something higher than happiness.

WILLOUGHBY. That depends on what you mean by the word. Of course, life has a purpose far above that snug animalism which some men call happiness. In opposition to *that*, the outcry revived of late against happiness, as a motive, has its full right. But I mean by happiness, man's true well-being—that of his higher, not his lower nature—that of his nature, not for a moment, but for ever. With such happiness, duty, however stern, must always ultimately coincide. I say, man was formed to desire such a realisation of the possibilities of his nature, that to bid him cease or slacken in this desire is a cruelty and a folly, and that the will of God ought never for an instant to be conceived as hostile to such well-being. If He were, why hear we of Redemption? And I may point with reverence to the Incarnate

Perfectness, 'who, *for the joy that was set before him*, endured the cross;' he would die to know the blessedness of restoring to us our life. Only the most sublime self-sacrifice could account such a result a recompense; and that recompense he did not refuse to keep constantly in view.

ATHERTON. Your dispute is very much a question of words. True self-annihilation certainly does not consist in being without a personal aim, but in suppressing all that within us which would degrade that aim below the highest.

GOWER. The Quietists are right in undervaluing, as they do, mere pleasurable feeling in religion.

ATHERTON. Quite so: in as far as they mean to say by such depreciation that God may be as truly near and gracious in spiritual sorrow as in spiritual joy,—that inward delights and blissful states of mind are not to be put virtually in the place of Christ, as a ground of trust—that the witness of the Spirit does not evince itself in the emotional nature merely, but is realised in the general consciousness of a divine life, which is its own evidence. But I think the Quietists too much overlook the fact that peace, rising at times to solemn joy, is after all, the *normal* state of the Christian life, and as such, always a legitimate object of desire.

GOWER. As to disinterested love, once more, may we not take Bunyan as a good example of the mean between our two extremes? When in prison, and uncertain whether he might not soon be condemned to die, the thought came into his mind:—Suppose God should withdraw Himself at the very last moment—fail to support me at the gallows—abandon me. But he resisted the temptation like a man. He tells how he said within himself, 'If God

doth not come in (to comfort me), I will leap off the ladder even blindfold into eternity, sink or swim, come heaven, come hell. It was my duty,' he declared, 'to stand to His word, whether He would ever look upon me, or save me at the last, or not.'

WILLOUGHBY. I can understand Bunyan. He was *driven* to that self-abandonment, and his faith made its brave stand there; he did not *seek* it. But the Quietists would have us cultivate, as the habit of Christian perfection, that self-oblivion which is, in fact, only our resource in the hottest moment of temptation. Why shut ourselves up in the castle-keep, if not an outwork has been carried?

ATHERTON. What a torrent of cant and affectation must have been set a flowing when Quietism became the fashion for awhile! What self-complacent chatter about self-annihilation; and how easily might the detail of spiritual maladies and imaginary sins be made to minister to display! Is it not thus Pope describes Affectation?—how she

> Faints into airs, and languishes with pride,
> On the rich quilt sinks with becoming woe
> Wrapt in a gown for sickness, and for show.

GOWER. That reminds me of Zoilus, pretending to be ill, that he might exhibit to his friends the new purple counterpane just come from Alexandria.

WILLOUGHBY. But I can imagine some, in earnest, seeking refuge in Quietism—doing so rather in desperation than in aspiration—heart sick, weary of the world. Such would find but cold comfort. In vain would they be surrounded with offers of supersensible manifestations, divine touches, tastes, illapses—ethereal, super-angelic—not to say superhuman, fare. Craving some tangible

consolation, some food adapted to their nature, they would be mocked with these pictures of a feast,—with promise of the sustenance proper only to some other race of creatures.

ATHERTON. As though one should feed a sick lion on gingerbread and liqueurs.

GOWER. Or one might liken such poor disappointed creatures to the lamb brought into the churches on St. Agnes' day, reclined on its cushion fringed with gold, its ears and tail decked with gay ribbon,—bleating to church music—petted and adorned, in a manner to it most unintelligible and unsatisfying—and seeming, to the ear of the satirist, to cry all the while,—

> Alack, and alas!
> What's all this white damask to daisies and grass!

KATE. Helen and I were much interested in that old book you lent us, Mr. Atherton, *The Life of Mistress Antonia Bourignon*,[368] an excellent woman, shamefully persecuted.

ATHERTON. I think so. She took upon herself, you see, to rebuke the Church as well as the world.

MRS. ATHERTON. And had large property left her, which excited the cupidity of those Fathers of the Oratory, who gave her such trouble.

GOWER. I never heard of her before.

ATHERTON. Her Quietism was very similar to that of Madame Guyon, but she was not, like her, mixed up with a controversy famous in history. She found, however, a faithful Fénélon in her accomplished disciple, Peter Poiret,[369] a liberal and large-minded Quietist, whose mysticism may be said to occupy a

position between that of the German Theology and our English Platonists.

WILLOUGHBY. I greatly enjoyed reading some parts of his *Divine Œconomy*. Tennyson's stanza expresses the spirit of his theology:—

> Our little systems have their day;
> They have their day and cease to be:
> They are but broken lights of Thee,
> And Thou, O Lord, art more than they.

ATHERTON. Yet his six volumes add one more to our many systems. The vitiating element, in a theology otherwise very fairly balanced, is the extreme to which he carries the doctrine of passivity. In religion, he will have the understanding utterly inert.[370]

WILLOUGHBY. Yet he uses, very effectively, in his writings, the faculty he calls on us to resign.

ATHERTON. It is very common with mysticism to demand, in that way, a sacrifice which it does not make itself. With Poiret, Philosophy, Criticism, and Rhetoric, are the curse of the Church—the sources of all false theology.

WILLOUGHBY. Still there is much truth in his assertion that all positive religion accomplishes its purpose only as it leads to a filial subjection of the soul to God—as it conducts men, beyond itself, to immediate intercourse with Deity.

ATHERTON. William Law has the same idea: it constitutes, with him, the *natural* basis of all revealed religion.

WILLOUGHBY. It is mainly on this ground, I suppose, that Poiret adopts an eschatology more mild than that of the Calvinism which he forsook. He is not

without his hopes concerning heathens hereafter. He believes in a state of purification after death, for those who departed, in a state of grace, but not yet ripe for the full enjoyment of heaven.

ATHERTON. It is significant that the first step taken by Protestant Mysticism, after departing from Calvinistic, Lutheran, or Anglican orthodoxy, should always be an endeavour to mitigate the gloom which hangs over the doctrine of the future state.

MRS. ATHERTON. I have also been reading M. Eynard's *Life of Madame de Krüdener*. She appears to me an inferior Madame Guyon—falling very short of her predecessor in real elevation of soul and power of mind, and decidedly more credulous.

ATHERTON. She was never chastened by trials so severe as those which befel Madame Guyon or Antoinette Bourignon. I do not think her insincere altogether,—she meant well, and often deceived herself; but she never thoroughly conquered her inordinate vanity and love of display. When her novel of *Valerie* had outlived its day of puffery—when she had ceased to shine in the world of fashion, she achieved distinction as a seeress and guide of souls at the Hotel Montchenu.

WILLOUGHBY. A tuft-hunting sort of Quietism, hers. What a picture Talleyrand gives of the evening religious service in her drawing-room, when the allies were in Paris. The Emperor Alexander was a frequent visitor, prominent among notabilities from every court in Europe. M. Empeytaz, in his gown, prayed and preached; Madame de Krüdener, with her blue eyes and long dark locks, would converse on the interior life, with guest after guest, in the inner apartment, or haply come forward and deliver a prophecy.[371]

ATHERTON. She had all the tact of a woman of the world, an impressive manner, and a fascinating gift of utterance. Her mysticism received its prophetic impulse chiefly from the predictions of a pretended clairvoyante, managed by a knave.[372]

MRS. ATHERTON. Jung Stilling and Swedenborg had also their share in giving that bent to her enthusiasm. I think she may have done good in some quarters.

ATHERTON. Very likely. The world is seldom the worse for the shock it receives when some one speaks out a strong belief in unseen realities, even though not always in the wisest way.

Note to page 286.

An anonymous work, entitled *An Apology for Me. Antonia Bourignon* (Lond. 1699), contains an account of her life. It was not her design to found a sect, for she taught that of sects there were too many: exclusive formulas and hostile systems had corrupted Christendom, and made it a very Babel. She wished to forsake the world, with a few associates, bound by no vows, distinguished by no habit, working with their hands, and giving themselves to prayer and meditation. She was much resorted to by religious persons of every communion, as a guide to the higher degrees of the Christian life. She believed that special light was granted her for the interpretation of Scripture, and that it was her mission to recall the Church from formalism and human notions to spirituality and Quietist devotion. She appears to have been truly successful in awakening and stimulating religious aspiration in very many minds,

till the storm of persecution, raised by her sweeping censure of the ecclesiastical world, drove her from one hiding-place to another, throughout Schleswig and Holstein. She died, at last, impoverished and deserted, concealed in a wretched lodging at Amsterdam. Her letters are those of a pious and sensible woman, clear-headed, precise, and decided in vexatious business details, and singularly free from all obscureness or rhapsody. Swammerdam, the naturalist, was one of her disciples. Her Quietism was a welcome doctrine to many among Romanists, Lutherans, and Calvinists. Her bitterest persecutors were found among the clergy of every denomination. The Jesuits of Frederickstadt wished for fuel to burn her. The priests of the Oratory at Mechlin defrauded her of her property. Lutheran and Calvinist pastors alike, wrote, spoke, and preached against her with such virulence that the zealous populace of Flensburg were ready to tear her in pieces for the glory of God. (*Life*, pp. 310-313. Comp. *Letters*, xxii. xxiii. xxiv.: *A Collection of Letters written by Mrs. A. Bourignon*, Lond. 1708.)

Note to page 287.

Poiret was a Calvinistic clergyman, who, after his acquaintance with Antoinette Bourignon, and much reading of mystical writers, relinquished his office. In his retirement he wrote a number of theological works, of which the best known is his system of divinity, entitled The *Divine Œconomy*. He possessed a goodly measure of that scholarship and philosophic culture which, as a mystic, he at once uses and depreciates.

Our higher faculty—the understanding, or intellect, he calls it—is not (like what he terms 'reason') a limited capability; but 'being made for God is in a manner infinite, so as to be able to exert infinite acts, that is, to raise itself up to the contemplation of God as incomprehensible, infinite, and above all particular forms of conceiving him.' If, therefore, we make an absolute surrender of this faculty to God, and so, by a passive 'implicit faith,' yield ourselves up to whatsoever He may be pleased to communicate to us, we receive Him 'in a manner worthy of Him, above all particular and bounded conception, light, and sentiment.' Then, he says, we practically own this fundamental truth, 'that God is infinite and incomprehensible; that he is a Light, a Good, a Wisdom, a Power, a Justice,—in a word, a Being above all comprehension and thought.' He bids us remember that our apprehensions of God, however true, as derived from his own word and from particular communications of his own, are necessarily partial and imperfect, so that 'a true and pure faith, while embracing the particular divine lights, will not regard chiefly the particular forms, but the infinite God that is annexed to them, and comprehends in himself infinitely more than the particulars he has disclosed to us.' (*Div. Œcon.* vol. v. chap. iv. §§ 37-41.)

What is true in this doctrine has seldom been denied —viz. that beyond our highest apprehension of God, his nature extends infinitely. We know but parts of his ways. We know *that* infinity lies behind all our 'bounded conceptions;' but *what* that infinity is, no surrender of the Intellect can disclose to us.

Note to page 287.

Here Poiret shall speak for himself:—

'The Understanding, to pass into the order of faith, must have these two conditions; the first, that it be empty, and shut to all ideas of worldly things, both heavenly and earthly; the second, that it keep itself open before God after an indeterminate and general manner, not particularly fixing upon anything. This being supposed, with the faith of desire aforementioned, God causes to rise in the soul his divine light, which is his eternal substantial word, which does himself modify (if I may so say), or rather fills and quickens the understanding of the soul, and enlightens it as he pleases.'—*Div. Œcon.* p. 93.

'It will be objected, it may be, to what has been said, that this second condition required here of the intellect that means to be enlightened by Faith, is a state of idleness—time lost; and that it is an absurd thing not to make use of the understanding and faculties God has given us, nor so much as endeavour to excite in our minds good and bright thoughts. Here are several things tacked together, and most of them beside the purpose. For at present I am not treating of the means by which one may be introduced, or rather brought, as it were, to the threshold of faith, as I may say; nor of that imperfect and beginning faith, by me styled active. Nor yet do I say, that when one has been enlightened by the light of God, one is not to fix one's mind to the consideration of the lights held out by God: but what I say is this: I suppose a man has already had some glimpse of the divine light by the call of preventing grace, and that he has actively co-operated with it, by turning his understanding towards it, with particular desires of such and such lights; and, moreover, that, to confirm himself therein, he has

deduced in his reason and his other inferior faculties, notions, ratiocinations, images, and words, and other particular exercises wherein he has been exercised long enough to be capable of ascending to the state of pure and altogether divine faith. Upon this supposition, the question is, whether one whose faith has as yet been but weak, and the small light he has had clouded and mixed with great darkness, prejudices, and errors, designing to clear the principles of the fight he has from the aforesaid mixture, and desiring to see this divine light in its purity and more fully,—whether, I say, to this end he ought to apply thereto the activity of his understanding, of his meditations, reflections, and reasonings; or else, whether, all this apart, he ought to offer his understanding in vacuity and silence to the Son of God, the Sun of Righteousness, and the true Light of Souls? And this last is what we affirm, and against which the objections alleged are of no force.'—P. 100.

'Thus have I shown what God requires of the intellect in matters of faith—viz. a fund of mind wherein neither reason nor imagination do at all act, but where God only may be, and act brightly as He pleases, the soul meanwhile not adhering to the particular manners of God's acting, but merely because it is God acting, and God infinite and incomprehensible, who can dispose of His infinite ways above our understanding.'—P. 104.

Antoinette Bourignon found in Poiret a learned and philosophical disciple. He was to her, in some respects, what Robert Barclay was to George Fox. But her writings appear also to have awakened a response, of a more practical kind, in many devout minds of whom the world knew nothing. Throughout

Germany and Holland, France and Switzerland, and in England also, were scattered little groups of friends who nourished a hidden devotion by the study of pietist or mystical writers. Arndt and Spener, Bourignon and Guyon, Labadie and Yvon, Thomas à Kempis, De Sales, or translations from the Spanish mystics, furnished the oil for their inward flame. Some withdrew altogether from the more active duties of life; others were separatists from the religion established around them. In some cases they held meetings for worship among themselves; in others, the struggles of a soul towards the higher life were only revealed to one or two chosen intimates. Whenever we can penetrate behind the public events which figure in history at the close of the seventeenth and the opening of the eighteenth century, indications are discernible which make it certain that a religious vitality of this description was far more widely diffused than is commonly supposed. A single example will be sufficiently suggestive. One M. de Marsay, who threw up his ensign's commission in the French army, and retired, with two friends, into seclusion, after the manner recommended by Antoinette Bourignon, left behind him an unpublished Autobiography. A copy from a translation of this curious narrative, in the possession of Mr. Tindall Harris, has been kindly placed at my disposal by that gentleman. The copy was executed in 1773, by some one who had known De Marsay personally.

M. de Marsay was born at Paris, in 1688, of Protestant parents. A taste for devotional reading was fostered, in early youth, by the piety of his mother. Jurieu's well-known work on *Divine Love* found its place among such studies; but none of the mystical writers. When he had entered the army,

sometimes half the day, and often half the night also, was devoted to reading, meditation, and prayer. At one time he maintained an inward prayer for three or four days without intermission, though the regiment was on the march, and the troops under arms day and night. He fondly imagined that such a state would continue all his life. When the reaction came, his efforts to overcome the natural exhaustion and regain his spiritual joy were so strenuous and painful that his delicate frame gave way, and symptoms of consumption appeared. His distress at this time was similar to that of Madame Guyon, and of many others, at the earlier period of their entrance on the 'inward way.' Thomas à Kempis was in his hand; but he could not yet understand the lesson which the more experienced mystics so earnestly inculcate,—that spiritual pleasures may be sought too greedily,—that we should persevere and trust, whether in sensible delight or obscuration, whether in fulness or 'aridity.' He lay sick at Lisle for three months, calmly looking for death, and then, to the surprise of all, recovered.

Meanwhile his friend, Lieutenant Cordier, has been reading Bourignon's *Lux in Tenebris*, in the camp before Bethune. He writes to De Marsay, saying that he was now convinced the devotion they had hitherto practised together was as nothing; that he had resolved to quit the army and retire to some desert, there to live a life of poverty and devotion. M. Barratier, the chaplain of their regiment, was of like mind; if De Marsay would read Madame Bourignon, he would probably arrive at the conclusion, and join them. So indeed it proved. De Marsay bought her nineteen volumes, and determined to live her 'poor and evangelical life.'

After many delays, he succeeded in obtaining his discharge (diligently reading, meanwhile, Theresa's Life, and John of the Cross); and at last, behold the three friends, in the spring of 1711, settled in a solitude such as they desired, at Schwartzenau, on the estate of the Countess Witgenstein. They rise at four, and begin the day by reading a chapter in the Bible. Cordier and De Marsay work in the field, and Barratier has breakfast ready for them at seven o'clock,—dry bread, of their own baking, and cold water. Till noon they spin, card, or knit wool; Cordier goes out on some errand; or De Marsay collects leaves, instead of straw, for their beds. At noon they dine, and Barratier (the cook and housekeeper) boils them the same food all the week through. One week it is pease, with bread; another week, barley; next, wheat, groats, or oatmeal pap; and for drink sometimes, 'as a special treat,' boiled groats, in milk. After dinner one of them reads aloud from Bourignon's writings. Work again till four, and in the field till seven, when they sit down to supper, before a dish of pulse or salad, groats or turnips. Work again, in-doors, till nine, and then to bed. It was a rule that they should only speak to each other when it was absolutely necessary. They had no regular hours for prayer, but endeavoured (as Bourignon counsels) to do everything in a spirit of prayer, by living consciously in the presence of God, and referring all ceaselessly to Him.

Yet in this Paradise of asceticism De Marsay is not happy. The endeavour to retain constantly a general sense of the divine presence was far less unnatural and arduous than those protracted prayers and meditations at which he used to labour. But he has little enjoyment, and the clamorous demands of a large appetite sorely disturb his pious thoughts. See

him, one day, sitting on the stump of a tree—the picture of despair. His soul is in the abyss. God seems to have abandoned him to himself. What has he done? He has eaten a potato between meals! Only by the most ample confession, the most contrite self-abasement, can he recover peace. Terrible tyranny of the misguided conscience over the feeble judgment! Here was a moral power that might have made a hero; and it only drives a slave.

But the revulsion must come; and simultaneously the three anchorites remit their silence and their introversion, and (the spell once broken) chatter incessantly; now one, and now another, bursting into fits of unmeaning, involuntary laughter. Yet, through all such mortifying discouragement, all terror and temptation, De Marsay makes his way. He does but yield himself, in his helplessness, the more absolutely to God, to be delivered from his spiritual adversaries, if He wills, or to be abandoned to the countless possibilities of evil, within him and about him. Bourignon brought him to this point. So far she essays to guide souls in the 'interior way;' after that, the Divine Conductor leads them each as He will.

With poor Cordier it fared not so well. They had relaxed their rule, he said: he would leave them, and live entirely alone. So he was carried from extreme to extreme, till he reached a spurious resignation—a passivity which did not resist evil—a self-forgetfulness which ceased to recognise in himself his most dangerous enemy. From the height of spiritual pride he was precipitated into licence. A woman living near, with great affectation of sanctity, beguiled him into marriage. This female Tartuffe stood afterwards revealed in her real iniquity; and Cordier eventually returned to the world and a

godless libertinism.

The Countess Witgenstein gave shelter, about this time, to a Lady Clara de Callenberg, who had suffered much domestic unhappiness on account of her pietism. This lady, considerably his senior, De Marsay saw, wooed, and won. Our pair of ascetics resolved to live a life of absolute continence, and De Marsay renders hearty thanks that (in spite of many temptations) they received grace to adhere to their determination. The good man's manner of reasoning is curious. The first thought of a change of life occurred to him one day, when sitting, 'in great calmness of mind,' under a tree, with his knitting-tackle. 'It was shown to me,—if it was true that I was willing to be the property of God without exception, it was his will that I should give Him the first proof thereof, in marrying the Lady Clara de Callenberg.' Barratier married them, and so the original association was finally dissolved.[373] The marriage was a very happy one, their principal outward trial arising from the frequent indisposition of his wife, who ruined her constitution by the miserable austerity of her diet. They were all but penniless; yet in this they rejoiced, as so much exercise of faith; and, indeed, such moderate means as they required were generally found forthcoming from one quarter or another.

De Marsay did not always remain in their hut at Schwartzenau; he journeyed to Switzerland to visit his mother, and again to Paris to see his brother, passing through Blois with letters to Madame Guyon, who died shortly before he reached that city. He travelled also repeatedly, in company with his wife, everywhere finding little circles of devout persons who received them with open arms. His narrative is

full of the difficulties he found in ascertaining the divine will. Again and again does he discover, after an interval of years, that steps taken in the full persuasion that they were divinely directed, were, in reality, self-moved and erroneous. He fears to relax a severity, lest it should be self-indulgence; he fears to prolong it, lest it should be self-righteousness. After making one sacrifice, an additional one suggests itself as possible, and the longer the thought is entertained, the more hopeless is peace of mind, till conscience has compelled that also; and all this, sometimes from first to last, in fear and darkness. After dividing most of their little store among the poor, and selling their cottage as too large, Madame de Marsay can know no rest from her fears till the greater part of the money received has been also given away,—that the command may be obeyed, 'Sell all that thou hast.' Yet, through all self-made troubles, the genuineness of their religion shines out. He is ever humble, thankful, trustful. The reading of Madame Guyon weans him still farther from 'sensible religious delights;' he enters calmly into the state of 'dark faith;' begins to attach less importance to austerities; loses much of his stiffness; will attend public worship, and commune.

It is instructive to mark how few of those concerning whom he writes as having entered on the higher religious life, are found holding on in that course. After an interval of absence, he returns to a neighbourhood where he had known several such. He finds most of them in darkness and disappointment. They know not where their souls are, or what has come to them. Some are sunk in apathy. There are those who retain the form, though their fire has gone out long ago. Others have plunged from high profession into vices the most shameless.

Yet a remnant are preserved through all the dangers of the way. Those perplexities and doubts which so frequently clouded the pathway of De Marsay, were probably his safeguard. In a life of such excessive introspection, a proper self-distrust must almost necessarily take the form of morbid scrupulosity. Even he had some narrow escapes, for which he does well to sing his lowly *Non nobis Domine!* He came afterwards to see how injurious was that withdrawment from all public worship (habitual with himself and his wife), in the case of those who had children. The offspring of such parents either grew up with a contempt for the ordinances of religion, or, finding their position as separatists hurtful to their advancement in the world, conformed, from interested motives.

In 1731, Count Zinzendorf came to Schwartzenau, and fascinated the De Marsays for a time. But De Marsay—so melancholy, and so given to solitude—was not one long 'to find good for his soul' in connexion with any religious community whatever. The Moravian converts met at first at his house, and he preached to them two or three times, with remarkable acceptance. But he detected pleasure to sense and self in such exercise of his gifts, and left them, resolving to yield himself up to the way of dark faith—to 'die off from all the creatures'—to be as one excommunicate, and perishing in the wilderness of spiritual desertion for his unfaithfulness.

His difficulties were not diminished by mystical metaphysics. There is the Ground of his soul, and its inward attraction, to be followed, whatever reason, prudence, reflection, and even that which seems conscience, may urge or thunder against it. Whether

the attraction be false or true, is exceedingly hard to determine;—the issue frequently proves it the former, and that the common-sense folk about him were right after all. He arrives at a state—the wished-for state, in fact—free from all form, image, object of hope, &c.—a total blank of the senses and powers, and yet complains bitterly of the misery of that condition. Reason, internal sense, hope,—all have been abandoned, and yet, out of the internal ground there arises nothing in the shape of light or encouragement. The most harassing secular life, in which he would have been driven to look out of himself to Christ, had been truer and happier than this morbid introversion.

A single passage in his history (and there are several like it) is better than a treatise in illustration of the dangers which beset the notion of *perceptible* spiritual guidance. He is at Berleberg (1726), and hears of emigration thence to Pennsylvania. As he lies awake one night, it is strongly impressed upon his mind that he ought to go: he and his wife might realize a complete solitude in that land of cheapness and freedom. For there was too much of the creature for him, even at Schwartzenau. They resolve, despite the earnest dissuasion of their friends, to join the next band of emigrants. News arrives that the greater part of those who last went out, died on the voyage, of disease or want. De Marsay finds nothing here to stagger him—for should he shrink from any such hazard? Again, it is shown him clearly that his wife will die if they sail—he seems to see her dead. They resolve, nevertheless, to yield themselves up to death; and spend wretched tearful days, nerved to that determination. At last, when again alone and in stillness, he receives an impression that it is *not* the will of God that he should go. He communicates the

joyful tidings to his wife. She replies that she will go without him, unless she also receives a similar inward monition for herself. Such impression she happily obtains, and they remain. The sacrifice had been made, however, said De Marsay, the Isaac offered—but the victim was not to be actually slain. Finally, he discovers that his original impulse to go to America was 'muddy and impure,' arising from his excessive attachment to seclusion. So is it continually where men's whims and fancies are identified with the oracles of an imagined perceptible guidance.

After many alternations—now rising to a love that casts out fear, and anon receding into gloom—his mind is mellowed and liberalized with advancing years. He no longer conceives it necessary to die to the creature by forsaking his religious friends. He lives at Wolfenbüttel, with Major Botticher, the husband of his niece, and has abandoned every ascetic singularity. He believes in the mystical states (for he has lived them), but he is no longer in any one of them. He looks away from himself only to Christ. He no longer identifies the mysteries of the interior way with spirituality. He has friendly intercourse with ministers—attends church—rejoices in the good work doing among Reformed and Lutherans everywhere.

Madame de Marsay died in 1742, in great mental distress; throughout several weeks previously having imagined herself abandoned and condemned. But her husband rejoiced in his assurance of her glorious rest. His end was a contrast to his distressful life. 'I swim and bathe in joy,' said he, 'that I shall now soon obtain what, through the grace of our Saviour, I have so long and ardently wished and hoped for.'

BOOK THE ELEVENTH
MYSTICISM IN ENGLAND

CHAPTER I.

Is virtue then, unless of Christian growth,
Mere fallacy, or foolishness, or both?
Ten thousand sages lost in endless woe,
For ignorance of what they could not know?
That speech betrays at once a bigot's tongue;
Charge not a God with such outrageous wrong.
Truly not I—the partial light men have,
My creed persuades me, well employed, may save;
While he that scorns the noonday beam, perverse,
Shall find the blessing, unimproved, a curse.

COWPER.

One morning, Willoughby, calling on Atherton, found him and Gower looking over an old-fashioned little volume.

WILLOUGHBY. What have you there, Atherton?

ATHERTON. A curious old book—*The History of Hai Ebn Yokhdan*, by Abu Jaafer Ebn Tophail—an Arabian philosopher of Spain, writing in the twelfth

or thirteenth century: ‘done into English’ by Simon Ockley.

GOWER (*to Willoughby*). I happened to be looking through Barclay’s *Apology*—found him referring to this *History of Yokhdan*; and, behold, Atherton fetches me down, from one of his topmost dust-of-erudition strata there, the very book. It appears that good Barclay was so hard put to it, to find examples for the support of his doctrine concerning the Universal and Saving Light, that he has pressed this shadowy philosophical romance into the service, as an able-bodied unexceptionable fact:—sets up a fanciful ornament from the Moorish arabesques of Toledo as a bulwark for his theory.

WILLOUGHBY. Who, then, may this Hai Ebn Yokhdan be?

ATHERTON. Simply a mystical Robinson Crusoe. The book relates how a child was exposed in an ark upon the sea, drifted to a Fortunate Island in the Indian Ocean, was there suckled by a roe, dresses himself with skins and feathers, builds a hut, tames a horse, rises to the discovery of ‘One supreme and necessarily self-existent Being,’ and does, at last, by due abstinence and exclusion of all external objects, attain to a mystical intuition of Him—a contemplation of the divine essence, and a consciousness that his own essence, thus lost in God, is itself divine:—all this, by the unaided inner Light. A Mussulman hermit who is landed on the island, there to retire from mankind, finds him; teaches him to speak; and discovers, to his devout amazement, that this Ebn Yokhdan has attained, first by deduction from the external world, and then, abandoning that, by immediate intuition, to the very truth concerning God which he has learnt through

the medium of the Koran—the tee-totum mysticism of spinning dervishes included.[374]

GOWER. Barclay, citing his Arab, points the moral as teaching 'that the best and most certain knowledge of God, is not that which is attained by premises premised, and conclusions deduced; but that which is enjoyed by conjunction of the Mind of Man with the Supreme Intellect, after the mind is purified from its corruption and is separated from all bodily images, and is gathered into a profound stillness.'[375]

WILLOUGHBY. And the simple-hearted apologist of the Friends never suspected that this story was a philosopher's conjecture—Abu Tophail's ideal of what the inner light might be supposed to teach a man, in total seclusion?

ATHERTON. Not he. At any rate, Yokhdan figures in the first half-dozen editions of the *Apology*. I believe, in none later.

GOWER. A curious sight, to see the Arabian Sufi and the English Quaker keeping company so lovingly.

WILLOUGHBY. And yet how utterly repugnant to our English natures, that contemplative Oriental mysticism.

GOWER. In practice, of course. But in the theory lies a common ground.

ATHERTON. Our island would be but a spare contributor to a general exhibition of mystics. The British cloister has not one great mystical saint to show. Mysticism did not, with us, prepare the way for the Reformation. John Wycliffe and John Tauler are a striking contrast in this respect. In the time of the Black Death, the Flagellants could make no way with us. Whether coming as gloomy superstition, as

hysterical fervour, or as pantheistic speculation, mysticism has found our soil a thankless one.

GOWER. I should like to catch a Hegelian, in good condition, well nourished with the finest of thrice-bolted philosophic grain, duly ignorant of England, and shut him up to determine, from the depths of his consciousness, what would be the form which mysticism must necessarily assume among us.

ATHERTON. He would probably be prepared to prove to us *à priori* that we could not possibly evolve such a product at all.

GOWER. Most likely. The torches of the Bacchantes, flung into the Tiber, were said still to burn; but what whirling enthusiast's fire could survive a plunge into the Thames? There could be nothing for it but sputtering extinction, and then to float—a sodden lump of pine and pitch, bobbing against the stolid sides of barges.

