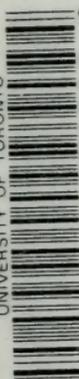


CONWAY MEMORIAL LECTURE

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO



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THE TASK OF
RATIONALISM

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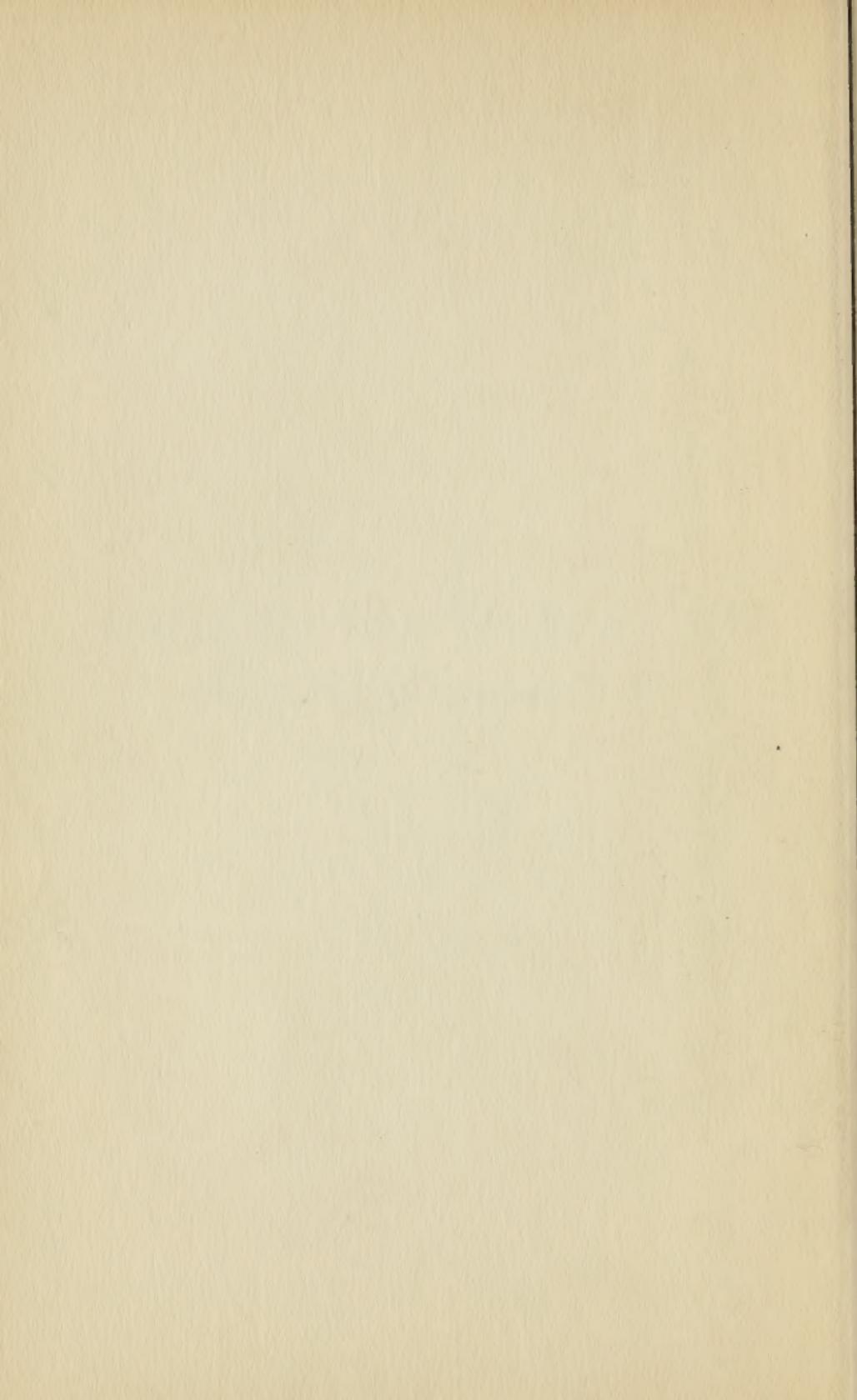


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THE TASK OF RATIONALISM:

IN RETROSPECT AND PROSPECT



CONWAY MEMORIAL LECTURE

THE TASK
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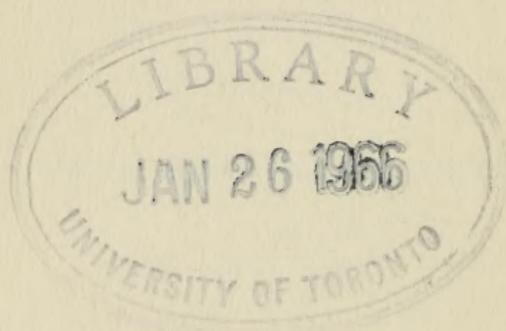
IN RETROSPECT AND PROSPECT

INAUGURAL LECTURE, MARCH 16, 1910

BY
JOHN RUSSELL, M.A.

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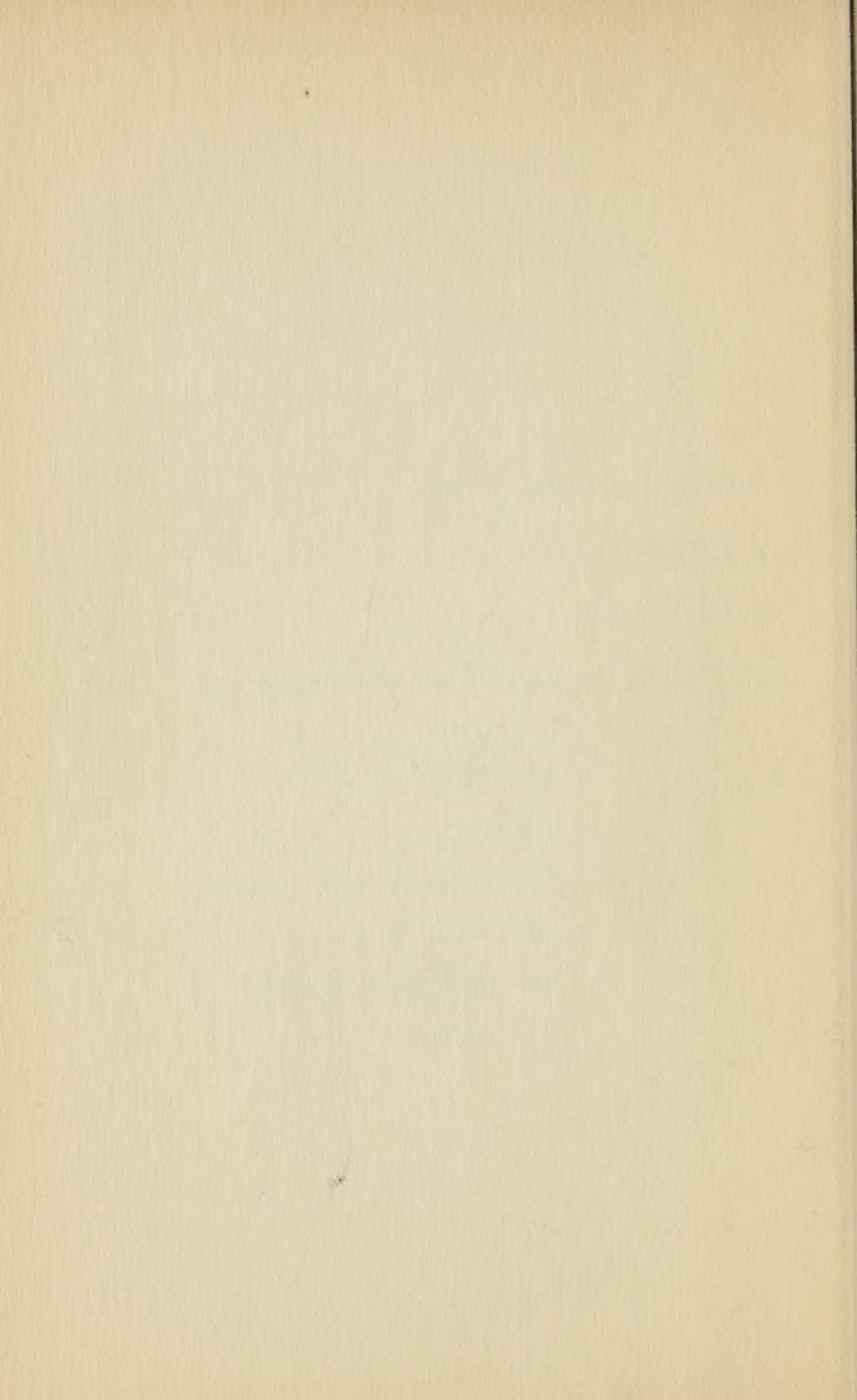
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INTRODUCTORY NOTE

As the result of a conference of friends and admirers of Moncure Conway held in South Place Chapel in October, 1908, for the purpose of considering how best to commemorate his life and work, it was decided to invite subscriptions, which, if of sufficient amount, should be invested, and the interest thereon applied to the endowment of an annual lecture or lectures perpetuating Dr. Conway's memory. The result, although not so large as hoped, is sufficient to secure the settlement of the scheme on a permanent basis, and Mr. John Russell was good enough to accept the unanimous invitation of the Executive Committee to deliver the Inaugural Lecture.

I think we shall all agree that, better than medallion or statue of Moncure Conway, and more in line with his own wishes, could he have expressed them, is the form which the Committee resolved that the memorial to him—*Monumentum ære perennius*—should

take. Every time that we honour the dead we are members of that Universal Church "built upon the foundation of" the cult of ancestors of which Zoroaster, Buddha, Jesus, and Mohamed are the corner-stones—a Church whose creed is recognition of the continuity of the generations and of the power of the past upon us. And in the roll-call of "famous men and of our fathers who begat us" no obscure place is his whose fearless, lovable, and truth-seeking spirit abides as an influence in our midst—an influence to which all the gross conceptions of a *dolce far niente* immortality are not to be compared.

