

B 908
.C44 H2
Copy 1

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

Class. **B908** Copyright No.

Shelf **C44 H2**

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.



(Deposited Aug. 21, 1845
Recorded Vol. 20. Page 296)

-12-36

No. 41
y

ESSAY

ON THE

PHILOSOPHICAL CHARACTER

OF

CHANNING.

BY

ROWLAND G. HAZARD.

G. C.

BOSTON: 

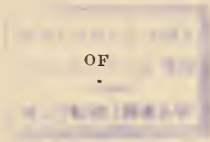
JAMES MUNROE AND COMPANY.

1845.

ESSAY

ON THE

PHILOSOPHICAL CHARACTER



CHANNING.

BY

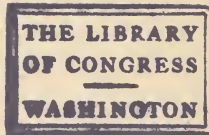
ROWLAND G. HAZARD.

BOSTON:

JAMES MUNROE AND COMPANY.

1845.

B908
C44-H2



Entered according to act of Congress, in the year 1845, by
JAMES MUNROE AND Co.,
in the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the District of Massachusetts.

6153

BOSTON:
PRINTED BY THURSTON, TORRY & CO.
31 Devonshire Street.

P R E F A C E .

IN publishing this Essay the writer is aware, that he renders himself liable to the charge of presumption, in having undertaken a work, which the public would rather have expected from some one of established reputation for profound thought and erudition, than from one having so little connection with literary and philosophical pursuits.

In mitigation of any offence with which he may thus be deemed chargeable, he may be permitted to observe, that the small portion of ground he has occupied does not exclude others ; and that in the attempt to commence a task, to the completion of which he is conscious that higher attainments are requisite, he wrote with the expectation that his work might be used merely as suggestive, in the department to which it relates, to those engaged in a general biography ; but that by the advice of a few friends, and in conformity to the views of the near relatives of Dr. Channing, it is now offered in a separate form, some additions having been made to the original manuscript for that object.

ESSAY.

WHEN a great and good man dies, it is a generous impulse which prompts us to redeem from oblivion those incidents of his life, and those traits of his character, which may serve to gratify a laudable desire to know as much as possible of the benefactor of our race ; to sustain a praiseworthy interest in all that makes us more familiar with the thoughts and actions which comprise his history, and to hold up to the present and succeeding generations, an object for those feelings of admiration and gratitude, which nurture pure purpose and noble sentiment in the living, while they render merited homage to departed worth.

It is the part of wisdom to preserve, in the most enduring forms, the lineaments of his mind, that, by an immortal influence, they may perpetuate and enforce the precepts and examples by which he has contributed to the happiness and progress of his fellow men. A generous and philanthropic regard for the living, and the natural and commendable desire to serve posterity, no less than reverence and gratitude for the illustrious dead, demand the performance of this duty.

In the death of Channing we have lost the brightest ornament of our literature, the able sustainer and promoter of a pure morality and rational piety, and the strong and fearless champion of human rights. We would that all which pertained to him should be held in enduring remembrance, that, by an ideal presence, his purity may forever encourage virtue, his calm energy continually sustain the weak and assure the

timid, and his moral dignity and elevated piety perpetually exhort the degraded and sensual to a nobler and more spiritual existence.

Even the artist who portrays the external features of such men, with some faint approaches to the expression which soul has given them, performs no mean service to his race ; and while pure and lofty thoughts, clothed in harmonious and beautiful expression, shall continue to delight, to elevate, and refine the mind, will the canvass on which the pencil of genius has delineated the benign countenance of Channing, awaken in the beholder the sentiments of admiration and reverence, and inspire him with high and disinterested principle, earnest and manly purpose, and firm and magnanimous devotion to truth and virtue. We gaze on those calm features, moulded by benevolence and philosophic meditation, and are again and again carried back to those cherished hours of converse, when their vital expression betrayed the varying emotions of his soul, as “ calmly he uttered his beautiful thought,” or as “ bravely he spoke to oppression and wrong,” till kindling with the associations thus recalled, we breathe the thought, we give utterance to the wish, that some intellectual artist would portray the moral beauty and spiritual energy which tabernacled in that feeble frame.

We aspire not to such a work. Abler hands have not unwisely shrunk from the task, and our purpose is only to give such profile sketch as we may draw from the unforgotten past, in aid of the hand which shall essay a more perfect portrait ; to give form to our recollections of some aspects of his mind, which we had opportunities for observing, before time shall have dimmed their lines on the tablets of memory, or imagination shall have removed the landmarks of reality, and blended them with those ideal conceptions of moral beauty and excellence, to which they are nearly allied.