WILLOUGHBY. The sage might be pardoned for prophesying that our mysticism would appear in some time of religious stagnation—a meteoric flash spasmodically flinging itself this way and that, startling with its radiance deep slimy pools, black rich oozing reaches of plurality and sinecure. Remembering the very practical mysticism of the Munster Anabaptists, he might invest our mystical day-star with such 'trains of fire and dews of death;' or depict it as a shape of terror, like his who 'drew Priam's curtain at the dead of night;' heralding horrors; and waking every still cathedral close to dread the burning fate that befell, 'the topless towers of Ilium.'

ATHERTON. It certainly would have been hard to foresee that mysticism in England would arise just

when it did—would go so far, and no farther:—that in the time of the Commonwealth, when there was fuller religious freedom by far, and, throughout the whole middle class, a more earnest religious life than at any former period of our history,—when along the ranks of triumphant Puritanism the electric light of enthusiasm played every here and there upon the steel which won them victory, and was beheld with no ominous misgiving, but hailed rather as Pentecostal effluence,—that, at such a juncture, Quakerism should have appeared to declare this liberty insufficiently free, this spirituality too carnal, this enthusiasm too cold,—to profess to eject more thoroughly yet the world, the flesh, and the devil,—to take its place in the confused throng contending about the 'bare-picked bone' of Hierarchy, and show itself not to be tempted for a moment by wealth, by place, by power,—to commit many follies, but never a single crime,—to endure enumerable wrongs, but never to furnish one example of resistance or revenge.

WILLOUGHBY. Well done, old England! It is gratifying to think that, on our shores, mysticism itself is less fantastic than its wont,—labours benignly, if not always soberly; and is represented, not by nightmared visionaries, or fury-driven persecutors, but by the holy, tender-hearted, much-enduring George Fox. The Muggletonians, Fifth-Monarchy men, and Ranters of those days were the exceptional mire and dirt cast up by the vexed times, but assuredly not the representatives of English mysticism.

ATHERTON. The elements of Quakerism lie all complete in the personal history of Fox; and the religious sect is, in many respects, the perpetuation

of his individual character;—the same intellectual narrowness, incident to an isolated, half-disciplined mind, and the same large, loving heart of charity for all men. Remember how he describes himself as 'knowing pureness and righteousness at eleven years of age;' carefully brought up, so that from his childhood all vice and profaneness were an abomination to him. Then there were his solitary musings and sore inward battles, as he walked about his native Drayton many nights by himself: his fastings oft; his much walking abroad in solitary spots many days; his sitting, with his Bible, in hollow trees and lonesome places, till night came on. Because the religious teachers to whom he applied in his temptations to despair were unhappily incompetent to administer relief, he concludes too hastily that the system of ministerial instruction is more often a hindrance than a help to 'vital godliness.' Because 'priest Stevens' worked up some of his remarks in conversation into his next Sunday's sermon,—because the 'ancient priest' at Mansetter, to whom he next applied, could make nothing of him, and in despair recommended tobacco and psalm-singing (furthermore violating his confidence, and letting young George's spiritual distresses get wind among a bevy of giggling milk-lasses),—because, after travelling seven miles to a priest of reputed experience at Tamworth, he found him after all 'but like an empty hollow cask,'—because horticultural Dr. Cradock of Coventry fell into a passion with him for accidentally trampling on the border of his flower-bed,—because one Macham, a priest in high account, offered him physic and prescribed blood-letting,—*therefore* the institution of a clerical order was an error and a mischief, mainly chargeable with the disputings of the church, and the

ungodliness of the world. So, in his simplicity, he regarded it as a momentous discovery to have it opened to him 'that being bred at Oxford or Cambridge was not enough to fit and qualify men to be ministers of Christ.'[376]

GOWER. We may hold that without joining the Society of Friends.

ATHERTON. In like manner he argues that because believers are the temple of the Spirit, and many venerate places superstitiously, or identify church-going with religion, therefore 'steeple-houses' are a sinful innovation, diffusing, for the most part, darkness rather than light. Because it appeared to him that in his study of the Scriptures he knew Christ 'only as the light grew'—by inward revelation—'as he that hath the key did open,' therefore the doctrine of the inward Light is proclaimed to all as the central principle of Redemption.

GOWER. True. This proneness to extremes has led his followers often to attach undue importance to the mere externals of a protest against externalism. Those peculiarities of dress and speech are petty formalities unworthy of their main principle. In his '*Epistle to gathered Churches into outward forms upon the Earth*,' Fox can see scarce a vestige of spiritual religion anywhere beyond the pale of the Society of Friends.

ATHERTON. Yet ascetic and narrow on many points as he unquestionably was, and little disposed to make concession to human weakness, in practical charity he was most abundant. Oppression and imprisonment awakened the benevolent, never the malevolent impulses of his nature,—only adding fervour to his plea for the captive and the oppressed. His tender conscience could know no fellowship with

the pleasures of the world; his tender heart could know no weariness in seeking to make less its sum of suffering. He is a Cato-Howard. You see him in his early days, refusing to join in the festivities of the time called Christmas; yet, if a stranger to the mirth, never to the mercy, of that kindly season. From house to house he trudges in the snow, visiting poor widows, and giving them money. Invited to marriage merry-makings, he will not enter the house of feasting; but the next day, or soon after, we find him there, offering, if the young couple are poor, the effectual congratulation of pecuniary help. In the prison-experiences of George Fox are to be found the germs of that modern philanthropy in which his followers have distinguished themselves so nobly. In Derby Jail he is 'exceedingly exercised' about the proceedings of the judges and magistrates—concerning their putting men to death for cattle, and money, and small matters,—and is moved to write to them, showing the sin of such severity; and, moreover, 'what an hurtful thing it was that prisoners should lie so long in jail; how that they learned badness one of another in talking of their bad deeds; and therefore speedy justice should be done.'[377]

WILLOUGHBY. How the spirit of benevolence pervades all the Journals of the early Friends. Look at John Woolman, who will neither write nor have letters written to him by post, because the horses are overwrought, and the hardships of the postboys so great. When farthest gone in rhapsody, this redeeming characteristic was never wanting to the Quakers. It may be said of some of them, as was said of dying Pope—uttering, between his wanderings, only kindness—'humanity seems to have outlasted understanding.'

ATHERTON. As to doctrine, again, consider how much religious extravagance was then afloat, and let us set it down to the credit of Fox that his mystical excesses were no greater. At Coventry he finds men in prison for religion who declared, to his horror, that they were God. While at Derby, a soldier who had been a Baptist, comes to him from Nottingham, and argues that Christ and the prophets suffered no one of them externally, only internally. Another company, he says, came to him there, who professed to be triers of spirits, and when he questioned them, 'were presently up in the airy mind,' and said he was mad. The priests and magistrates were not more violent against him than the Ranters, who roved the country in great numbers, professing to work miracles, forbidding other enthusiasts to preach, on pain of damnation; and in comparison with whom, Fox was soberness itself. Rice Jones, the Ranter, from Nottingham, prophesies against him with his company. At Captain Bradford's house, Ranters come from York to wrangle with him. In the Peak country they oppose him, and 'fall a-swearing.' At Swanington, in Leicestershire, they disturb the meeting—hound on the mob against the Friends; they sing, whistle, and dance; but their leaders are confounded everywhere by the power of the Lord, and many of their followers, says the *Journal*, 'were reached and convinced, and received the Spirit of God; and are come to be a pretty people, living and walking soberly in the truth of Christ.'[378] Such facts should be remembered in our estimate. Fox's inner light does not profess to supersede, nor does it designedly contradict, the external light of Revelation.

But hand me his *Journal* a moment. Here is a curious passage. It shows what a narrow escape Fox had of

being resolved into an English Jacob Behmen.

He says, 'Now (he was about four-and-twenty at the time) was I come up in spirit, through the flaming sword, into the paradise of God. All things were new; and all the creation gave another smell unto me than before, beyond what words can utter. I knew nothing but pureness and innocency and righteousness, being renewed up into the image of God by Christ Jesus; so that I say I was come up to the state of Adam which he was in before he fell. The creation was opened to me; and it was showed me how all things had their names given them, according to their nature and virtue. And I was at a stand in my mind whether I should practise physic for the good of mankind, seeing the nature and virtues of the creatures were so opened to me by the Lord. But I was immediately taken up in spirit to see into another or more stedfast state than Adam's in innocency, even into a state in Christ Jesus, that should never fall. And the Lord showed me that such as were faithful to Him in the power and light of Christ, should come up into that state in which Adam was before he fell; in which the admirable works of the creation, and the virtues thereof may be known, through the openings of that divine word of wisdom and power by which they were made. Great things did the Lord lead me into, and wonderful depths were opened unto me, beyond what can by words be declared; but as people come into subjection to the Spirit of God, and grow up in the image and power of the Almighty, they may receive the word of wisdom that opens all things, and come to know the hidden unity in the Eternal Being.'[379]

Here he has arrived on life's road where two ways meet;—had he taken the wrong alternative, and

wandered down that shadowy and mysterious theosophic avenue, ignorant that it was *no thoroughfare*, what a different history! Imagine the intrepid, heart-searching preacher—the redoubted 'man in leather breeches'—transformed into the physician, haply peruked and habited in black, dispensing inspired prescriptions, and writing forgotten treatises on Qualities and Signatures, Sympathies and Antipathies. What a waste of that indomitable energy!

WILLOUGHBY. How destructive to human life might his very benevolence have proved.

GOWER. Whatever direction the mysticism of a man like Fox might have taken, it must have been always actively benevolent. His mysticism is simple—no artificial stages of abstraction, mounting step by step above the finite, to a solitary superhuman sanctity. It is beneficent—his many and various spiritual distresses were permitted by God, he tells us, 'in order that he might have a sense of all conditions—how else should he speak to all conditions?'[380]

WILLOUGHBY. Truly, metaphysical refinements and Platonic abstraction could have no charm for this most practical of mystics. What a contrast here is his pietism to that of Zinzendorf—as abundant in sentiment as Fox is devoid of it.

GOWER. Nicholas of Basle is more like Fox than any of the German mystics—much more so than Tauler.

ATHERTON. Fox is, as you say, eminently practical in one sense, yet not enough so in another. In one respect Behmen and Law are more practical than he, because more comprehensive. They endeavour to infuse a higher spiritual life into forms and communities already existing. Fox will have no

steeple-houses, vestments, forms of prayer, no ministry, regularly paid and highly educated. Such a code is not practical, for it rests on an abstraction: it does not legislate for men as they are. Formalism does not lie in these outward things themselves—it consists in the *spirit* in which they are used. Here, you see, the mystic, who will always go beneath the surface to the reality, is too superficial. Formalism cannot be expelled by any such summary process. The evil lies deeper.

WILLOUGHBY. So with the asceticism of the Friends. The worldly spirit is too subtile to be exorcised by a strict outward separation between church and world. How much easier is total abstinence from scenes of amusement than temperance in money-getting.

GOWER. Yet I know men and women who pique themselves on their separateness from the world, because they were never seen at a concert, whose covetousness, insincerity, or censorious speech, proclaim them steeped in worldliness to the very lips.

WILLOUGHBY. What say you, Atherton, to the doctrine of the Universal Light? In their theory on this matter the mystics seem to divide into two classes. With the mystics of the fourteenth century there is still left in fallen man a native tendency Godward, on which grace lays hold. With Behmen and Fox, on the contrary, the inward Seed is a supernatural gift, distinct from conscience, reason, or any relics of natural goodness—the hidden word of promise, inspoken into all men, in virtue of the redeeming work of Christ.[381]

ATHERTON. I do not believe that fallen man required a divine bestowment of this kind—a supernatural soul within the soul, to give him a moral sense, and

make him responsible. But I am so far a believer in the doctrine that I would not go beyond what is written, and rigidly confine all the benefits of Christ's redemption to those only who have had access to the Christian Scriptures. The words of the Apostle are still applicable,—'Is he the God of the Jews only, is he not of the Gentiles also?' I cannot suppose that all Pagan minds, past and present, have been utterly and for ever abandoned by the Divine Spirit, because the dispensation under which they have been placed is so much less privileged than our own. God has light enough to be *Himself*, in the twilight, even as in the noonday. Did He rule the rising and falling of ancient nations, working all things toward the fulness of time;—did He care for the bodies of those heathen, with seedtime and harvest for his witness, and shall we suppose that He debarred Himself from all access to their souls?

WILLOUGHBY. Yet no doctrine we can hold on this question materially lessens the mystery of that dark fact—the prevalence of Evil.

ATHERTON. I am afraid not. Whether we call that better part of man the light of nature, conscience, or the internal Word, we must admit that it accomplished next to nothing for the restoration of the vast majority. We must not judge of the moral effects of heathendom by the philosophic few merely; we must remember the state of the superstitious many. And mysticism will be the first to admit that an inoperative Christ (like that of the Antinomian, for example) is a deceptive phantom or a vain formula.

Our own position, however, is the same, let our theory or our hope, concerning others, be what it may. Whatever it may be possible (under the

constitution of our nature) for the Spirit of God to make known inwardly to that man who is shut out from external teaching, it is quite certain that *we* shall receive no inward communications of gracious influence, while we neglect those outward means which are of divine appointment.

Note to page 300.

The full title of the work referred to runs as follows: *The Improvement of Human Reason, exhibited in the Life of Hai Ebn Yokhdan*: written in Arabick about 500 years ago, by Abn Jaafer Ebn Tophail. In which is demonstrated by what methods one may, by the mere *Light of Nature*, attain the knowledge of things *Natural* and *supernatural*; more particularly the knowledge of God and the affairs of another Life. Newly translated from the original Arabick by Simon Ockley, &c. 1708.

Ockley adds an Appendix, to guard the book from abuse by the Quakers, wherein he proposes to examine 'the fundamental error' of his author—viz. that 'God has given such a power or faculty to man whereby he may, without any external means, attain to the knowledge of all things necessary to salvation, and even to the Beatifick Vision itself, whilst in the state.'

The following is a specimen of the mystical progress which our Arabian Defoe describes his Crusoe as making,—precisely that with which Ebn Tophail was well acquainted, but which no real solitary Ebn Yokhdan could ever have struck out for himself.

'He began, therefore, to strip himself of all bodily properties, which he had made some progress in

before, during the time of the former exercise, when he was employed in the imitation of the heavenly bodies; but there still remained a great many relicks, as his circular motion (motion being one of the most proper attributes of body), and his care of animals and plants, compassion upon them, and industry in removing whatever inconvenienced them. Now, all these things belong to corporeal attributes, for he could not see these things at first, but by corporeal faculties; and he was obliged to make use of the same faculties in preserving them. Therefore he began to reject and remove all those things from himself, as being in nowise consistent with that state which he was now in search of. So he continued, after confining himself to rest in the bottom of his cave, with his head bowed down and his eyes shut, and turning himself altogether from all sensible things and the corporeal faculties, and bending all his thoughts and meditations upon the necessarily self-existent Being, without admitting anything else besides him; and if any other object presented itself to his imagination, he rejected it with his utmost force; and exercised himself in this, and persisted in it to that degree, that sometimes he did neither eat nor stir for a great many days together. And whilst he was thus earnestly taken up in contemplation, sometimes all manner of beings whatsoever would be quite out of his mind and thoughts, except his own being only.

‘But he found that his own being was not excluded from his thoughts; no, not at such times when he was most deeply immersed in the contemplation of the first, true, necessarily self-existent Being; which concerned him very much,—for he knew that even this was a mixture in this simple vision, and the admission of an extraneous object in that

contemplation. Upon which he endeavoured to disappear from himself, and be wholly taken up in the vision of that true Being; till at last he attained it; and then both the heavens and the earth, and whatsoever is between them, and all spiritual forms, and corporeal faculties, and all those powers which are separate from matter, and all those beings which know the necessarily self-existent Being, all disappeared and vanished, and were as if they had never been; and amongst these his own being disappeared too, and there remained nothing but this one, true, perpetually self-existent Being, who spoke thus in that saying of his (which is not a notion superadded to his essence):—"To whom now belongs the kingdom? To this One, Almighty God."[382] Which words of his Hai Ebn Yokhdan understood and heard his voice; nor was his being unacquainted with words, and not being able to speak, any hindrance at all to the understanding him. Wherefore he deeply immersed himself into this state, and witnessed that which neither eye hath seen nor ear heard, nor hath it ever entered into the heart of man to conceive.'—§§ 83, 84.

CHAPTER II.

And to such Enthusiasm as is but the triumph of the soul of man, inebriated, as it were, with the delicious sense of the divine life, that blessed Root, and Original of all holy wisdom and virtue, I am as much a friend as I am to the vulgar fanatical Enthusiasm a professed enemy.—HENRY

MORE.

WILLOUGHBY. There is no mysticism in the doctrine of an immediate influence exercised by the Spirit of God on the spirit of man.

ATHERTON. Certainly not. It would be strange if the Creator, in whom we live and move, should have no direct access to the spirits of his own creatures.

GOWER. Does not your admission indicate the line between the true and the false in that aspiration after *immediate* knowledge, intercourse, or intuition, so common among the mystics? It is true that the divine influence is exerted upon us directly. But it is not true that such influence dispenses with rather than demands—suspends rather than quickens, the desires and faculties of our nature. So it appears to me at least.

ATHERTON. And to me also.

WILLOUGHBY. And again (to continue your negatives, Gower) it is not true, as some of the mystics tell us, that we can transcend with advantage the figurative language of Scripture; or gaze directly on the Divine Subsistence,—that we can know without knowledge, believe without a promise or a fact, and so dispense, in religious matters, with modes and media.

ATHERTON. Agreed. For ourselves, I believe we shall always find it true that the letter and the spirit do reciprocally set forth and consummate each other,—

> 'Like as the wind doth beautify a sail,
> And as a sail becomes the unseen wind.'

We see truth in proportion as we are true. The

outward written word in our hands directs us to the unseen Word so high above us, yet so near. The story of Christ's life and death is our soul's food. We find that we may—we must, sit in spirit at his feet, who so spake, so lived, so died. And, having been with him, we find a new power and attraction in the words; we are led by the Spirit of Christ in the keeping of those commandments, concerning which he said, 'The words I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life.'

WILLOUGHBY. So Plotinus is right, in a sense, after all;—like only can know like. Our likeness to Christ is our true knowledge of him.

ATHERTON. Yes. But we become partakers of the unseen life and light of God only through the *manifestation* of that life and light, Christ Jesus. It is on this point that the theology of Fox is so defective.

WILLOUGHBY. His doctrine that the influence of the Spirit is *perceptible*, as well as immediate, is still more questionable, surely?

GOWER. Perceptible! aye, and physically perceptible, he will have it, in some cases,—manifested in a tremulous agitation of the frame.

WILLOUGHBY. True. The convulsive movements among the Protestant peasantry of the Cevennes are a similar instance. This spasmodical religious excitement is in a high degree infectious when many are assembled together.

ATHERTON. Yet we should not reject the doctrine of perceptible spiritual guidance because it is so liable to abuse. My objection is that I have never seen satisfactory proof adduced. Do not let us think, however, that we escape from the danger of self-delusion by denying this doctrine, and can afford to

be careless accordingly. You often see persons who would think the Quaker belief a dangerous superstition, unscrupulously identifying their personal or party interests with the cause of God, as though they believed themselves divinely commissioned, and could not possibly be liable to deception.

WILLOUGHBY. Here you see the value of the Quaker doctrine concerning stillness and quiet. The soul must be withdrawn in a silent waiting, and so hearken for the divine voice. The impulses which stir in the unallayed tumult of the feelings are the promptings of passion or of self, not of God. Wherever the belief in perceptible guidance is entertained, this practice of tranquil tarrying should accompany it, as its proper safeguard.

ATHERTON. The Quakers are wrong, I think, in separating particular movements and monitions as divine. But, at the same time, the 'witness of the Spirit,' as regards our state before God, is something more, I believe, than the mere attestation to the written word.

WILLOUGHBY. The traditional asceticism of the Friends is their fatal defect as a body.

ATHERTON. And their proneness to hazard good principles by pushing them to some repulsive extreme. Thus, they propose to abolish physical force by yielding everything to it;—to put an end to war by laying Europe at the feet of a great military power,—by apologizing for the oppressor and reviling those who resist him.

GOWER. I believe the man who says to me, I am trying to love my neighbour as myself: I suspect him who professes to love him better. His profession is

worse than worthless unless he be consistent, and will allow himself to be swindled with impunity.

ATHERTON. We may well be suspicious when we see this super-Christian morality defended by arguments which can only be valid with the meanest and most grovelling selfishness. Such ethics are, in promise, more than human; in performance—less.

WILLOUGHBY. But, leaving this question, I am sure no sect which systematically secludes itself from every province of philosophy, literature, and art, can grow largely in numbers and in influence in a state of society like ours.

GOWER. Our English Platonists contrast strongly, in this respect, with George Fox and his followers.

WILLOUGHBY. How incomprehensible must have been the rude fervour and symbolic prophesyings of the Quakers to the refined scholarship and retiring devotion of men like More and Norris, Gale and Cudworth. But can you call them mystics?

ATHERTON. Scarcely so, except in as far as Platonism is always in a measure mystical. A vein of mysticism peeps out here and there in their writings. Cold rationalism they hate. They warm, with a ready sympathy, to every utterance of the tender and the lofty in the aspirations of the soul. But their practical English sense shows itself in their instant rejection of sentimentalism, extravagance, or profanity. This is especially the case with More—as shrewd in some things as he was credulous in others, and gifted with so quick an eye for the ridiculous.

GOWER. Delightful reading, those racy pages of his, running over with quaint fancies.

ATHERTON. More's position as regards mysticism is,

in the main, that of a comprehensive and judicial mind. He goes a considerable distance with the enthusiast,—for he believes that love for the supreme Beautiful and Good may well carry men out of themselves; but for fanatical presumption he has no mercy.[383]

WILLOUGHBY. The Romanist type of mysticism would be the most repugnant of all, I should think, to these somewhat free-thinking English scholars.

ATHERTON. So I have found. More has no notion of professing to give up his reason, like Poiret; still less of awaiting a suspension of our powers, like John of the Cross. He believes that 'the Spirit doth accomplish and enlarge our humane faculties.'[384]

GOWER. Yet Norris is less remote than More from the Romish mysticism, is he not? I mean that his Platonism seemed to me a little more monastic, and less philosophical.

ATHERTON. He has, it must be confessed, his four gradations of love—akin to the class-religion of the Romish Church;—as though a certain degree were incumbent on all Christians, but higher stages of devout affection (above mere duty) were set before the eminently religious.[385] Yet let us do full justice to the good sense of that excellent man. The Quietist doctrine of unconsciousness appears to him an unnatural refinement. He cannot conceive how it should be expected that a man was to be 'such an America to himself,' as not to know what his own wishes and attainments are. The infused virtue of the Spanish mystics appears to his discriminating eye 'as great a paradox in divinity, as occult qualities in philosophy.'[386]

WILLOUGHBY. And none of them, I think, distress

themselves, as did Fénélon, about purely disinterested love.

ATHERTON. They are too close followers of Plato to do that. They do not disguise their impatience of the bodily prison-house. Neither have they any love for the divine ignorance and holy darkness of Dionysius. They are eager to catch every ray of knowledge—to know and to rejoice, to the utmost that our mortality may, upon its heavenward pilgrimage.[387]

BOOK THE TWELFTH
EMANUEL SWEDENBORG

CHAPTER I.

> What if earth
> Be but the shadow of heaven, and things therein
> Each to other like, more than on earth is thought.
>
> MILTON.

Here follow extracts from a section in Atherton's Note-book, entitled 'Remarks on Swedenborg.'

> The doctrine of Correspondence is the central idea of Swedenborg's system. Everything visible has belonging to it an appropriate spiritual reality. The history of man is an acted parable; the universe, a temple covered with hieroglyphics. Behmen, from the light which flashes on certain exalted moments, imagines that he receives the key to these hidden significances,—that he can interpret the *Signatura Rerum*. But he does not see spirits, or talk with angels. According to him, such communications would be less reliable than the

intuition he enjoyed. Swedenborg takes opposite ground. ‘What I relate,’ he would say, ‘comes from no such mere inward persuasion. I recount the things I have seen. I do not labour to recall and to express the manifestation made me in some moment of ecstatic exaltation. I write you down a plain statement of journeys and conversations in the spiritual world, which have made the greater part of my daily history for many years together. I take my stand upon experience. I have proceeded by observation and induction as strict as that of any man of science among you. Only it has been given me to enjoy an experience reaching into two worlds—that of spirit, as well as that of matter.’

A mysticism like that of Tauler strives, and strives in vain, to escape all image and ‘figuration.’ A mysticism like that of Swedenborg clothes every spiritual truth in some substantial envelope, and discerns a habitant spirit in every variety of form. The follower of Plato essays to rise from the visible to the invisible. But he spurns each ladder in succession by which he has ascended. The follower of Swedenborg seeks a similar ascent; but he never flings away, as common, the husk which guards the precious spiritual kernel. He will not shun the material, or diminish his relations to it. Rather will he surround himself by those objects and those ties of earth which, spiritually regarded, speak constantly of heaven. To look thus on life, I need not enter the school of Swedenborg.

But in this freedom from asceticism,—this tendency to see the spiritual, not beyond, but in, the natural,—the mysticism of Swedenborg, like that of Behmen, has advanced far beyond its

mediæval type. Religion no longer plays the despot toward science; the flesh is no longer evil; this beautiful world no longer yielded over to that father of lies who called it his.

As regards the scriptures, I find Swedenborg less one-sided than mystics like Frank, Weigel, or the more extreme among the Quakers. He displays no inclination to depreciate the letter of scripture in favour of the inward teaching of the Word. Without this 'book-revelation,' he tells us, man would have remained in gross ignorance concerning his Maker and his future destinies. The literal sense of the word is the basis of the spiritual and celestial sense; and the word, for this very reason, holy in every syllable. He sets up no doctrine based on arbitrary or fantastical interpretations. His doctrinal system is drawn from the literal sense, and calmly, if not always satisfactorily deduced, by citation, exegesis, and comparison of passages, without any mysticism whatever. Thus the balance between the letter and the spirit is maintained in his theology with a fairness almost unparalleled in the history of mysticism.[388]

According to Swedenborg, all the mythology and the symbolisms of ancient times were so many refracted or fragmentary correspondences—relics of that better day when every outward object suggested to man's mind its appropriate divine truth. Such desultory and uncertain links between the seen and the unseen are so many imperfect attempts toward that harmony of the two worlds which he believed himself commissioned to reveal. The happy thoughts of the artist, the imaginative analogies of the poet, are exchanged

with Swedenborg for an elaborate system. All the terms and objects in the natural and spiritual worlds are catalogued in pairs. This method appears so much formal pedantry. Our fancies will not work to order. The meaning and the life with which we continually inform outward objects,—those suggestions from sight and sound, which make almost every man at times a poet,—are our own creations, are determined by the mood of the hour, cannot be imposed from without, cannot be arranged like the nomenclature of a science. As regards the inner sense of scripture, at all events, Swedenborg introduces some such yoke. In that province, however, it is perhaps as well that those who are not satisfied with the obvious sense should find some restraint for their imagination, some method for their ingenuity, some guidance in a curiosity irresistible to a certain class of minds. If an objector say, 'I do not see why the ass should correspond to scientific truth, and the horse to intellectual truth,' Swedenborg will reply, 'This analogy rests on no fancy of mine, but on actual experience and observation in the spiritual world. I have always seen horses and asses present and circumstanced, when, and according as, those inward qualities were central.'[389] But I do not believe that it was the design of Swedenborg rigidly to determine the relationships by which men are continually uniting the seen and unseen worlds. He probably conceived it his mission to disclose to men the divinely-ordered correspondences of scripture, the close relationship of man's several states of being, and to make mankind more fully aware that matter and spirit were associated, not only in the varying analogies of imagination, but by the deeper

affinity of eternal law. In this way, he sought to impart an impulse rather than to prescribe a scheme. His consistent followers will acknowledge that had he lived in another age, and occupied a different social position, the forms under which the spiritual world presented itself to him would have been different. To a large extent, therefore, his *Memorable Relations* must be regarded as true for him only,—for such a character, in such a day, though containing principles independent of personal peculiarity and local colouring. It would have been indeed inconsistent, had the Protestant who (as himself a Reformer) essayed to supply the defects and correct the errors of the Reformation, —had he designed to prohibit all advance beyond his own position.

There is great depth and beauty in that idea of Dante's, according to which he represents himself as conscious of ascending from heaven to heaven in Paradise, not by perception of a transit through space, but by seeing his Beatrice grow more and more lovely:—

> Io non m'accorsi del salire in ella;
> Ma d'esserv' entro mi fece assai fede
> La donna mia ch' io vidi far più bella.

What is an imagination with Dante, acquires, in the theosophy of Swedenborg, the constancy of law. According to him, the more I have of goodness in me, the more shall I discern of the loveliness belonging to the form of a good angel. If I am evil, the hideous forms of evil natures will not be repulsive to me; and if I were placed in heaven, the glory would afflict me with pain. To three persons, in three different states of holiness

and knowledge, a fourth would present three several aspects in the spiritual world. Thus, spirits see as they themselves are; their character modifies their vision; their nature creates for them their world. All this seems so much mere idealism, extended from this life into the next. I ask, Where is the absolute truth, then? My German neighbour quietly inquires, 'Is there, or is there not, any *Ding an sich*?' The Swedenborgian replies, 'Swedenborg is no idealist, as you suspect. The absolute truth is with God; and the more goodness and wisdom the creatures have from him, the more truly do they see. The reality external to self, I do not take away; yea, rather I establish it on a divine basis. For the reality is even this divine order, which the Omniscient hath established and maintains,—that form and vision shall answer exactly to spirit and insight. Such correspondence is but partial in this masquerading world of ours, so full of polite pretences and seemly forms. But in the spiritual world every one appears by degrees only what he is. He gravitates towards that circle or association of spirits where all see as much as he does. His character is written, past all disguise, in his form; and so 'the things spoken in the ear in closets are proclaimed upon the housetops.'