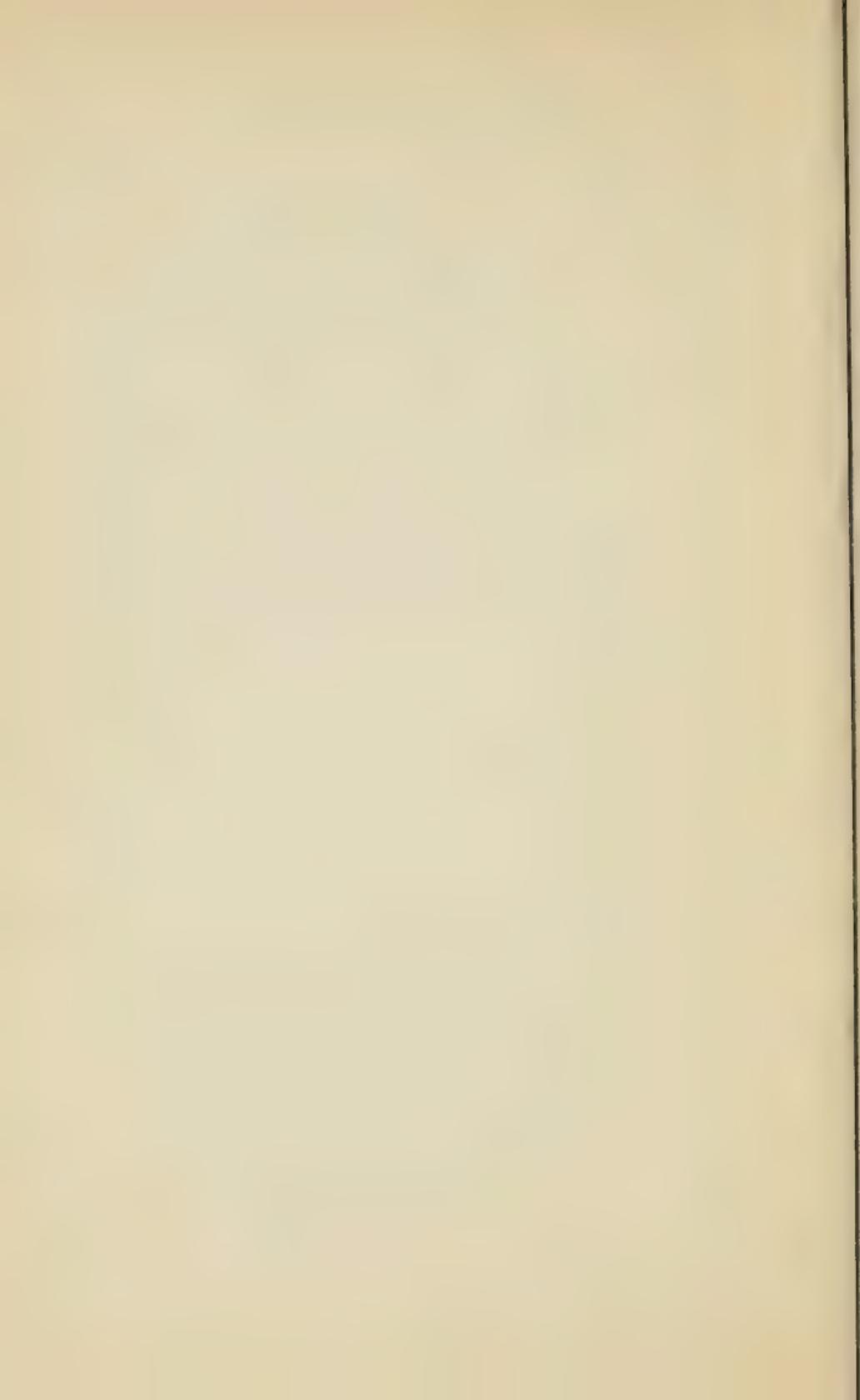
Mr. Russell's lecture is full of what the late Professor Seeley, in a phrase now classic, called "the Enthusiasm of Humanity." The objects which the advocates of Rationalism have in view are well and clearly defined; and they can be secured, as Mr. Russell contends, only by multiplication of centres of propagandism and by endowments for supply of means of defence, both involving a demand for large sums. There would seem to be no other way, because of the utter hopelessness of capturing the orthodox machinery,

the churches and chapels, to whose pulpits no Rationalist could or would be admitted ; and the equal hopelessness of sequestrating to what would be secular purposes the millions of pounds, ever increasing from legacies and other sources, which maintain thousands of official teachers. Moreover, we are in like case with the Churches. Their appeals and threats to sinners are of no avail, because the sinners don't go to church, and our arguments rarely reach outside the area of those who have accepted them already. The spectacle is strange and unalluring. Not many years ago there seemed warrant for the hope that the result of scientific discoveries destructive of the entire body of Christian dogma would be such revolt in the attitude of the mass of orthodox worshippers as would compel official renunciation of discredited creeds. We were under the illusion which, in a posthumous letter to Dr. Janes, late president of the Brooklyn Ethical Association, Herbert Spencer confesses possessed him. He says: "In my earlier days I constantly made the foolish supposition that conclusive proofs would change beliefs, but experience has long since

dispelled my faith in man's rationality." The Churches have administered their nepenthe to the reason; they have abandoned much, and in their astuteness kept silent about their surrender. They have forged more effectively the chains of custom and tradition on the minds of their followers; they have linked defence of what little remains of "the faith once delivered to the saints" with social prestige, privilege, and security, so that attack on the one becomes menace to the other. And their success has lain in the inertia and indifference of men of whom, as Montaigne said, inscribing it on one of the rafters of his famous tower: "It is not so much things that torment men as the opinion they have of things." Hence their avoidance of whatever disturbs the normal calm of the modern Gallios. And the words of Jeremiah ring true to-day: "The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means, and my people love to have it so" (chapter v. 31). Nevertheless, I would not be echoing only a Jeremiad. The principalities and powers against which Rationalism has fought are too worsted in the struggle to be eager, or able, to act

other than on the defensive; what they have lost is irrecoverable, and therein lies our assurance of ultimate success. That success will never be unless our policy and principles are imbued with a constructive element, and our appeal be made, not to reason alone, but also to emotions which may be disciplined, but can never be suppressed, except to the grievous loss of all that is best for the future of that insignificant portion of mankind which can ever rise above a low intellectual and spiritual plane.

EDWARD CLODD.



THE TASK OF RATIONALISM



I.

IN RETROSPECT

LET me at the outset explain my title and my plan. Rationalism probably means but one thing to most of us here, but to other people it seems to mean something else. Only a few weeks ago I delivered a lay sermon in a Christian church. "I think you know," I took the precaution of observing to the minister (whom I had never before met), "that I am a Rationalist." "I hope," he replied, with an air of pleasant patronage, "I hope you are." Now that hope meant much. It meant that he, too, claimed to be a Rationalist, claimed that his Christian faith was also based upon reason. But would he have accepted, as I do, the following definition: "Rationalism is the mental attitude which unreservedly accepts the supremacy of reason and aims at establishing a system of philosophy and ethics

verifiable by experience and independent of all arbitrary assumptions or authority"? In any Christian who can accept that, there is little of the Christian left but the name.

As to my plan, it is very simple. I regard the chief task of Rationalism in retrospect to have been the task of establishing itself. I regard its chief task in prospect to be that of applying itself. In looking back, I shall base my statements chiefly upon material gathered from my study of Moncure Conway's life and work. In looking forward I shall depend chiefly upon material gathered in the course of my own life and work. If, among the faithful pioneers of Rationalism, dead and living, I mention no name but Conway's, it is only that we are met in his honour, at his inspiration, and within walls still sweet with the fragrance of his soul.

And so I come, not to bury the Master, not even (in accordance with explicit instructions) to tell the story of his life, but just to praise him. And my praise even will be indirect, will consist chiefly in leading you to those last Pisgah heights to which he had so valiantly

attained, and in describing such features of his Vision as my own good Genius shall make plain to me.

But before Pisgah, Sinai—his consecration. It was on March 17, 1851, his nineteenth birthday, that he entered the American Methodist ministry. And the only consecration he ever received, he tells us, was from a black man, one of his father's slaves.

Massa Monc [it ran] I have had a vision. I saw you standing on a hill, and one came and blew a trumpet, and there came many people from the south ; and another came and blew a trumpet, and a great number came from the north ; and one sounded a third trumpet, and many came from the east ; and a fourth trumpet and a multitude from the west ; and a host was around you, and to them all you spoke the word of the Lord.

“Blow, bugle, blow, set the wild echoes flying”—and who knows but that to-night some echoes of the old days may awaken for a space the beloved dead !

I spoke of my own good Genius. That good Genius, like every other man's, is a very composite personality. This is not an occasion for analysing it, but you will bear

with me for a few moments if I please myself by trying to trace Moncure Conway's share in it.

I first heard his name and saw his face in 1881, and at once came under his spell. I was then a half-hearted student of theology at Cambridge—half-hearted because, from whatever place it had ever held in my heart, the love and service of God was fast being ousted by the love and service of man. Conway had been invited to address a newly-formed Society for Promoting Religious Equality, and under the title of "The Unbinding of Prometheus" presented his idea (as he tells us in his *Autobiography*) "of the cords by which thought was still bound and preyed upon, for serving mankind in ways not authorised by the Christian Zeus."

I have never been able to find that address, and I have no memory of it in detail. The only impression that remains is that of a man fearlessly but modestly pulling down our national false gods (as I already believed them to be) and setting up in their stead the one and only true God—Goodness. It was

the first revolutionary public utterance I had ever heard ; it was a trumpet call to the young rebel already working inside me, and I have ever since served whole-heartedly in the ranks of revolt.

Early in 1882 I began schoolmastering in London, and during that year and the next I was an occasional visitor to this chapel, and heard several of those scholarly, outspoken *Lessons for the Day* that made South Place almost a household word among Rationalists.

In the autumn of 1884, crossing from Dover to Calais, I espied, to my delight, Conway on the boat. I had never before spoken to him, but I now took courage to do so, thanking him for the brave words he had uttered at Cambridge, and the many brave words I had heard at South Place, and telling him that I had now finally put on the whole armour of Rationalism, and thereby seriously imperilled, I feared, my future career as a schoolmaster. He was very sympathetic (was he ever anything else?), encouraged me to persist in my new course, and said that one of the most hopeful signs of the times was the steadily increasing number of young people breaking free from the Christian

conventions. Only a short time before, he told me, in saying good-bye to his congregation, he had comforted them for his going with the assurance that there was no lack of younger men qualifying to take his place. I had a very poor opinion of my own qualifications, but I distinctly remember a sort of thrill of hope that I might some day be found worthy to stand where he had stood.