Willingly would we linger yet longer amid these cherished recollections, and enjoy in soothing reverie the retrospection glowing with such benign light. But the spirit which sheds its radiance over it, and whose influence we would now in-

voke, summons us to a more earnest and arduous duty. To strow his grave with the fragrant flowers, planted by his hand, and cherished in our hearts, is not allotted to us. In his presence we are reprov'd when we relax in that labor for the progress of our race, in which he never seemed to tire, and in this cause we now proceed to offer some remarks upon his philosophical character. Partial and imperfect, we are aware, our analysis of it must be, but if in conformity to our design, as already expressed, we can reflect a ray of light on some phase of his mind, or render any portion of its outline more distinct, we shall not deem the labor bestowed in vain.

The mind of Channing, as viewed in the abstract, with reference only to its truth discovering powers, separated from the impulses which gave it activity, and from the motives which directed its energies, presents, as one of its most striking characteristics, the important aid which the intellectual faculties derived from the moral qualities. This is so apparent in his writings, that it can hardly escape the notice even of a superficial observer. It was yet more obvious in his conversation, for in the familiar colloquial expression of his views, upon subjects which he had not made his particular study, he habitually gave utterance to the dictates of his moral sense, before he had constructed any argument to sustain them, or even distinctly ascertained their relations to any pre-established principles.

In him this was not the effect of intellectual temerity, of even of a want of caution, but of a firm reliance on these dictates of the internal consciousness. This influence of the moral qualities is a very important element in the philosophic mind, and one which, perhaps, is not generally estimated so highly as it deserves. It gives a sensibility which enables the mind to recognise truth in its most ethereal forms, and to detect error in its most subtle disguises. Without it, the intellect may be acute, but cannot attain that wisdom which lays the foundations of its knowledge on the rock of truth.

Even in those who are not remarkable for the possession of these qualities, opinions are modified, and judgment improved by their influence. It would be but a truism to say that the sense of right runs through all our convictions of every kind, but we may also add, that the sense of justice, either directly or by close analogies, pervades and binds together all truth. This is the case, not only with the abstractions of ethics and metaphysics, but even with the conclusions of mathematical reasoning, of all truths the farthest removed from the jurisdiction of the moral sense.

In these spontaneous suggestions, he had himself great confidence. The accuracy with which he had settled great leading principles, — the purity of his morals, — the sensitiveness of his mind, — his inflexible justice, and the clearness and extent of his spiritual perceptions, — all combined to give them a truthful aim, which seldom failed to direct their conclusions within the limits of moral certainty. They were in him revelations which mere argument could not supersede; and highly as he estimated the reasoning faculties, he never exalted them above consciousness, nor deemed their authority paramount to the dictates of the moral sense; but on the contrary, in any apparent collision between them, he was more prone to suspect error in the reasoning processes than in the moral judgment.

In his mind conscience was supreme, and established and preserved a beautiful harmony in the movements of all its powers. From his own convictions he thus speaks of it : —

“It is conscience within us, which, by its approving and condemning voice, interprets to us God’s love of virtue, and hatred of sin; and without conscience, these glorious conceptions would never have opened upon the mind. It is the lawgiver in our breasts which gives us the idea of divine authority, and binds us to obey it. The soul, by its sense of right, or its perception of moral distinctions, is clothed with sovereignty over itself, and through this alone it understands and recognizes the Sovereign of the Universe. Men, as by a natural inspiration, have agreed to speak of conscience as the voice of God, as the

Divinity within us. This principle, reverently obeyed, makes us more and more partakers of the moral perfections of the Supreme Being, of that very excellence, which constitutes the rightfulness of his sceptre, and enthrones him over the universe. Without this inward law, we should be as incapable of receiving a law from Heaven as the brute. Without this, the thunders of Sinai might startle the outward ear, but would have no meaning, no authority to the mind. I have expressed here a great truth. Nothing teaches so encouragingly our relation and resemblance to God; for the Glory of the Supreme Being is eminently moral."—Vol. III. p. 234.