Humanity stands high with Behmen, higher yet with Swedenborg. The Divine Humanity is at once the Lord and pattern of all creation. The innumerable worlds of space are arranged after the human form. The universe is a kind of constellation *Homo*. Every spirit belongs to some province in Swedenborg's 'Grand Man,' and affects the correspondent part of the human body. A spirit dwelling in those parts of the universe which answer to the heart or the liver, makes his

influx felt in the cardiac or hepatic regions of Swedenborg's frame before he becomes visible to the eye. Evil spirits, again, produced their correspondent maladies on his system, during the time of his intercourse with them. Hypocrites gave him a pain in the teeth, because hypocrisy is spiritual toothache. The inhabitants of Mercury correspond to a province of memory in the 'grand man:' the Lunarians to the ensiform cartilage at the bottom of the breast-bone. With Swedenborg likeness is proximity: space and time are states of love and thought. Hence his journeys from world to world;—passing through states being equivalent to travelling over spaces. Thus it took him ten hours to reach one planet, while at another he arrived in two, because a longer time was required to approximate the state of his mind to that of the inhabitants of the former.[390]

The thoughts of Swedenborg have never to struggle for expression, like those of the half-educated Behmen. The mind of the Swedish seer was of the methodical and scientific cast. His style is calm and clear. He is easily understood in detail. The metaphors of poets are objects of vision with him: every abstraction takes some concrete form: his illustrations are incessant. He describes with the graphic minuteness of Defoe. Nothing is lost in cloud. With a distinct and steady outline he pourtrays, to the smallest circumstance, the habitations, the amusements, the occupations, the penalties, the economy, the marriages of the unseen world. He is never amazed, he never exaggerates. He is unimpassioned, and wholly careless of effect. Those of his followers with whom I have come in contact, partake of their master's philosophy.

They are liberal in spirit, and nowise impatient of unbelief in others. Swedenborg never pants and strives—has none of the tearful vehemence and glowing emotion which choke the utterance of Behmen. He is never familiar in this page, and rhapsodical in that. Always serene, this imperturbable philosopher is the Olympian Jove of mystics. He writes like a man who was sufficient to himself; who could afford to wait. He lived much alone; and strong and deep is the stream of this mysticism which carries no fleck of foam.

Other mystics seem to know times of wavering, when enthusiasm burns low. To Swedenborg sunrise and sunset are not more constant and familiar than the divine mission which he claims. Other mystics are overpowered by manifestations from the unseen world. Horror seizes them, or a dizzy joy, or the vision leaves them faint and trembling. They have their alternations; their lights and shadows are in keeping; they will topple headlong from some sunny pinnacle into an abysmal misery. But Swedenborg is ‘in the spirit’ for near two score years, and in his easy chair, or at his window, or on his walks, holds converse, as a matter of course, with angels and departed great ones, with patriarchs and devils. He can even instruct some of the angels, who have had experience only of their own world, and are guileless accordingly.

CHAPTER II.

We have but faith: we cannot know;
For knowledge is of things we see;
And yet we trust it comes from Thee,
A beam in darkness: let it grow.

Let knowledge grow from more to more,
But more of reverence in us dwell;
That mind and soul, according well,
May make one music as before,

But vaster.

TENNYSON.

I find Swedenborg, in the midst of his spiritual interviews and voluminous authorship, taking his part for some time in the Diet of 1761, and presenting three memorials with high repute for practical sagacity. He publishes '*A New Method of finding the Longitude*,' simultaneously with the '*Apocalypse Revealed*.'

He appears to have possessed a remarkable power of inward respiration. He says that he received from the Lord a conformation enabling him to breathe inwardly for a long time, without the aid of the external air, while his outward senses continued their operation.[391]

Swedenborg is strongly opposed to ascetic practice in every form. He contradicts all the cloistered contemplative mystics, when he declares that 'man cannot be formed for heaven except by means of the world.' He represents the 'religious,' and devotees who have renounced the world for pious meditation, as by no means agreeable or enviable personages in the other life. They are of a sorrowful temper, despising others,

discontented at not having been honoured with superior happiness, selfish, turning away from offices of charity (the very means of conjunction with heaven), soon betaking themselves to solitary places. Truly, many of the first in the heaven of the Romish calendar are the last in the heaven of Swedenborg. And I doubt not that his arrangement is, in such cases, the more near the truth of the two. For, as he justly says, 'a life of charity towards our neighbour (which consists in doing what is just and right in every employment) can only be exercised in general as man is engaged in some employment.' Such a life, he declares, tends heavenward,—not so a life of piety without a life of charity.[392]

'In heaven,' says Swedenborg, 'instruction is committed, not to memory, but to *life*;'—a goodly saying.

Swedenborg's 'Christian Religion' is a system of theology, calm and orderly throughout, illustrated with plates—the *Memorable Relations*. I interpret these marvellous narratives much as Swedenborg does the Mosaic record. I do not question their historic truth, *for Swedenborg*. Such things he saw and heard; for to such a mind all abstraction takes substantial form. His mental transitions are journeys. Every proposition has its appropriate scenery; every group of verities incorporates itself in a drama, and becomes a speech and action. But I put an inner sense into these *Relations*, and so reading them, find charming allegories, just in moral and elegant in style.

What Swedenborg tells us about a future state I am certainly not in a position to contradict, for I know nothing about such matters. The general

conviction of the Christian world seems to me true in the main,—that the silence of the scriptures concerning such details is an argument for their inspiration—was wisely designed to check curiosity and to exercise faith. Yet it cannot be denied that after all Swedenborg's disclosures, the Christian conflict, and the motives to that holy warfare, remain very much as the Bible presents them. Selfishness is still the root of evil; God the sole foundation of truth and goodness; faith alone, working by love, can overcome the world. If the arrangements he relates as finding place in heaven and hell, be regarded as the unconscious creation of his own brain, an extraordinary genius for legislature must be allowed him by all. There is generally an obvious fitness in the economy he describes. Here and there he is whimsical and Quevedo-like. Sometimes a certain grim satire peeps out. As regards individuals, we suspect prejudice or caprice. He represents Melanchthon as faring but poorly, for a long time, in the other world, because he would not let go his doctrine of justification by faith. He elevates Mahomet in his heaven, and lowers Paul. Who does not think of Dante, carrying the feud of Guelph and Ghibelline beyond the grave?[393]

It shocks such preconceived ideas as we may most of us have formed concerning heaven, to find it represented as so like earth. That in the spiritual world there should be towns and cities, gymnasia and theological discussions, sermons and book-writing, courts of law, and games, yea marriage, of a refined species, the progeny whereof are inward joys and virtues;—all this is novel.[394] Our notions here are mostly taken from Milton, and his, in considerable measure, from ecclesiastical

and scholastic tradition. After the sublimity of the poet, the homely circumstantialities of the theosophist appear cruelly prosaic. Yet Swedenborg's view of the future state may be regarded as, in many respects, a wholesome corrective to the popular conception. The truth, I should dimly surmise, may lie between the two. The general apprehension does perhaps make the transition at death too abrupt; forgets too much the great variety of degrees and societies of spirits which must distinguish the inhabitants of hell and heaven,—how completely the inward tendency will make the grief or the joy,—how little mere change of scene and mode of existence can constitute the bliss or woe,—and how various must be the occupations and enjoyments of a world which is to consummate, not our adoration merely, but active love and knowledge.

Very beautiful is Swedenborg's description of infants in heaven, and the instruction they receive 'from angels of the female sex, who in the life of the body, loved infants tenderly, and at the same time loved God.'[395]

Even wicked men, immediately after death, are kindly received by good angels—such mercy is there for our poor mortality at the last trying hour. But the evil nature of such persons soon resumes its former ascendancy. The society of those pure associates grows irksome, and is forsaken by the sinful for evil companionship similar to themselves.

Swedenborg cannot be considered mystical in his doctrine concerning spiritual influence—that customary seat of mysticism. Such influence he pronounces immediate on the divine part, but not

perceptible on ours, nor such as to exclude the necessity of instruction and the use of means. The good we do, God alone worketh in us; but we are conscious only of effort on our own part, though believing that we receive divine assistance. There is to be no tarrying, he says, for magical grace; no crying 'Wash me!' while the divinely given means of purification lie unused at our side. The *proprium*, or own-hood of every angel, spirit, or man, is only evil. (All angels and devils were once good and bad men.) To live only from God and not from self, is the true purity. Every man is an organ of life, deriving his life and free-will from God, and receptive of the Divine influx—enjoying more or less, as he opens or closes his nature thereto. If the lower regions of his spiritual nature be closed against this influx, God is still in him, but he is not in God.[396]

Swedenborg declares that the Church has been corrupted by the doctrine of three divine persons existing from eternity. He maintains that such a belief must in reality involve the conception of three several gods, however loudly those who hold it may profess to acknowledge the Divine Unity. In his theology, the Father, Son, and Spirit, are 'the three essentials of one God, which make One, like Soul, Body, and Operation in man.'

The doctrine of Swedenborg concerning the work of Christ appears to have received its peculiar complexion, at least in great measure, from his repugnance to Calvinism. He saw that the theology of the Reformation had unduly elaborated into doctrine, the forensic and pecuniary metaphors of Scripture, concerning justification and redemption. In his reaction, he is

too much inclined to give to those figures a meaning considerably short of that which a consistent interpretation must assign them. Yet the results at which he arrives are not so decidedly opposed to those reached by the theology usually termed evangelical, as might have been anticipated. But the process of redemption in Swedenborg's system differs widely. He says he cannot believe that the Father, in his wrath, condemned the human race, and in his mercy sent his Son to bear their curse; that out of love for his suffering Son he cancelled the sentence of damnation, yet only in favour of those for whom the Son should intercede, who was thus to be a perpetual Mediator in the presence of the Father.[397] He declares it a fundamental error of the Church to believe the passion of the Cross to be redemption itself. He pronounces imputed righteousness a subversion of the divine order.—So much for what he denies. On the other hand, he affirms that in the fulness of time, Jehovah assumed humanity to redeem and save mankind. Both in the spiritual regions and among men, evil had been gradually outgrowing and threatening to overpower good. The equilibrium between the heavenly and hellish worlds was lost. It was as though a dyke had been broken down, and sin were about to overflow the universe. Then God took to himself our nature, to subjugate the hells and to restore to order the heavens. Every victory gained by Christ over the temptations which assailed Him, distanced and enfeebled the powers of evil everywhere. It was the driving back of ravenous beasts to their dens,—the delivery and feeding of his flock, both men and angels. This victory of the Saviour is our victory, is that

redemption in virtue of which we are able, believing in Him, to resist and vanquish evil. Mediation, Intercession, Atonement, Propitiation, are forms of speech 'expressive of the approach which is opened to God, and of the grace communicated from God, by means of His Humanity.' Thus Swedenborg also believes in a violated order and an impending perdition; in the redemption of the race from such a fate by the incarnate One; in the vindication or restoration of the divine law and order by his conflict and victory on our behalf; and in a life lived *for* us, which becomes also a life quickened *in* us. He appears to object to the idea of sacrifice as necessarily concentrating the work of redemption in the shedding of the Saviour's blood. Such may have been the limited conception of sacrifice in the theology he opposed; but that error could be no good reason for explaining away the idea of sacrifice altogether. The language of Christ concerning himself must be strangely misinterpreted if no such idea is to be found there. But that sacrifice was constituted by his whole life, as well as by its last act—the laying down thereof. The distinction drawn by some divines between the active and passive obedience —as though the death alone were our atonement, and the life alone our example—is a most unhappy refinement.

In Swedenborg's doctrine concerning union with Christ there is nothing mystical. From the passionate and sensuous union of some mystics, and from the pantheistic confusion of others, he is completely free.

It is to be regretted that the work of redemption

should still be so partially regarded by opposing sections of the Church. On the one side are those who hold the doctrine of an exact satisfaction (the commercial theory); who suppose that, in virtue of imputed righteousness, God sees in his people no sin; and who would say that men *may*, rather than that they *must*, be exhorted to maintain good works. This covert and generally theoretical antinomianism is happily rare. Yet there are some well-meaning men, desirous of doing a reforming work among us, who actually imagine such an extreme as this to be the ordinary evangelical doctrine. On the other side are those whose tendency is to resolve the historical into the inward Christ. From any such leaning Swedenborg is more free than George Fox. On this side, too, stand those with whom Christ's work is rather a first sample of restored humanity than the way of restoration, and who seem to suppose that in admitting God to be just, they make Him cruel. In this extreme aversion to acknowledge an external law, and an external danger consequent on its violation, Swedenborg does not share. But, like most of the mystics, he conceives of redemption as wrought for us only as it is wrought in us; takes justification for granted, if we have but sanctification; and regards our sins as remitted just in proportion as we are reclaimed from them. If we must lean towards some extreme, this is the more safe, because containing the larger measure of truth. It appears to me that the 'divine order' requires that man be accepted of God in a way consistent with the divine righteousness; and so also as, at the very same time, to become conformed to that righteousness. The sacred writers constantly combine those two aspects of

redemption which our systems are so prone to separate. On the one side, Christ's example is pressed upon us, even in those very acts which are peculiar to Himself as divine. On the other, the blood of Christ is represented as sanctifying us—purging our consciences from dead works to serve the living God; while it is also stated expressly that He died, the just for the unjust.

Similar as Swedenborg's theology is in its spirit to that of Behmen, I find him expressly stating that he had never read the German theosophist.

Concerning the Church of the New Jerusalem, Swedenborg says, 'Since the Lord cannot manifest himself in person (to the world), which has just been shown to be impossible, and yet He has foretold that He would come and establish a New Church, which is the New Jerusalem, it follows that He will effect this by the instrumentality of a man, who is able not only to receive the doctrines of that Church in his understanding, but also to make them known by the press. That the Lord manifested Himself before me His servant, that He sent me on this office, and afterwards opened the sight of my spirit, and so let me into the spiritual world, permitting me to see the heavens and the hells, and also to converse with angels and spirits; and this now continually for many years, I attest in truth; and farther, that from the first day of my call to this office, I have never received anything appertaining to the doctrines of that Church from any angel, but from the Lord alone, whilst I was reading the Word.'—*True Christian Religion*, § 779.

BOOK THE THIRTEENTH
CONCLUSION

CHAPTER I.

Wär nicht das Auge sonnenhaft,
Wie könnten wir zur Sonne blicken?
Wär nicht in uns des Gottes eigne Kraft,
Wie könnt uns Göttliches entzücken?[398]

GOETHE.

Early in December, Atherton was called away from Ashfield by some matters of business. His solitary evenings were spent in the chief inn of a quiet cathedral town, and solaced by the drawing up of a kind of summary, which was to indicate the main results arrived at by so much reading and talking about the mystics. This final review was despatched in a letter to Gower,—was read aloud by him to a full auditory (comprising, beside its ordinary members, Mr. and Mrs. Lowestoffe, who had come up to spend Christmas),—and is here inserted.

Old Red Dragon, Snorumbury.

MY DEAR GOWER,

I had purposed keeping this concluding paper, which you asked of me, till I could rejoin you once more, and we might read and talk over it together. But I cannot say how long I may be detained here: so I send it you at once, that our mystical inquiries may be wound up before the Christmas merry-makings begin.

In the present day, there are few who will acknowledge the name of mystic. Indeed, Mysticism is now held in combination with so many modifying or even counteracting elements, that a very strongly-marked or extreme expression of it is scarcely possible. Yet in many and very diverse forms of religious opinion, a mystical tendency may be discerned. It is apparent in the descendant of Irving, with his supernatural gifts; among some of the followers of Fox, where the inner light eclipses the outer; in the disciple of Swedenborg, so familiar with the world of spirits. The mystical tendency is present, also, wherever the subjective constituent of religion decidedly overbalances the objective. It is to be found whereever the religionist (under whatever pretence) refuses to allow the understanding to judge concerning what falls within its proper province. Thus, I tend toward mysticism, if I invest either my religious intuitions or my particular interpretation of scripture, with a divine halo—with a virtual infallibility—and charge with profanity the man whose understanding is dissatisfied with my conclusions. The ‘evangelical’ is wrong, if he hastily condemns, as ‘carnal,’ him who does not find his express doctrines in the Bible;—if, instead of attempting

to satisfy the understanding of the objector with reasons, he summarily dismisses it, by misquoting the passage, 'the natural man discerneth not the things of the spirit.' The 'spiritualist' errs, in precisely the same way, when he assumes that his intuitions are too holy to be questioned by the logical faculty,—proclaims his religious sentiment above criticism, and pronounces every objection the utterance of a pedantic formalism, or a miserable conventionality. So to do, is to confound the childlike and the childish,—to forget that we should be, in malice, children; but in understanding, men. If the intuition of the one man, or the faith of the other, be removed from the sphere of knowing, and the court of evidence, —be an impulse or an instinct, rather than a conviction, and be rendered inaccessible utterly to the understanding, then is the bridge broken down between them and their fellows. The common tongue of interpretation and the common ground of argument are taken altogether away. For such faith no reason can be rendered to him who has it not.

In Germany, it may be questioned whether the efforts of the 'faith-philosophers' were not more injurious than helpful to the cause which they espoused. They endeavoured to shelter religion from Rationalism by relegating it to the province of feeling or sentiment. Hamann and Jacobi[399] might have withstood Rationalism on its own ground. But these defenders abandoned, without a blow, the fortifications of an impregnable argument, and shut themselves up in the citadel—faith. Both were soon eclipsed by the deservedly great name of Schleiermacher. His position was a stronger one than theirs, and more

comprehensive; yet, in the issue, scarcely more satisfactory. In Schleiermacher's theology, the individual 'Christian consciousness' is made the test according to which more or less of the recorded history of the Saviour is to be received. The supposed facts of Christianity contract or expand according to the supposed spiritual wants of the individual Christian. Thus, if any say, 'Certain of the miracles, the resurrection and ascension of Christ, do not make a part of my Christian consciousness,—I can realize spiritual communion with Christ, independently of these accessories,'—Schleiermacher tells him he may dispense with believing them. Here, again, too much is conceded: portions of the very heart are set aside as non-essentials. Christianity is a *living* whole, and cannot be thus dismembered without peril to life. This baptism of Schleiermacher is rapid and sweeping, and the veriest sceptics are Christianized in spite of themselves. Men whose Christianity is historic, much as Mahommedanism is historic, turn out excellent Christians, notwithstanding.

Such a theory is, after all, ignoble, because it does not seek Truth alone, at all costs. The first object of religious inquiry is not moral expediency, not edification, not what we may deem productive of the most wholesome impressions, not what we wish to find true; but what *is* true. Let us seek the Truth, and if faithful to what we can find of *that*, these other things will be added to us. Mere good nature is a spurious charity. The cause of religion can never be served by acquiescence in a falsehood. The Christianity offered by Schleiermacher is a glass which mirrors every man—a source of motive, never beyond our own

level—a provision which is always what we like and expect. Now, it may so happen that the kind of religion we should like is not that which is the true—not that, therefore, which is good for us. We need a religion adapted to us, but yet high above us, to raise us up. The untrained eye does not at the first view appreciate the old masters of art. If we are sincere in seeking God's truth, we must count on having to receive some things that do not at once commend themselves to our judgment, but into which we shall grow up, in the process of spiritual education. Now, for this kind of self-transcendence Schleiermacher makes no preparation, and his easy entrance does, in reality, preclude progress. We are not surprised to see the Romish priest considering first, not what is truth or fact, but what statement will bring the greatest number within the pale of the Church, what will produce the most edifying impression, what will do least violence to the current preconceptions. The children of the day should disdain the slightest approach to such facile complaisance. If Christ did not rise from the dead, Christianity is a lie. On this question no inquiry must be spared—our minds must be thoroughly made up. But to allow the name of Christian to men who do not regard this fact as established, looks as though we were afraid of inquiry,—as politic governments will seem hot to see offences which it would be dangerous to punish. I justify my means by my end—I am wanting in truth and manhood, if, having myself rejected some doctrine, I yet appear to hold it, because I think it morally expedient that it should be generally received. I am guilty of a similar pious fraud if I yield up as non-essential some fact on which the Christian faith must hang,

in order to recall certain wanderers to the fold of a nominal Christianity. Schleiermacher's sincerity can only be saved at the expense of his judgment. This was the weak point of his accomplished intellect—a weakness shared by many a German divine,—he regarded external facts as of small moment compared with inward feeling. The continual evaporation of outward reality in sentiment is the vitiating principle in his system. [400]

Side by side with the advocates of faith and feeling in the religious province, appeared German Romanticism in the field of art and literature. The Romanticists were the enthusiastic champions of the Ideal against Realism, the assailants of all artificial method and servile conventionality, the sworn foes everywhere of that low-minded, prosaic narrowness which Germany calls Philistinism.[401]

Schelling gave them a poetical philosophy, and young Schleiermacher's *Discourses on Religion* were, for a time, their Bible. French Encyclopedism and German Rationalism had professed a summary explanation for every mystery, had exiled the supernatural, and ridiculed the Middle Age. In the pages of the *Athenæum* and the *Europa*, Romanticism undertook the defence of mediæval superstition, extolled its fist-law, its wager by battle, its 'earnest' religious wars; and confounding clear thought and definite expression with the pert self-complacence of Rationalism, announced itself enamoured of every mystical obscurity, for the very shadow's sake.

The evils against which the Romanticists

contended were many of them real; much they laughed at, well deserving ridicule; but with their truth they mingled a world of fantastic folly. Voltaire was, in many things, as shallow as he was transparent,—*therefore* the muddy obscurity of every visionary who rhapsodized about the All, must be profound as the 'everlasting deeps.' Conventionalism, utilitarianism, logic-grinding, old formulas,—all were to be dethroned by the inspired votaries of intellectual intuition. The most startling extravagance or desperate paradox of opinion was hailed with the loudest plaudits, as most surely fraught with the divine afflatus. The Romanticists essayed to harmonize the ideal and the real. For the most part, they succeeded only in confounding their spheres; and ending by absorbing the real in the ideal. In their hands, philosophy became imaginative and rhetorical,—a very garden of gay fancies; while poetry grew metaphysical and analytic. Where they should have created, they dissect; where they should have inquired, they imagine.[402]

It is a cardinal doctrine with Romanticism that the common should be regarded as the wondrous, and the wondrous as the common. The land of faëry is to be our beaten business track; its dreamy speech, a household language; its spirit-glances, our familiar looks. At the same time, the objects and appliances of everyday existence are to be informed with supernatural significance, and animated with a mysterious life. So, in *Sartor Resartus* (a book which is simply the Evangel of Romanticism, in its more vigorous form), Mr. Carlyle reminds the reader that his 'daily life is girt with Wonder,' and that his 'very blankets and breeches are Miracles.' Thus our life is to be at

once a trophy and a bazaar; like old Westminster Hall, where the upper story was gorgeous with blazonry and proud with the ensigns of chivalrous romance, and the ground-floor laid out in shops.

Ere long, Romanticists like Creuzer and Görres, began to resolve the old mythologies into allegorical science: while Romanticists like Frederick Schlegel, were resolving religion into poetry, and morality into æsthetics. Dante and Tasso, Camoens and Goethe, had intermingled classic and romantic myths as a poetic decoration, or a fanciful experiment. With the Romanticists (so frequently mastered by their own materials), such admixture became actual earnest. They announced the approach of a new Religion of Humanity and Art. They summoned flower-spirits from the Ganges, braceleted crocodiles from the Nile, monstrous forms from the Talmud and the Koran, to fill its incongruous pantheon of symbols. The novel wonders of animal magnetism were to constitute its miracles. Thus, like Proclus, they could make philosophy superstitious, they could not make superstition philosophical. They attempted the construction of a true and universal religion, by heaping together the products of every recorded religious falsity, and bowing at all shrines in turn. Like Iamblichus, they sought in theurgy for a sign; and in their credulous incredulity, grew greedy of every supranaturalism except the scriptural. In a moment of especial inspiration, Frederick Schlegel, writing in the *Athenæum*, declared that the only opposition which the new religion of philanthropy and good taste was likely to encounter, would spring from the few Christians proper still in existence; but even they, when the Aurora actually shone, would

fling aside their prejudice, fall down, and worship.[403]

Such anticipations appear ridiculous enough. But against ridicule, to which they were peculiarly sensitive, the Romanticists possessed a ready safeguard. This resource consisted in their doctrine of Irony. After advancing a paradox, or pushing a fancy to the edge of absurdity, let the author turn round, and abandon his own creation; or dissipate it, with a serene smile; or assuming another tone, look down upon it, as questionable, from some new and superior height. Thus, if any dullard begins gravely to criticise, he shall have only laughter for his pains, as one too gross for the perception of humour; while at the same time, the reader is given to understand that beneath that jest there *does* lie, nevertheless, a kernel of most earnest and momentous truth. According to the Ironic theory, such saying and unsaying is not convenient merely (as a secret door of escape behind the tapestry), but in the highest degree artistic. For what is Art, but a sublime play? Does not loftiest genius ever sport, godlike, with its material, remote and riddling to the lower apprehension of common minds? In *Sartor Resartus* the English public have been familiarized with this ingenious device. After professing to translate, from the paper-bags of Teufelsdröckh, some ultra-transcendental sally, Mr. Carlyle makes a practice of addressing the reader, admits that he may well feel weary and perplexed, confesses that he himself does not always see his way in these ‘strange utterances,’ calls them a farrago whose meaning must be mainly conjectured, and finally leaves it pleasantly uncertain how much is delirium, how much inspiration.

But no artifice could save Romanticism, in the hands of its most extravagant representatives, from the condign catastrophe. This sensuous æsthetic religion, this effeminate symbolism, with its gallery of arbitrary and incongruous types from the dreams of all time,—this worship of Art as Deity, could tend but in one direction. The men who began with sentimental admiration for the Church of Rome, ended by passing their necks beneath her yoke; and the artist terminates miserably in the bigot. They had contemned the Reformation, on æsthetic grounds, as unromantic: they came to dread it on superstitious grounds as unsafe. Romanticism, so sanguine and so venturous in its revolutionary youth, grew anile in its premature decrepitude; mumbled its *credos*; cursed its heretics—and died.

It was at the opening of the present century that the great rush to Rome took place: a significant lesson, indicating the constant issue of that subjective poetical religionism which divorces Truth from Beauty, which craves religious fancies and neglects religious facts, till it falls a victim to the greatest religious fallacy. Then was celebrated the perversion of Frederick Schlegel, of Adam Müller, of Zachariah Werner—'a born mystic,' as Carlyle rightly styles him. Tieck, who must stand acquitted of the follies of the school; and August Wilhelm Schlegel (despite some crotchets, immeasurably superior to Frederick) retained their Protestantism.

Novalis, for by this name Friedrich von Hardenberg is most known, is perhaps as fair a representative of Romanticism as can be found. He had no occasion, like some of the party, to

affect, as so much art, the language of the mystics whom he studied with such devotion. Novalis was to the manner born. To none was the realm of reverie and fable—visited by most of us only at intervals—more completely a familiar, daily dwelling-place. Scarcely to the morbid phantasy of Hoffmann was the ordinary life more visibly inwrought with the mysterious. Poetry was his practical staff of every-day existence; and practical life, to him, all poetry. The creations of his fancy were his Holy Writ; and Holy Writ the most divine creation of the fancy. Werner regretted that men should ever have employed two distinct terms to designate Art and Religion. With Novalis they are perfectly identical. It is his wont to deal with spiritual truth by analogies drawn from physics, and to investigate physics by his mystical axioms concerning spiritual truth. A mind so desultory and discursive was quite unequal to the formation of a system. But to what sort of system such a confusion of thought must lead, if ever methodically elaborated, has not patient, hard-working Jacob Behmen already shown us? Where other men are satisfied with tracing a resemblance, Novalis announces an identity. What others use as an illustration, he will obey as a principle. With him, as with the old theosophists, the laws of the universe are the imaginative analogies which link together all its regions, seen and unseen,—analogies bred in his own heated brain.

Thus, according to Novalis, he is the true Archimage of Idealism, ‘who can transform external things into thoughts, and thoughts into external things.’ ‘The poet,’ he says, ‘is the true enchanter: by identifying himself with an object

he compels it to become what he will.' 'Experience is magical, and only magically explicable.' 'Physics is the theory of imagination.' 'Religion, Love, Nature, Politics, all must be treated mystically.' On such a principle alone can we account for the ultra-Neoplatonist rodomontade he utters in praise of mathematics. He declares the genuine mathematician the enthusiast *par excellence*—mathematics is the life of the gods—it is religion—it is virtual omniscience. Mathematical books are to be read devoutly, as the word of God.[404]

The suggestive and sparkling aphorisms of Novalis should be read with due allowance. Some contain admirable thoughts, pointedly expressed; others are curiously perverse or puerile. Now they breathe the lofty stoical spirit we find in Schleiermacher's monologues. Presently, Fichte seems forgotten; the strain of Titanic self-assertion is relaxed, and Novalis languidly reclines with the Lotos-eaters among the flowers. In one page life is but 'a battle and a march,' in another, the soul's activity is an eating poison; love, a sickness; life, the disease of the spirit—a brief fever, to be soothed by the slumber of mystical repose, and healed at last by healthful, restful death. In this latter mood he woos the sleepy abstraction of the oriental mysticism. Action is morbid, in his eyes; to dream is to overcome. All activity ceases, he says, when Knowledge enters. The condition of Knowlege is Eudæmonia—saintly calm of contemplation.[405] Such is the aspiration dimly discernible through the florid obscurity of his *Hymns to Night*. Shutting out the garish outer world of the Actual, forgetting all its tinsel glories and its petty pains, the enthusiast seems to rise

into that mystic meditative Night, whose darkness reveals more truth than the searching brightness of the daylight, and in whose recesses his transported spirit celebrates its bridal with the Queen of Heaven—the æsthetic Mary, the Eternal Beauty.

Now that the assailants of Revelation have grown so extremely pious, we find them zealously enlisting certain modifications of mysticism on their side. Modern spiritualism revives the tactics of ancient philosophy. It borrows from Christianity (as did Porphyry) a higher moral tone than it could otherwise have reached, and then pretends to look down upon the ethics of the scriptures. The religious sentiment so variously evolved in every age and country, is brought forth to overwhelm the religious truth revealed in Christ. A philosophic church is set up. The hope full of immortality is depreciated as low and selfish. Quietism abased itself so profoundly that it would scarcely lift its eyes toward that hope. Spiritualism exalts itself so ambitiously, that it will not stoop to make that hope its own. In the seventeenth century, mysticism was in sad earnest on this question of disinterestedness: in the nineteenth, such indifference is the pretence of a preposterous self-sufficiency.

But the device which failed so signally, some fourteen centuries ago, cannot now prevail, though the hostile approach is more artfully contrived. That antichristian sentimentalism which is too refined for the medium of a book, and for the morality of the Bible, was discomfited as soon as seen, and received its *coup de grace* from the '*Eclipse of Faith*,' amidst universal

laughter. But this repetition of old ideas is, after all, the most mortifying and damnatory fact. To think; that the advocates of a philosophic religious sentiment, in opposition to the old Book, should exhibit as little novelty as their enemies,—that even after throwing off the Biblical fetters, no progress should be visible,—that the haunting Past should be with them still,—that after making their escape from antiquated Paul and John, they should find themselves in company with antiquated Proclus and Plotinus!