I do not think I ever saw him again till that last scene of all in this place—that Sunday evening in November, 1907, when, on his way back to Paris from a visit (on a mission of peace) to Mr. Carnegie in Scotland, he came here for an hour to meet old friends. I was introduced to him (he had naturally forgotten me) as the morning's lecturer, and a schoolmaster; and almost his first words were to ask whether I knew the *Crime de Sylvestre Bonnard*, by Anatole France. He had been reading it that morning, he said, and had been much struck by the pages on education. My answer must have startled him as much as his question startled me. "I have been reading it in the train," I said, "and it is now in my pocket. And the

question I most wanted to ask you, knowing that you had been lately in Paris, was whether you knew and valued the book, and could tell me anything of its author." I am old enough (and Rationalist enough) to know better, but that simple coincidence seemed at once to bind all my heart about him. And later in the evening, when he spoke those last touching words as to immediate happiness being the supreme quest and supreme gift in human life, I knew that he would for ever remain one of my revered masters.

That sense of reverence has been deepened since his death by my reading of his writings, which have revealed to me a man much greater than I had ever suspected—greater in sympathy, in courage, in intellect, in eloquence, in experience. His "Discourses" especially, so ideal and so practical, and—to a fellow-outcast at least—so convincing, have revived my somewhat flagging belief in the value of such Sunday exercises. I have always felt (who has not?) that the Christian pulpit might, properly used, be as great a spiritual force as it is now a spiritual waste; but the Rationalist pulpit (though I have sometimes occupied it)

I have been prone, in seeking my own spiritual living, to neglect—partly, perhaps, from following not wisely but too well the Emersonian injunction to “cultivate an original relation with the universe.”

It is now too late to amend my ways. All sorts of infirmities of the flesh and of the spirit are crowding upon me, and my Sundays have generally to be devoted to arrears of duty ; but if I could have my last twenty-five years over again (do not grudge me the consecrated consolation) I would search out some body of bravely religious men and women, self-dedicated, as many of your forefathers and foremothers were, to “the duty of free inquiry and the right of religious liberty,” and keep some part of every Sunday holy in spiritual communion with them.

You see now the extent of my first-hand acquaintance with the Master whose ideals we are met to celebrate—nay, to advance. It was all too little ; but without it, little as it was, I had not dared to attempt the task set me by the Memorial Committee.

He was greater in sympathy and courage

than I had suspected, I say, and, although I am not to deal with his life, I must at least instance his noble part in the Abolitionist movement in America. Born in Virginia of slave-owning parents, he suffered much for his advocacy of freedom, but his voice and pen were tireless and dauntless. The whole story is vividly told in his *Autobiography*, and is especially interesting for the light it throws on the methods of the opponents of a great cause, and for the inspiring conclusion it suggests that those methods are always the same and therefore always marked out for defeat. I will only give you one typical specimen of opposition rhetoric. It was from the mouth of a Unitarian preacher: "Rather than divide the Union, I would send my own mother into slavery, ten thousand times rather go myself." The Union, the Constitution, the Home—how easily we make idols of our ideals!

Will you now come up into the spiritual mountains with me, and, though many of you know them far better than I, let me lead you, by the magic of thought in a few short minutes,

to those heights to which the master's long earthward pilgrimage had by slow, but not, I think, painful steps, led him.

After all the wrong and suffering of the wilderness, his loving eyes saw the Promised Land as a land flowing with the milk and honey of human happiness. Innumerable passages in his writings attest this. I will quote only those last words from this platform in which he gathered into a single sentence the lesson of his life :—

Let us give ourselves up to this fine ideal, and seek to spread happiness. To make beautiful homes and a beautiful life is more difficult than to paint a beautiful picture. To give happiness to a single heart *now* is better than all that can be done for unborn generations in unknowable ages beyond.

That “ now ” is driven home at the end of his *Autobiography*, where he writes : “ The superstition of to-day is our inveterate belief that the world exists for some other coming world—in heaven or on the earth.”

The spiritual height from which he looked out over that land of happiness, and by which, in his experienced judgment, all must eventually pass into it, was the height of religious Rationalism. He was beyond all else a

religious man—far more so, I think he would have said, in his free-thinking maturity than in his Methodist youth or his Unitarian middle-age. “My faith increased,” he somewhere says, “as I grew out of the creeds.” A good many of us, I suspect, could say the same.

There have been (and doubtless still are) Rationalists who refuse to adopt the word “religion” because of its connection with revelation and other supernatural sanctions. Conway never refused. He insists again and again that Rationalism (or Freethought) *is* a religion, and that the Rationalist’s great task is “to transfer the religious sentiment from a supernatural to a scientific basis”—or, as O. W. Holmes put it, “to clear away theological rubbish.” He quotes with approval a saying of Carlyle’s: “There is but one real religion—passionate love of the good, passionate abhorrence of the reverse.” And again and again he declares religion (in his rational sense) to be the supreme instrument of social amelioration. I quote one or two emphatic passages:—

Religion whose end and aim is not human happiness on earth is a cruel superstition. (*Autobiography*, I. 42.)

Religion is distinguished from every other force by having supremely at heart the supreme interest of man.Science follows truth for its own sake.....Religion exists to press the whole universe, and all the laws and forces discovered by science, to the service and development of man. (*Humanised Universe*, L. for D.)

It is the essence of religion to animate man to redress the evils and make up for the defects of nature.....A true religion will teach him self-reliance, trust of the god in his own heart, culture of the providence residing in his own reason. He will learn that his heaven is to be attained by self-development, the exaltation of his own powers, the satisfaction of his own aspirations. (*Jacob's Ladder*, L. for D.)

The heart and the flesh cry out for a religion that a man can believe without insulting his reason or degrading his manhood; a religion which shall be the one thing absolutely certain, though it have no fable about God, no speculations about heaven, no fairy-tales about the past, yet making that which it affirms for ever firm; a religion which shall come amid the social play, the world of trade.....which shall uplift above all else the splendour of man, a knowledge, hope, joy, born of our own nature, the attainable ideal of our own life and time. (*Ceremonial Religion*, L. for D.)

“The attainable ideal of our own life and time”—he is aiming at a new earth now, but he knows that that new earth can come in its full glory only by the slow growth of knowledge, and by the still slower intellectual and spiritual emancipation that knowledge will surely bring.

He had faith, then, not only in man's desire, but in man's power, "to redress the evils and make up for the defects of nature." That faith was a religious faith, and was rooted in Rationalism. And in spite of the churches and chapels of Christendom, he held that Rationalism not only would triumph, but had triumphed.

As long ago as 1883 he wrote of the Rationalist's task :—

It may now be safely affirmed that the negative work of reason towards supernatural systems has ended. The intellectual part of the Freethinker's task is done. His task was not to convince those who do not think, but those who do. His business was to gain the verdict of thought, a judgment on the facts and argument, from those competent to give a verdict.....and the intellect and thought of the world have decided *against* the traditional dogmas and so-called revelations of the world that their claims to divine authenticity and to truth are unfounded.....The case of the intellect is won.

But he was not blind to the task still ahead :—

And yet, looking around, we see the institutions of society still based on that demonstrated falsity : we still see the majority of human homes ruled by that error ; we still see governments and nations filled with the corrupt and poisonous fruits of dogma and superstition. These errors must be eradicated ; their fruit is altogether evil. This is the task to which every thinking mind is bound to contribute something.

And it is to be done, not by violence, not by denunciation and contempt, but by bringing to the aid of intellect a new heart.....When, having made up our minds that we cannot honestly warm ourselves at fires of altars grown false, we resolutely kindle fires on the altar of reason, be sure we shall find the new more glorious than the old ; the wilderness of fear and doubt will be past, the land of Promise will be attained. (*A New Heart*, L. for D.)

For Conway, as I have said, that land of Promise held an increasing sum of human happiness. Happiness was everything to him. "As my vision of heaven faded," he says, "the importance of happiness in this world became paramount." (*Auto.*, II. 358). And again :—

The whole object of existence is happiness.....Man can have no higher aim.....A thousand heavens could do no more than make people happy. The happiness is attained by the satisfaction of all human aspirations—all the hungers and thirsts of body, heart, and mind.Whether a man seeks his happiness by sensuality or by martyrdom, it is that he pursues.....Seeking joy, a moth is consumed in candle ; seeking joy, a saint is consumed in his cell ; seeking joy, a drunkard is consumed in alcohol, a sensualist in lust.....In each there is a noble longing—a longing for fuller existence, for freedom ; some prisoned power trying to burst into beauty. If each of these moths could only get the same ecstasy in a painted flame—find the bliss without the ashes—the mad desire would rise smokeless and pure.

Nor does he forget what some would call the higher happiness :—

There are few lives in which there has not occurred here and there the moment when some strain of music, some beautiful scene, a grand picture, or a thrilling oration, a poem, an emotion of love, or communion with a kindred intellect, has not awakened a lofty happiness, a serene joy. (*Gospel of Art*, L. for D.)

Happiness, then, ought to be the lot of every human being, and would be if the beautiful ways of life were not darkened by delusions about self-sacrifice and the dangers of pleasure. Is it our duty to make *others* happy? Should we give *others* pleasure? Why should we give others what we ought not to seek ourselves? What folly! We should seek pleasure, should cultivate the fine art of happiness; and if we did so, we should find that it is an essential part of our own pleasure to diffuse it. (*Will and its Parasites*, L. for D.)

Here is the connection between happiness and morality :—

The aim of morality is to induce man to seek his happiness in high and pure and large ways, harmonious with his own complete well-being and with the well-being of others. (*Palace of Delight*, Farewell Discourses.)

And again :—

There are hours that bring visions of a society in which goodwill will be contagious, where kindness will be caught from one to another, and smiles will shine from face to face, till even the invalids forget their pain, and the sometime violent grow peaceful under the mystical magnetism of a society organised to seek for

each and all the perfect human happiness. (*Will and its Parasites*, L. for D.)

“The sometime violent (whether individuals or nations) grow peaceful”—yes, that is his unfailing hope. Looking out over his land of Promise, of the many temples set amidst happy homes, I see most majestic, most radiant, the white temple of Peace.

I doubt whether any man has ever worked harder than Conway at the laying (or ought I to say the digging?) of the foundations of that great temple. To him, as to Emerson, the supplications of the Churches were a blasphemy, but his passionate denunciations of war (even when waged for the abolition of slavery), and his passionate endeavours to promote international legislation against war, are, perhaps, the most characteristic feature of his whole life. I am equally of opinion with him that Christian warfare is the darkest stain on the history of humanity, but I cannot be so sanguine as he as to the future.

Nevertheless, it is impossible on such an occasion as this to withhold from you his maturest thought on a cause so dear to his heart.