The tendency of this influence of the moral qualities, in their full development, is to give greater sensibility, reach and certainty to the perceiving and intuitive faculties, and at the same time, induce a firm reliance in their revelations. A large infusion of these qualities thus exerted, and in combination with the reasoning powers, forms the basis of the *poetic order of philosophic minds*. By this phrase we do not mean that order of mind which delights in fiction, nor even that which, of necessity, pursues the imaginary and beautiful in preference to the real. We do not so understand poetry. On the contrary, we believe it to be the result of that faculty of the mind by which it is most nearly allied to the actual, and which most especially seeks truth through the medium of reality, — that its processes are carried on by means of the original impressions which the mind receives of the objects of thought, whether these impressions are the result of observation or reflection: — that it thus brings the actual existencies before the mental vision, enabling it to observe their relations without first substituting arbitrary signs for them, and is thus contra-distinguished from the prosaic or logical mode, in which abstract terms or signs are substituted for realities, as a means of comparing their relations, and of which mathematical reasoning, based entirely on hypotheses, involved in the definitions, and carried on by arbitrary signs, having no *natural* connexion or analogous

relations to the things they represent, is the most perfect specimen.

These two modes of investigation,—the one carried on by means of a direct examination of the realities themselves ; the other by means of words or other signs substituted for those realities, — constitute the most important distinction in the means of philosophic research and discovery. Each has its peculiar advantages, and both are perhaps equally necessary to the advancement of knowledge. Like the external senses of sight and feeling, they mutually confirm or correct each other.

The prosaic mode has the advantage in condensing and generalizing, and perhaps we may add, that its results are more distinct and definite ; but it is confined to a very contracted sphere of action, and can be extended little, if any, beyond the limits in which a philosophical or scientific language has been constructed ; while the poetic is coextensive with thought, and freely traverses its boundless domain.

In its least ethereal form, it is the element of that common sense which, perceiving the reality of things and events, and their relations to time and to each other, is enabled to form just opinions of propriety, and probable conjectures of immediate consequences ; and as it is aided and elevated by the moral sentiments, — combined with intellectual power, and invigorated by warm feelings, pure passion, and fervid enthusiasm,—rises to the dignity of inspiration, and the sublimity of prophecy.

It does not follow that a man possessing this order of mind, inspired poet though he be, will *seek* to express himself in poetic diction. He will almost of necessity acquire a love for beauty, harmony, and sublimity, and this sentiment will naturally manifest itself in his style, and mould it into a correspondence with its own character. His thoughts extending beyond the limits of definite or conventional terms, he must, if he imparts them at all, present them by means of some other representative of ideas, — by literal description, or by analogies and associations which will convey his views to the

minds of others ; and this power of bringing the mind in immediate contact with the actual, we hold to be the distinguishing characteristic of poetry, which, consequently, is the nearest possible approach which language can make to reality. It pictures to the mind all the objects, occasions and results of thought, with almost as much certainty and precision as the eye presents it with the external appearances of nature, and scarcely less immediately ; for when poetic language assumes its purest form, we are as unconscious of the medium of words which it uses, as we are of the motion of light, and of the image on the retina by which we are made conscious of the existence of external objects.

The power of advancing beyond the limits of concrete science, which is conferred by the poetic mode of mind, makes it the all-important element of discovery and invention, and hence it is the essential attribute of genius. That most minds with capacities for this higher sphere of action should be absorbed by it, and attain excellence in it only by fervent devotion to the improvement and enlargement of those capacities is not remarkable, and that they should neglect to cultivate the arts of logic, is as natural as that the genius of Milton or Shakspeare should not have been directed to mechanical contrivance or arithmetical calculations. He who, by the exercise of the poetic faculties, can, from the whole universe, summon before him all the objects of his knowledge, is under no necessity to substitute visible signs to make those objects tangible to his thoughts. He who, by the same power, can observe all the properties and all the relations of those objects, has no occasion to marshal words in their stead.

He who can thus bring the result of his observations directly to the view of the mental perceptions, and make them bear immediately on the springs of moral action, has no need to approach reason or conscience through the cold medium of artificial signs and soulless abstractions. He wields a mightier sceptre. He possesses a more Godlike attribute. He commands light to be, and there is light.

We have already suggested that the mind of Channing was of this *poetic order*, and to this we may attribute not only his lofty aspirations, elevated sentiments, and reach of thought, but also that directness and sound practical common sense, so conspicuous even in the most ornate productions of his pen.