The theosophy of Swedenborg was original. Mysticism has produced nothing really new in that direction since his day, and the northern seer still walks alone within his circle. Franz Baader re-clothes the bones of Behmen's system from the materials of modern science; and Oetinger, a student both of Behmen and of Swedenborg, attempts to arrange a divine system of science by the mystical interpretation of scripture. Even the 'holy vegetation' of oriental mysticism has been reproduced. Schelling bids man know God 'in silent not-knowing,' as the plant reveals eternal beauty in 'stillest existence and without reflection.' Such counsel means much more than the maxim, 'Il ne faut pas voyager pour voir, mais pour ne pas voir,' so frequent with John of the Cross and Fénélon. Laurence Oken, a physiologist of note and a disciple of Schelling, sees in the snail an exalted symbol of mind slumbering deeply within itself. He beholds in that creature an impersonation of majestic wisdom: it is 'the prophesying goddess sitting on the tripod.' What reflection, what earnestness, what timidity, what confidence! The same Oken travesties Behmen, when he makes red = fire, love, Father; blue =

air, truth, belief, Son; green = water, formation, hope, Ghost; yellow = earth, Satan. He imagined that he wrote his Physio-philosophy in a kind of inspiration. Here, again, we see that this intellectual intuition, professedly so keen, so spontaneous, so free from every formula, does yet continually repeat itself.

Great and various have been the services rendered by mysticism throughout the history of the Christian Church. It has exposed pretence, it has demanded thoroughness. It has sought, amidst surrounding formalism, what was deemed the highest form of spirituality. Its strain has been sometimes of a mood so high as to ‘create a soul within the ribs of death.’

But it has been influential for good in proportion to its temperance in the doctrine concerning the outward rule and the inner light. Wherever it has been extravagant in this respect—has thrown off common sense or decency—been turbulent, licentious, or ‘high fantastical,’ there good men and thoughtful have stood mournfully aloof from it, while formal men or designing have made its follies a plea for tightening the cords of spiritual oppression. It has won acceptance from men when it has been sufficiently moderate to urge intelligible arguments, and to appeal sincerely (if not always warrantably) to that outward Revelation which is commonly received. But the world has rarely been disposed to receive boastful professions of spirituality or freedom, vague declamation and rhapsodical denunciation of reason or the schools, in the place of those definite expressions of opinion which, though sometimes narrow, are at least readily

apprehensible. Incalculable must be the advantage of any man or party who can manifest a clear meaning over those who cannot.

There is danger in the present day, lest in the reaction against logical formalism and prescription, an extravagant value should be set on faith for its own sake. The Romanist makes mere faith, blind and implicit, a saving virtue. The spiritualist falls into the same error when he says, 'Only be in earnest—get faith in an idea—in something, at any rate—and all will be well.' But faith is a principle, not an instinct. Among the many claimants for my belief, I must make an intelligent choice. It is of some consequence whether the 'idea' on which I am mounted be false or true. It can be good for no man to be recklessly earnest in the devil's work.

Mysticism has generally apprehended religion rather on its divine than on its human side. It makes haste to lose humanity, and to be glorified. Grievous afflictions have reminded some of the mystical aspirants that they were human still. The spiritual pride of others has betrayed them, first to ostentatious sanctity, and then to shameful sin. Among those who would surpass humanity, some have fallen disgracefully, others ludicrously, below it. There have been those whose transformation proved to be downward to a lower sphere, not upward to an element more rare. They fare like Lucius in the *Golden Ass* to whom Fotis has given the wrong witch-salve. He extends his arms, he sways himself to and fro, he expects the next moment to find himself changing into a bird. But his hands and feet grow horny, his thickening, irritated skin shoots forth hairs, and behold him

metamorphosed into an ass. The theatrical devotion, so frequent among the ornaments of Roman saintship, overlooks common duties, sometimes despises necessary helps, generally mistakes altogether the nature of true greatness. The Christianity exhibited in the New Testament differs most conspicuously from the Mystical Theology in being so much more human. It addresses man as he is; it addresses all; it appeals to the whole nature of every man. It knows nothing of class-religion. It does not bid men exhaust themselves in efforts to live only in the *apex* of their being—that ἄνθος νόου of which Plotinus speaks.

The history of mysticism shows us, farther, that the attempt to escape all figure or symbol, in our apprehensions of divine truth, is useless, or worse than useless. Such endeavour commonly ends in substituting for a figure which, though limited and partial, has life and heart in it, some vague abstraction, cold and lifeless,—and itself, perhaps, ultimately a figure, after all. It is one thing to remember that language is *but* language,—that behind all the expressions of love or power lies an infinity that cannot be expressed. It is another to leave behind (as many mystics have striven to do) even the vital breathing metaphors of Holy Writ, and restlessly to peer beyond, into the Unutterable—the Illimitable. Surely the words 'King,' 'Shepherd,' 'Father,' express more truth concerning God than the 'pure Act' of philosophy. When I speak of God as near or distant, pleased or displeased, the change may be in me rather than in Him. But in practical result—in the effects I feel —it is to me *as though* such change of disposition were real. And mysticism must freely grant me

this, if it would not play into the hands of scholasticism, its hereditary foe. There is a sickly dread of anthropomorphism abroad among us, which is afraid of attributing to God a heart.

Mysticism has often spoken out bravely and well against those who substitute barren propositions for religious life,—who reject the kindly truth to make a tyrant of some rigid theory or system. But there is danger also on the other side. An imaginative, brainsick man, may substitute religious vagaries, whims, conceits, for religious truth. Men may be led as far astray by mere feeling as by mere logic. While the man of method makes an idol of his theory, the enthusiast may make an idol of his passion or his fancy. To this latter snare we have seen mysticism repeatedly fall a prey. The fanatic and the formalist both essay to build a temple to the Holy Spirit. The formalist is satisfied with raising the structure; and a sorry taper, here and there, makes darkness visible. The fanatic kindles so many lights, and with so little care, that he burns his edifice to the ground, as did the Florentines their Church of the San Spirito, from excessive illumination.

Anatomists tell us of what they term vicarious secretion in the bodies of men. One organ is found, in some cases of injury, to produce the secretion proper to another; and so we survive the hurt. I think some process of the kind must supervene for the benefit of our minds. With many of the mystics, I doubt not, the heart performed, in their spiritual œconomy, the functions of the head. A careful scrutiny of the mystical theology will show, I am confident, that several of its prominent doctrines are, in fact,

most valuable correctives, and probably took or maintained their place as such. These doctrines, some of which by no means commend themselves to the non-mystical mind, are the preservatives of the mystic from his peculiar dangers. Mysticism leads to an excessive and morbid introspection. How necessary, then, that doctrine of 'unconsciousness' reiterated by John of the Cross and Fénélon,—itself an extreme, but indispensable to counteract its opposite. Mysticism has taught many to expect a perceptible inward guidance. How necessary, then, the doctrine of 'quiet,'—that the soul should be abstracted in a profound stillness, lest the hasty impulses of self should be mistaken for a divine monition. Mysticism exalts the soul to a fervour and a vision, fraught with strange sweetnesses and glories. How necessary, then, that doctrine of the more elevated Quietism which bids the mystic pass beyond the sensible enjoyments and imaginative delights of religion—escape from the finer senses of the soul, as well as the grosser senses of the body, into that state of pure and imageless contemplation which has no preference or conception of its own. If Quietism is not to become a fantastic selfishness, a sensuous effeminacy, a voice must cry, 'Haste through the picture-gallery—haste through the rose-garden—dare the darkness, wherein the glory hides!'

The lawless excesses of which mysticism has been occasionally guilty should not serve to commend spiritual despotism. The stock alternative with the Church of Rome has been—'Accept these fanatical outbreaks as divine, or submit to our rule.' Unfortunately for this very palpable sophism, the most monstrous mystical extravagance, whether of pantheism, theurgy, or miracle, is to be found

in the Romish Church. Angelus Silesius, Angela de Foligni, and Christina Mirabilis, are nowhere surpassed in their respective extremes. The best of the Romish mystics are questionable Romanists. Tauler and Madame Guyon were more Protestant than they were aware. Even the submissive Fénélon is but a half-hearted son of the Church, beside that most genuine type of her saintship—the zealous Dominic. Innocent folk are sometimes inclined to think better of a system which could produce a man like Fénélon. They forget that, as a product of the system, Fénélon was a very inferior specimen—little better than a failure.

There is a considerable class, in these restless, hurrying, striving days, who would be much the better for a measure of spiritual infusion from the Quietism of Madame Guyon. She has found an excellent expositor and advocate in Mr. Upham. The want of leisure, the necessity for utmost exertion, to which most of us are subject, tends to make us too anxious about trifles, presumptuously eager and impatient. We should thank the teacher who aids us to resign ourselves, to be nothing, to wait, to trust. But it is to be feared that such lessons will have the greatest charm for those who need them least—for pensive, retiring contemplatists, who ought rather to be driven out to action and to usefulness. There is a danger lest passivity should be carried too far—almost as though man were the helpless object about which light and darkness were contending, rather than himself a combatant, armed by God against the powers of night. It seems to me, too, better to watch against, and suppress as they arise, our selfish tendencies and tempers—our envy, pride, indifference, hate, covetousness—than to be

always nervously trying (as Fénélon does) to catch that Proteus, SELF, in the abstract.

Finally, in the mischievous or unsuccessful forms of mysticism we have the recorded result of a series of attempts to substitute the inner light for the outer. When mysticism threw off external authority altogether, it went mad—as we have seen in the revolutionary pantheism of the Middle Age. When it incorporated itself more and more in revealed truth, it became a benign power—as on the eve of the Reformation. The testimony of history, then, is repeatedly and decisively uttered against those who imagine that to set aside the authority of Scripture would be to promote the religious life of men. The Divine Spirit is with us yet; and the healing, elevating wisdom of the inspired page unexhausted still. The hope of our age lies, not in a conceited defiance of controul, but in our ability more fully to apprehend the counsels God Himself has given us. Argument may be evaded. To speak in the name of religion may seem to beg the question. But to resist the verdict of the past is not the part of any thoughtful man. He who hopes to succeed in superseding letter by spirit—in disseminating a gospel more spiritual than that of scripture, by somehow dispensing with the vehicle which all truth requires for its conveyance,—who hopes to succeed in any attempt approaching this, where more powerful minds, sometimes more favourably situated, have met only with defeat—such a fanatic must be dismissed with pity as totally incurable.

It grows late. Good night all. If I can get back earlier I will.

Yours,

CHAPTER II.

> La raison, dit saint Augustin, ne se soumettroit jamais, si elle ne jugeoit qu'il y a des occasions où elle doit se soumettre. Il est donc juste qu'elle se soumette quand elle juge qu'elle doit se soumettre; et qu'elle ne se soumette pas, quand elle juge avec fondement qu'elle ne doit pas le faire: mais il faut prendre garde à ne pas se tromper.—PASCAL.

Gower ceased reading. A few irregular remarks and questions followed the short silence. Willoughby expressed his wish that Atherton were with them, and was echoed by the lady of Ashfield. Kate received Atherton's bulky letter from Gower's hands, and began to look it over for herself, as we always do with newspapers, however fully read aloud. Mrs. Lowestoffe was cutting out some ingenious paper figures, destined to throw little Kate into rapturous glee, and her husband had just petitioned for music, when the deep bark of Lion was heard in the court-yard; then the muffled sound of hoofs and wheels over the snow, and a tearing peal of the bell.

It was Atherton, who, released sooner than he had hoped, had followed his epistle at speed, sweeping with the wind, through the whitening hills, for two-thirds of the December day.

In half an hour he was among his guests—had refreshed him after his journey—been upstairs to kiss his sleeping child—and now appeared, blithesome and ruddy, diffusing smiles. Enthroned in his favourite arm-chair, he amused them with the story of what he had seen, and heard, and done; nothing uncommon, certainly, but full of life and humour in his style of telling. On his way home that, day he had met with an entertaining companion in the railway carriage, a little spherical old gentleman, exhibiting between upper and nether masses of fur a narrow segment of face,—gruff and abrupt in speech—ferocious about stoppages and windows,—who had been in India, and knew everybody who was 'anybody' there.

'We talked,' said Atherton, 'about Brahmins and Buddhists, about the Bhilsa Topes and Major Cunningham, about the civil service, and what not. On every topic he was surprisingly well informed, and gave me, in his brief way, just the facts I wanted to know. A propos of Ceylon and the famous cinnamon breezes, he said that when he was on board the Bungagunga Indiaman, they stood one day out at sea, some miles off the island, when the wind was blowing, mark you, right *on* the land. A group among the passengers began to dispute about these said breezes—were they a poetic fiction, or an olfactory fact? With that, my old gentleman slips away slyly, rubs a little oil of cinnamon on the weather hammock nettings, and has the satisfaction of presently seeing the pro-cinnamon party in full triumph, crying, with distended nostrils and exultant sniffs, 'There! don't you smell them now?' One of them, he told me (his multitudinous envelopes shaking the while), actually published an account when he got home, relating his own experience of

those spicy gales, said to perfume the ocean air so far away.'

GOWER. Amusing enough. Just the blunder, by the way, of our mystics,—mistaking what exists only on board their own personality for something real that operates from without. Their pleasurable emotions can be nothing less than precious odours—miraculous benisons, breathed from some island of the blest.

LOWESTOFFE. They seem to me a most monotonous set of gentry—those same mystics. Accept my congratulations on your having nearly done with them. As far as I understand them, they go round one old circuit for ever, in varying forms,—just like your gold fish there, Mrs. Atherton, now looking so big about it, and the next moment tapered off to a mere tail. See that fellow now, magnified almost to the size of his glass world, with his huge eyes, like a cabbage rose in spectacles; and now, gone again on his way round and round,—always the same, after all.

ATHERTON. And yet religious extravagances, with all their inordinate Quixotism, or worse, are full of instruction. Your favourite botanical books should hint that much to you; for the vegetable physiologists all say that no little light has been thrown on the regularly developed organism by the study of monstrous and aberrant forms of growth.

LOWESTOFFE. There is something in that. But these irregularities you speak of have repeatedly broken out in the conduct, have they not, as well as in imagination or opinion?

ATHERTON. They have. The dazzling splendour of a superhuman knowledge or a superhuman fervour,

has often distorted the common rule of right and wrong,——

GOWER. As they say the Northern Lights disturb the direction of the needle.

KATE. Yet those glimmers and flashes are of service in the arctic night,—better than total darkness.

LOWESTOFFE. Right, Miss Merivale. I fully admit the plea.

WILLOUGHBY. I think we must allow the substantial justice of Mr. Lowestoffe's complaint. There is a sameness in these mystics. Each one starts, to so large an extent, on his own account, with the same bias and the same materials. He reiterates, after his manner, the same protest, and the same exaggeration. The same negations, the same incoherence, the same metaphors, have attempted in every age the utterance of the unutterable.

ATHERTON. So science began to make steady progress as soon as it confined itself within the limits of the knowable, and ceased to publish fancy maps of the *terra incognita*. Theosophy was perpetually transgressing those limits, and hence its waste of ingenuity in vain gyrations.

GOWER. There is one point, Atherton, on which I could wish you had dwelt more at large in your letter. Do we not find, the most prolific source of mysticism in the idea that there is a special faculty for the discernment of spiritual truth,—that there is a kind of soul within the soul which may unite with God, leaving behind it all the ordinary powers of the mind,—a potency, in fact, altogether independent of knowledge, understanding, judgment, imagination, &c., and never amenable to any of them? We have encountered this doctrine over and over again,

sometimes in a qualified, sometimes in an uncontrollable form. Hugo's 'Eye of Contemplation' is such a faculty. Tauler adopts the principle when he separates the Ground of the Soul from all its acts and powers. It lies at the root of the inexpressible experiences so precious to the Spanish mystics, when every function of the soul underwent divine suspension. It appears again in the divorce declared (by Coleridge, for example) between the Understanding—the reasoning faculty, which deliberates and judges, and the Intuitive Reason, which discerns religious and philosophic truth directly.

ATHERTON. You make out a strong case, certainly. Declare intuition absolute, with an undivided irresponsible prerogative of this kind, and what check is provided against any possible vagary of mysticism?

MRS. ATHERTON. I do not clearly understand the question at issue. Pray explain before you go farther.

GOWER. Allow me to make the attempt. I am afraid we are growing prosy—speaking for myself, at least. Old travellers used to report that the Danube, near its conjunction with the Drave, flowed in a stream quite separate from its tributary, though the same banks confined them both. The two currents were said to be perfectly distinct in colour, and their waters of quality so opposite, that the fish caught in the one were never to be found in the other. Now the question is, whether Reason and Understanding in the mind of man, do, in a similar way, reciprocally exclude each other.

ATHERTON. Gower says no; and the failures of mysticism powerfully support his position. I agree with him. I think we have all within us what I may

call Intuition, the poetical, and Understanding, the practical man; but that each of the two is the better for close fellowship with his brother. Let not Intuition disdain common-sense, and think irrationality a sign of genius. And you, Gower, would be the last to give the reins to logic only, and live by expediency, arithmetic, and mensuration.

MRS. ATHERTON. Thank you.

WILLOUGHBY. But there was occasion, surely, for Coleridge's exhortation to rise above the dividual particular notions we have gathered about us, to the higher region of the Universal Reason.

ATHERTON. By all means, let us clear our minds of prejudice, and seek the True for its own sake.

LOWESTOFFE. But I do not find that those who profess to have ascended to the common ground of Universal Reason, are one whit more agreed among themselves, than those who are disputing in the lists of logic about evidence.

WILLOUGHBY. They are not, I grant. They would attribute their want of unanimity, however, to the fact that some of them have not sufficiently purged their intuitional eyesight from everything personal and particular.

LOWESTOFFE. Who is to be judge in the matter? Who will say how much purging will suffice to assure a man that he has nowhere mistaken a 'wholesome Prejudice' for a divine intuition?

WILLOUGHBY. He must exercise his judgment——

GOWER. Exactly so; his critical, sifting faculty—his understanding. But that is contrary to the theory in question, which represents Understanding as utterly incapable in the Intuitional sphere. According to

Jacobi, it is the instinct of the logical faculty to contradict the intuitional—as the bat repudiates the sunshine.

ATHERTON. If the Christianity of mere logic hardens into a formula, the Christianity of mere intuition evaporates in a phantom.

WILLOUGHBY. But do not let us forget how limited is the logical faculty.

GOWER. So, for that matter, is the intuitional. Undeveloped by culture from without, its voice is incoherent, various, scarce audible oftentimes.

WILLOUGHBY. What logic can prove to me the Eternity of the Divine Nature? Is not that a transcendental truth?

ATHERTON. I grant it. But my understanding, observing and reasoning, has shown me convincingly that I must receive that truth on pain of believing an absurdity. In this way, the Understanding is satisfied (as Pascal observes it always should be), and acquiesces in a truth beyond itself. But if I have not thus used my Understanding as far as it will go, I am traversing the transcendental region without the passport it should give me,—I cannot render a reason —I only oracularly affirm—I am fast turning mystic.

LOWESTOFFE. But how this Intuition sees to work, or finds means to work, without contact with the other faculties of the mind, I cannot conceive. Has it a set of finer senses of its own? Has no one ever defined it?

GOWER. Several definitions have been attempted. I think Mark Antony's the best. He delivered it when he gave drunken Lepidus that hoaxing description of the crocodile. A mind with any depth of insight will

understand at once the fine symbolism of Shakspeare, and see that he is depicting Intuition. 'It is shaped, sir, like itself; and it is as broad as it hath breadth; it is just so high as it is, and moves with its own organs; it lives by that which nourishes it; and, the elements once out of it, it transmigrates.'

ATHERTON. In fact, Intuition is not to be termed one among or above the faculties of the mind. It is rather, like consciousness, related to them as species to individuals. As the man is, so are his intuitions. Previous observation, training, judgment, all combine to bring the mind to that point from which Intuition takes its survey, more or less extended.

LOWESTOFFE. Good. Our inner and our outer world contradict that separatist theory every day, by their action and reaction on each other. The man who dreads the internal light as an illusive Will-o'-the-Wisp, has often consulted his own inward bent, far more than he supposes, in choosing what authority he shall receive. The man who professes to transcend the external altogether is still moulded by it in a thousand unimagined modes.

WILLOUGHBY. The imperfect character of our recollection should make us very cautious, I admit. So much that has been imported into the mind looks native and spontaneous after a lapse of time. Many an idea, promulged as the dictum of Intuition—as having its source in the immemorial depths of our being, has been subsequently traced, even by its own author, to the external world.

GOWER. That gaberlunzie, Memory (whose wallet has so many holes), would step in oftener, if he did his duty, and say, like Edie Ochiltree, 'I mind the biggin o' it.'

ATHERTON. It seems to me so unfair and ungrateful that after having been so largely indebted, from the first, to the outer world, any man should pretend, at a certain point, to deny utterly that indispensable coadjutor in his inward development.

GOWER. You remind me of the affectation of the author in *Humphrey Clinker*, who professed such an antipathy to green fields as made him careful to sit with his back to the window all dinner-time,—though he had, in fact, passed his childhood with the asses on the village common.

LOWESTOFFE. Let us, then, celebrate the reconciliation of the pair—Reason and Understanding, if the terms are to be retained. So only can our nature realize its full productiveness,—as the richest mines lie always near the junction of two dissimilar rocks.

ATHERTON. I think spiritualism, which complains that religion is separated too widely from common life, will scarcely mend the matter by teaching men that they use one faculty, or set of faculties, about their week-day business, and a quite distinct one in their worship.

GOWER. As though we were to leave our understandings—like the sandals of old—at the door of our holy places.

ATHERTON. Enough on this question, I have only one remark to add. We have seen mysticism endeavouring to exclude all distinct form or expression, all vivid figure, from its apprehensions of spiritual truth; as if such clearness and warmth belonged to our meaner nature—were low and sensuous.

GOWER. Confounding spirituality with abstraction.

ATHERTON. Spiritualism now repeats the same error —is the revival of an old mistake in a new form. It shrinks from distinctness, mistaking it, I suppose, for so much gross materialism, or artificial formalism. It shuns, as far as possible, actual outward persons and events—as though reality were carnality—as though the fewer facts we acknowledged, the less formal we were sure to be—as though we were spiritual in proportion as we resolved sacred narrative into symbols of inward states or emotions, forsook history for reverie, and evidence for hazy sentiment. The Spanish Quietists were well nigh enjoining the exclusion of the conception of Christ's humanity from their higher contemplation, as an image too substantial and earthy. Spiritualism, in its tendency to escape from objective facts to subjective experience, displays a similarly unnatural timidity—a morbid aversion to that manly exercise of our whole nature on religious questions which we put forth on others.

GOWER. Thinking, I conclude, that the opposite to spirituality is, not sensuality or earthliness—but external reality.

WILLOUGHBY. Why look at me? You don't suppose I have a word to say in defence of such a curious confusion of thought?

LOWESTOFFE (*who has been turning over the leaves of a Shakspeare while listening.*) If any one of you should ever take it into his head to write a book about mysticism——

ATHERTON. Forbid it, my good genius!

LOWESTOFFE. I have a motto for him—a motto by 'sweet Bully Bottom,' quite in the past-all-utterance mystical strain.

‘I have had a most rare vision. I have had a dream—past the wit of man to say what dream it was. Man is but an ass if he go about to expound this dream. Methought I was, there is no man can tell what. Methought I was, and methought I had. But man is but a patched fool, if he will offer to say what methought I had. The eye of man hath not heard, the ear of man hath not seen; man’s hand is not able to taste, his tongue to conceive, nor his heart to report, what my dream was. I will get Peter Quince to write a ballad of this dream: it shall be called Bottom’s Dream, because it hath no bottom.

CHAPTER III.

What pale dictatress in the air
Feeds, smiling sadly, her fine ghostlike form,
With earth’s real blood and breath, the beauteous life
She makes despised for ever?

BROWNING.

These lines hovered in Gower’s memory that night, as he walked home after the conversation just recorded. He thought how applicable they were to asceticism,—especially to that intense asceticism of the mind which, not content with wasting the body and searing the sense, prides itself on starving Reason and blinding Imagination,—which eschews all form and figure, and affects naked truth, without

a medium or an envelope. His was a nature which saw everything in figure. His mind moved everywhere among pictures. For him to dispense with metaphor and parable—with significant raiment and dramatic action for his ideas, would have been almost equivalent to dispensing with ideas altogether. So he quickened his steps; for the starless, unfeatured night seemed to him too much to resemble the blank and bleak Abstraction of the severer mystics,—that tyrannous curfew of warm natural life and of all bright thoughts.

He soon reached his abode, where a blithe fire awaited him, radiating its almost animated welcome over easel, busts, and books. Assuming light study vesture, he leaned back in his arm-chair, enjoying slippered ease. He would not light his lamp, but reclining in the very mood for reverie, watched the fire—now the undisputed magician of his studio,—as it called up or dismissed, with its waving flame, the distorted shadows of familiar things on wall and ceiling. He himself was soon occupied in like manner, waywardly calling forth, linking, severing, a company of shadows out of the past.

In a half-waking, half-dreaming twilight, Gower seemed to see the dusky form of the Indian, crouched on his mat beside a holy river, awaiting divine insensibility. There was the Yogi, gathered up in his patch of shade, like an insect rolled under a leaf; while, above, the beating sun-glare trampled over the plains, strewn with his reflected rays, as over an immeasurable threshing-floor.

Then he dreamed that he stood in a Persian garden, and before him were creeping plants, trained on wires slanting upward to a point, and in and out and up and down this flower-minster, hung with bells,

darted those flying jewels, the humming-birds: the sun's rays as they slanted on their glancing coats seemed to dash off in a spray of rainbow colours. Some pierced the nectaries of the flowers with their fine bills; others soared upward, and as they were lost in the dazzling air, the roses swung their censers, and the nightingales sang an assumption-hymn for them. Yet this scene changed incessantly. Every now and then the pinnacle of flowers assumed giant size, —was a needle of rock, shooting up out of a chasm of hanging vegetation; and innumerable spirits—winged souls of Sufis, were striving to reach the silent glistening peak. There was a flutter and a pulsing in the sky—as with summer lightning at night,—and the palpitation of some vast eyelid made light and darkness succeed each other with quick throbs. Now it was the pyramid of flowers, now the star-crowned point of rock. So time and space were surpassed—sported with. Instants were ages, he thought, and cycles ran their round in a moment. The vault of heaven was now a hanging flower-cup; and presently the feather of a humming-bird expanded to a sunset of far-streaming gold and purple.

A leaping flame caused these alternations in Dreamland, as it lit or left in shadow his closed eyes.

Then he stood on the desolate Campagna, where before him stretched the ruins of the Roman aqueducts. The broken arches, dotting at intervals the far waste of withered green, drew no more water from the hills for the million-mouthed City in the horizon. Their furrowed, beaten age held in its wrinkles only roots of maidenhair, and sometimes little rain-pools along the crevices,—the scornful charity of any passing shower. In a moment the

wilderness grew populous with the sound of voices and the clangour of tools.—A swarm of workmen, clustered about the broken links of the chain, were striving to piece them together again—to bind up the mighty artery, and set it flowing as of old. But an insatiable morass sucked down the stones they brought. Waggons full of gods (such as moved in the old triumphs), of statues monstrous, bestial, many-limbed, from all the temples of the nations, were unladen, with sacrifice and augury, and the idols deposited on the treacherous quagmire, only to sink down, a drowning mass, with bowing heads and vainly-lifted arms. Then the whole undulating plain appeared to roll up in vapour, and a wind, carrying in it a sound of psalms, and driving before it a snowy foam of acacia blossoms, swept clear the field of vision. No; the old influence was to flow no more from the Olympian Houses above that blue line of hills. Great Pan was dead. The broken cisterns would hold no water.

He stood next before the mouth of a cavern, partly overhung with a drooping hair of tropical plants. At his side was a nun, who changed, as is the wont of dreams, into a variety of persons. At one time, she was St. Theresa, then Christina Mirabilis, and presently Gower thought he recognised Theresa once more. He followed his conductress into the cavern, in the gloom of which a hermit rivulet was pattering along, telling its pebble beads. As they passed on, the night-birds in the black recesses of the rock shrieked and hooted at them. As he touched the dank sides of the passage, from time to time his hand would rest on some loathly wet lump, shuffling into a cranny, or some nameless, gelid shape fell asunder at his touch, opening gashes in itself where lay, in rows, seeds of great tarantula eye-balls, that ran away dissolved in

venomous rheum. Bat-like things flapped down from funnel-shaped holes: polypi felt after his face with slimy fingers: crabs, with puffed human faces, slid under his tread; and skinny creatures, as it were featherless birds, with faces like a horse's skull, leaned over and whinnied at him. 'These,' said Theresa, 'are the obscene hell-brood whose temptations make so terrible the entrance on the Higher Life.'

The long cavern had not yet made a single winding, and he turned, as the darkness increased, to have a last look at the entrance, whence the outer sunshine still twinkled after them. He could see a green hill that faced the mouth, lying off like a bright transparency. Or was it a spot brought into the disc of his great rock-telescope, from some planet of perpetual summer—one of those that play in the hair of the sun? Christina, impatient of this sinful looking back, urged him onward. A palm-branch she carried grew luminous, and its plume of flame dropping sparks, became their torch. She paused to point out to him some plants growing in a black mould. Birds had carried in thus far the seeds from which they sprang; but there had been no sun-light to give them colour, and their form was uncertain and defectively developed. 'Behold,' said she, 'these saintly flowers. Mark that holy pallor! The sun never stained their pureness with those gaudy hues men admire. Yon garish world can show no such perfectness: see them, they are hueless, scentless, well-nigh formless!' 'Sickly, blanched abortions!' exclaimed the dreamer, so loudly that he almost awoke. 'We want more life, not less—fuller—sunnier!' Christina crossed herself piously to hear abstraction thus blasphemed. And now the passage, widening, opened on the central hall of rock, that branched out into depths of

darkness every way, and was fretted with gleaming stalactites. There were amber volutes and brittle clusters of tawny bubbles; lily-bells of stone, flowers with sparry thorns and twining stream-like stems; creamy falls from slabs of enamel, motionless, yet seeming ever to drop from ledge to ledge; membranous curtains, and net-work, and traceries; tissues and lawnlike folds of delicate marble; while in the centre, reaching to the misty summit of the dome, stood a huge sheaf of pillars, like alabaster organ-pipes. A solemn music trembled and swelled, and as its rising volume shook the air, voices sang —'Weep for the sins of men!' There was a wild burst of sound; then sudden silence; and, above and around, nothing was audible but a universal trickling and running, a dripping and dropping and plashing, while the palm-torch flashed on innumerable tear-drops, hanging on every pendant point and jutting ledge, or sliding down the glistening rock.