In 1904 he writes (*Auto.*, II. 411):—

There can arise no important literature or art, nor real freedom nor happiness, among any people until they feel military uniform a livery, and see in every battlefield an inglorious arena of human degradation. And now, at the end of my work, I offer yet a new plan for ending war—namely, that the friends of peace and justice shall insist on a demand that every declaration of war shall be regarded as a sentence of death by one people on another, and shall be made only after a full and formal judicial inquiry and trial, at which the accused people shall be fairly represented. This was suggested to me by my old friend Professor Newman, who remarked that no war in history had been preceded by a judicial trial of the issue. The meanest prisoner cannot be executed without a trial. A declaration of war is the most terrible of sentences; it sentences a people to be slain and mutilated, their women to be widowed, their children orphaned, their cities burned, their commerce destroyed. The real motives for every declaration of war are unavowed and unavowable; let them be dragged into the light! No war would ever occur after a fair judicial trial by a tribunal open to citizens.

There is one utterance of Conway's post-theistic life with which I find myself in profound disagreement. But for that very reason I dare not suppress it. In a footnote to "The Scapegoat" in the revised one-volume edition of *Lessons for the Day* (1907) he writes:—

I now consider any genuine political enfranchisement of women impossible. With rare exceptions, they must vote under some kind of coverture or virtual duress ; we could not get the real heart and voice of the woman, but the echo of a father, husband, priest, or party-boss. The disfranchisement is a stigma only in very vulgar eyes ; refined and thinking men would see the degradation in feminine participation in the sorry work of partisanship—from which, indeed, many gentlemen take refuge in self-disfranchisement.

This is not the place to examine that judgment ; but when I first read the words, remembering the noble utterances of his whole life on behalf of women, the very fabric of my social faith seemed for a moment to be tottering. But only for a moment. I remembered that England is not America, and that Conway had suffered in his old age from that insidious disease, disillusion.

There is, indeed, a pathetic note of disappointment running through all his later writings. I suppose we must all, as we grow older, have our faith tried by disappointments ; but I do not call mine disillusion. Disillusion (I say it with all respect) seems to me to be a sort of inverted superstition. Superstition looks for effects without adequate causes. Disillusion denies to causes adequate effects. It is a loss

of faith. But, though judges may commit injustice, I have still faith in justice. Though Christianity may bless the sword, I have still faith in love. Though education may lead to evil, I have still faith in knowledge; and, though men may misuse the franchise, I have still faith in its extension to women. Indeed, to exclude women from practical politics seems to me as grotesque a folly and an inhumanity as it would be to exclude them from practical education or religion.

It is only fair to Conway to add that the advance in the position of women during the last forty years of his life seemed to him to be "almost the only progress made in civilisation." It is only fair to add also that of the fatal disillusion that has beset so many a brave man there was never a trace. Conway died and was buried, as for half a generation he had lived, a faithful unbeliever.

I have been asking you to think of him as an apostle of earthly happiness. Of that happiness he regarded as essential conditions :
(1) personal religion, as he understood religion ;
(2) the cessation of "civilised" warfare; and

(3)—though, as he tells us, he had no faith in any Socialism except that the poor should unite in communal means for physical comfort—a more equitable distribution of wealth among the producers of wealth. But he knew, as we all know, and repeatedly declared, as we all repeatedly declare, that the root of all these things—of all politics, of all religion, of all progress, of all happiness—is (I hope I am not unduly magnifying my own office) education.

But education is as fertile in heresies as religion, and in high quarters Conway will be as suspect (if not anathema) in the one case as in the other. With those high quarters, however, I am not now concerned. I, too, am a heretic; and it is my bounden duty to speak Conway's deepest thoughts as fearlessly as he himself always spoke them.

In studying his life records I have been especially interested to find that, in this matter of education, his earlier utterances are as full of insight as his later—his later as his earlier. In his first published work, for instance, a pamphlet entitled *Free Schools in Virginia*

(printed in 1850, when he was only eighteen), he wrote :—

Nature acts by mediators.....One generation makes the path for another.....The mind of posterity is committed to us no less than the bodily health.....We are now forming the condition of morals, enlightenment, and religious opinions which shall give tone to Virginia in 2000 A.D.

That, in famous phrase, is one of the eternal verities, and that, surely, is the warrant of all education.

Soon after his first arrival in England (1863), when still an orthodox Unitarian, he wrote to F. W. Newman “deprecating hymns, prayers, prayers, hymns, as a regimen for children.” A passage from Newman’s reply is worth quoting :—

I am sure you are right.....At best it must be premature to children, and must teach hypocrisy.....My father, who was an entire Freethinker, as much as I am now, never taught me anything, but allowed me to pick up religion from anyone around me, and then scolded me because I embraced beliefs which he knew must condemn him. I think this neglect to be honest with children is a terrible evil. I have lost years of thought.....and encountered risks for soul and bodyall of which might have been obviated by his frank teaching. (*Autobiography*, I. 396.)

In his *Earthward Pilgrimage* (1870) he

declares that it will someday be a chief function of art (with which, in his estimation, and in mine, education is almost synonymous) "to secure to every human being the freedom to carve his or her own being into the character for which each life exists." That is another of the verities—still only half believed. But George Meredith knew: "Life said: 'As thou hast carved me, such am I.'"

In a discourse on *The Religion of Children* (South Place, 1877) there is a suggestive educational note:—

Amid ever-present hells and heavens your child must move—onward from the cradle to the grave; why give it dismay or hope of heavens and hells not present? Do not pour that living heart into ancient moulds and examples, even the best. While it has to thread its way through London why give it the map of Jerusalem?A noble and brave life is worthy to be studied..... but only that we may be true and faithful in our relations to living men and women.

The later discourses at South Place (1880–1883) abound in educational suggestion. Three of them, indeed—*The Rising Generation*, *The Education of Character*, and *Flogging in the School and Home*—are, from any point of view, notable educational utterances, which might have been written yesterday,

and might with advantage be reprinted—or re-delivered !

I resist the temptation to quote at length, but a few pregnant passages must be exhumed :—

All conditions and efforts towards human welfare depend upon the prevailing doctrine of what is the chief end and aim of human life.....

For our children must be secured the full benefits of our best knowledge and experience.....

The best thing a matured generation can do is to run to seed—the seed of experience—to select from these seeds those that are largest and soundest, and sow them in the quick soil of youth and vigour.....

We must tell our children just what we believe true, and let them know that it is a basis for them to build on. They are to think for themselves.....

But to a large extent the young are being taught over again what their elders have painfully unlearned ; they are solemnly and deliberately crammed with that which the best thought of our time has proved to be untrue.....

The child is dealt with as a moral invalid who must go to the holy doctor every week to be dosed with piety and texts.....

It were hard to conceive a more continuous drill in hypocrisy than that child undergoes who is taught the Church Catechism in the intervals of a life practically absorbed in worldly schemes. (*Rising Generation.*)

The only radical reform is that which goes on in the home. It is the teaching and example there, the spirit prevailing there, which will surely prevail in the large world. If, in that nursery of characters, principles are

raised to supremacy above persons, so will it presently be in all the world. If a parent desires that the child should be loyal to justice, he must himself be loyal to justice. If he demand blind obedience to his own will, irrespective of the wisdom or justice above parent and child alike, he must expect to have the child grow up servile to mere authority, incapable of loyalty to a principle. If the child be made a scapegoat, he will grow up to make others scapegoats. (*The Scapegoat*, L. for D.)

Do not be in a hurry to develop a precocious spiritual growth in your child. If you do, you will, after all, be apt to overlay and crush its real power with your own life, which is not theirs, nor to be theirs. They too have the right to enjoy an original relation to the universe. If their religion is to be worth anything, they must find it for themselves. What you can do is to start them on the right way, to strengthen the germs of reverence in them—reverence for what is comprehensible by their age. Let them revere their father and mother; let them revere woman, and venerate the wisdom that is gained by old age. (*Prayer*, L. for D.)

Do not cling to methods failed or failing, however sanctified in your memory; give up the rod that spoils the child; give up the outgrown creed he is sure to laugh at when he gets older; give up the prayer which falsely teaches him that God will do for him the good work which is to be done by himself or not at all. (*M. of M.*, L. for D.)

It was Plato, I think, who first asked why we should teach children what they are not to believe when they are grown up.

Do you believe in the teacher's high calling? Listen to this characteristic touch :—

There is an Eastern tradition that when a certain land was perishing of drouth the inhabitants vainly offered prayers and sacrifices to heaven, which remained as brass. But there came among them a man of mild demeanour, who no sooner uttered his prayer than the genial showers descended, and the land was enriched. The inhabitants gathered around that quiet man and said : "Who art thou, whose prayer has prevailed beyond others?" He answered : "I am a teacher of little children." The superstitious form of the legend but thinly veils its profound truth. The teacher's work is the prayer of man ; it is the prayer that is answered ; the powers that culture leads forth are those which win the bounties of nature, and feed the famine of earth, be it moral, mental, or physical, by giving man the keys that unlock all resources. And when the dignity of the teacher's art and profession, for it is both, is adequately felt, our method of educating will itself be educated. (*F. in School and Home*, L. for D.)

In 1905, in opening a hall named after him in his old college in America, he warns teachers against "false aims and mean standards of life," and expresses the fear that they "do not sufficiently realise that they are necessarily moulding the new generation in its spirit and character." And in the following passage from the same paper he shows

his familiarity with the most advanced educational theory of the time :—

In the garden of mental and moral culture the aim should be that each stage of growth shall have its general perfections—the perfect bud, the perfect blossom, not inferior in their perfection to the fruitling or the ripe fruit in which the series of perfections are garnered.

Finally, in 1907 (the last year of his long life), he writes :—

The object of our culture, intellectual and moral, is to attain the wisdom which can control in most cases the conditions amid which we have to work..... Freedom of the best self in each of us is the immediate jewel of our soul ; the aim of education is to refine it, polish it, and guard it from all tempters besetting the pathway of life. (*W. Penn.*)

Inner freedom and control—there is no truer word in education.

Here I close my retrospect. And, as I close it, I am conscious that I have dealt, not so much with the task of Rationalism, as with Conway at work at that task—at work not only in establishing, but in applying his faith.

Other observers would have seen other things. I can only plead that I have tried to show you where I have myself found him most inspiring.

II.

IN PROSPECT

WHAT, now, is the task of Rationalism in prospect—the task in this our day, in this our generation? To more fully establish, endow, and apply the Rationalist religion.

“Were my public ministry to begin again,” wrote Conway the year before his death, “I should assume that the old theological ideas exist no more in minds capable of ideas, but should make for the nests in which the ova of defunct superstitions are bred into living wrongs.” He would, that is, work for the practical application of his faith to life—for the redressing of wrong, for the establishing of right. And so—each one of us—must we. Indeed, I would say that what Rationalism now most needs is a generous endowment of fearless personal service. Let your Rationalist faith so shine before men in your private acts, in your corporate acts, in your public acts, that they must needs see your good

works and glorify the spiritual force from which those good works spring.