It also imparts that persuasive power, which, with few exceptions, pervades all his writings; and these exceptions are in most instances where the logical processes usurp the place of the poetic; where for the moment he throws off the mantle of inspiration, and meets his opponents with the earth-made weapons of polemical discussion. But though the prominent characteristic of his mind was thus poetic, the logical modes of investigation were far from being wholly neglected.

Of this, his writings furnish repeated and convincing proof. He made use of them as auxiliary to his own progress, and as a vehicle of truth to others. By the exercise of his mind in these two modes, the perceiving and reasoning faculties were kept healthy and vigorous, and as they grew, acquired strength and acuteness. It was indeed the harmonious combination of these powers, which made the action of his mind at once so strong and so graceful.

These, taken in connexion with great moral power and purity, combine all the mental elements essential to grandeur of character, and the successful investigation of truth, and leave us only to regret that the physical frame in which they were embodied was too frail to admit of the full and continuous action of such powers.

And yet we can conceive that this very weakness of the material nature may have made the spiritual more sensitive to truth, and more ethereal in its thoughts.

The clay-built prison house yielded to the spirit it imprisoned, and the mortal coil could only partially restrain the aspiring nature it seemed so feebly to enthrall. It is not improbable, too, that this physical weakness gave him a more acute feeling of the supremacy of moral power, and the necessity of relying

upon it to overcome all the ills of life, and to grapple with its numerous trials and temptations. In the spiritual energy which he thus put forth, under circumstances which so often enfeeble or crush effort, we have a sublime manifestation of that moral grandeur, that real greatness, to which human nature, through the medium of the true and the holy, may be elevated, and fulfil the noble destiny which is indicated by its pure and lofty aspirations. That he sometimes felt the subduing tendencies of bodily infirmity, and suffered from that keen sensibility it often imparts to the soul, and which renders it painful to come in collision with a selfish and unfeeling world, is manifest in occasional passages of his writings; but they also contain abundant proof of the lofty determination which elevated him above their depressing influence, and enabled him to meet the conflicts of life not merely without fear, but with a serene confidence in the ultimate triumph of truth and virtue; which sustained his hopes, and inspired his efforts with the emotion of victory. We think these feelings are indicated in a passage which we extract from his *Essay on Milton*.

“We will not say, that we envy our first parents; for we feel, that there may be a higher happiness than theirs,—a happiness won through struggle with inward and outward foes, the happiness of power and moral victory, the happiness of disinterested sacrifices and wide-spread love, the happiness of boundless hope, and of ‘thoughts which wander through eternity.’ Still there are times when the spirit, oppressed with pain, worn with toil, tired of tumult, sick at the sight of guilt, wounded in its love, baffled in its hope, and trembling in its faith, almost longs for the ‘wings of a dove, that it may fly away,’ and take refuge amidst the ‘shady bowers,’ the ‘vernal airs,’ the ‘roses without thorns,’ the quiet, the beauty, the loveliness of Eden.” — Vol. I. p. 18.

This occasional shade of despondency only exhibits in stronger light the general tone of hope, strength, and elevation which pervade his works, and which are sustained against bodily weakness by the happy constitution and assiduous

improvement of his mind ; a mind which, in view of the strength of his intellect, the clearness of his perceiving faculties, and his moral power and purity, may in its action be compared to a strong and healthy eye, aided by a telescope, in looking at remote objects, through a medium so pure, that the slightest cloud might easily be detected in its remotest bounds.

The moral qualities were the foundation of his elevated character. The poetic power which we have ascribed to him, though, from its capacity of extension beyond the limits of language and of the senses, susceptible of the most ethereal elevation, does not of necessity aspire to it. In this utilitarian age we make the lightning run upon our errands, and toil in our work-shops ; and poetry, though electric in its nature, may be employed in every department of mind, and has a universality coextensive with its thoughts. It may have for its object the discovery of native unadorned truth, or it may put forth its powers to render it more attractive, by clothing it in beauty. It may seek merely to entertain or amuse us, to minister to our immediate gratification, and, in doing this, it may still elevate the taste, purify the heart, and strengthen its hold upon virtue ; or it may throw its bright and glittering hues over the deformities of vice, and, desecrated by grovelling passions, become the pander to the lowest appetites, and cater for their wants, by drawing from the regions of sensuality and impurity.