After a while, it seemed to be Theresa who spoke to him and said, 'Here in these depths is warmth, when the world above is locked in ice; and when the surface is parched, here dwells chaste coolness, safe encelled. Our fire seems numbness to a blinded world; and we are frost to its dog-day rages.' With that a spell seemed to come over her hearer. The spirit of the words became his spirit. The fate of an empire seemed as nothing in his eyes beside his next prospect of rapture, or his success in straining out another half-pint of tears. In a moment he was turned to stone. He had become a gargoyle high up on Strasburg Cathedral, and was spouting water from his lolling tongue at the circling birds.

Gower next found himself, on a cold grey morning in spring, in a vine country, where men and women

were toiling up the steep hills on either side a river, carrying baskets of earth. Last winter's rain had swept away the thin soil to the bone, and they must lay a new one about their vine-sticks. In the midst of their miserable labour, these poor people saw standing among them a majestic stranger, wrapped in a robe. Gower thought he recognised Swedenborg at once. 'Stay,' cried the seer, 'God hath made a soil already for you. Build no other. Your own stony hearts have made the hill seem to you as iron.' They heard: each seemed to take a stone out of his bosom, and hurl it down the steep; when straightway every foot sank deep into a rich and kindly earth, and a shout of joy broke forth, echoed far among the cloudy gorges.

Once more Gower thought he stood upon the shoulder of a volcano, among the clinking scoriæ. It was growing dark. A strange shape of fire was suddenly at his side, helmed with a flaring cresset, under the light of which the rocky projections around glowed like the burnished beaks of galleys. Over his shoulders hung a mantle of azure flame, fringed with sparks and tasselled with brushes of fire. On his breast was what seemed a hauberk of some emerald incandescence, that brightened or paled with every sinuous motion of the lithe frame, as when the wind comes and goes about an ignited tree-trunk in a burning forest. The form said—'I am the Flame-king: behold a vision of my works'—and passed his hand before the eyes of the dreamer. Gower saw columns of steam shot up from an Indian sea, with stones and mire, under a great canopy of smoke. Then all was calm: a new island had been born; and the waves licked the black fire-cub. Next he saw a burning mountain, lighting, at the dead of night, glaciers and snowy precipices—as the fire-

cross of a great festival lights the shafts and arches of some darkened cathedral. Avalanches fell, looking, under the glare, like sliding continents of ruby, and were shut down in their chasm-caskets with a noise of thunder. He beheld the burning of brave palaces, of captured cities, of prairies where the fire hunts alone, and the earth shakes with the trample of a myriad hoofs flying from the destroyer.

Then he stood on the mountain side, as before; but it was broad day, and beneath him lay in the sun a sky-like bay, white houses, and the parti-coloured fields under the haze, like a gay escutcheon, half-hidden by a gauzy housing. Beside him, in place of the Flame-king, stood a shining One fantastically clad in whatsoever the sunshine loves best to inform and turn to glory. The mantle slanting from his shoulders shone like a waterfall which runs gold with sunlight; his breast mirrored a sunset; and translucent forest-leaves were woven for his tunic. His cheek glowed, delicate as the finely-cut camelia, held against the sun. 'I am King Sunlight,' he said. 'Mine is the even kindliness of the summer-time. I make ready harvest-home and vintage. I triumph in the green-meshed tropic forests, with their fern-floors, and garland-galleried tree-tops, where stand the great trunks which, interlaced with their thick twining underwood, are set like fishers' stakes with their nets, in those aerial tides of heavy fragrance. There I make all things green threaten to shoot faster than the cumbered river can run through the wilds of verdure. I drive Winter away, as though I were his shepherd, and he leaves fragments of his fleece in snow-patches among the hills, when I pursue him. I love no flaming ascents, no tossing meteoric splendours. I overgrow the strife-scars and fire-rents, which my Titan brother makes, with peace-breathing

green. I urge thee to no glittering leap against the rapids of thy natural mortal element. With my shining in thy heart, thou shalt have peace, whether thine outward life raise or sink thee,—as he who rows in the glory-wake under a sunrise, is bright and golden whether on the crest of the wave or in the hollow. I put courage into the heart of the Lady in *Comus*, when alone in the haunted wood.—A quite true story, by the way,' continued the Phantom, with a sudden familiarity, 'for those of you mortals who can receive it. Wilt thou come with me, and work humbly at what lies next thy hand, or wait to surpass humanity, or go travelling to find Michael's sword to clear thy land withal? With my shining in thy heart, every flinty obstacle shall furnish thee with new fire; and in thine affliction I will bring thee from every blasted pine an Ariel swift to do thee service: so shall thy troubles be thy ministers. Shall it be the splendour, or the inward sunshine?'

As Gower turned from the approaching Flame-king, he clasped the hand of Sunlight with such vehemence that he awoke.

It was one o'clock. He hastened to bed, and there slept soundly: I am sure he had dreamed more than enough for one night.

From the very church-tower which struck one that winter morning, the ensuing spring heard a merry peal of bells,—such a rocking and a ringing as never since has shaken those old stones. I daresay Willoughby would tell you that the bells made so merry because he had just finished his romance. Don't believe him: suspect rather, with your usual sagacity, that Lionel Gower and Kate Merivale had something to do with it.

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Zerbino, Prince, by Tieck, ii. 343, *note*.

Zinzendorf, ii. 308.

Zwickau, the fanatics of, ii. 44.

THE END.

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Footnotes

1. *Die Christliche Mystik.* Von Dr. Ludwig Noack. Königsberg.

2.

> How fruitful may the smallest circle grow,

If we the secret of its culture know.

3.

The writer, who goes by the name of Dionysius Areopagita, teaches that the highest spiritual truth is revealed only to those 'who have transcended every ascent of every holy height, and have left behind all divine lights and sounds and heavenly discoursings, and have passed into that Darkness where He really is (as saith the Scripture) who is above all things.'—*De Mysticâ Theologiâ*, cap. i. § 3.

4.

On the word μύησις Suidas says, Εἴρηται δὲ παρὰ τὸ τὰ μυστήρια καὶ ἀπόρρητα τελεῖσθαι· ἢ διὰ τὸ μυόντας τὰς αἰσθήσεις καὶ ἐπέκεινα σωματικῆς φαντασίας νενομένους, τὰς θείας εἰσδέχεσθαι ἐλλάμψεις.

Suicer also cites Hesychius: *Etym. Mag.*—Μύστης, παρὰ τὸ μύω, τὸ καμμύω. μύοντες γὰρ τὰς αἰσθήσεις καὶ ἔξω τῶν σαρκικῶν φροντίδων γινόμενοι, οὕτω τὰς θείας ἀναλάμψεις ἐδέχοντο.

5.

See Bingham, *Antiq. of the Christian Church*, vol. ix. pp. 96-105. Clement of Alexandria abounds in examples of the application to Christian doctrine of the phraseology in use concerning the heathen mysteries;—*e.g. Protrept.* cap. xii. § 120.

6.

Both Plotinus and Proclus speak of the highest revelation concerning divine things as

vouchsafed to the soul which withdraws into itself, and, dead to all that is external, ‘gazes with closed eyes’ (μύσασαν). See Tholuck’s *Blüthensammlung aus der Morgenlandischen Mystik*; *Einleitung*, § I, p. 6. Dr. Tholuck is the only German writer I have seen who throws light on the word in question by accurately investigating its etymology and successive meanings; and I readily acknowledge my debt to his suggestions on this point.

7.

Dionysius thus describes the mystical adept who has reached the summit of union:—‘Then is he delivered from all seeing and being seen, and passes into the truly mystical darkness of ignorance, where he excludes all intellectual apprehensions (τὰς γνωστικὰς ἀντιλήψεις), and abides in the utterly Impalpable and Invisible; being wholly His who is above all, with no other dependence, either on himself or any other; and is made one, as to his nobler part, with the utterly Unknown, by the cessation of all knowing; and at the same time, in that very knowing nothing, he knows what transcends the mind of man.’—*De Mysticâ Theologiâ*, cap. i. p. 710. *S. Dion. Areop. Opp.* Paris, 1644.

So again he exhorts Timothy ‘by assiduous practice in mystical contemplations to abandon the senses and all operations of the intellect; all objects of sense and all objects of thought, all things non-existent and existent (αἰσθητὰ = οὐκ ὄντα, νοητὰ = ὄντα), and ignorantly to strive upwards towards Union as close as possible with Him who is above all essence and

knowledge:—inasmuch as by a pure, free, and absolute separation (ἐκστάσει) of himself from all things, he will be exalted (stripped and freed from everything) to the superessential radiance of the divine darkness.'—p. 708.

About the words rendered 'intellectual apprehensions' commentators differ. The context, the antithesis, and the parallel passage in the earlier part of the chapter, justify us in understanding them in their strict sense, as conveying the idea of cessation from all mental action whatsoever.

8.

See Note, p. 23.

9.

See Wilkins' *Bagvat-Gita*, pp. 63-65. *Ward*, ii. 180. Also, *Asiatic Researches*, vol. xvii. pp. 169-313, containing an account of these Yogis, by Horace Hayman Wilson. One sect, we are told, have a way of contemplating Vishnu in miniature, by imagining the god in their heart, about the size of an open hand, and so adoring him from top to toe. In this gross conception of an indwelling deity these Hindoos do indeed exceed St. Theresa, who after swallowing the wafer conceives of Christ as prisoner in her inwards, and, making her heart a doll's-house, calls it a temple. But beyond her, and beyond the Indians, too, in sensuousness, are the Romanist stories of those saints in whom it is declared that a *post-mortem* examination has disclosed the figure of Christ, or the insignia of his passion, miraculously modelled in the chambers of the heart.

10.

Asiatic Researches, *loc. cit.* The worshipped principle of Hindooism is not love, but power. Certain objects are adored as containing divine energy. The Guru is a representative and vehicle of divine power—a Godful man, and accordingly the most imperious of task-masters. The prodigies of asceticism, so abundant in Indian fable, had commonly for their object the attainment of superhuman powers. Thus Taraki, according to the Siva Puran, stood a hundred years on tip-toe, lived a hundred years on air, a hundred on fire, &c. for this purpose. —Notes to *Curse of Kehama*, p. 237.

The following passage, cited by Ward, exhibits the subjective idealism of these Hindoos in its most daring absurdity. 'Let every one meditate upon himself; let him be the worshipper and the worship. Whatever you see is but yourself, and father and mother are nonentities; you are the infant and the old man, the wise man and the fool, the male and the female; it is you who are drowned in the stream—you who pass over; you are the sensualist and the ascetic, the sick man and the strong; in short, whatsoever you see, that is you, as bubbles, surf, and billows are all but water.'

Now, there is an obvious resemblance between this idealism and that of Fichte. The Indian and the German both ignore the notions formed from mere sensible experience; both dwell apart from experience, in a world fashioned for themselves out of 'pure thought;' both identify thought and being, subject and object. But here the likeness ends. The points of contrast are

obvious. The Hindoo accepts as profoundest wisdom what would be an unfair caricature of the system of Fichte. The idealism of the Oriental is dreamy and passive; it dissolves his individuality; it makes him a particle, wrought now into this, now into that, in the ever-shifting phantasmagoria of the universe; he has been, he may be, he, therefore, in a sense is, anything and everything. Fichte's philosophy, on the contrary, rests altogether on the intense activity—on the autocracy of the Ego, which posits, or creates, the Non-Ego. He says, 'The activity and passivity of the Ego are one and the same. For in as far as it does *not* posit a something in itself, it posits that something in the Non-Ego. Again, the activity and passivity of the Non-Ego are one and the same. In as far as the Non-Ego works upon the Ego, and will absorb a something in it, the Ego posits that very thing in the Non-Ego.' (*Grundlage der gesammten Wissenschaftslehre*, § 3. *Sämmtliche Werke*, v. i. p. 177.) Action is all in all with him. God he calls 'a pure Action' (*reines Handeln*), the life and principle of a supersensuous order of the world—just as I am a pure Action, as a link in that order. (*Gerichtliche Verantwortung gegen die Anklage des Atheismus, Werke*, v. p. 261.) Charged with denying personality to God, Fichte replies that he only denied him that conditioned personality which belongs to ourselves—a denial, I suppose, in which we should all agree. The only God in his system which is not an uninfluential abstraction is manifestly the Ego —that is dilated to a colossal height, and deified. Pre-eminently anti-mystical as was the

natural temperament of Fichte, here he opens a door to the characteristic misconception of mysticism—the investiture of our own notions and our own will with a divine authority or glory. He would say, 'The man of genius *does* think divine thoughts. But the man who is unintelligible, who, in the very same province of pure thought as that occupied by the true philosopher, thinks only at random and incoherently; *he* is mistaken, I grant, in arrogating inspiration—*him* I call a mystic.' But of unintelligibility or incoherence what is to be the test,—who is to be the judge? In this anarchy of gods, numerous as thinkers, one deity must have as much divine right as another. There can be no appeal to experience, which all confessedly abandon; no appeal to facts, which each Ego creates after its own fashion for itself.

11.

Philo gives an account of the Therapeutæ referred to in the letter, in his treatise *De Vitâ Contemplativâ*.

Passages corresponding with those contained in the letter contributed by Atherton, concerning the enmity of the flesh and the divine nature of the soul, are to be found in the works of Philo, *Sacr. Leg. Alleg.* lib. iii. p. 101 (ed. Mangey); lib. ii. p. 64; *De eo quod det. potiori insid. soleat*, pp. 192, 208.

Philo's interpretation of the scriptural account concerning Babel is contained in the *De Confus. Linguarum*, p. 424. His exposition of Gen. i. 9, illustrates the same principle, *Sacr. Leg. Alleg.* lib. i. p. 54; so of Gen. xxxvii. 12; *De eo quod*

pot. p. 192.

Eusebius shows us how Eleazar and Aristobulus must have prepared the way for Philo in this attempt to harmonize Judaism with the letters and philosophy of Greece. *Præp. Evang.* lib. viii. 9, 10.

12.

The testimony of Cicero and Iamblichus may be received as indicating truly the similarity of spirit between Pythagoras and Plato,—their common endeavour to escape the sensuous, and to realize in contemplative abstraction that tranquillity, superior to desire and passion, which assimilated men to gods. The principles of both degenerated, in the hands of their latest followers, into the mysteries of a theurgic freemasonry. The scattered Pythagoreans were, many of them, incorporated in the Orphic associations, and their descendants were those itinerant vendors of expiations and of charms—the ἀγύρται of whom Plato speaks (*Repub.* ii. p. 70)—the Grecian prototypes of Chaucer's Pardonere. Similarly, in the days of Iamblichus, the charlatans glorified themselves as the offspring of Plato.

13.

Clement of Alexandria gives a full account of the various stories respecting this idol, *Protrept.* c. iv. p. 42 (ed. Potter); moreover an etymology and legend to match, *Strom.* lib. i. p. 383.

Certain sorts of wood and metal were supposed peculiarly appropriate to certain deities. The art of the theurgist consisted partly in ascertaining the virtues of such substances; and

it was supposed that statues constructed of a particular combination of materials, correspondent with the tastes and attributes of the deity represented, possessed a mysterious influence attracting the Power in question, and inducing him to take up his residence within the image. Iamblichus lays down this principle of sympathy in the treatise *De Mysteriis*, v. 23, p. 139 (ed. Gale, 1678). Kircher furnishes a description of this statue of Serapis, *Œdip. Ægypt.* i. 139.

14.

See *Histoire de l'Ecole d'Alexandrie*, par M. Jules Simon, tom. i. p. 99.

15.

See Note, p. 82.

16.

See *Jules Simon*, ii. pp. 626, &c.

17.

See Note to Chap. III. p. 92.

18.

The statements made in this and the preceding paragraph, and the reasons adduced by Plotinus in support of them, will be found in the fifth Ennead, lib. v. c. i. He assumes at once that the mind must be, from its very nature, the standard of certitude. He asks (p. 519) Πῶς γὰρ ἄν ἔτι νοῦς, ἀνοηταίνων εἴη· δεῖ ἄρα αὐτὸν ἀεὶ εἰδέναι καὶ· μὴ δ'ἂν ἐπιλαθέσθαί πότε. He urges that if Intelligibles were without the mind it could possess but images of them; its knowledge, thus mediate, would be imperfect,

p. 521. Truth consists in the harmony of the mind with itself. Καὶ γὰρ αὖ, οὕτως οὐδ᾽ ἀποδείξεως δεῖ, οὐδὲ πίστεως ὅτι οὕτως αὐτὸς γὰρ οὕτως. καὶ ἐναργὴς αὐτὸς αυτῷ. καὶ εἴ τι πρὸ αὐτοῦ, ὅτι ἐξ αὐτοῦ. καὶ εἴ τι μετ᾽ ἐκεῖνο, ὅτι αὐτός. καὶ οὐδεὶς πιστότερος αὐτῷ περὶ αὐτοῦ. καὶ ὅτι, ἐκεῖ τοῦτο, καὶ ὄντως. ὥστε καὶ ἡ ὄντως ἀλήθεια, οὐ συμφωνοῦσα ἄλλῳ, ἄλλ᾽ ἑαυτῇ. καὶ οὐδὲν παρ αὐτὴν ἄλλο λέγει καὶ ἔστι. καὶ ὅ ἔστι τοῦτο καὶ λέγει, p. 522.

19.

Enn. iii. lib. v. capp. 2 & 7. There the gardens of Jove, and Porus, with his plenty, are said to be allegorical representations of the intellectual food of a soul nourished and delighted by the truths of Reason. Poverty, again, with its sense of need, is the source of intellectual desire. Comp. Plato, *Symp.* p. 429 (*Bekk*).

20.

See Note 2, p. 82.

21.

Enn. i. lib. 3, c. 1.

22.

There is above a light which makes visible the Creator to that creature who finds his peace only in the vision of Him.

23.

See Schelling's *System des Trancendentalen Idealismus*, pp. 19-23 (Tübingen, 1800), and Chalybæus, *Hist. Entw. d. Spec. Phil.* p. 244.

24.

Aids to Reflection, pp. 225, 249. The reader is referred to a discriminating criticism of this doctrine in the *British Quarterly Review*, No. xxxvii.

25.

See Note, p. 92.

26.

J. Simon, i. 154; ii. 173.

27.

J. Simon, liv. iii. chap. 4.

28.

See Note, p. 106.

29.

Jules Simon, ii. 218.

30.

All these orders gaze admiring upward, and exert an influence downward (each on that immediately beneath it), so that they all together reciprocally draw and are drawn toward God. Dionysius gave himself with such zeal to the contemplation of them that he named and distinguished them as I have done.

31.

Athanasii Opp. Vita S. Antonii. The vision alluded to is related p. 498.

32.

Poiret, *Bibliotheca Mysticorum*, p. 95. Macarius gives great prominence to the doctrine of Union—describes the streaming in of the Hypostatic Light—how the spiritual nature is all-pervaded by the glory, and even the body is not so gross as to be impenetrable by the divine radiance. Some centuries later we find the monks of Mount Athos professing to discern this supernatural effulgence illuminating their stomachs. Gass, *Die Mystik des N. Cabasilas*, p. 56.

33.

In the year 533 the books of Dionysius were

cited by the Severians, and their genuineness called in question by the bishop because neither Athanasius nor Cyril had made any allusion to them. *Acta Concil. Hard.* ii. p. 1159.

34.

For the passages authenticating this account, see *Dion. Areop. Opp.* as follows:—

(1.) *De Div. Nom.* c. iv. § 1; v. 3, 6, 8; vi. 2, 3; i. 1. *De Eccl. Hier.* i. 3.

(2.) *De Cœl. Hier.* i. 2, 3; v. 3, 4; vii. *De Eccl. Hier.* i. 1; x. 3. The resemblance of this whole process to the Pröodos and Epistrophe of Plotinus is sufficiently obvious.

(3.) *De Div. Nom.* iv. 20, p. 488. The chase after evil runs through sections 24-34. He sums up in one place thus:—'In a word, good springs from the sole and complete cause, but evil from many and partial defects. God knows the evil as good, and with him the causes of things evil are beneficent powers.' Proclus seeks escape from the hopeless difficulty in precisely the same way.

Concerning the *Via negativa* and *affirmativa*, see *De Div. Nom.* i. 1, 5, 4; *De Cœl. Hier.* xv.; and *De Myst. Theol.* i. 2, 3.

(4.) *Ibid.* Also, *Ep. ad. Dorotheum*, *De Myst. Theol.* iii. pp. 714, 721.

35.

See Meier, '*Dionysii Areop. et Mysticorum sœculi* xiv. *doctrinæ inter se comparantur*.' He remarks justly 'causæ ad Causatum relationem cum relatione generis ad speciem confudit', p. 13.

36.

The *hyper* and the *a* privative are in constant requisition with Dionysius. He cannot suffer any ordinary epithet to go alone, and many of his adjectives march pompously, attended by a *hyper* on one side, and a superlative termination on the other.

37.

The later Greek theology modified the most objectionable parts of the Dionysian doctrine, while continuing to reverence him as a Father. See Ullmann's *Nicholas von Methone*.

38.

Aristot. *Eth. Nic.* lib. x. c. 8.—See Note, Page 123.

39.

See Note 1, p. 146.

40.

See Note 2, p. 146.

41.

Vita, ii. cap. v.

42.

See the account of his diet, and of the feebleness and sickness consequent on his austerities, by the same biographer (Alanus), *Vita*, ii. cap. x., in the Paris reprint of 1839, from the Benedictine edition of Bernard, tom. ii. p. 2426. John Eremita describes the devil's visit to Bernard, 'ut ungeret sandalia sua secundum consuetudinem,' and relates the rebuke of the proud monk who would not wash

the *scutellæ* in the kitchen.—*Vita*, iv. p. 2508.

43.

Vita, ii. cap. x. 32.

44.

Epp. cx., cxi.

45.

Chronologia Bernardina, Opp. tom. i. p. 83.

46.

Epist. cxli.

47.

De Consideratione, IV. iii. 7, and II. vi. 11, pp. 1028 and 1060.

48.

Epist. ccclxv. to the Archbishop of Mayence, against the fanatic Rudolph.

49.

He thus distinguishes Faith, Intellection, and Opinion:-Fides est voluntaria quædam et certa prælibatio necdum propalatæ veritatis. Intellectus est rei cujuscumque invisibilis certa et manifesta notitia. Opinio est quasi pro vero habere aliquid; quod falsum esse nescias.... Quid igitur distat (fides) ab intellectu? Nempe quod etsi non habet incertum non magis quam intellectus, habet tamen involucrum, quod non intellectus.... Nil autem malumus scire, quam quæ fide jam scimus. Nil supererit ad beatitudinem, cum quæ jam certa sunt nobis, erunt æque et nuda.—*De Consideratione*, V. 4, p. 1075.

50.

See Note, p. 149.

51.

See Note, p. 149.

52.

See Note 1, p. 150.

53.

See Note 2, p. 150.

54.

Sane in hoc gradu (tertio) diu statur: et nescio si a quoquam hominum quartus in hac vita perfecte apprehenditur, ut se scilicet diligat homo tantum propter Deum. Asserant hoc si qui experti sunt: mihi, fateor, impossibile videtur.—*De diligendo Deo*, xv. and *Epist.* xi. 8. And, again, in the same treatise (vii. 17),—Non enim sine præmio diligitur Deus, etsi absque præmii intuitu diligendus sit.... Verus amor se ipso contentus est. Habet præmium, sed id quod amatur.

55.

See Note, p. 151.

56.

Light and Colour.—Light, thou eternally one, dwell above by the great One Eternal; Colour, thou changeful, in love come to Humanity down!

57.

Liebner's *Hugo of St. Victor*, p. 21.—This account of his early studies is given by Hugo in

his *Didascalion*.

58.

Schmid, *Der Mysticismus des M. A.*, p. 303.

59.

Comp. *De Sacramentis*, lib. v. p. x. c. 4. (tom. iii. p. 411. Garzon's edition of his works, Cologne, 1617.)

60.

See Liebner, p. 315.

61.

De Sacramentis, lib. i. p. i. cap. 12.—Quisquis sic ordinatus est, dignus est lumine solis: ut mente sursum erecta et desiderio in superna defixo lumen summæ veritatis contemplanti irradiet: et jam non per speculum in ænigmate, *sed in seipsa ut est* veritatem agnoscat et sapiat.

62.

See Note, p. 170.

63.

Tom. iii. p. 356.—In speaking of the days of creation and of the analogous seasons in the new creation within man, he says that as God first saw the light, that it was good, and then divided it from the darkness, so we must first try the spirit and examine our light with care, ere we part it from what we call darkness, since Satan can assume the garb of an angel of light.

For an elaborate account of his entire theology, the reader is referred to Liebner's *Hugo von St. Victor und die Theologischen Richtungen seiner Zeit*; one of the best of the numerous

monographs German scholarship has produced.

64.

Richardi S. Victoris Opp. (Lyons, 1534), *De Preparatione animi ad contemplationem*, fol. 39.

65.

Ibid. cap. xli.

66.

Engelhardt, *Richard von St. Victor*, p. 6.

67.

See Note, p. 171.

68.

The six degrees of contemplation are as follows (*De Contemp.* i. 6, fol. 45):

1 In imaginatione secundum solam imaginationem.
2 In imaginatione secundum rationem.
3 In ratione secundum imaginationem.
4 In ratione secundum rationem.
5 Supra rationem sed non præter rationem.
6 Supra rationem videtur esse præter rationem.

The office of Imagination to which the first two belong is Thought (*Cogitatio*); the office of Reason, Investigation (*Meditatio*); that of Intelligence, Contemplation (*Contemplatio*).—*Ibid.* cap. 3. These three states are distinguished with much care, and his definition of the last is as follows:—Contemplatio est perspicax et liber animi contuitus in res perspiciendas undequaque diffusus.—*Ibid.* cap. 4. He draws the distinction between intelligibilia and intellectibilia in cap. 7; the former = invisibilia

ratione tamen comprehensibilia; the latter = invisibilia et humanæ rationi incomprehensibilia. The four lower kinds are principally occupied, he adds, with created objects, the two last with what is uncreated and divine.—Fol. 45.

69.

See Note, p. 171.

70.

See Note, p. 172.

71.

The *Heiligenleben* of Hermann von Fritslar has been recently edited by Franz Pfeiffer, in his *Ausgabe der Deutschen Mystiker* (Leipsig, 1845). Hermann says himself repeatedly that he had caused his book to be written (*schreiben lassen*) and there is every reason to believe that he was, like Rulman Merswin and Nicholas of Basle, his contemporaries, a devout layman,—one of a class among the laity characteristic of that age and neighbourhood, who, without entering into an order, spent the greater part of their time in the exercises of religion, and of their fortune on religious objects. Though he could not write, he could read, and his book is confessedly a compilation from many books and from the sermons and the sayings of learned and godly men. He says, Diz buch ist zu sammene gelesen ûzze vile anderen bucheren und ûzze vile predigâten und ûzze vil lêrêren. —*Vorrede.*

72.

Concerning these sects, see Ullmann,

Reformatoren vor der Reformation, vol. ii. pp. 1-18. The fullest account is given of them in a masterly Latin treatise by Mosheim, *De Beghardis et Beguinabus*. He enters at length into the discussion of their name and origin; details the various charges brought against them, and gives the bulls and acts issued for their suppression. See especially the circular of John Ochsenstein, Bishop of Strasburg, cap. iv. § xi. p. 255.

73.

Authority for these statements concerning the literature of the period, will be found in Gervinus, *Geschichte der poetischen National-Literatur der Deutschen*, part vi. §§ 1, 2, 5.

74.

Johannes Tauler von Strasburg, by Dr. Carl Schmidt, pp. 8-10; and Laguille's *Histoire d'Alsace*, liv. xxiv.

75.

Meister Eghart spricht: wer alle cit allein ist, der ist gottes wirdige; vnt wer alliu cit do heimenen ist, dem ist got gegenwürtig; vnt wer alliu cit stat in einem gegenwürtigen nu, in dem gebirt got der vatter sinen sune an vnderlas.—*Sprüche Deutscher Mystiker*, in Wackernagel's *Altdeutsches Lesebuch*, p. 889.

76.

Meister Eghart sprach: vnt wem in einem anders ist denne in dem andern, vnt dem got lieber ist in einem denne in dem andern, der mensche ist grobe, vnt noch verre vnt ein kint. Aber dem got gelich ist in allen, der ist ce man

worden.—*Ibid.*

Both this saying and the foregoing are expressions for that total indifference and self-abandonment so strenuously inculcated by the mystics. He who lives weaned from the world, alone with God, without regrets, without anticipations, 'stands in a present Now,' and sees the divine love as clearly in his sorrows as in his joys,—does not find 'one thing other than another.' There is exaggeration in suppressing, as Eckart would do, the instinct of thanksgiving for special benefaction; but in his strong language lies couched a great truth,—that only in utter self-surrender can man find abiding peace.

77.

Alles das in der gottheyt ist, das ist ein, vnd davon ist nicht zu sprechen. Got der würcket, die gotheyt nit, sy hat auch nicht zu würckende, in ir ist auch kein werck. Got vnt gotheyt hat underscheyd, an würcken vnd an nit würcken.

Was ist das letst end? Es ist die verborgen finsternusz der ewigen gotheit, vnd ist unbekant, vnd wirt nymmerme bekant. (See a paper on Eckart, by Dr. Carl Schmidt in the *Theol. Stud. u. Kritiken*, 1839, 3, p. 693.) Comp. the following:—Got ist noch gut noch besser, noch allerbest, vnd ick thue also unrecht, wenn ick Got gut heisse, rechte ase ob ick oder er etwas wiz weiss und ick es schwarz heisse.—*Ibid.* p. 675. This last assertion was one of the counts of accusation in the bull of 1330.

78.

Martensen's *Meister Eckart* (Hamburg, 1842), p. 22.—The divine communication assumes with Eckart the form of philosophical necessity. The man emptied of Self is infallibly full of Deity, after the fashion of the old principle, 'Nature abhors a vacuum.' Yet even this doctrine is not wholly false. It is the misrepresentation of a Christian truth. Its correlative verity is this,—that the kingdom of grace, like the kingdom of nature, has its immutable laws. He who seeks shall find; as we sow we reap, with unerring certainty. Gravitation is not more sure than the announcement, 'With that man will I dwell who is of a meek and contrite spirit.'

79.