I am one of those who hold that a man's religion, if it be anything more than a cupboard-religion, should determine every deliberate act of his life. I cannot, for instance, dissociate religion and politics any more than I can dissociate religion and business, or religion and war. In the recent elections, for instance, had I believed in prayer, I should not only have prayed earnestly (as many an honest man on both sides undoubtedly did pray) that my side should win, but, had my side won, I should quite certainly have returned my private thanks to God for the vouchsafed mercy; and, had I been the Vicar of Plumstead, and of the Vicar's persuasion, I should quite certainly have held such a public thanksgiving as, but for an illogical episcopal intervention, the Vicar of Plumstead would have held.

As a Rationalist I have a case against the Vicar; but as a Christian bishop, or a Non-conformist editor, I should, it seems to me, have none. Upon what grounds do bishop and editor intervene? Upon the ground, as

I understand it, of offence to other Christian (and perhaps non-Christian) convictions.

But wherein lies the offence? One man, in the highest exercise of his highest faculties, comes to believe in prayer to God and Tariff Reform; another man, by a similar process, in prayer to God and the Budget. Both are entitled to pray their mutually destructive prayers, we may suppose, without offence. One man wins—also, we may suppose, without offence. But no sooner has the winner the common courtesy to propose to join with people of a like mind in returning thanks for favours received than an outcry arises: “Your proposed act of courtesy is a scandal to your fellow-Christian opponents. It suggests that you are God’s chosen, they outcasts. (A quite warrantable assumption, no doubt, were it not for the result in a neighbouring constituency.) The public expression of such an assumption is too grave an offence against good manners to be tolerated. If you must return thanks, enter again into your closet, where you probably first uttered the prayer that has been the cause of so much misunderstanding.”

I wonder whether in our next war (which, after all, is only politics on the grand scale) bishop and editor will hold that public thanksgiving to God for the defeat of our enemies—especially if they be Christian enemies—is an unneighbourly act?

What an undemonstrable, ravelled scheme of conduct it all is—this conduct by prayer! Has anybody ever really believed in it, ever really based his life on it? You may remember Cromwell's famous command at Dunbar: "Pray, my hearties, but keep your powder dry!" and Conway's story of the sagacious Irish priest called to bless a particularly infertile field: "Brethren, there's no use in praying here; it's manure that's wanted!"

The Rationalist puts his trust frankly in powder and manure—things he can analyse, experiment with, put to the proof. He is content, nay, proud, to take the conditions of life as scientific inquiry reveals them, and make his brave best of them. He will have nothing to do with magic swords and potions and talismanic formulæ. Nor, in his heart of

hearts, will the modern anti-Rationalist. That at least is my honest conviction.

Prayer proper—prayer, that is, uttered in the hope of an objective answer—has had its day. In the last visitation of the cholera prayer was ousted by sanitation; in times of drought or of flood it is nowadays ousted by logic; in the stress of politics it is ousted by public opinion. In all churches and most schools certain stereotyped aspirations are, it is true, regularly intoned; and in nearly all chapels certain less stereotyped aspirations (more or less spontaneous, more or less elaborated) are ceremonially “addressed to the audience”; but I do not believe that to one in a thousand this daily or weekly act of prayer is anything more than a mere mental habit like our empty “How d’ye do?” And if it is anything more, then, though I do not deny that a man may sometimes rise from honest prayer in some senses a better man, he will rise, I believe, in other senses a worse man—with less trust in the efficacy of powder and manure, and less trust in the force of his own soul.

The prayer of the King’s Speech survives,

it is true, but does anybody take it seriously—unless it be the Opposition? More significant, perhaps, was the petition of the American Methodist: “Grant to our rulers, O Lord, the wisdom they so much need.” No; “the man of the past,” as Conway says, “offered prayers; the man of the future must be his own Providence and answer them.”

Just as prayer has become little more than a habit, so has church-going become little more than a habit. Honest men and women are many of the church and chapel-goers, and of good repute; their hearts are set on doing good; they are comforted and strengthened by the Christian exercises; but they go to them because they have been taught and have allowed themselves inertly to think that it is right so to do. Personal conviction of the truth of the Christian scheme has little or nothing to do with it. There may be some confused sense of heaven and hell beyond the grave; but with the ever-present heavens and hells of this world (in Conway’s phrase) there is little or no concern. Business, they hold, is business; politics, politics; and religion, if it is to be kept pure and undefiled,

must (like women) be kept clear of such things.

But this half-hearted, weak-kneed Christianity bears a precious moral for Rationalism. We must be whole-hearted and straight-kneed, and live up to the logic of our faith.

Our task, I have said, has a threefold aspect—personal, corporate, and public. Under the personal aspect comes our personal faith. That faith must be living and fruitful, and must issue in good works. By our fruits shall we be known—and rightly. And our faith being of this world, our fruits will be of this world, where they can be tried by the touchstone of earthly happiness. In our religion the real issues of the home and the market-place cannot be obscured by the false issues of gods and their factions. And the issues of home and market-place are the sum of the issues of life.

One other word as to our personal faith. We must never be betrayed into allowing ourselves to bow in the House of Supernaturalism. "That the social edifice needs

pious fraud to support it is the last superstition surviving among the educated," wrote Conway in 1877. "We are to-day weaving the destinies of the future, and every false, rotten thread we weave in will tell in the woof.Better honest ritualism than unfaithful Rationalism" (*Alcestis*).

In our private relations we shall be courteous, tolerant, and kindly—as we would that others should be unto us; but there must be uncompromising loyalty to our flag (I owe the metaphor to a courteous and kindly bishop), which we must never lower "by a single inch," or for a single moment. My experience leads me to add that our chief danger in this respect lies in the education of our children. "To thine own self be true; thou canst not then be false to any man"—any woman, or any child.

Under the corporate aspect of our task I should include the provision of centres for the Propagation of our Faith. In such service this chapel in which we are met is, I suppose, the most veteran foundation. Scattered about England and the world are many allied

temples, dedicated to "the duty of free inquiry, the right of religious liberty," and the service of man. But the supernatural factions are in every street, and our task is to leave none of them in undisturbed possession. We are few, I know, and scattered, but, as Meredith finely says of other pioneers:—

Though few,
We hold a promise for the race
That was not at our rising.

And we are growing from day to day.

Another part of our corporate task is to equip, and, if possible, endow, a body of skilled Defenders of our Faith, to speak from our platforms and in our journals, to write our books, to lead our missions, and to man our watch-towers. "The price of liberty is eternal vigilance." One of the most notable among such Defenders of the Faith was Conway; and now that he has gone silent, as he used to say, what more fitting tribute to his reproachless valour could have been devised than this effort I have the unexpected honour to inaugurate—an effort to prepare in some real degree the way of the one, or the

many, that shall come after him? My own path is in the wilderness. I can never now hope to do more than reiterate my soul's cry to the new generation: "Prepare ye the way of the Lord!"

Lastly, it is surely our corporate duty to purge the Statute-Book of any laws directed against heresy and heretics that may still disfigure it. I myself shall always say what I like, when I like, and where I like, according to my own conscience, and without any consideration for what the law allows. But is not some corporate defiance possible?

There remains the public aspect of our task—the means by which our Rationalist faith may be brought to bear upon the conduct of the national life. The conduct of life in that national sense may almost be summed up in the word "politics"—imperial and municipal.

It has been well said that it is the aim of science to make life possible, of religion to make life worth while. I would add that it is the aim of politics to combine those two aims—to make life possible and worth while for us all. From Cabinet Minister and Lord Mayor

to the humblest Labour member of the humblest parish council there can surely be no other legitimate aim. And that aim is a religious aim, and can be legitimately furthered only by acts and considerations that have a religious basis. So far from subscribing to "No politics in the pulpit!" as a political or religious cry, I would far rather subscribe to "Only politics in the pulpit!"—and I seriously believe it would be better for both politics and pulpit.

I need hardly explain that I do not mean such angry, personal politics as we have heard of late from most political platforms, or read in most political newspapers. I mean such dispassionate presentment of political data—the data of life—such illuminating analysis of human motive, and such impassioned appeal to the human heart, as, say, Emerson (whose "hereditary and natural place was in the pulpit") might have been capable of at his best.

There are more pulpits than Emersons, I know, but whoever we are we can aim high; and, after all, every day, every hour, is the child of perfection and imperfection.

“I go to my pew as I go to my bed—for repose,” said the ancestor of one of our recent American ambassadors. Not so Conway. Listen to this from a sermon he preached when, at the age of twenty-two, he was a candidate for the Unitarian pulpit at Washington: “The Church must hold itself ready to pass free judgment on all customs, fashions, ideas, facts; on trade and politics, and..... greatest of all sins, our national sin of human slavery.” That was in 1854, in the heart of a slave-owning district. Within fifteen minutes he was elected minister.

I cannot now survey the whole field of politics, and show in detail where I think the faith of the Rationalist would be more effective for the general good than the faith of the Supernaturalist. But there are two public questions of such far-reaching consequence that I must not be silent about them. I mean the problem of war and the problem of education.

I can imagine that on many political questions even Rationalists would hold opposing views; and I can imagine that on the question

of war and the kindred question of armaments there might be, even among Rationalists, considerable difference of opinion. Indeed, I do not hesitate to declare myself in disagreement with Mr. Blatchford, though I readily admit that he has probably made a far closer study of the raw facts than I have. But what I cannot imagine is that Rationalists should, as a body, condone war and conquest, as official Christianity has always done, and, at any rate as recently as the South African War, was still doing. I can only take the Christian precepts at their face-value ; but I should be happier turning the other cheek with Tolstoy than hitting back with a Christian Emperor. I do not say that personal or national resistance is never justified ; but I do utterly condemn national aggression as immoral and inhuman, and an act for which no pure religion could find justification. Whatever the battles of the gods, the battles of men have been, for the most part, crimes—wanton outrages on the holiest instincts of humanity. And the blackest record in history is the battle-record of the so-called religion of love. I have faith that a religion of real love, as it comes more

and more to prevail, will be strong, some great day, to wipe away this awful reproach from the earth.

Of education I speak with more knowledge, but not with deeper conviction. And let me speak of it, forgetting that I am a school-master, and remembering only that I am a Rationalist citizen, with a faith that I call a religion in the desirability and possibility of goodness.

At the risk of hurting many true friends (though the hurt will recoil chiefly upon my own head) I must openly express the conviction that the many good men who have been laboriously trying to patch up an educational peace between the Christian factions are blind to the real issue. The religious difference—the religious difficulty—that really threatens is not between Churchman and Nonconformist, but between Supernaturalist and Rationalist, between the service and glory of God and the service and glory of man.

I am always on the side of freedom against privilege, and want the Nonconformist to win; but I should passive-resist his catch-

words as strenuously as his opponent's, and I know that as soon as he does win he will drive me into doing so.

And so the only solution of the political education problem that I am interested in, or can work for, is the so-called secular solution. I should vote to-morrow for the exclusion of Supernaturalism from all schools in receipt of public money, not so much because the tenets of Supernaturalism offend my own judgment and conscience, as because they seem to me to poison the springs of national conduct.

Would any Rationalist hesitate for a moment to vote with me, and are there not by now enough determined men and women in England, not merely to keep this question of secular education persistently to the front, but to see it through?

Does the answer at all depend upon the character of the secular education proposed? If so, let us call together as soon as possible a Secular Moral Education Congress (to which only Rationalists shall be invited), and set to work on a scheme of rational religious education that shall exclude God and the blood of

Jesus and prayer and heaven and hell, but shall include a Duty to my Neighbour based on a faith in the power of human love and the power of human understanding.

I will not anticipate the labours of such a congress by here setting forth, even tentatively, the details of such a scheme. But I think it worth while to make one or two general observations.

In the first place, is it not possible that people would be much less afraid of secular education if it could be called by some less forbidding name? To very many minds secular means not sacred, not sacred means godless, godless means immoral. It is for us Rationalists to insist that the distinction between sacred and secular is a false distinction; that holiness is a state of heart, is subjective, not objective; that all places, times, acts, things, are holy or unholy according to the use made of them. I cannot admit that there is any useful sense in which the unbeliever's morning bath, say, taken in the right spirit, is any less holy than the believer's morning prayer; or that I myself, at my best, am any less reverend than any right reverend

father-in-God at his best. It will be a good thing for real religion and real worth when all these misleading courtesy titles and distinction can be swept away. Daily bread, if you like, is secular material. But the honest effort to earn it, or to make it, or to use it, is a sacred act.

Just as, in the truest and deepest sense, all religion is educational, so all education that aims at increasing the sum of human happiness upon the earth is religious. There is no perfect knowledge of how to ensure happiness for all, and there probably never will be. We can only make the best use we can of such imperfect methods as the best minds can suggest; investigate and experiment without ceasing; and abandon discredited methods without compunction. I am bold to bracket mythology and theology as equally discredited. There is no longer "a divinity that shapes our ends," and it is worse than idle to tell any of us, men, women, or children, that there is. Tell us rather that there is something greater than a divinity—a universe of matter and spirit (the self-conscious will of man) in beneficent, unswerving motion, to work in harmony

with which in the pursuit of human happiness is good, in disharmony evil.

I make the further observation that, if school education is to prepare for life, it must deal with life. If you exclude religion, which is the spiritual hunger and driving-power of life; if you exclude politics, which is the spiritual economy and chart of life—then your education will be a wreckers' beacon. I do not (you know) mean such party religion (whether Catholicism or Temple-Cowperism) as is found in our schools to-day, or such party politics as was too often found there in the recent elections. I mean such rational foundations of both religion and politics as are suited to such rational foundations of society as boys and girls.

I can anticipate the answer from certain quarters: "You denounce the would-be manufacturers of little Christians and little Conservatives, while encouraging the whole-sale manufacture of little Radicals and little Rationalists."

There would be some sting in the taunt. Too many of us do still look upon a school

system as a machine for turning out goods to pattern—our own pattern, of course, or, at least, our own sense of what is best in patterns. We are afraid to trust it as a source of knowledge and of inspiration, wherein the individual soul may find the impulse and the way to make the best it can of itself.

Education, I say, must deal with life. I must not allow myself to be betrayed into grinding one of my own axes (most of us, I suspect, have more than one to grind); but I do venture to say that, just as legislation will never be really effective till men and women work at it side by side, so education will never be really effective till boys and girls work at it side by side.

The legitimate aim of an educational system has been well summed up by Mr. Lowes Dickinson in that illuminating little book of his, *Religion: A Criticism and a Forecast*: "To surround a child with all the influences which society may judge to be healthy for body and soul, while at the same time training the understanding to become, when it is ripe, the critic and judge of those influences."

Note, first, that society is to be the judge of what influences are healthy. In these democratic days who or what else could be? Once it may have been the king, once it may have been the priest, once even it may have been the peers; but to-day it can only be the people; and as soon as the people judge Supernaturalism to be an unhealthy influence, so soon Supernaturalism will have to go. I believe that popular judgment to be dawning, and it is a chief part of the task of Rationalism to throw open all dark places to the light.

Note, next, that the understanding is to be trained—trained, that is, not to accept criticism and judgment of life at second-hand, but to become, as it ripens, critic and judge for itself.

To provide such ideal training will certainly make more demands upon teachers than any other part of their task. Great gifts of intellect will not be enough. To them must be added greater gifts of soul—unfailing sympathy with every type of human character, and unfailing honesty in every presentment of human opinion. If the intellectual freedom

of the children entrusted to us teachers is really to be respected, then our own most cherished beliefs are only to be offered them as possible solutions, among many others, of the enthralling enigma of the universe.

As a Rationalist, I want rational religion in our schools, and rational politics; but both must be undogmatic. And I have faith that such an open-minded policy would presently make England more truly great than she has ever been. Is she truly great and good to-day? I am not without sin, but I should not hesitate to cast many stones at her. My first stone, I think, would be this: that, for whatever cause, the understanding of the great mass of the people in all so-called strata of society has not been trained to become the critic and judge of the issues of life, the issues of the marketplace and the home.

We are at the mercy, I should say, of the floods of uninformed, unprincipled, and unwholesome talk with which cheap printing has deluged us. I can, of course, have no quarrel with cheap printing as such (unless it be ugly or sweated); but I profoundly deprecate its prostitution. How against such prostitution

is the new generation to be made proof? Only by a better training of the understanding and some more systematic attention to the heart.

We must begin with the understanding and heart of ourselves—parents, teachers, administrators, ordinary citizens. We must refuse foothold in our schools to all dogmas, rational or irrational; to all authoritative promulgation of unintelligibilities; and in their stead we must set up a system of scientific inquiry into the scheme of things, into the material and spiritual conditions of earthly happiness—above all, into the possibilities of progress in the direction of a more general good.

At the same time we must seek to broaden and deepen the sympathies; must help the child not only to distinguish between truth and falsehood, right and wrong, but, at all costs, to follow truth and follow right.

“The proper way to make and keep men moral,” says Mr. Dickinson, in the book already quoted, “is to help them to conditions of life in which morality would be possible, and in which it would be backed and

supported by intelligence." That is not only the key to politics, but the key to education.

It undoubtedly is the part of politics to establish such material and spiritual conditions of national life as shall make morality at least more possible. Most of the immoralities I see about me make me as humble as the old philosopher—"There, but for the grace of God (or, as we should say, of circumstance), goes myself!" Many of us have never committed any of the grosser offences only because we have never been tempted. Many of us believe in the power of love only because all our lives long we have basked in the sunshine of love. I am an uncompromising radical, chiefly because I am convinced that degrading conditions of life inevitably entail degrading conceptions and degrading uses of life.

Similarly, it is the part of the school to establish such material and spiritual conditions of school-life as shall make genuine morality possible—there is plenty of sham already—even to boys and girls. The first of those conditions is justice. I suppose there is no place in the world where ideal legislative

justice might so nearly prevail as in a school. Among the children there will always be the usual human clashing of wills and temperaments, and the usual human shortcomings; but what ruler, what legislator, what bench of judges, ever had such scope for even-handed justice as a headmaster or headmistress! And yet there are still schoolmasters who delegate their sacred powers, both executive and retributive, to raw youths in a Sixth Form! I would as soon entrust to those same raw youths the diagnosis and care of cases of grave bodily disease.

The first condition of effective moral education, I say, is justice. Another condition is health. All schools must be places of the best possible physical conditions—from food to recreation and sleep. How that is to be accomplished I cannot now even suggest; but rational religion and rational politics will find a way.

A third condition is intellectual honesty and intellectual freedom. There must be no juggling with truth, no suppression of truth, no coercion into truth—far less into falsehood. All conclusions—scientific, literary, historical,

political, religious—must be built up on a rational basis, verifiable by human experience, and absolutely independent of so-called revelation, or any other supernatural source. Such progress, material and spiritual, as the world has already made has been begotten of science and freedom. And so it must ever be.

The only other condition I will mention (I am taking properly-equipped teachers for granted) is the cultivation of the spontaneous activities and (if I may say so) the spontaneous reflectivities of childhood. It is as unnatural and as pernicious for a child to pore over even the best books several hours a day as to fall upon its knees once or twice a week with ejaculations about "miserable sinners."

Little or no sermonising, natural opportunities for mutual service, much self-expression in handicraft, art, and song, much physical activity, and as much spontaneity and joyous high spirits as is compatible with the comfort of neighbours—those are the things that go to the making of real goodness (of which normally healthy children are not ashamed), and to the unmaking of spurious goodness, or

goodness (of which so many normal children are so heartily ashamed).

Have I, after all, been speaking too much as a humdrum schoolmaster, too little as a man among men? I do magnify my office, it is true; but, though I am proud to be a schoolmaster, I am prouder to be a schoolmastering Rationalist, and still prouder to have been called (by the grace of circumstance) to be head man "in a little Iberian village," the record of whose politics, peradventure, will some day not be despised in the councils of Imperial Rome.

And now to conclude. To-morrow is the birthday of the man whose memory we are honouring. It is well nigh the allotted four-score years since that strong soul was first made flesh to enrich the earth. And now—but no! As Maeterlinck has been telling us lately, "there are no dead."

You remember Granny Tyl's words to the children in the Land of Memory:—

"Why don't you come to see us oftener?.....It makes us so happy!.....We are always here, waiting for a

visit from those who are alive.....They come so seldom !
.....Every time they think of us, we wake up and see
them again.....”

“ I didn't know,” says the boy.

“ It's astonishing up there,” says Granny to Gaffer.
“ They don't know *yet!*.....Do they never learn any-
thing ?”

“ It's as in our own time,” replies Gaffer—“ the
Living are so stupid when they speak of the
Others.....”

“ Do you sleep all the time ?” asks the girl.

“ Yes,” says Gaffer ; “ we get plenty of sleep while
waiting for a thought of the Living to come and
wake us.....Ah, it is good to sleep when life is done !
.....but it is pleasant, also, to wake up from time to
time !”