Martensen, p. 23. Comp. *Stud. u. Krit. loc. cit.* Alles das denn got yn gegab seinem eingebornen sun, das hat er mir gegeben.... *Was got würcket, das ist ein*, darumb gebiret er mich seinen sun, on aller underscheyd.—These words exhibit the pantheistic principle on which this assumption is based. All spirit (whether in so called creature or Creator) is substantially one and the same. It cannot be divided; it can have no distinctive operations. Our dividual personal consciousness is, as it were, a temporary accretion on the Universal Soul with which we are in contact. Escaping this consciousness, we merge in—that is, we become—the Universal Soul. We are brought into the Essence,—the calm, unknown oneness beyond all manifestation, above creation, providence, or grace. This is Eckart's escape from distinction,—lapse into the totality of spirit. This doctrine he teaches, not in

opposition to the current Christian doctrine, but as a something above it,—at once its higher interpretation and its climax.

80.

These statements concerning the ‘füncklin der vernunfft’ are the substance of passages given by Martensen, pp. 26, 27, and Schmidt (*Stud. u. Krit. l. c.*), pp. 707, 709.—Ich sprich es bey gutter warheit, und bey yemmerwerender warheit, und bey ewiger warheit, das disem liechte nit benüget an dem einfaltigem stilstanden götlichen wesen, von wannen disz wesen harkommet, es will in den einfaltigen grundt in die stillen wüste, das nye underscheyd ingeluget, weder vatter noch sun noch heiliger geist, in dem einichen, da niemant daheim ist, da benüget es im liechte, und da ist es einicher, denn es sey in im selber, wann diser grundt ist ein einfeltig stille die in ir selber unbeweglich ist, und von diser Unbeweglichkeit werdent beweget alle ding, &c. Hermann von Fritslar, in a remarkable passage, enumerates the various and conflicting names given to this organ of mysticism. ‘Und das leben was daz licht der lûte.’ Daz meinet, daz di sêle einen funken in ir hât, der ist in gote êwiclîchen gewest leben und licht. Und dirre funke ist mit der sêle geschaffen in allen menschen und ist ein lûter licht in ime selber und strafet allewege umme sunde und hat ein stête heischen zu der tugende und kriget allewege wider in sînen ursprung.... Dar umme heizen in etlîche meistere einen wechter der sêle. Also sprach Daniêl: ‘der wechter ûf dem turme der rufet gar sêre. Etliche heizen disen

funken einen haven der sêle. Etlîche heizen in di worbele (axis, or centre) der sêle. Etelîche heizen in ein gotechen in der sêle. Etelîche heizen in ein antlitze der sêle. Eteliche heizen *intellectus*, daz ist ein instênde kraft in der sêle. Etlîche heizen *in sinderisis*. Etliche heizen in daz wô der sêle. Etlîche heizen in daz nirgen der sêle.—*Heiligenleben. Di dritte messe*, p. 32.

81.

Martensen, p. 27. Schmidt, *loc. cit.*

82.

The passage in Martensen, p. 20.

83.

Martensen, pp. 19, 29.

84.

Ibid. p. 29.

85.

Etlich leut wöllent got mit den ougen ansehn, als sy ein ku ansent unnd wöllent gott liebhan, als sy ein ku liebhaben (die hastu lieb umb die milch, und umb den kätz, und umb dein eigen nutz). Also thund alle die leut die got liebhand, um uszwendigen reichtum, oder umb inwendigen trost, und die hand gott nit recht lieb, sunder sy suchent sich selbs und ir eigen nutz.—*Schmidt*, p. 712.

86.

Got ist ein luter guot an ime selben, vnt do von wil er nienen wonen denne in einer lutern sele: in die mag er sich ergiessen vnt genzeclichen in si fliessen. was ist luterkeit? das ist das sich der

mensche gekeret habe von allen creaturen, vnt sin herce so gar uf gerichtet habe gen dem lutern guot, das ime kein creature trœstlichen si, vnt ir ouch nit begere denne als vil als si das luter guot, das got ist, darinne begriffen mag. vnt also wenig das liechte ouge icht in ime erliden mag, also wenig mag diu luter sele icht an ir erliden keine vermasung vnt das si vermitlen mag. ir werdent alle creaturen luter ce niessen: wanne si niusset alle creaturen in got vnt got in allen creaturen. Denne si ist also luter, das si sich selben durschowet, denne endarf si got nit verre suochen: si vindet in ir selben, wanne si in ir natiurlichen luterkeit ist geflossen in das übernatiurliche der lutern gotheit. vnt also ist si in got, vnt got in ir; vnt was si tuot, das tuot si in got, vnt tuot es got in ir.—*Wackernagel*, p. 891.

87.

Wann sol der mensch warlich arm sein, so soll er seynes geschaffnen willes also ledig sein, als er was do er noch nit was. Und ich sag euch bey der ewigen warheit, *als lang ir willen hand zu erfüllend den willen gottes, vnd icht begerung hand der ewigkeit und gottes, also lang seind ir nitt recht arm*, wann das ist ein arm mensch der nicht wil, noch nicht bekennet, noch nicht begeret—*Schmidt*, p. 716. Here again is the most extravagant expression possible of the doctrine of *sainte indifférence*, in comparison with which Madame Guyon is moderation itself.

88.

See *Schmidt*, p. 724.

89. He was charged with denying hell and purgatory, because he defined future punishment as deprivation,—'Das Nicht in der helle brinnet.'—*Schmidt*, p. 722.

90. The narrative here put into the mouth of Eckart is found in an appendix to Tauler's *Medulla animæ*. There is every reason to believe that it is Eckart's. Martensen gives it, p. 107.

91. A literal translation of a curious old hymn in Wackernagel's collection, p. 896.

92. C. Schmidt (*Johannes Tauler von Strasburg*, p. 42) gives examples of the extravagant display in dress common among the clergy at that time.

93. The substance of this dialogue will be found in the works of Heinrich Suso (ed. Melchior Diepenbrock, Regensburg, 1837), Book iii. chap. vii. pp. 310-14. Suso represents himself as holding such a conversation with 'ein vernunftiges Bilde, das war subtil an seinen Worten und war aber ungeübt an seinen Werken und war ausbrüchig in florirender Reichheit,' as he sat lost in meditation on a summer's day. Atherton has ventured to clothe this ideal of the enthusiast of those times in more than a couple of yards of flesh and blood, and supposed Arnstein to have picked up divinity enough in his sermon-hearing to be able to reason with him just as Suso does in his

book.

The wandering devotees, who at this time abounded throughout the whole region between the Netherlands and Switzerland, approximated, some of them, to Eckart's portraiture of a religious teacher, others to Suso's ideal of the Nameless Wild. In some cases the enthusiasm of the same man may have approached now the nobler and now the baser type.

94.

See Note, p. 212.

95.

Eckart does not make use of his lapse into the Essence to philosophise withal; it is simply his religious *ultimatum*.

96.

Louis was indebted for this important victory to the skill of Schweppermann. After the battle the sole supply of the imperial table was found to consist of a basket of eggs, which the emperor distributed among his officers, saying, 'To each of you one egg—to our gallant Schweppermann two.'—*Menzel.*

97.

See Laguille, *Histoire d'Alsace*, liv. xxiii. p. 271.

98.

Many passages in his *Heiligenleben* are altogether in the spirit of Eckart, and have their origin, beyond question, in his sayings, or in those of his disciples.—See pp. 114, 125, 150, 187 (*Pfeiffer*), and also the extracts in

Wackernagel, *Altd. Leseb.* p. 853.

99. See Schmidt's Tauler, Appendix, p. 172, &c., where such information as can be obtained concerning Henry of Nördlingen is given.

100. Compare Petrarch's account in his letters, cited by Gieseler: 'Mitto stupra, raptus, incestus, adulteria, qui jam pontificalis lasciviæ ludi sunt: mitto raptarum viros, ne mutire audeant, non tantum avitis laribus, sed finibus patriis exturbatos, quæque contumeliarum gravissima est, et violatas conjuges et externo semine gravidas rursus accipere, et post partum reddere ad alternam satietatem abutentium coactos.'

101. Laguille gives an account of this revolution, *Hist. d'Alsace*, p. 276.

102. Schmidt's Tauler, p. 12.

103. Laguille, liv. xxiv. p. 280.

104. Schmidt, p. 22.

105. Tauler's *Sermon on the Twenty-second Sunday after Trinity* contains an exhortation to Christian love, remarkable for beauty and discrimination. Tauler's *Predigten*, vol ii. p. 591

(Berlin, 1841).

106.

Schmidt, p. 14:—

> ‘do soltent sü ouch fürbas singen
> oder aber us der statt springen.’

107.

Schmidt’s Tauler, *Anhang über die Gottesfreunde*.

108.

Passages from two of these mystics, Heinrich von Löwen and Johannes von Sterngasse, are given among the *Sprüche Deutscher Mystiker*, in Wackernagel, p. 890.

109.

See Tauler’s *Predigten*, vol. ii. p. 584; and also, concerning the charge of sectarianism, p. 595; and the services of the Friends of God, vol. i. pred. xxvi. p. 194; pred. xi. p. 85.

110.

Ibid., vol. ii. pred. lxvi. p. 594.

111.

The sermon referred to is that on the *Twenty-third Sunday after Trinity*, vol. ii. p. 598.

While he is careful to warn his hearers against the presumption of attempting at once to contemplate Deity apart from its manifestation in the humanity of Christ, he yet seems to admit that when the soul has been thoroughly exercised in the imitation of Christ,—has become conformed, as far as man can be, to his spirit and his sufferings, then there commences

a period of repose and joy in which there is an extraordinary intuition of Deity, which approximates to that perfect vision promised hereafter, when we shall see, not ‘through a glass darkly,’ but face to face.—Vol. ii. p. 609.

112.

Meiners, *Hist. Vergleichung der Sitten, &c., des Mittelalters*, vol. ii. p. 117.

113.

To long and weave a woof of dreams is sweet unto the feeble soul, but nobler is stout-hearted striving, and makes the dream reality.

114.

This sermon is given entire in the second chapter of the *Lebenshistorie des ehrwürdigen Doctors Johann Tauler*, prefixed to his sermons. The succeeding incidents are all related by the same authority. The cellarer only and the family affairs of Adolf, appear to be invented by Atherton.

115.

Atherton defends this word by the usage of Thomas Fuller.

116.

These letters are preserved in substance in Specklin’s *Collectanea*, and are inserted, from that source, in the introduction by Görres to Diepenbrock’s edition of Suso’s works; pp. xxxv. &c.

117.

The substance of the foregoing narrative

concerning Tauler and the laymen will be found in the *Lebenshistorie des ehrwürdigen Doctors Joh. Tauler*. See also C. Schmidt's account of Nicholas in his monograph on Tauler (p. 28), and a characteristic letter by Nicholas concerning visions of coming judgment given in the Appendix.

118.

See Note, p. 254.

119.

See first Note, p. 256.

120.

Serm. on Eleventh Sun. after Trinity, ii. p. 436.

121.

Serm. on Eleventh Sun. after Trin., ii. pp. 442, 443. Also, *Predigten*, vol. iii. p. 19, and *Schmidt*, p. 125.

122.

Third Serm. on Thirteenth Sun. after Trin., ii. pp. 474-478.

123.

First Serm. on Thirteenth Sun. after Trin., ii. p. 459.

124.

See second Note, p. 256.

125.

Twenty-first Sun. after Trin., ii. p. 584.

126.

See Note, p. 257.

127.

Preface to Tauler's *Life and Sermons* by Susanna Winkworth.

128.

Nicole, in his *Traité de la Prière*, describes and criticises this style of devotion. It must always be borne in mind that the warnings of Tauler with regard to the image and the symbol are addressed, not to us sober Protestant folk, but especially to the devotees of the cloister. Those who have some acquaintance with the fantastic excesses he combats, will not think his language too strong.

129.

See Hecker's *Black Death* (trans. by Dr. Babington, 1853).—Hecker gives the documents relating to the trial of the Neustadt Jews in an appendix, from the *Chronicle* of Jacob of Königshoven. See also pp. 103-127.

130.

These fanatics were everywhere foremost among the instigators of the cruelties perpetrated on the Jews. Women, and even children, joined their ranks in great numbers, wearing the hats with red crosses, carrying flags, and scourging themselves with the rest. The particulars given are taken from the account in Jacob von Königshoven's *Elsassische u. Strassburgische Chronik*, inserted entire in Wackernagel,—(p. 931). The chronicler says: —'Zuo Strôsburg kam mê denne tûsent manne in ire geselleschaft, und siu teiltent sich zuo Strôsburg: eine parte der geischelaere gieng das lant abe, die ander parte das lant ûf. und kam

sô vil volkes in ire bruoderschaft, das es verdrôs den bôbest und den keiser und die phafheit. und der keiser verschreip dem bôbeste das er etwas hie zuo gedaechte: anders die geischeler verkêrtent alle die welt.' The Flagellants claimed power to confess and give absolution. The thirty-four days' scourging among them was to make a man as innocent as a babe—the virtue of the lash was above all sacraments. Thus the people took religion into their own hands, blindly and savagely,—no other way was then possible. It was a spasmodic movement of the mass of life beneath, when the social disorder that accompanied the pestilence had loosened the grasp of the power temporal and spiritual which held them down so long.

131.

See Schmidt's *Tauler*, p. 58.

132.

Laguille's *Histoire d'Alsace*, liv. xxv. p. 290.

133.

Hecker, p. 81.

134.

Schmidt's *Tauler*, p. 59.

135.

See Note, p. 336.

136.

Ruysbroek sent a copy of his book, *De ornatu spiritualium nuptiarum*, to the Friends of God in the Oberland. He had many friends in Cologne,

and it is very likely that the work may have reached Tauler there, either through them or from the author, who must have heard of him.

137.
See *Johannes Ruysbroek*, by Engelhardt, p. 168.

138.
Froissart, book ii. chap. 40.

139.
Froissart, chapp. 41, 42.

140.
Ibid., book i. chap. 34.

141.
Optimum aliena insania frui.

142.
Engelhardt, p. 326.

143.
It is certain that Ruysbroek was visited during the many years of his residence in Grünthal, much after the manner described, and also that Tauler was among the visitors, though the exact time of his journey is not known.

144.
See Engelhardt, pp. 189, 288.—According to Ruysbroek, the Trinitarian process lies at the basis of the kingdoms both of Nature and of Grace. There is a flowing forth and manifestation in the creative Word,—a return and union of love by the Holy Ghost. This process goes on continually in the providential government of the universe, and in the spiritual

life of believers. The upholding of the world, and the maintenance of the work of grace in the heart, are both in different ways a perpetual bringing forth of the Son, by whom all things consist, and who is formed in every devout soul. Ruysbroek is careful to state (as a *caveat* against pantheism) that such process is no necessary development of the divine nature, —it is the good pleasure of the Supreme. (See *Vier Schriften von J. Ruysbroek, in niederdeutscher Sprache*, by A. v. Arnswaldt; Hanover, 1848.) 'Wi hebben alle boven onse ghescapenheit een ewich leuen in gode als in onse leuende sake die ons ghemaect ende ghescapen heest van niete, maer wi en sijn niet god noch wi en hebben ons seluen niet ghemaeckt. *Wi en sijn ooc niet wt gode ghevloten van naturen*, maer want ons god ewelijc ghevoelt heest ende bekent in hem seluen, so heest hi ons ghemaeckt, niet van naturen noch van node, *maer van vriheit sijns willen*,'—p. 291. (*Spiegel der Seligkeit*, xvii.)

The bosom of the Father, he says, is our proper ground and origin (der schois des vaders is onse eygen gront ind onse oirsprunck); we have all, therefore, the capacity for receiving God, and His grace enables us to recognise and realise this latent possibility (offenbairt ind brengit vort die verboirgenheit godes in wijsen),—p. 144.

145.

Engelhardt, pp. 183, 186. Ruysbroek speaks as follows of that fundamental tendency godward of which he supposes prevenient grace (vurloiffende gracie) to lay hold:—'Ouch hait

der mynsche eyn naturlich gront neygen zo gode overmitz den voncken der sielen ind die overste reden die altzijt begert dat goide ind hasset dat quaide. Mit desen punten voirt got alle mynschen na dat sijs behoeven ind ecklichen na sinre noit,' &c.—*Geistl. Hochzeit*, cap. 3.

Ruysbroek lays great stress on the exercise of the will. 'Ye are as holy as ye truly will to be holy,' said he one day to two ecclesiastics, inquiring concerning growth in grace. It is not difficult to reconcile such active effort with the passivity of mysticism. The mystics all say, 'We strive towards virtue by a strenuous use of the *gifts* which God communicates, but when God communicates *Himself*, then we can be only passive—we repose, we enjoy, but all operation ceases.'

146.

Engelhardt, pp. 195, 199.

147.

Engelhardt, pp. 201, 213. In the season of spiritual exaltation, the powers of the soul are, as it were, absorbed in absolute essential enjoyment (staen ledich in een weselic gebrucken). But they are not annihilated, for then we should lose our creatureliness.—Mer si en werden niet te niete, want soe verloeren wy onse gescapenheit. Ende alsoe lange als wy mit geneichden geeste ende mit apen ogen sonder merken ledich staen, alsoe lange moegen wy schouwen ende gebruken. Mer in den seluen ogenblijc dat wy proeven ende merken willen wat dat is dat wy geuoelen, so vallen wy in

reden, ende dan vynden wy onderscheit ende anderheit tusschen ons ende gade, ende dan vynden wy gade buten ons in onbegripelicheiden.—*Von dem funkelnden Steine*, x.

148.

See first Note, p. 338.

149.

See second Note, p. 338.

150.

Engelhardt, p. 225. Schmidt's *Tauler*, p. 61.—The same doctrine which furnished a sanctuary for the devotion of purer natures supplied also an excuse for the licence of the base. Wilful perversion, or mere ignorance, or some one of the manifold combinations of these two factors, would work the mystical exhortation into some such result as that denounced by Ruysbroek. We may imagine some bewildered man as speaking thus within himself:—'So we are to covet ignorance, to surmount distinctions, to shun what is clear or vivid as mediate and comparatively carnal, to transcend means and bid farewell to the wisdom of the schools. Wise and devout men forsake all their learning, forget their pious toil and penance, to lose themselves in that ground in which we are united to God,—to sink into vague abstract confusion. But may I not do at first what they do at last? Why take in only to take out? I am empty already. Thank heaven! I haven't a distinct idea in my head.'

It is so that the popular mind is sure to travesty

the ultra-refinements of philosophy.

151. Engelhardt, pp. 224-228.—Eckart, like Hegel, would seem to have left behind him a right-hand and a left-hand party,—admirers like Suso and Tauler, who dropped his extreme points and held by such saving clauses as they found; and headstrong spirits, ripe for anarchy, like these New-Lights or High-Fliers, the representatives of mysticism run to seed. Ruysbroek's classification of them is somewhat artificial; fanaticism does not distribute itself theologically. In the treatise entitled *Spiegel der Seligkeit*, § 16, he describes them generally as follows:—'Ander quade duulische menschen vint men, die segghen dat si selue Cristus sijn of dat si god sijn, ende dat haer hant hemel ende erde ghemaect heest, ende dat an haer hant hanghet hemel ende erde ende alle dinc, ende dat si verheuen sijn boven alle die sacramenten der heiligher kerken, ende dat si der niet en behoeuen noch si en willen der ooc niet.' He represents their claim to identity with God as leading to a total moral indifference (§ 17):—'Ende sulke wanen god sijn, ende si en achten gheen dinc goet noch quaet, in dien dat si hem ontbeelden connen ende in bloter ledicheit haer eighen wesen vinden ende besitten moghen.' Their idea of the consummation of all things savours of the Parisian heresy—the offspring of John Scotus, popularised by David of Dinant and his followers. The final restitution is to consist in the resolution of all creatures into the Divine Substance:—'So spreken si voort dat in den

lesten daghe des ordels enghele ende duuele, goede ende quade, dese sullen alle werden *een eenvoudighe substancie der godheit* ... ende na dan, spreken si voort, en sal god bekennen noch minnen hem seluen noch ghene creature'—(§ 16).

152.

Engelhardt, pp. 326-336.—Good Ruysbroek was fully entitled to the encomium placed in the mouth of Tauler. He himself, like Bernard, would frequently perform the meanest offices of the cloister. The happy spirit of brotherhood which prevailed among the canons of Grünthal made a deep impression on that laborious practical reformer, Gerard Groot, when, in 1378, he visited the aged prior. What he then saw was not without its influence in the formation of that community with which his name is associated—the Brethren of the Common Life.—See Ullmann, *Reformatoren vor der Reformation*, vol. ii.

153.

Engelhardt, p. 330.—Ruysbroek inveighs with much detail against the vanities of female dress —as to those hair-pads, sticking up like great horns, they are just so many 'devil's nests.'

154.

Ruysbroek expressed himself in these words to Gerard Groot (Engelhardt, p. 168). In his touching description of the 'desolation' endured by the soul on its way upward toward the 'super-essential contemplation,' he makes the sufferer say,—'O Lord, since I am thine (want ich din eygen bin), I would as soon be in hell as

in heaven, if such should be thy good pleasure; only do thy glorious will with me, O Lord!'—*Geistl. Hochzeit*, § 30. Ruysbroek, like Fénelon, abandons himself thus only on the supposition that even in hell he should still retain the divine favour;—so impossible after all is the absolute disinterestedness toward which Quietism aspires. The Flemish mystic distinguishes between the servants of God, the friends, and the sons. Those worshippers who stand in the relation of friends have still something of their own (besitten oer inwendichkeit mit eygenscap) in their love to God. The sons ascend, 'dying-wise,' to an absolute emptiness. The friends still set value on divine bestowments and experiences; the sons are utterly dead to self, in bare modeless love (in bloeter, wiseloeser mynnen). Yet, very inconsistently, he represents the sons as more assured of eternal life than the friends. (*Von dem funkelnden Steine*, § 8.)

155.

A veritable personage. He died in 1377, and left behind him a book recording the conflicts he underwent and the revelations vouchsafed him. (Engelhardt, p. 326.)

156.

The lyrics of Muscatblut are characterised by Gervinus (ii. p. 225), and the same authority gives some account, from the *Limburg Chronicle*, of the famous friar, leper, and poet mentioned by Arnstein.

157.

Why smite thy breast and lament? why not lift

up thy soul? why meditate for ever on the sign? He thou lovest is within thee. Thou seekest Jesus—thou hast him; he is found, and thou perceivest it not. Why these groans, this weeping? The true joy is thine; hidden within thee, though thou knowest it not, lies the solace of thine anguish; thou hast within, thou seekest without, the cure for thy languishing soul.

158.

I live, but with no life of mine, and long towards a life so high—I die because I do not die.

159.

The *Life of Suso*, published in Diepenbrock's edition of his works, was written by his spiritual daughter, Elsbet Stäglin, according to the account she received at various intervals from his own lips. He sprang from a good family,—his name, originally Heinrich vom Berg. The name of Suso he adopted from his mother, a woman remarkable for her devotion. The secret name of Amandus, concealed till after his death, was supposed to have been conferred by the Everlasting Wisdom himself on his beloved servant.

The incident of the rescue of himself and his book from the floods, by the timely intervention of a knight passing that way, is related in the twenty-ninth chapter of the *Life*, p. 68.

160.

Heinrich Suso's *Leben und Schriften*, von M.

Diepenbrock (1837), pp. 15, 51, 86. Diepenbrock's book is an edition of the biography by Stäglin, and of the *Book of the Everlasting Wisdom*, &c., from the oldest manuscripts and editions, and rendered into modern German.

161.

Leben, cap. 48,—where it is also said that, on one occasion, as 'the servant was preaching at Cologne, one of his auditors beheld his face luminous with a supernatural effulgence.' It is known that Tauler possessed a copy of the *Horologium Sapientiæ*.

See also Schmidt's *Tauler*, p. 169. Comp. *Leben*, cap. xxxi. p. 72, and cap. xlix.

162.

Leben, cap. iv.

163.

Leben, cap. xvii.-xx. Suso died in 1385 at Ulm; he was born about the commencement of the century.

164.

Suso sent a Latin version of the book of the Everlasting Wisdom, under the title *Horologium Sapientiæ*, to Hugo von Vaucemain, Master of the Order, for his approval. The date of the work is fixed between 1333 and 1342. The prologue contains the account of the '*inspiratio superna*' under which the work was written.—(*Diepenb. Vorbericht*, p. 6.) It was translated ere long into French, Dutch, and English, and appears to have been in the fourteenth century

almost what the *Imitatio Christi* became in the fifteenth.—*Ibid.*, p. 15.

165.

Leben, cap. vi.

166.

Reverences or prostrations.

167.

Leben, capp. x. and xiv.

168.

Leben, cap. xxii. p 5; and xxv.

169.

This incident is related at length in the twenty-seventh chapter of the *Life*; and the adventure with the robber, which follows, in the succeeding. The account given in the text follows closely in all essential particulars the narrative in the biography.

170.

Leben, cap. lvii. Suso speaks to this effect in a dialogue with his spiritual daughter. She describes in another place (p. 74) how she drew Suso on to talk on these high themes, and then wrote down what follows.

171.

Ibid., cap. xxxiv. p. 80; and comp. *Buch. d. E. Weisheit*, cap. vii. p. 199.

172.

Buchlein von d. E. Weisheit, Buch. iii. cap. ii.; and *Leben*, cap. lvi. p. 168, and p. 302.

173.

Leben, p. 171.

174.

Extravagant as are his expressions concerning the absorption in God, Suso has still numerous passages designed to preclude pantheism; declaring that the distinction between the Creator and the creature is nowise infringed by the essential union he extols. The dialogue with the 'nameless Wild,' already alluded to, is an example.—Comp. *Leben*, cap. lvi. pp. 166, 167, and *Buch. d. E. W.*, Buch. iii. cap. vi.

175.

Leben, cap. liii. p. 148. See Note, p. 357.

176.

Schröckh's *Kirchengeschichte*, vol. xxxiv. pp. 431-450.

177.

See *Die Mystik des Nikolaus Cabasilas vom Leben in Christo*, von Dr. W. Gass (1849).—In this work, Dr. Gass publishes, for the first time, the Greek text of the seven books, *De Vita in Christo*, with an able introduction. The authority for this summary of the theological tendency of Cabasilas will be found, pp. 210-224.

178.

The Masters speak of two faces the soul hath. The one face is turned towards this world. The other face is turned direct toward God. In this latter face shineth and gloweth God eternally, whether man is ware or unaware thereof.

179.

Schmidt's *Tauler*, pp. 205, &c.—Mosheim gives the passage in Nieder relating the apprehension and death of Nicholas:—'Acutissimus enim erat (says this authority) et idcirco manus Inquisitorum diu evaserat.'—*Mosheim de Beghardis et Beguinabus*, cap. iv. § 42, p. 454.

180.

See *Revelationes Selectæ S. Brigittæ* (Heuser, 1851).—This is a selection for the edification of good Catholics, and contains accordingly the most Mariolatrous and least important of her writings. Rudelbach gives some specimens of her spirited rebuke of papal iniquity in his *Savonarola*, pp. 300, &c. In her prophetic capacity she does not hesitate to call the pope a murderer of souls, and to declare him and his greedy prelates forerunners of Antichrist. She says,—'If a man comes to them with four wounds, he goes away with five.' Like Savonarola, she placed her sole hope of reform in a general council.

A common mode of self-mortification with her found an imitator in Madame Guyon:—the Swede dropped the wax of lighted tapers on her bare flesh, and carried gentian in her mouth—*Vita*, p. 6. The Frenchwoman burned herself with hot sealing-wax in the same manner, and chewed a quid of coloquintida.

The *Revelationes de Vitâ et Passione Jesu Christi et gloriosæ Virginis*, contain a puerile and profane account of the birth, childhood, and death of our Lord, in the style of the apocryphal *Gospel of the Infancy*, professedly conveyed in conversations with the authoress

by the Mother and her Son. The Virgin tells her, in reference to her Son,—'quomodo neque aliqua immunditia ascendit super eum;' and that his hair was never in a tangle—(nec perplexitas in capillise jus apparuit).

181. '*Angela de Foligni.*' See *Beatæ Angelæ Fulginio Visionum et Instructionum Liber*; (recens. J. H. Lammertz; Cologne, 1851.)—The account of the wonderful star is given by Arnold in his *Prologue*, p. 12. At one time it is promised by the Lord that the 'whole Trinity shall enter into her,' (capit. xx.); at another, she is transported into the midst of the Trinity.—(Capit. xxxii.) In chapter after chapter of monotonous inflation, she wearies and disappoints the curious reader by declaring her 'abysses of delectation and illumination' altogether unutterable,—such as language profanes rather than expresses —'inenarrabiles,' 'indicibiles,' &c. So the miraculous taste of the host to her favoured palate was not like bread or flesh, but a 'sapor sapidissimus,'—like nothing that can be named. —Capit. xl.

The following act of saintship we give in the original, lest in English it should act on delicate readers as an emetic. She speaks of herself and a sister ascetic:—'Lavimus pedes feminarum ibi existentium pauperum, et manus hominum, et maxime cujusdam leprosi, qui habebat manus valde fœtidas et marcidas et præpeditas et corruptas; *et bibimus de illâ loturâ*. Tantam autem dulcedinem sensimus in illo potu, quod per totam viam venimus in magnâ suavitate, et videbatur mihi per omnia quod ego gustassem

mirabilem dulcedinem, quantum ad suavitatem quam ibi inveni. Et quia quædam squamula illarum plagarum erat interposita in gutture meo, conata sum ad diglutiendum eam, sicut si communicassem, donec deglutivi eam. Unde tantam suavitatem inveni in hoc, quod eam non possum exprimere.'—Capit. l. p. 176.

In her 'Instructions,' she lays it down as a rule that none can ever be deceived in the visions and manifestations vouchsafed them who are truly poor in spirit,—who have rendered themselves as 'dead and putrid' into the hands of God. (Capp. liv. lv.) She says that when God manifests Himself to the soul, 'it sees Him, without bodily form, indeed, but more distinctly than one man can see another man, for the eyes of the soul behold a spiritual plenitude, not a corporeal, whereof I can say nothing, since both words and imagination fail here.' (Capit. lii. p. 192.) Angela died in 1309.

182.

'*Catharine of Siena.*' Görres gives a short account of her in his Introduction to Diepenbrock's edition of *Suso*, p. 96.

183.

The theology of this remarkable little book is substantially the same with that already familiar to us in the sermons of Tauler. Luther, writing to Spalatin, and praising Tauler's theology, sends with his letter what he calls an epitome thereof,—cujus totius velut epitomen ecce hic tibi mitto. (*Epp. De Wette*, No. xxv.) He refers, there can be little doubt, to his edition of the *Deutsche Theologie*, which came out that

year.

184.

See, especially, the twelfth chapter of the second book, *On the Necessity of bearing the Cross*. Compare Michelet's somewhat overdrawn picture of the effects of the *Imitation* in his *History of France*.