Our dear Master is awake now, I am sure ;
with his true wife, also awake, by his side.
They will receive many more intimate birth-
day greetings than ours, but none more full
of love, and gratitude, and hope. What form
shall our message take ?

“ Be of good cheer, old friends ! The
memory of what you were to each other, of
what you were to the world, is still radiant.
Nor will it easily grow dim, for some of your
friends left behind in the garden of the Living
have grafted on the Tree of Life a precious
shoot from your one heart, that year by year

(so far as loving culture can prevail with Fate) shall bear fragrant blossoms of the love that blossomed in your own lives, and golden fruit of the knowledge and happiness that ripened there. And till all those friends have joined you in your pleasant land of Sleep, there will always come at blossoming-time and harvest-time to wake you for a moment some grateful and loving remembrance couched in words like these: 'Faithful ones, who made this place sacred, spirits touched to finest issues—in this your old home your spirit dwells; receive the loving homage of those who travel the paths you pointed, in trust that, should we, too, in the future be summoned from our graves as witnesses, we may be found no less faithful to our time and light.'"

APPENDICES



APPENDIX A

PEACE AND ARBITRATION

To the Peace Congress that met in Paris in 1900 Conway submitted an elaborate scheme for international arbitration, originally drafted two years before for the Boston Free Religious Association.

“My pamphlet,” he says, “was translated into French and German, and distributed to all in the Congress. It was vaguely approved in an incidental resolution, but the Congress had gathered mainly to utter triumphal shouts over the Hague conventions” (*Auto.*, II. 409). The main points of the scheme are set forth as follows :—

It is proposed to form an International Alliance on the following principles :—

I. In no case whatever can a point of *honour* between nations be *honourably* settled, nor a question of *justice* be *justly* settled, by proving the superiority of one over the other in power to slay.

II. It is inadmissible for a nation to be the sole judge of its own *honour*, or of the *justice* of its own case, in any dispute with another nation.

III. The interests of all nations, both material and moral, being affected by every disturbance of peace

between two of their number, Humanity itself is necessarily a party to every dispute that endangers peace, and should be represented in each such case by a tribunal competent to investigate the same, to discover the right and the wrong, and to affirm the adjustment required by justice and honour.....

X. If the tribunal constituted by the Hague conventions fails in any instance to bring about arbitration, or shall so delay it as to endanger peace, a General Council shall assemble and adjudicate the dispute; nor shall it decline this obligation, even though one or both of the disputants should not be signatories to the Hague conventions.

In April, 1907, in an address delivered in America in honour of William Penn, he says :—

The Hague tribunal is only a first step towards the realisation longed for by the Moral Nation distributed through the geographical nations.....Mr. Carnegie's plan is to have a permanent international court, before which all nations shall agree to submit disputes they are unable to settle by negotiation. It is then to be determined that any nation which breaks the peace without having submitted its case to the tribunal shall be "boycotted," left without the provisions and supplies necessary for a war. In addition to this, in order to prevent swift attacks of one nation on another without notice, or outrages on weak and helpless tribes, there shall be selected from the armaments of the world a combination armament to act as the international police.

I quote from this same address a suggestion for ending war, or at least making it

more difficult, which throws light incidentally on Conway's final attitude towards the question, now so passionately debated, of Woman's Suffrage:—

It is a disgrace that women should be politically disfranchised along with lunatics. The disgrace, however, is not that of the women, but of the governments. They confess that they are as the pitch, which hands cannot touch without being defiled. The English "suffragettes," in their violent invasion of Parliament, are wasting a force which, in another direction, might gradually be effectual. They are at this very moment, when the hope of peace is widespread, reminded that they may not vote because they cannot fight. Very well: suppose, then, that women should quietly resolve that they will not assist in the continuance of the military violence for which they are unfit. If all those "suffragettes," and the multitudes of their sex who quietly sympathise with them, should resolve that in no case will they ever marry any man whose profession is manslaughter, the social stigma of inability to vote would be transferred to the sex which supports its monopoly of suffrage on its monopoly of legalised murder.....

So far as the suffrage is concerned, women are practically not in any different situation from the enlightened and refined men who vote, if at all, under duress of the boss to make ignorant masses his dictators.....In the circles of intelligence there is neither male nor female. The cultured gentleman knows that his individual preference—the real vote of his heart and mind—cannot be cast any more than that of his wife. Meanwhile, as there is a vast difference between the voices that count

and the voices that weigh, let women reflect that for the very reason of their exclusion from the ballot-counting-machine they have been trained to use the influences that weigh—inso-much that their appeals to reason and justice have outweighed the prejudices and traditions of ages, and cleared from our codes the barbarous statutes by which that sex was oppressed.

APPENDIX B

EDUCATION

I COMMEND the following extracts from *The Education of Character* to the notice of my friends of the Moral Education League :—

We have been so long accustomed, when thinking of moral education, to have a preacher with a catechism start into our vision, that we have hardly dared face the problem left by his disappearance. It is probable that some of you, even now, are thinking me somewhat imprudent in suggesting a need of moral education which, if admitted, would be so likely to bring back the preacher and catechism. But it would be more imprudent to admit so dangerous a theory as that merely to give our children power—intellectual or physical—is to ensure their using it wisely or well. It is true now, as in Homer's day, that he who makes man a slave takes half his worth away ; but it is not true that merely to break his chains—intellectual or physical—

will ensure the freedom being used wisely or well. Moral science does not come by nature more than other science, and a man can be described as educated only in a partial sense if he have culture without character.

The rulers of the world once made for themselves friends of the mammon of superstition by giving away to it the rights and possessions of humanity. Civilisation must now make unto itself friends of the principles of humanity, advancing to reclaim its rights and possessions, so that as those falsities fail in which it has trusted it may be received into the new habitations.

And society can only do this by seeing to it that every child is as completely educated in the best moral science, and social science, of our time as it ever was in the superstitions of the past. Our system of public education rests on a sound principle, but its expansion has suffered arrest by that ceremonial bow to the discredited system which takes the place of the education of character. So far as intellectual education is concerned, we make compulsory each branch which all men find useful in every-day life. But why is it we cannot also teach the moral principles which all men agree to be right? If the vast majority agree that reading, writing, and arithmetic must be taught, do they not equally agree that love of truth, freedom, justice, love of humanity, respect for the rights of others, universal charity, sympathy with the weak, independence of mind, firmness of character, are good things also? Are not their praises upon every lip? Ask any priest of any sect, and he will admit the value of each such principle. Who is prepared to say he does not believe in any one of them?

And yet these fundamental principles of human character are not taught. It is no disproof of this

assertion to say that passages are read from the Bible which imply one or another of these principles. Implication is not what is needed. It implies the law of gravitation that Eutychus fell out of a window while Paul was preaching, but the story would not teach that law. To say to a child, or to a man, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," is no education in the principle implied. Commandments are not explanations, proofs, applications. Moreover, these ancient moral statements are hopelessly conventionalised. They have had to be squared with the convenience of men through many ages. "Love thy neighbour as thyself" has had to be accommodated to the selfishness which has built up the wealth of Christendom. "Be kindly affectioned one to another" has had to accord with the stake and the faggot. "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors" has been conventionalised to suit the demands of creditors.

Biblical morality is a mystification, and in education impedes the culture of a character related to the time and place for which character is needed.

Nor is this need met by teachers instructing children that they should always speak the truth. No doubt all of them do that. It is not merely inadequate because true words may convey falsehood, but because mere advice is not education. If human characters are to be formed on moral principles, these principles must be as thoroughly taught and understood as arithmetic laws and rules are when one has learned arithmetic. It is not teaching arithmetic to state one of its rules, nor is it teaching veracity to bid one speak the truth.

The fact is, these moral principles, which all approve in words, are not taught in any true sense, because they are profoundly inconsistent with the traditional theology

and the institutions based upon it. Carry any of them a step beyond its phrase, and it turns to an axe laid at the root of some ancient interest that cumpers the ground.

What would be the result in a country where heresy is still a statutory offence if every child were trained to regard as a duty perfect truthfulness of thought and speech? What would become of established creeds if independence and honesty of mind were seriously inculcated? How would a teacher teach all the laws of charity so as to leave out the infidel and the heathen? Or how can equal justice be taught in all its bearings in such a way as to preserve respect for privilege? How can men be trained to an enthusiasm of humanity, to compassionateness for all who suffer, and yet approve the diversion to ceremonies and flatteries before an Almighty God of time, wealth, and energies which might bring some real salvation to the suffering?

These moral principles cannot be taught as other knowledge is taught because they cannot be consistently traced to their bearings upon life without undermining the artificial and arbitrary moral system based upon theology. Under an overstrained moral phraseology theology has compromised away principles really adapted to human life. The old system of "indulgences" survives where maxims are consecrated but never exacted, even by—or of—those who consecrate them. Transcendental phrases about loving enemies and seeking not one's own, will not answer the stern necessities of a society built up by punishing enemies and seeking one's own. They will linger only as apologies for not facing the real and practicable principles of equality, justice, and honour.

The task of engraving deep in every mind that grows up in the community the moral principles recognised

by the wisdom and knowledge of our time, which I call the education of character, can only be neglected under penalties. We have come upon an age not bound by the girdle of superstition. Unless in home and school there be education of the moral sense, direction of sympathies, humanisation of the sense of honour; unless the formation of character accompany that of the intellect; education will be the evolution of selfishness with every refinement of predatory power; it will be the steady arming of man against man, as if every one carried his intellectual revolver.

APPENDIX C

CIVIL DISABILITIES

THERE is one painful element in the history of even modern Rationalism of which I have been forcibly reminded by my study of Conway—that is, the disabilities of Rationalists before the law. In 1820 W. J. Fox, minister of South Place Chapel, could be married only in a church; in the earliest days of Conway's ministry there (about 1864) he officiated at the funeral of a man who had been imprisoned for selling Paine's works; in 1867 Mr. James Grant (I think a member of his congregation) was imprisoned for refusing to pay Church

Rates ; in 1883 Mr. Foote and others were imprisoned for blasphemy ; and in 1884 Mr. Bradlaugh was excluded from the House of Commons. I may add that in my own Cambridge days one of my friends was the son of the first dissenter (then still living) admitted to the University.

In a discourse on *The Criminal Law* (1884) Conway prophesied three improvements :—

The judicial oath will be abolished ; every punishment instituted in the interests of any deity or deities will be abolished ; all punishments for self-injuries will be abolished.....If not, if any man is punished for these fossil offences, he will not be alone.....good men will go about blaspheming as a patriotic duty.