The *Ignitum cum Deo Soliloquium* of Gerlacus Petrus is a contemporary treatise belonging to the same school. (Comp. capp. xxxix. and xxvi.; ed. Strange, 1849.) It is less popular, less impassioned than the *Imitation*, and more thoroughly impregnated with the spirit of mysticism. Gerlach would seem to have studied Suso: in one place he imitates his language. The cast of his imagery, as well as the prominence given to mystical phraseology, more peculiar to the Germans, shows that he addresses himself to an advanced and comparatively esoteric circle.—Comp. capp. xxii, xxiv, p. 78.

185.

'*Gerson.*'—See an article by Liebner (Gerson's *Mystische Theologie*) in the *Theologische Studien und Kritiken*; 1835, ii.

186.

Malcolm's *Persia*, vol. ii., p. 383.

187.

See Schrader's *Angelus Silesius und seine Mystik*; Halle, 1853. This author shows, that the supposition identifying Scheffler with Angelus (copied too readily by one writer from another) may be traced up to a source of very slight

authority. Scheffler repudiated mysticism after entering the Romish communion. Furious polemical treatises by Scheffler, and sentimental religious poems by Angelus appeared contemporaneously during a considerable interval. Had Scheffler published anything mystical during his controversy, his Protestant antagonists would not have failed to charge him with it. With Scheffler the Church is everything. In the *Wanderer* of Angelus the word scarcely occurs. The former lives in externalisms; the latter covets escape from them. The one is an angry bigot; the other, for a Romanist, serenely latitudinarian. Characteristics so opposite, urges Dr. Schrader, could not exist in the same man at the same time.

The epithet '*Cherubic*' indicates the more speculative character of the book; as contrasted, in the language of the mystics, with the devotion of feeling and passion—*seraphic* love.

188.

Cherubinischer Wandersmann, i. 100, 9, 18; Schrader, p. 28.

189.

And if thy heart know nought of this—'Die that thou mayest be born;' then walkest thou the darksome earth a sojourner forlorn.

190.

Tholuck, *Ssufismus, sive Theosophia Persarum pantheistica* (Berlin, 1822), pp. 51-54.

191.
Tholuck, *Ssufismus*, p. 63. *Cherub. Wand.*, ii. 18.

192.
Tholuck, *Blüthensammlung aus der Morgenländischen Mystik* (Berlin, 1825), p. 114.

193.
Cherub. Wand., i. 274; v. 81.

194.
Blüthen., p. 61. *Cherub. Wand.*, iv. 23.

195.
Blüthen., pp. 64, 71, 113, 156.

196.
Blüthen., p. 167. Emerson's *Essays* (1848), p. 35.

197.
Blüthen., pp. 204-206. *Cherub. Wand.*, i. 24, 92, 140.

198.
Blüthen., pp. 180, 181. *Cherub. Wand.*, v. 367; ii. 92; i. 91, 39; ii. 152, 59. Emerson, pp. 37, 42.

199.
Blüthen., pp. 85, 116. Emerson, pp. 141, 143. *Cherub. Wand.*, i. 12. Compare *Richard of St. Victor*, cited above, vol. i., p. 172, Note to p. 163.

200.
Blüthen., pp. 82, 84.—The truth, of which the licentious doctrine alluded to is the abuse, is

well put by Angelus,—

‘Dearer to God the good man’s very sleep
Than prayers and psalms of sinners all night
long.’—(v. 334.)

201.

Blüthen., pp. 266, 260.—Never does this soaring idealism become so definite and apprehensible as when it speaks with the ‘large utterance’ of the Sufis. Angelus has here and there somewhat similar imagery for the same thought. What is with him a dry skeleton acquires flesh and blood among the Orientals.

‘Sit in the centre, and thou seest at once
What is, what was; all here and all in heaven.

‘Is my will dead? Then what I will God must,
And I prescribe his pattern and his end.

‘I must be sun myself, and with my beams
Paint all the hueless ocean of the Godhead.’—
(ii. 183; i. 98, 115.)

202.

Emerson, pp. 154, 156, 196. *Cherub. Wand.*, i. 10, 8, 204.—Angelus has various modes of expressing the way in which God realizes his nature in the salvation of men.

‘I bear God’s image. Would he see himself?
He only can in me, or such as I.

‘Meekness is velvet whereon God takes rest:
Art meek, O man?—God owes to thee his
pillow.

‘I see in God both God and man,

He man and God in me;
I quench his thirst, and he, in turn,
Helps my necessity.'—(i. 105, 214, 224.)

203.

Works, vol. iv., *On the Mystical Poetry of the Persians and Hindoos*.

204.

Blüthen., p. 218.

205.

A reference to Raumer's *History of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* will satisfy the reader that this dream 'was not all a dream.' Most minute details are given in a letter from the MSS. of Dupuy.

206.

See Note, p. 51.

207.

See the account in Ranke's *History of the Reformation*.

208.

See Carriere, *Die philosophische Weltanschauung der Reformationzeit* (1847), pp. 196-203.

209.

Horst's *Zauberbibliothek*, vol. iii. p. 21.

210.

Agrippa's *Vanity of Arts and Sciences*, chap. 47.

211.

See M. B. Lessing, *Paracelsus, sein Leben und Denken*, p. 60.

212.

The third and fourth volumes of Horst's *Zauberbibliothek* contain a very full account of all these vincula. The vincula of the Intellectual World are principally formulas of invocation; secret names of God, of celestial principalities and spirits; Hebrew, Arabic, and barbarous words; magical figures, signs, diagrams, and circles. Those of the Elementary World consist in the sympathetic influence of certain animals and plants, such as the mole, the white otter, the white dove, the mandrake; of stones and metals, ointments and suffumigations. Those of the Astral or Celestial World depend on the aspects and dispositions of the heavenly bodies, which, under the sway of planetary spirits, infuse their influences into terrestrial objects. This is the astrological department of theurgy. Meinhold's *Sidonia* contains a truthful exhibition of this form of theurgic mysticism, as it obtained in Protestant Germany. See Paracelsus, *De Spiritibus Planetarum*, passim. (Ed. Dorn., 1584.)

213.

See Carriere (pp. 89-114), to whom I am indebted as regards the character of this and the preceding work, having had access to neither.

214.

This distressing outbreak on the part of Gower will scarcely seem extravagant to those who remember how intensely poetical were many of the theosophic hypotheses. Analogies which would only occur to imaginative men in their hours of reverie were solidified into principles

and enrolled in the code of nature. Nothing could be more opposite to the sifting process of modern investigation than the fanciful combination and impersonation of those days,—more akin, by far, to mythology than to science. Conceits such as the following are those of the poet,—and of the poet as far gone in madness as Plato could wish him.

The waters of this world are mad; it is in their raving that they rush so violently to and fro along the great channels of the earth.

Fire would not have burned, darkness had not been, but for Adam's fall. There is a hot fire and a cold. Death is a cold fire.—*Behmen.*

All things—even metals, stones, and meteors—have sense and imagination, and a certain 'fiducial' knowledge of God in them.

The arctic pole draws water by its axle-tree, and these waters break forth again at the axle-tree of the antarctic pole.

Earthquakes and thunder are the work of dæmons or angels.

The lightnings without thunder are, as it were, the falling flowers of the 'æstival' (or summer) stars.—*Paracelsus.*

Hail and snow are the fruits of the stars, proceeding from them as flowers and blossoms from herb or tree.—*Paracelsus.*

Night is, in reality, brought on by the influence of *dark stars*, which ray out darkness, as the others light.—*Paracelsus.*

The final fires will transform the earth into

crystal. (A summary expression for one of Behmen's doctrines.)

The moon, planets, and stars are of the same quality with the lustrous precious stones of our earth, and of such a nature, that wandering spirits of the air see in them things to come, as in a magic mirror; and hence their gift of prophecy.

In addition to the terrestrial, man has a sidereal body, which stands in connexion with the stars. When, as in sleep, this sidereal body is more free than usual from the elements, it holds converse with the stars, and may acquire a knowledge of future events.—*Paracelsus.* See Henry More's *Enthusiasmus Triumphatus*, § 44.

215.

See Lessing's *Paracelsus*, p. 18.

216.

Lessing's *Paracelsus*, § 26.

217.

Language to this effect is cited among the copious extracts given by Godfrey Arnold, *Unpartheyische Kirchen- und Ketzer-Historie*, Th. ii. p. 309.

218.

De Occulta Philosophia, Prologus, p. 30, and p. 58. This is one of the three treatises edited by Gerard Dorn, and published together in a small volume, Basle, 1584. Comp. also Arnold, Th. iv. p. 145.

219.

Dorn's *Dictionarium Paracelsi* (Frankfort, 1583), Art. Microcosmus. Also the *Secretum Magicum* of Paracelsus, entire in Arnold, p. 150. The implanted image of the Trinity, and the innate tendency in man toward his Divine Origin, are familiar to us as favourite doctrines with the mystics of the fourteenth century.

220.

De Occ. Phil. cap. iv. p. 45, and cap. xi. p. 78. Also, *Dict. Paracels.* Art. Magia. Talis influentiarum cœlestium conjunctio vel impressio qua operantur in inferiora corpora cœlestes vires, *Gamahea* Magis, vel matrimonium virium et proprietatum cœlestium cum elementaribus corporibus, dicta fuit olim.—Paracelsi *Aurora Philosophorum*, cap. iv. p. 24 (ed. Dorn).

221.

Aurora Phil. loc. cit.; *De Occ. Phil.* i. ii.; and xi. p. 79.

222.

See *De Occ. Phil.* cap. v. Magical powers are ascribed to images, p. 85. A collection of talismanic figures is appended to the treatise. In the *Thesaurus Philosophorum* is to be found (p. 145) the arcanum of the Homunculus and the Universal Tincture. The Homunculus is said to be a mannikin, constructed by magic, receiving his life and substance from an artificial principle, and able to communicate to his fabricator all manner of secrets and mysteries of science.

223.

The three continents—Europe, Asia, and Africa —were said to represent these three constituent principles respectively; the stars contain them, as in so many vials; the Penates (a race of sapient but mortal spirits) employ them for the manufacture of thunder.

224.

Lessing's *Paracelsus*, § 58. This fanciful kind of physiognomy displaces theurgy, among these inquirers. It led, at least, to much accurate observation. It was a sign of health when the chafing-dish and conjuring-book were forsaken for the woods and fields. Cardan, who repudiates the charge of having ever employed incantations or sought intercourse with dæmons, endeavours to establish chiromancy on what were then called astronomical principles. Thus, Mars rules the thumb, wherein lies strength; Jupiter, the forefinger, whence come auguries of fame and honour, &c.

225.

See *Lives of the Alchemistical Philosophers*. This book contains a collection of the most celebrated treatises on the theory and practice of the Hermetic Art. The passage from Bernard is in *The Book of Eirenæus Philalethes*, p. 166.

226.

Thus, Cardan declared that the law of Moses was from Saturn; that of Christ, from Jupiter and Mercury. Over that of Mahomet presided, in conjunction, Sol and Mars; while Mars and the Moon ruled idolatry. It was thought no impiety—only a legitimate explanation, to attribute the supernatural wisdom and works of

our Lord to the divinely-ordained influences of the planetary system.

227.

This passage is from the Annotations of Weidenfeld on the *Green Lion* of Paracelsus; *Lives of the Alchem. Phil.* p. 201. The *Thesaurus Thesaurorum* contains another choice specimen of the same sort, p. 124.

228.

The personal appearance of Behmen is thus described by his friend and biographer, Abraham von Franckenberg, in the biography prefixed to his Works, § 27.

229.

See Note on p. 88.

230.

Lebens-lauff, § 4.

231.

See his own account of his mental conflict and melancholy, issuing in the rapturous intuition which solved all his doubts, *Aurora*, cap. xix. §§ 1-13. He acknowledges having read many astrological books. *Aurora*, cap. xxv. § 43: Ja, lieber, Leser, ich verstehe der Astrologorum Meinung auch wol, ich habe auch ein paar zeilen in ihren Schrifften gelesen, und weiss wol wie sie den Lauf der Sonnen und Sternen schreiben, ich verachte es auch nicht, sondern halte es meisten Theil für gut und recht. Compare also cap. x. § 27: Ich habe viel hoher Meister Schrifften gelesen, in Hoffnung den Grund und die rechte Tieffe darinnen zu finden,

aber ich habe nichts funden als einen halb-todten Geist, &c. In a letter to Caspar Lindern he mentions sundry mystical writers concerning whom his correspondent appears to have desired his opinion,—admits that several of them were men of high spiritual gifts, not to be despised, though in many respects capable of amendment,—says that they were of good service in their time, and would probably express themselves otherwise did they write now,—shows where he thinks Schwenkfeld wrong in affirming Christ's manhood to be no creature, and speaks of Weigel as erring in like manner by denying the Saviour's true humanity.—*Theosoph. Sendbr.* §§ 52-60.

232.

Theosoph. Sendbr. xii. §§ 8-20.

233.

A full account of the persecution raised by Gregory Richter against Behmen, was drawn up by Cornelius Weissner, a doctor of medicine, and is appended by Franckenberg to his biography. A young man, who had married a relative of Behmen's, had been so terrified by the threatenings of divine wrath launched at him by Richter, about some trifling money matter, that he fell into a profound melancholy. Behmen comforted the distressed baker, and ventured to remonstrate with the enraged primarius, becoming ever after a marked man. For seven years after the affair of the Aurora, in 1612, Behmen refrained from writing. Everything he published subsequently was produced between the years 1619 and 1624, inclusive.

234.

Thus he thanks Christian Bernard for a small remittance of money.—*Theos. Sendbr.* ix. Sept. 12, 1620.

235.

Apologia wider den Primarium zu Görlitz Gregorium Richter, written in 1624.

236.

Vide Corn. Weissner's *Wahrhafte Relation*, &c., and Franckenberg's account of his last hours, § 29.

237.

While regarding as infallibly certain the main features of the doctrine communicated to him, Behmen is quite ready to admit the imperfect character both of his knowledge and his setting forth thereof. Light was communicated to him, he said, by degrees, at uncertain intervals, and never un-mingled with obscurity.—*Aurora*, cap. vii. § 11; cap. x. § 26, and often elsewhere.

238.

Aurora, x. §§ 44, 45.

239.

See *Aurora*, cap. xix. §§ 26-45; cap. xxiii. § 86.

After speaking of the revolt of Lucifer as the cause of the present imperfection and admixture of natural evil in the world, by corrupting the influence of the Fountain-Spirits throughout our department of the universe, and of the blind and endangered condition of man consequent thereon, he adds,—'But thou must not suppose that on this account the heavenly

light in the Fountain-Spirits of God is utterly extinct. No; it is but a darkness which we, with our corrupt eyesight, cannot apprehend. But when God removes the darkness which thus broods above the light, and thine eyes are opened, then thou seest even on the spot where thou sittest, standest, or dost lie in thy room, the lovely face of God, and all the gates that open upon heaven. Thou needest not first lift thine eyes upwards to heaven, for it is written, 'The word is near thee, even on thy lips and in thine heart;' Deut. xxx. 14; Rom. x. 8. So near thee, indeed, is God, that the birth of the Holy Trinity takes place in thine heart also, and there all three persons are born,—Father, Son and Holy Ghost.'—*Aurora*, cap. x. §§ 57, 58.

240.

'The spirit of man,' says Behmen, 'contains a spark from the power and light of God.' The Holy Ghost is 'creaturely' within it when renewed, and it can therefore search into the depths of God and nature, as a child in its father's house. In God, past, present, and future; breadth, depth, and height; far and near, are apprehended as one, and the holy soul of man sees them in like manner, although (in the present imperfect state) but partially. For the devil sometimes succeeds in smothering the seed of inward light.—*Aurora*, *Vorrede*, §§ 96-105.

According to Behmen, Stephen, when he saw the heavens opened, and Christ at the right hand of God, was not spiritually translated into any distant upper region,—'he had penetrated into the inmost birth—into the heaven which is

everywhere.'—*Aurora*, cap. xix. § 48. Similarly, he declares that he had not ascended into heaven, and seen with the eye of the flesh the creative processes he describes, but that his knowledge comes from the opening within him of the gate to the inner heavenly world, so that the divine sun arose and shone within his heart, giving him infallible inward certainty concerning everything he announces. If an angel from heaven had told him such things, he must have doubted. It might have been Satan in a garb of light: it would have been an external testimony: it would have been beyond his comprehension; but this light and impulse from within precludes all doubt. The holy Soul is one spirit with God, though still a creature; sees as the angels see, and far more, since they discern only heavenly things, but man has experience both of heaven and hell, standing as he does midway between the two.—*Aurora*, cap. xi. §§ 68-72 and cap. xii. § 117. Comp. also cap. xxv. §§ 46-48.

241.

The initiate mind saith this and saith that, as it circles around the unspeakable Depth. Thou art the bringer-forth, thou too the offspring; thou the illuminer, thou the illuminate; thou art the manifest, thou art the hidden one,—hid by thy glories. One, and yet all things, one in thyself alone, yet throughout all things!

242.

Von den drei Principien des Göttlichen Wesens, cap. vii. §§ 22, &c., cap. ix. 30, *et passim*. *Aurora*, cap. ii. § 41; cap. xxiii. 61-82. Compare *Aurora*, cap. xx. §§ 49, &c. *Drei Princip.* cap. vii.

25. *Aurora*, cap. x. § 58. Also cap. iii. throughout. There he describes the way in which every natural object—wood, stone, or plant, contains three principles,—the image, or impress of the divine Trinity; first, the Power (*Krafft*) whereby it possesses a body proper to itself; secondly, the sap (*Safft*) or heart; thirdly, the peculiar virtue, smell, or taste proceeding from it; this is its *spirit* (§ 47). So, in the soul of man, do Power, and Light, and a Spirit of Understanding—the offspring of both—correspond to the three persons of the Trinity (§ 42).

243.

See Note on p. 120.

244.

See Note on p. 121.

245.

Here I am much indebted to the masterly discussion of the theory in question, contained in Müller's *Lehre von der Sünde*, Buch ii. cap. 4.

246.

Aurora, cap. ix. § 42; cap. xviii. § 10-15; cap. xxiii. §§ 92, &c. The remarks in the text, concerning Behmen's position as between theism and pantheism, are only true if the word theism be there understood as equivalent to deism. For theism, understanding by it belief in a personal deity, does not remove God from the universe. Theism ought to represent the true mean between the deism which relegates a divine Mechanician far from the work of his hands, and the pantheism which submerges

him beneath it.

247.

Aurora, cap. iv. §§ 10, 11. Comp. § 15, and also cap. xxi. § 37.

248.

Aurora, cap. v. § 4; cap. xvii. § 16.

249.

Aurora., § 27; cap. xiv. § 104; cap. x. §§ 42, 65; xix. § 50.

250.

For example, in the *Drei Principien*, cap. xxvi. §§ 13-34, and in the *Aurora*, cap. xii. § 65.

251.

See Note on p. 121.

252.

Theos. Sendbr. 46, §§ 51-54. See also Note on page 122.

253.

Behmen supposed the latter day not far distant (*Aurora*, iv. 2), but his remarks on the vanity of eschatological speculations generally might be read with advantage by some of our modern interpreters of prophecy. See the letters to Paul Kaym, *Theos. Send.* viii. and xi.

254.

Theos. Sendbr. x. § 20. See also Note on page 123.

255.

Aurora, cap. xx. § 1; xxii. 26. See also second

Note on page 123.

256.

See, concerning the history of this book, and its author, Valentine Andreä, J. G. Buhle, *Ueber den Ursprung und die Vornehmsten Schiksale der Orden der Rosenkreuzer und Freymaurer* (Göttingen, 1804), chapp. iii. and iv. Arnold gives a full account of the controversy, and extracts, which appear to indicate very fairly the character of the Fama Fraternitatis, *Kirchen-und-Ketzergeschichte*, Th. ii. Buch xvii. cap. 18.

The derivation of the name Rosicrucian from *ros* and *crux*, rather than *rosa* and *crux*, to which Brucker alludes (*Hist. Phil.* Per. III. Pars i. lib. 3, cap. 3), is untenable. By rights, the word, if from *rosa*, should no doubt be Rosacrucian; but such a malformation, by no means uncommon, cannot outweigh the reasons adduced on behalf of the generally-received etymology. See Buhle, pp. 174, &c.

257.

Le Comte de Gabalis, ou Entretiens sur les Sciences Secrètes (Metz, an cinq. républicain), pp. 53-56.

The following passage is a sample of those high-sounding promises with which the pretenders to the Rosicrucian science allured the neophyte:—

‘You are about to learn (says the Count to the author) how to command all nature: God alone will be your master; the philosophers alone your equals. The highest intelligences will be ambitious to obey your desire; the demons will not dare to approach the place where you are;

your voice will make them tremble in the depths of the abyss, and all the invisible populace of the four elements will deem themselves happy to minister to your pleasures.... Have you the courage and the ambition to serve God alone, and to be lord over all that is not God? Have you understood what it is to be a man? Are you not weary of serving as a slave,—you, who were born for dominion?'—(p. 27.)

258. *Comte de Gabalis*, p. 185. See the story of Noah's calamity, and the salamander Oromasis, p. 140.

259. See Colin de Plancy's *Dictionnaire Infernal*, Art. Cabale. Horst furnishes a number of such words, *Zauberbibliothek*, vol. III. xvi. 2.

260. Horst inserts in his *Zauberbibliothek* the whole of a once famous cabbalistic treatise, entitled *Semiphoras et Shemhamphoras Salomonis Regis*, a medley of astrological and theurgic doctrine and prescription. The word Shemhamphorash is not the real word of power, but an expression or conventional representative of it. The Rabbis dispute whether the genuine word consisted of twelve, two-and-forty, or two-and seventy-letters. Their Gematria or cabbalistic arithmetic, endeavours partially to reconstruct it. They are agreed that the prayers of Israel avail now so little because this word is lost, and they know not 'the *name* of the Lord.' But a couple of its real letters, inscribed by a potent

cabbalist on a tablet, and thrown into the sea, raised the storm which destroyed the fleet of Charles V. in 1542. Write it on the person of a prince (a ticklish business, surely), and you are sure of his abiding favour. Eisenmenger gives a full account of all the legends connected therewith, *Entdecktes Judenthum*, vol. i. pp. 157, 424, 581, &c. (Ed. 1711).

The rationale of its virtue, if we may so call it, affords a characteristic illustration of the cabbalistic principle. The Divine Being was supposed to have commenced the work of creation by concentrating on certain points the primal universal Light. Within the region of these was the appointed place of our world. Out of the remaining luminous points, or foci, he constructed certain letters—a heavenly alphabet. These characters he again combined into certain creative words, whose secret potency produced the forms of the material world. The word Shemhamphorash contains the sum of these celestial letters, with all their inherent virtue, in its mightiest combination.—Horst, *Zauberbibliothek*, vol. iv. p. 131.

261.

See *Das transcendentale magie und magische Heilarten im Talmud*, von Dr. G. Brecher, p. 52. Eisenmenger, *Entdecktes Judenthum*, ii. pp. 445, &c.

The *Tractat Berachoth* says the devils delight to be about the Rabbis, as a wife desireth her husband, and a thirsty land longeth after water, —because their persons are so agreeable. Not so, rejoins Eisenmenger, but because both hate the gospel and love the works of darkness.—(p.

447.)

262.

See Horst's *Zauberbibliothek*, vol. i. pp. 314-327.

263.

Alban Butler, July 31.

264.

Ribadeneira, *Flos Sanctorum*, Appendix, p. 35 (Ed. 1659).

265.

Los Libros de la B. M. Teresa de Jesus, *Vida*, capp. i. iii. This edition of 1615 contains the *Camino de la Perfecion*, and the *Castillo espiritual*, with the *Life*. The *Foundations*, at which I have only glanced in the French, are devoted to business, not mysticism.

266.

Vida, cap. v. p. 26.

267.

Teresa confesses that during the first year of her seizure her disorder was such as sometimes completely to deprive her of her senses:—Tan grave, que casi me privava el sentido siempre, y algunas vezes del todo quedava sin el.—Pp. 17.

268.

Vida, cap. xxxvi.

269.

Vida, p. 83.

270.

Vida, cap. xxvii. p. 196.

271.

Vida, cap. xxiv. p. 171.

272.

Vida, cap. xxvi. p. 186. Siempre que el Señor me mandava alguna cosa en la oracion, si el confessor me dezia otra, me tornava el Señor a dezir que le obedeciesse: despues su Magestad le bolvia para que me lo tornasse a mandar. She speaks in the very same page of bad advice given her by one of her confessors.

273.

See Note on p. 164.

274.

Vida, p. 85; *Camino de Perfecion*, capp. 4 and 5.

275.

Vida, cap. xxix., p. 209.

276.

Vida, cap. xxxii.

277.

Ibid., cap. xxxi.

278.

Vida, pp. 198, 301, 209, 321. This last communication is not related by herself: we have it on the authority of Ribadeneira:—Itidem ei rursus apparens dixit: Cœlum nisi creassem, ob te solam crearem.—*Vita Teresiæ*, p. 41.

279.

Originally:

> Mas causa en mi tal passion
> Ver à Dios mi prisionero
> Que muero porque no muero.

280.

Vida, cap. xl. p. 324.

281.

The biographers of the saints differ both as to the time of her death (1308, 1299, 1393, are dates assigned), and as to the number and nature of the miraculous formations discovered within her heart. Ribadeneira's account is by no means the most extravagant. He says:—Aperto ejus corde amplo et concavo, eidem repererunt impressa Dominicæ passionis insignia, nempe crucifixum cum tribus clavis, lancea, spongia, et arundine hinc, et illinic flagris, virgis, columna, corona spinea; atque hæc insignia Dominicæ Passionis, nervis validis durisque constabant.—*Vida S. Clarœ*, p. 161.

282.

Vida, cap. xxix, p. 213. Speaking of the delicious anguish, she says:—No es dolor corporal, sino espiritual, aunque no dexa de participar el cuerpo algo, y aun harto. Es un requiebro tan suave que passa entre el almo y Dios que suplico yo a su bondad lo dè a gustar a quien pensare que miento.

283.

Vida, cap. xxxviii. pp. 300, 301; and xl. 328.

284.

Vida, pp. 71 and 75. In the latter passage, Theresa says expressly:—En la mystica Teologia, que comence a dezir, pierde de obrar el entendimiento, porque le suspende Dios, como despues declararè mas, si supiere, y el me diere para el lo su favor. Presumir, ni pensar de suspenderle nosotros, es lo que digo no se haga, ni se dexe de obrar con el, porque nos quedaremos bouos y frios, y ni haremos lo uno ni lo otro. Que quando el Señor le suspende, y haze parar, dale de que se espante, y en que se ocupe, y que sin discurrir entienda mas en un credo que nosotros podemos entendir con todas nuestras diligencias de tierra en muchos años.

285.

See Note on p. 175.

286.

Vida, cap. xvii. and *Castillo Interior, Moradas Quintas*, cap. i.

287.

Castillo Interior, p. 580.

288.

See second Note on p. 175.

289.

See Note on p. 176.

290.

See Note on p. 177.

291.

See Note on p. 178.

292.

See the account of the proceedings against Molinos and his followers, in Arnold, th. III., c. xvii., and more fully in an Appendix to the English translation of Madame Guyon's Autobiography.

293.

Vida, chap. xxii.:—Quando Dios quiere suspender todas las potencias (como en los modos de oracion que quedan dichos hemos visto) claro estâ que aunque no queramos se quita esta presencia.... Mas que nosotros de maña y con cuydado nos acostumbremos a no procurar con todas nuestras fuerças traer delante siempre (y pluguiesse al Señor fuesse siempre) esta sacratissima humanidad esto digo que no me parece bien, y que es andar el alma en ayre, como dizen: porque parece no trae arrimo, por mucho que la parezca anda llena de Dios.—P. 154.

294.

The words of John are:—Mais il faut remarquer que quand je dis qu'il est à propos d'oublier les espèces et les connaissances des objets matériels, je ne prétends nullement parler de Jésus-Christ ni de son humanité sacrée. Quoique l'âme n'en ait pas quelquefois la mémoire dans sa plus haute contemplation et dans le simple regard de la divinité, parce que Dieu élève l'esprit à cette connaissance confuse et surnaturelle, néanmoins il ne faut jamais négliger exprès la représentation de cette adorable humanité ni en effacer le souvenir ou l'idée, ni en affaiblir la connaissance.—*La Montée du Mont Carmel*, liv. III. chap. 1. I have

used the French translation of his works, edited by the Abbé Migne, in his *Bibliothèque Universelle du Clergé*. 1845.

The chapter on images is the fourteenth of the same book.

Father Berthier (*Lettres sur les Œuvres de S. Jean de la Croix*) attempts to show the difference between the mysticism of his author and that of the false mystics. He succeeds only in pointing out a manifest disagreement between the opinions of John and those which he himself believes (or pretends to believe) are those of Quietism—the accusations, in fact, against the Quietists—the exaggerated conclusions drawn by their enemies.

295.

See Note on p. 180.

296.

Castillo Interior. Morada vi., c. v.

297.

Ibid., capp. viii., ix., x.

298.

Vida, cap. xxvii., pp. 191, &c. Here the supernatural illumination without means or mode, longed for by so many mystics, is professedly realised. Molinos puts forward no claim so dangerous as this special revelation. Theresa is confident that this most inexplicable species of communication is beyond the reach of any delusion, and inaccessible altogether to the father of lies. Her language concerning the absolute passivity of those who are its subjects,

is as strong as it could be. No Quietist could push it farther. It so happens that the saint, in his chapter, contravenes expressly the three criteria, afterwards laid down by Fénélon, to distinguish the true mysticism from the false. The genuine contemplation according to him is not purely infused, not purely gratuitous (*i.e.*, without correspondence on the part of the soul to the grace vouchsafed), not miraculous. With Theresa this form of passive contemplation *is* all three. So much more Quietist was the mysticism authorised than the mysticism condemned by Rome. See *Maximes des Saints*, art. xxix. What Fénélon rejects in the following section as false, answers exactly to the position of Theresa. Fénélon supports his more refined and sober mysticism by the authority of preceding mystics. He finds among them ample credentials, and indeed more than he wants. Their extravagances he tacitly rejects. Not that, as a good Catholic, he could venture openly to impugn their statements, but their fantastic extremes, and choice wonders, find a place with him rather as so much religious tradition, or extraordinary history, than as forming any essential part of the mysticism he himself represents and commends.

299.

Vida, cap. xxv.

300.

His exhortations here carry ascetic self-abnegation far beyond the Quietist indifference of Fénélon or Madame Guyon. They were satisfied—he, always, and she throughout her later life—to seek a state of calm, to hail joy or

sorrow alike, with the trustful equanimity of perfect resignation. John is too violent—too much enamoured of miseries, to await the will of Providence. His ambition will command events, and make them torments.

'Au reste, le meilleur moyen, le plus méritoire et le plus propre pour acquérir les vertus; le moyen, dis-je, le plus sûr pour mortifier la joie, l'espérance, la crainte et la douleur, est de se porter toujours aux choses non pas les plus faciles, mais les plus difficiles; non pas les plus savoureuses, mais les plus insipides; non pas les plus agréables, mais les plus désagréables; non pas à celles qui consolent, mais à celles qui causent de la peine; non pas aux plus grandes, mais aux plus petites; non pas aux plus sublimes et aux plus précieuses, mais aux plus basses et aux plus méprisables. Il faut enfin désirer et rechercher ce qu'il y a de pire, et non ce qu'il y a de meilleur, afin de se mettre, pour l'amour de Jésus Christ, dans la privation de toutes les choses du monde, et d'entrer dans l'esprit d'une nudité parfaite....

'Premièrement, il faut que celui qui veut réprimer cette passion tâche de faire les choses qui tournent à son déshonneur, et il aura soin de se faire mépriser aussi par le prochain.

'Secondement, il dira lui-même et fera dire aux autres les choses qui lui attirent du mépris.'—*Montée du Carmel*, liv. II. ch. xiii.

301.

Dionysius is very clearly followed into his darkness in *La Montée du Carmel*, liv. II. chap. viii.; and his Hierarchies reappear in *La Nuit*

Obscure, liv. II. ch. xii.

302.

La Nuit Obscure, liv. II. ch. iv.; *et passim*.

303.

This first Night is treated of at length in the first book of the *Montée du Carmel*, and in the first of the *Nuit Obscure*. The supernatural sensuous enjoyments, alluded to, are described in the *Montée du Carmel*, liv. II. ch. xi. They are placed in the second Night,—the compensation not taking place immediately; and their recipient is on no account to rely on them, or desire their continuance (p. 444). By 'sense,' John understands, not the body merely, but the least disorder of the passions, and all those imperfections so common to beginners which arise from an undue eagerness for religious enjoyments, such, for example, as what he calls spiritual avarice, spiritual luxury, spiritual *gourmandise*, &c.

304.

See Note on p. 195.

305.

Montée du Carmel, liv. II. ch. xxv.-xxxii.

306.

Ibid. ch. viii. and vi.

307.

Ibid. ch. xvii. and liv. III. ch. xii.

308.

What a scope for the indignant eloquence of

Bossuet, had Fénélon proclaimed as possible such a sudden equipment with all imaginable virtues as this:—Quelques-unes de ces connaissances et de ces touches intérieures que Dieu répand dans l'âme l'enrichissent de telle sorte qu'une seule suffit, non-seulement pour la délivrer tout d'un coup des imperfections qu'elle n'avait pu vaincre durant tout le cours de sa vie, mais aussi pour l'orner des vertus chrétiennes et des dons divins.—*Montée du Carmel*, liv. II. ch. xxvi. p. 484.

309.

In the chapter just cited, John says expressly, 'Elle ne saurait cependant s'élever à ces connaissances et à ces touches divines par sa co-opération,' and describes these gifts as coming from God, 'subitement et sans attendre le consentement de la volonté.'—P. 485. So again, quite as strongly, liv. II. chap. xi. p. 445. He discountenances the attempt to seek perfection by the 'voies surnaturelles,' yet his books are an introduction to the mystical evening, and a guide through the mystical midnight.

310.

La Nuit Obscure, liv. II. ch. ix.; especially the passage cited in note on p. 195.

311.

This night occupies the third book of the *Montée du Carmel*.

312.

See Note on p. 196.

313.
See second Note on p. 196.

314.
See the life of the saint in Alban Butler, Nov. 24.

315.
See the first six chapters of her *Autobiography*. This life was published posthumously at Cologne, in 1720. I have used an anonymous English translation, published at Bristol, in 1772.

316.
See Note on p. 238.

317.
Autobiography, chap. x.

318.
Autobiography, chap. xii. p. 87.

319.
See second Note on p. 238.

320.
Görres, *Die Christliche Mystik*, b. IV. c. i.

321.
Görres, *Die Christliche Mystik*, pp. 70-73.

322.
Specimens of the language may be seen in Görres, p. 152.

323.
Görres, *Die Christliche Mystik*, pp. 465, &c.

324.
Ibid. pp. 532, &c.

325.
See Note on p. 239.

326.
Autobiography, part I. c. xv.

327.
See Note on p. 240.

328.
Autobiography, part I. c. xxviii. p. 163.

329.
This spontaneity she likens to a fountain, as compared with a pump; love in the heart prompts every issue of life: outward occasions and stimulants are no longer awaited; and a glad inward readiness gives facility in every duty, patience under every trial. Such also is the teaching of Fénélon here—the genuine doctrine of spiritual life. But the enemies of Quietism were not slow to represent this 'practising the virtues no longer as virtues,' as a dangerous pretence for evading the obligations of virtue altogether.

330.
Upham, vol. I. pp. 262, 263.

331.
This Prayer of Silence became hers at an early period in her religious career, not as the result of direct effort in pursuance of a theory, but simply as the consequence of overpowering

emotion. She says, ‘I had a secret desire given me from that time to be wholly devoted to the disposal of my God, let it be what it would. I said, ‘What couldst Thou demand of me, that I would not willingly sacrifice or offer Thee? Oh, spare me not.’ I could scarce hear speak of God, or our Lord Jesus Christ, without being almost ravished out of myself. What surprised me the most, was the great difficulty I had to say the vocal prayers I had been used to say. As soon as I opened my lips to pronounce them, the love of God seized me so strongly that I was swallowed up in a profound silence, and a peace not to be expressed. I made fresh essays, but still in vain. I began, but could not go on. And as I had never before heard of such a state, I knew not what to do. My inability therein still increased, because my love to God was still growing more strong, more violent, and more overpowering. There was made in me, without the sound of words, a continual prayer, which seemed to me to be the prayer of our Lord Jesus Christ Himself; a prayer of the Word, which is made by the Spirit, which, according to St. Paul, ‘asketh for us that which is good, perfect, and conformable to the will of God.’—*Autobiography*, part I. c. xiii.

Here we find genuine devout fervour, emancipating itself, very naturally in private, from allotted forms of prayer; but no mysticism, till we come to the last sentence—even that, admitting a favourable explanation.

332.

Autobiography, part II. c. xvii. ‘God supplied me,’ she adds, ‘with what was pertinent and

satisfactory to them all, after a wonderful manner, without any share of my study or meditation therein. Nothing was hid from me of their interior state, and of what passed within them. Here, O my God! thou madest an infinite number of conquests, known to Thyself only. They were instantly furnished with a wonderful facility of prayer. God conferred on them His grace plentifully, and wrought marvellous changes in them. The most advanced of these souls found, when with me, in silence, a grace communicated to them, which they could neither comprehend nor cease to admire. The others found an unction in my words, and that they operated in them what I said to them. They said they had never experienced anything like it. Friars of different orders, and priests of merit, came to see me, to whom our Lord granted very great favours, as indeed he did to all without exception, who came in sincerity. One thing was surprising, and that was, that I had not a word to say to such as came only to watch my words and to criticise them. Even when I thought to try to speak to them, I felt that I could not, and that God would not have me do it.... I felt that what I spoke flowed from the fountain, and that I was only the instrument of Him who made me speak.'—P. 86.

333.

The little book to which she gave the name of *The Torrents*, was written, she tells us, at the suggestion of La Combe. When she took up her pen she knew not what she was to say, but soon came thoughts and words abundantly—as,

indeed, they were sure to do. She compares the different kinds of spiritual progress to the mountain streams she had seen hurrying down the sides of the Alps. She describes the varieties in the gravitation of devout souls toward God—the ocean which they seek. Some proceed slowly, by means of meditations, austerities, and works of charity,—dependent mostly on outward appliances,—deficient in spontaneity and ardour,—little exercised by inward experience. Another class flow in a fuller stream,—grow into laden rivers—haste with more strength and speed; but these are apt to dwell, with too much complacence, on those rich gifts for which they are conspicuous. A third order (and to these she herself belonged) dash out from the poverty of the rocks, impetuous, leaping over every obstacle, unburdened by wealthy freightage, inglorious in the eyes of men, but simple, naked, self-emptied, with resistless eagerness foaming up out of abysmal chasms that seemed to swallow them, and finding, soonest of all, that Sea divine, wherein all rivers rest.

Her commentaries on Scripture were written with extraordinary rapidity. The fact that she consulted no book except the Bible in their composition must doubtless have contributed to their speed: certainly not, as she fancied, to their excellence. No writers are so diffuse as the mystics, because no others have written so fast, imagining headlong haste an attribute of inspiration. The transcriber could not copy in five days what she had written in one night. We may conjecture that the man must have been paid by the day. The commentary on the

Canticles was written in a day and a half, and several visits received beside.—*Autobiography*, part II. c. xxi.

334.

O man, wouldst thou be grafted, and to the heavenly soil transplanted? then must thou first thy branches wild hew quite away, that kindly fruits may come forth in God's image.

335.

As far as his doctrine differs from that of Madame Guyon, it is for the worse, because he approaches more nearly the extreme language of some of the orthodox mystics in his communion.

336.

This Dialogue of Malaval's, which goes much beyond the mysticism of Molinos, was approved by the Sorbonne, and found so conformable to the teachings of St. Theresa, that the translation of it was dedicated to the bare-footed Carmelites. The unobtrusive and not unqualified mysticism of Molinos was stigmatised by the new epithet of Quietism, and condemned as deadly error. The extravagant and wonder-working mysticism of Theresa was extolled as the angelic life. See the *Account of Molinos and the Quietists*, appended to the *Autobiography* of Madame Guyon: translated, I believe, from a French work, entitled, *Recueil de Diverses Pièces concernant le Quiétisme et les Quiétistes*.

337.

Michelet, *Priests, Women, and Families*, p. 74.

338.

See Note on p. 276.

339.

Upham, vol. ii. pp. 3, &c. We find among these persons of rank a religion of some vitality—no court-fashion merely. It was to the *Introduction à la Vie Dévote* (1608) of St. Francis de Sales that Romanism was indebted for such hold as it really had on the upper classes. None of the great ecclesiastical writers of France—not even that darling of the fifteenth century, the *Imitatio Christi*, could win the ears of people of the world. In the *Introduction*, however, religion appeared neither ruthlessly stern, nor hopelessly fantastical. It was not, on the one side, scowling, unkempt, sordid, morose; it was not, on the other, impalpable, supersensuous, utterly unintelligible, as well as undesirable, to worldly common sense. Fashion and devotion met; piety and politeness embraced each other. The *Introduction* leaves to others the pains and raptures of the mystic. It is written for the Marthas, not the Marys. Its readers, personified in Philothea, are not supposed to be covetous of any extraordinary gifts. De Sales possessed a lively fancy, and the tender religious sentiment of his book, graced and lightened by its rainbow illustrations, was a bright-winged Psyche, welcome everywhere. These illustrations are drawn, sometimes from the farms, the flower-valleys, and the snow-peaks of his native Savoy; sometimes from fabulous natural history, from classic story, from the legends of the Church, or the forms and usages of the world,—oftenest of all, from the ways of

infants and children, and from the love of mothers. St. Beuve happily characterises the work, as ‘un livre qui, sur la table d’une femme comme il faut ou d’un gentilhomme poli de ce temps-là, ne chassait pas absolument le volume de Montaigne, et, attendait, sans le fuir, le volume d’Urfé.’—*Causeries du Lundi*, tom. vii. p. 216.

340.

This Harlay had owed his archbishopric to his libertinism in the days of Madame de Montespan. His sun was now setting, ingloriously enough, under the decent régime of the Maintenon, and there was nothing for it but to atone for the scandals of his life and diocese by exemplary rigour in matters of doctrine. The letters sent, and the documents shown him, were the fabrication of La Mothe and his creature the scrivener Gautier. They forged a letter from Marseilles, pretending that La Combe had slept in the same chamber with Madame Guyon—and also eaten meat in Lent. La Combe was further accused of having embraced and taught the heresy of Molinos.

The real letters which followed Madame Guyon from the scenes of her former activity breathe no suspicion of her character or motives. The Bishop of Geneva, in a letter quoted by Fénélon, declared that his only complaint against her was the indiscreet zeal with which she everywhere propagated truths which she believed serviceable to the Church. With that exception, ‘he esteemed her infinitely, and entertained for her the highest imaginable regard.’ This was in 1683. In 1688 he

prohibited her books. But even in 1695, the same bishop repeats his praise of her piety and morals, and declares that his conscience never would have suffered him to speak of her in other than respectful language.—See *Memoirs for the History of Madame de Maintenon* (London, 1757), vol. III. bk. xi. c. 2. *Autobiography*, part III. chapp. i. ii. iii. Fénélon's *Réponse à la Relation sur le Quiétisme*, chap. i.

341.

Memoirs for the History of Madame de Maintenon, bk. ix. Madame Guyon's doctrine entered St. Cyr while the absolute vows were yet under discussion.

342.

Memoirs for the History of Madame de Maintenon, bk. xi. chap. v.

343.

Autobiography, part III. chap. ix. Fénélon declares that her explanations at these interviews were such as to satisfy him of the harmlessness and orthodoxy of her intention. She appeared to him often extravagant or questionable in expression, from her ignorance; but so favoured of God, that the most learned divine might gather spiritual wisdom from her lips. She told him of certain instantaneous supernatural communications, which came and vanished, she knew not how. Yet, like John of the Cross, she did not rest on these, but passed on into the obscure path of pure faith. For this he praised her, and believed that though these experiences were illusory, a spirit so lowly and so obedient had been faithful to grace

throughout, such involuntary deception notwithstanding.—*Réponse à la Relation sur le Quiétisme*, chap. i. 10-13.

344. She still speaks, however, of the '*sense*' vouchsafed her of the state of the souls given to her, even when they were at a distance; and of communication in God with those to whom the Lord united her by the tie of spiritual maternity. *Autobiography*, part III. ch. viii. Nothing was more likely to open her eyes to the questionable character of some of her experiences, and to the unguarded nature of many of her expressions, than the kindly yet searching inquiries of a man like Fénélon, qualified by temperament to enter into her feelings, and a master in mystical theology. Mr. Upham seems to me greatly to overrate the influence of Madame Guyon on Fénélon. To her fancy, her imagination might at times depict him as a spiritual son: he was, in fact, a friendly judge.

345. When called to separate the true mysticism from the false in the writings of Madame Guyon, Bossuet was not only ignorant of Tauler, Ruysbroek, Harphius, and others; he had not even read Francis de Sales or John of the Cross. Fénélon, at his request, sent him a collection of passages from Suso, Harphius, Ruysbroek, Tauler, Catharine of Genoa, St. Theresa, John of the Cross, Alvarez, De Sales, and Madame de Chantal. With just indignation does Fénélon expose the artifice by which Bossuet afterwards attempted to turn this

confidence against him.—*Réponse à la Relation sur le Quiétisme*, chap. ii. 18-27.

346.

History of Madame de Maintenon, bk. XI. chap. vii.

347.

History of Madame de Maintenon, bk. XI. chap. vii. Bausset, *Histoire de Fénélon*, liv. ii. p. 295. The high opinion entertained of Fénélon by Madame de Maintenon was, as yet, unshaken. She knew that though the friend of Madame Guyon, he was not her advocate. But she was called to side with the man of charity or the man of zeal—the liberal man or the bigot; and the issue could not long be doubtful. Fénélon early saw the signs of danger. We find him striving to moderate the enthusiasm of Madame de la Maisonfort—to reconcile her to the regulations of Godet—to repress her indiscreet zeal in behalf of her cousin, Madame Guyon.—*Correspondance de Fénélon*, Lettres 24, 26, 29, 30.

348.

Autobiography, part III. chap. xiii. Phelipeaux gives in full the correspondence on both sides, *Relation de l'Origine, du Progrès et de la Condamnation du Quiétisme répandu en France* (1732), liv. i. pp. 73, &c. His account abounds in misrepresentations, and does little more, in the first part, than echo the *Relation sur le Quiétisme* of Bossuet, to whom the abbé was devoted. But his minuteness of detail, and the copious insertion of important letters and documents on either side, give to the heavy

narrative considerable value. In a subsequent interview between Bossuet and Madame Guyon, she declared herself unable to pray for any particular thing—the forgiveness of her sins, for instance. To do so was to fail in absolute abandonment and disinterestedness. Bossuet was shocked. Madame Guyon promised and meant, to be all submission; but conscience would be unmanageable at times. Bossuet writes her long, sensible, hard-headed letters, in which, without much difficulty, he exposes her error, and leaves her no ground to stand on. She, however, must still humbly suggest that the exercise of love embraces all petitions, and that as there is a love without reflexion, so there may be a prayer without reflexion—a substantial prayer, comprehending all others.—*Phelipeaux*, p. 111.

349.

Her request was made to Madame de Maintenon for commissioners, half clerical, half lay, to examine into the scandals which had been set afloat against her character.—*Phelipeaux*, liv. i. p. 114. *Autobiography*, part III. chap. xv.

350.

Autobiography, chapp. xvi. xvii. See also her letter to the three commissioners, in *Phelipeaux*, p. 117. Harlay heard with indignation of this Conference at Issy, to decide upon a heresy which had been unearthed in his diocese. He endeavoured to rouse the suspicions of Louis, but in vain. He determined himself to condemn the writings of Madame Guyon, before the Commissioners could come to a decision.

Madame de Maintenon informed Bossuet, who paid a visit without loss of time to his metropolitan, complimented him on the censure he was about to fulminate, gave every explanation, and took his departure with polite assurances that the verdict of Issy would but reiterate the condemnation pronounced by the vigilant Archbishop of Paris. So completely was the cause of Madame Guyon prejudged.—*Phelipeaux*, p. 125.

351.

Autobiography, part III. chapp. xviii. xix. *Réponse à la Relation*, &c., I. ii. 3. *Upham*, vol. II. chapp. x. and xi.

352.

The articles at first proposed to Fénélon for his signature were thirty in number. The 12th and 13th, the 33rd and 34th, were wanting. He said that he could only sign these thirty articles *as they were*, '*par déférence*,' and against his persuasion. Two days afterwards, when the four additional articles were laid before him, he declared himself ready to sign them with his blood. The 34th article is the most important of the four, as bearing directly on the most critical question arising from the doctrine of disinterested love. It allows that doctrine expressly, if words have meaning, and occupies all the ground Fénélon himself was concerned to maintain in its defence. (*Entretiens sur la Religion*, Fén. Œuvres, tom. i. p. 34.) The article is in substance as follows:—On peut inspirer aux âmes peinées et vraiment humbles un consentement à la volonté de Dieu, quand même, par une supposition très-fausse, au lieu

des biens éternels promis aux justes, il les tiendrait dans les tourments éternels, sans néanmoins les priver de sa grâce et de son amour.—*Réponse à la Relation*, &c., chap. iii. *Phelipeaux*, liv. i. pp. 131, 135-137.

353.

See Note on p. 278.

354.

See second Note on p. 278.

355.

See Note on p. 279.

356.

Witness the panegyrics of Bossuet on Theresa and John of the Cross. Compare also their different verdicts on the former. Fénélon says, writing to Madame de Maintenon, 'Quelque respect et quelque admiration que j'aie pour Sainte Thérèse, je n'aurais jamais voulu donner au public tout ce qu'elle a écrit.'—*Correspondance*, 31. Bossuet, writing to Madame Guyon, says, 'Je n'ai jamais hésité un seul moment sur les états de Sainte Thérèse, parceque je n'y ai rien trouvé, que je ne trouvasse aussi dans l'Ecriture,' &c.—*Phelipeaux*, liv. i. p. 104. In the *Instructions sur les Etats d'Oraison*, Bossuet, in speaking of the passive state, had allowed of certain miraculous suspensions (impuissances) from which Fénelon shrinks—which he would have located in some section *Faux* of his *Maxims*—and to which Noailles refused his approval.—*Réponse à la Relation*, xxviii. and lxii.

357.

Her letter to Bossuet furnishes a fair justification of this retreat to Paris.—*Phelipeaux*, liv. i. p. 152. It gratifies our curiosity to learn from this authority what books were seized when Desgrès, the detective, entered the little house in the Faubourg St. Antoine, in the name of the king. There were some plays of Molière, some romances, such as *John of Paris* and *Richard Lion-heart*, but these, said Madame Guyon, belonged to the lacqueys of her son, a lieutenant in the guards. But she acknowledged a *Griseldis* and *Don Quixote* as her books. It is pleasing to find our fair saint, so far of like passions with ourselves, amused with Sancho, and pitying Griseldis,—herself a patient sufferer at the hands of blinded, pitiless men.

358.

See Note on p. 280.

359.

See second Note on p. 280.

360.

Bausset, *Histoire de Fénélon*, liv. iii. p. 45. See also Note on p. 281.

361.

Bausset, *Hist. de Fénélon*, liv. iii. 47. A minute, though very partial account of all the squabbles and intrigues at Rome, from first to last, may be read in *Phelipeaux*.—See also *Memoirs of Madame de Maintenon*, xi. 19. *Corr. de Fénélon*, lettre 108.

362.

Bausset, iii. 48-50; Aimé-Martin, *Etudes sur la Vie de Fénélon*, p. 14.

363.

Bausset, 53-4; *Mem. of Maintenon*, XI. 20; Aimé-Martin, 15.

364.

Bausset, 59-61. The means to which Bossuet could stoop—the falsehoods he could coolly repeat, after detection, as though nothing had happened—the misquotation, and misrepresentation—the constant reply to awkwardly pressing arguments by malicious personalities—all these things are exposed in Fénélon's *Lettres en Réponse*, and in the *Réponse* itself. They are bad enough; but the student of controversy is accustomed to this imperturbable lying, to these arts of insinuation. The most detestable feature of all in the part played by Bossuet, lies in that sleek cant and tearful unction with which he calumniates—as though it almost broke his heart to write what he exults in writing. Well might Fénélon request that he would not weep over him so profusely while he tore him in pieces, and desire fewer tears and more fair play! See the Preface to the *Réponse*; *Réponse*, 59; and *Réponse aux Remarques*, § vi.

365.

Bausset, iii. 68, 69; Upham, vol. ii. p. 289.

366.

Bausset, 77, 78.

367.
Upham, vol. ii. ch. 18.

368.
See Note on p. 289.

369.
See Note on p. 290.

370.
See Second Note on p. 290.

371.
See *Revelations from the Life of Prince Talleyrand*; and compare Eynard, *Vie de Madame de Krüdener*, chap. xvii. Madame de Genlis writes of her, 'M^e^. de Krüdener disait les choses les plus singulières avec un calme qui les rendait persuasives; elle était certainement de très bonne foi; elle me parut être aimable, spirituelle et d'une originalité très piquante.'—P. 30.

372.
See the whole story of the pastor Fontaine and Maria Kummerin, in Eynard.

373.
Barratier subsequently became minister to the French church in Halle.

374.
See Note on p. 310.

375.
Barclay's Apology, propp. v. and vi. § 27, p. 194. Fourth Edition, 1701.

376.

Fox's *Journal*, pp. 76-83.

377.

Fox's *Journal*, vol. i. p. 130.

378.

Fox's *Journal*, vol. i. pp. 109, 129, 232. Vaughan's *Hist. of England under the House of Stuart*, p. 539.

379.

Journal, vol. i. p. 95.

380.

Journal, p. 89. This theopathetic mysticism is emphatically transitive. Every inward manifestation speedily becomes a something to be done, a testimony to be delivered. The Quaker is 'exercised,' not that he may deck himself in the glory of saintship, but to fit him for rendering service, as he supposes, to his fellows. The early followers of Fox often caricatured the acted symbolism of the Hebrew prophets with the most profane or ludicrous unseemliness. Yet stark-mad as seemed the fashion of their denunciations, their object was very commonly some intelligible and actual error or abuse.

381.

Barclay's *Apology*, propp. v. and vi. 16. Sewell's *History*, p. 544. (Barclay's *Letter to Paets*); also p. 646 (*The Christian Doctrine of the People called Quakers*, &c., published 1693). Compare J. J. Gurney's *Observations on the Distinguishing Views and Practices of the Society of Friends*,

chap. i. p. 59.

382.

Koran.

383.

Let the reader consult his *Enthusiasmus Triumphatus*, or read his caustic observations upon the *Anima Magica Abscondita*, and his *Second Lash of Alazonomastix*. Among the high-flyers of his day, there appear to have been some who spoke of being 'godded with God,' and 'Christed with Christ,' much after the manner of some of Eckart's followers.

384.

'But now seeing the *Logos* or steady comprehensive wisdom of God, in which all Ideas and their respects are contained, is but *universal stable reason*, how can there be any pretence of being so highly inspired as to be blown above reason itself, unlesse men will fancy themselves wiser than God, or their understandings above the natures and reasons of things themselves.'—Preface to the *Conjectura Cabbalistica*.

385.

See Norris's *Miscellanies* (1699):

An Idea of Happiness: enquiring wherein the greatest happiness attainable by Man in this Life does consist, pp. 326-341.

386.

Miscellanies, p. 276 (in a Discourse on Rom. xii. 3), and p. 334.

387.

Norris says, in his *Hymn to Darkness*—

> ‘The blest above do thy sweet umbrage prize,
> When cloyed with light, they veil their eyes.
> The vision of the Deity is made
> More sweet and beatific by thy shade.
> But we poor tenants of this orb below
> Don’t here thy excellencies know,
> Till death our understandings does improve,
> And then our wiser ghosts thy silent night-
> walks love.’

In the writings of Henry More we can see, by a notice here and there, how Quakerism looked in the eyes of a retired scholar, by no means indiscriminately adverse to enthusiasm. The word enthusiasm itself, he always uses more in the classical than the modern sense. ‘To tell you my opinion of that sect which are called Quakers, though I must allow that there may be some amongst them good and sincere-hearted men, and it may be nearer to the purity of Christianity for the life and power of it than many others, yet I am well assured that the generality of them are prodigiously melancholy, and some few perhaps possessed with the devil.’ He thinks their doctrine highly dangerous, as mingling with so many good and wholesome things an abominable ‘slighting of the history of Christ, and making a mere allegory of it,—tending to the utter overthrow of that warrantable though more external frame of Christianity which Scripture itself points out to us.’ Yet he takes wise occasion, from the very existence of such a sect, to bid us all look at home, and see that we do not

content ourselves with the mere Tabernacle without the Presence and Power of God therein.—*Mastix, his Letter to a Friend*, p. 306.

388.

See Swedenborg's *True Christian Religion*, chap. iv.

389.

See *E. Swedenborg, a Biography*, by J. G. Wilkinson, p. 99; a succinct and well-written account of the man, and the best introduction to his writings I have met with.

390.

Wilkinson, pp. 187, 118.

391.

Wilkinson, pp. 79, 130.

392.

Heaven and Hell, § 360.

393.

True Christian Religion, § 796.

394.

See the description of the heavenly palaces, of divine worship in heaven, and of the angelic employments, *Heaven and Hell*, §§ 183, 221, 387. *True Christian Religion*, §§ 694, 697. Also concerning marriages in heaven, *Heaven and Hell*, §§ 366-386.

395.

Heaven and Hell, §§ 329-345.

396.

True Christian Religion, chap. vi. 6, 7; *Heaven and Hell*, § 592.

397.

True Christian Religion, chap. ii. 1-7. I give here Swedenborg's idea of the evangelical theology. See especially §§ 132-135, where he represents himself as correcting the false doctrine of certain spirits in the other world concerning the Divine Nature.

398.

Goethe:

> Held our eyes no sunny sheen,
> How could sunshine e'er be seen?
> Dwelt no power divine within us,
> How could God's divineness win us?

399.

See F. H. Jacobi, *Von den Göttlichen Dingen und ihrer Offenbarung* (1811), where the principles of the Faith-Philosophy are expounded, though after a desultory, disjointed manner:—more especially pp. 70-93.

400.

To Schleiermacher the theology of his country owes great and lasting obligation for having led the intellectual promise of his time to a momentous crisis of transition. His genius at once kindled the enthusiasm of youth, and allowed a space to its scepticism. As much opposed as Hamann or Jacobi to the contemptuous Rationalism which then held the scorner's chair, he did not, like them, couch a polemic lance against philosophy. But real and

important as was his advance beyond the low and superficial anti-supranaturalism which preceded him, the followers of Schleiermacher found it impossible to rest where he did. From among his pupils have sprung the greatest names in this generation of German divines, and they have admitted, with scarcely an exception, that he conceded so much for the sake of peace as to render his position untenable. Their master led them to an elevation whence they discerned a farther height and surer resting-place than he attained. For a more detailed account of Schleiermacher and his theological position, the reader is referred to an article by the Author in the *British Quarterly Review* for May, 1849.

401.

The principles of the genuine Romanticism (as distinguished from its later and degenerate form) are ably enunciated by Tieck, in a comic drama, entitled *Prince Zerbino; or, Travels in Search of Good Taste*. One Nestor, a prosaic pedant, who piques himself on understanding everything, and on his freedom from all enthusiasm and imaginative nonsense, is introduced into the wondrous garden of the Goddess of Poesy. There he sees, among others, Dante and Ariosto, Cervantes and Sophocles. He complains of not finding Hagedorn, Gellert, Gesner, Kleist, or Bodmer; and the Goddess then points him out—as a true German bard—stout old Hans Sachs. Dante appears to him a crusty old fogie; Tasso, a well-meaning man, but weak; and Sophocles, whom he was disposed to respect as a classic, when blamed

for the obscurity of his choruses, turns upon him like a bear. The conceited impertinence, the knowing air, and the puzzle-headedness of the Philistine, are hit off to admiration. This Garden of Poesy seems to him a lair of savages, an asylum for lunatics, where all his smug conventionalisms are trampled on, and every canon of his criticism suffers flagrant violation. Genii take him away, and give him something substantial to eat—earth to earth. The tables and chairs begin to talk to him. They congratulate themselves on being delivered from their old free life in the woods, and cut out into *useful* articles of furniture, so fulfilling the purpose of their being. He gets on much better with them than with the poets, and thinks them (himself excepted) the most sensible creatures in the world.

402.

See Julian Schmidt, *Geschichte der Deutschen National Literatur im 19n Jahrhundert*, th. I. c. vi.

403.

Schmidt, p. 60.

404.

Novalis, *Schriften*, th. ii. pp. 152, 159, 221.

405.

Ibid., p. 158.

- Transcriber's Notes:
  - Footnotes have been collected at the end of the text, and are linked for ease of reference.
  - The original book had Volume I with

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