His persistent denunciation of Sabbatarianism as a “grievous tyranny and oppression” will be remembered by all his friends.

APPENDIX D

A REFERENCE

“FAITHFUL ones, who made this place sacred.....” (p. 66) are Conway’s own words at the South Place Centenary (1893).

APPENDIX E

BIOGRAPHICAL AND BIBLIOGRAPHICAL
NOTES

1832. Born in Virginia.
1850. *Free Schools in Virginia.*
1851. Enters Methodist Ministry.
1854. Enters Unitarian Ministry.
1858. Marries.
1863. Comes to England.
1864. Preaches at South Place Chapel.
1865. Appointed permanent Minister.
1869. Abandonment of prayer, followed by gradual abandonment of Theism.
1870. *The Earthward Pilgrimage.*
1874. *The Sacred Anthology.*
1877. *Idols and Ideals.*
1883. *Lessons for the Day* (2 vols.). (Revised edition, 1907.)
1884. Temporarily retires from South Place.
1892. Returns to South Place.
Life of Thomas Paine.
1897. Death of Mrs. Conway.
Final retirement from South Place.
1904. *Autobiography* (2 vols.).
1906. *My Pilgrimage to the Wise Men of the East.*

-
1907. Dies in Paris.
1909. *Moncure D. Conway: Addresses and Reprints.* (A Memorial Volume containing a complete Bibliography.)
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APPENDIX F

THE CONWAY MEMORIAL LECTURESHIP

AT a general meeting of the South Place Ethical Society, held on October 22, 1908, it was resolved, after full discussion, that an effort should be made to establish a series of lectures, to be printed and widely circulated, as a permanent Memorial to Dr. Conway.

Moncure Conway's untiring zeal for the emancipation of the human mind from the thralldom of obsolete or waning beliefs, his pleadings for sympathy with the oppressed and for a wider and profounder conception of human fraternity than the world has yet reached, claim, it is urged, an offering of gratitude more permanent than the eloquent obituary or reverential service of mourning.

The range of the lectures (of which the first is published herewith) must be regulated by the financial support accorded to the scheme ;

but it is hoped that sufficient funds will be forthcoming for the endowment of periodical lectures by distinguished public men, to further the cause of social, political, and religious freedom, with which Dr. Conway's name must ever be associated.

The Committee, although not yet in possession of the necessary capital for the permanent endowment of the Lectureship, thought it better to inaugurate the work rather than to wait for further contributions. The funds in hand, together with those which may reasonably be expected in the immediate future, will insure the delivery of an annual lecture for some years at least.

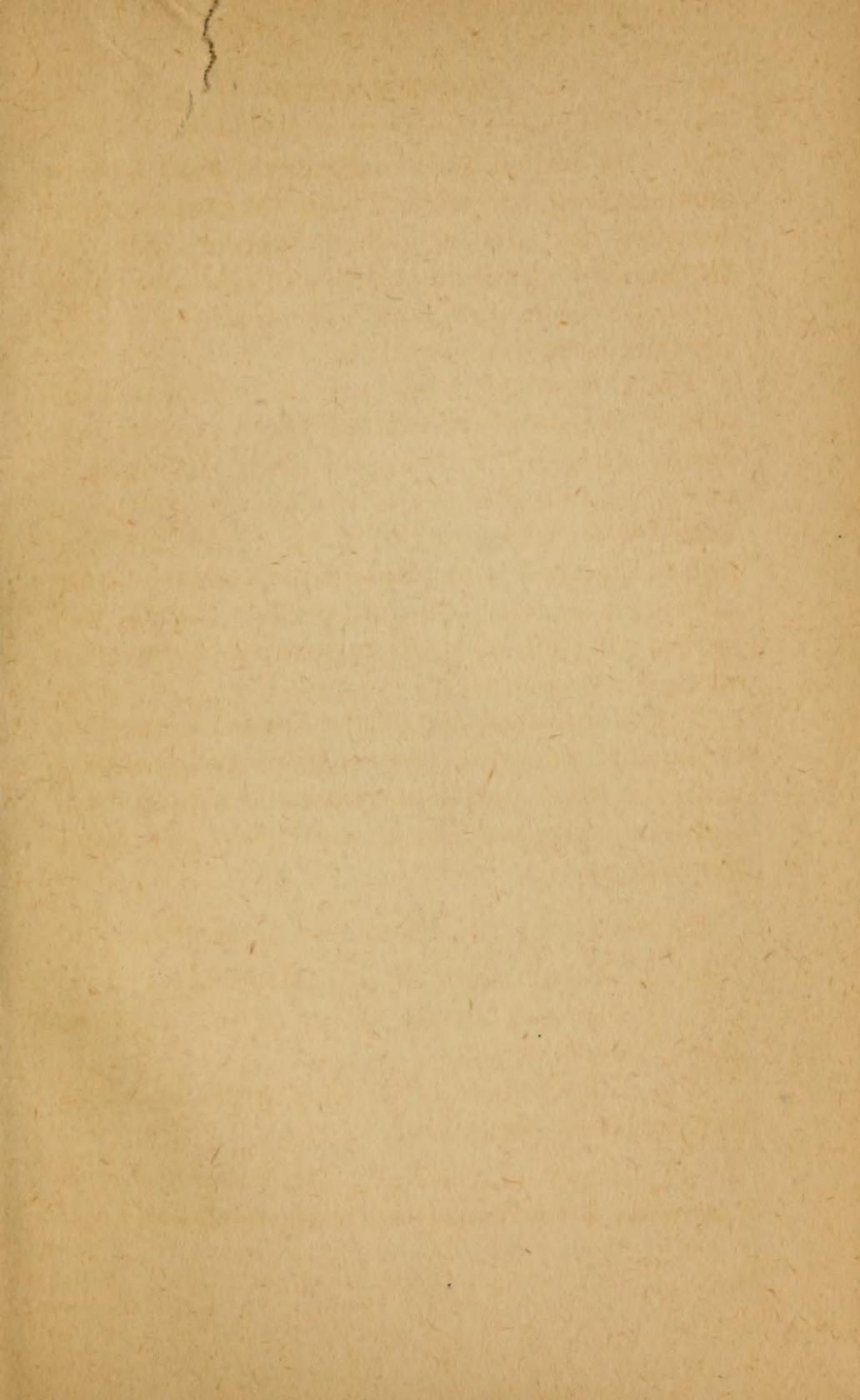
The Committee earnestly appeal either for donations or subscriptions from year to year until the Memorial is permanently established. Contributions may be forwarded to the Hon. Treasurer.

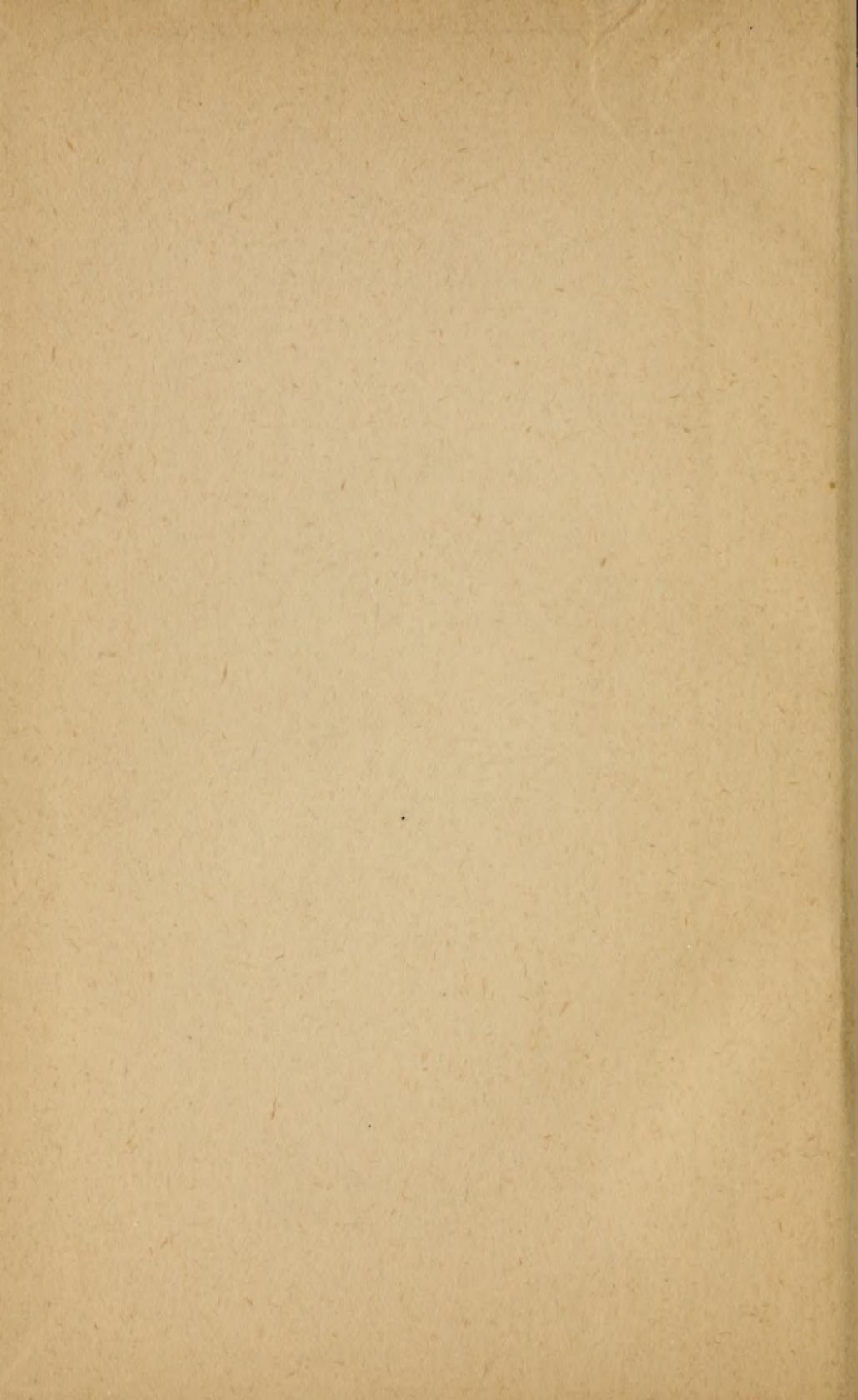
On behalf of the Executive Committee :—

W. C. COUPLAND, M.A., *Chairman*.

C. FLETCHER SMITH and ALFRED DELVE,
Hon. Secretaries.

WM. COCKBURN, *Hon. Treasurer*, 10, Ashburton Road, Croydon.





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