In all these manifestations, it is still power, and, degraded as it may be, still spiritual power. The thunder cloud, lowering upon the earth, still bears in its dark bosom celestial light, and thrills us with its fitful gleams while it sheds its blasting influence upon or around us. We gaze upon it with breathless attention, with awe and with apprehension of its erratic brightness and power.

How different the feelings with which we contemplate the beautiful cloud already elevated by its purity to the serene azure, illuminated by the softened splendor of Heaven, and reflecting upon us its benign radiance ; cheering the earth in

its sunshine, or dissipating a bright existence in the renovating dews which it sheds on a benighted world. Thus is it with those in whom high moral and intellectual endowments are brightened and etherialized by the poetic element ; and thus, looking upon the bright side of humanity, no one had higher words of encouragement than Channing, or, turning to its darker aspects, none offered to its weaknesses and its misfortunes more sincere and heartfelt sympathy, or more tender consolation ; while none visited its errors with more inflexible judgment, or more just and effective reproof.

He reasoned strongly, but it was not when he reasoned that his power was most felt. By the poetic element of his mind, he presented reality so clearly, that error found no hiding place. In the light of truth, it stood convicted and was abashed. By its obvious power to supply the deficiencies of experience, he was enabled to reflect upon the wicked their own deformity, and make them feel the upbraidings of a violated conscience, and the pangs of a debased and mutilated soul.

We have been thus particular in defining the poetic character of the mind of Channing, and solicitous to show that this, harmoniously co-operating with high moral qualities, was the principal element of his power, because we are aware that there are many who look upon his views as wanting in that fervor which is allied to poetry, and in that faith which it often instinctively opposes to syllogistic argument, and who regard his theology as the result of cold reasoning and heartless verbal theories. Such, if they have observed his life, and studied his writings at all, have done it to little purpose. For confirmation of our position in this particular, we would open his works almost at random. The high estimate which he himself had formed of this most ethereal attribute of the mind, is of itself evidence, that he possessed it in no small measure ; for the possession of it is essential to the very conception of its true character. He probably had not examined it with the eye of a mere metaphysician, but

he *saw* it as it existed in his own mind, and in such combinations as it there found most congenial to its own nature.

Glowing indeed must have been the original from which he drew the following description.

“We agree with Milton in his estimate of poetry. It seems to us the divinest of all arts; for it is the breathing or expression of that principle or sentiment, which is deepest and sublimest in human nature; we mean, of that thirst or aspiration to which no mind is wholly a stranger, for something purer and lovelier, something more powerful, lofty, and thrilling than ordinary and real life affords. No doctrine is more common among Christians, than that of man’s immortality; but it is not so generally understood, that the germs or principles of his whole future being are *now* wrapped up in the soul, as the rudiments of the future plant in the seed. As a necessary result of this constitution, the soul, possessed and moved by these mighty, though infant energies, is perpetually stretching beyond what is present and visible, struggling against the bounds of its earthly prison-house, and seeking relief and joy in imaginings of unseen and ideal being. This view of our nature, which has never been fully developed, and which goes farther towards explaining the contradictions of human life than all others, carries us to the very foundation and source of poetry.

“He who cannot interpret by his own consciousness what we have now said, wants the true key to genius. He has not penetrated those secret recesses of the soul, where poetry is born and nourished, and inhales immortal vigor, and wings herself for her heavenward flight. In an intellectual nature, framed for progress and for higher modes of being, there must be creative energies, powers of original and ever-growing thought; and poetry is the form in which these energies are chiefly manifested. It is the glorious prerogative of this art, that it ‘makes all things new,’ for the gratification of a divine instinct. It indeed finds its elements in what it actually sees and experiences, — in the worlds of matter and mind; but it combines and blends these into new forms, and according to new affinities; breaks down, if we may so say, the distinctions and bounds of nature; imparts to material objects life, and senti-

ment, and emotion, and invests the mind with the powers and splendors of the outward creation; describes the surrounding universe in the colors which the passions throw over it; and depicts the soul in those modes of repose or agitation, of tenderness or sublime emotion, which manifest its thirst for a more powerful and joyous existence. To a man of literal and prosaic character, the mind may seem lawless in these workings; but it observes higher laws than it transgresses, — the laws of the immortal intellect; it is trying and developing its best faculties; and in the objects which it describes, or in the emotions which it awakens, anticipates these states of progressive power, splendor, beauty, and happiness, for which it was created.

“We accordingly believe, that poetry, far from injuring society, is one of the great instruments of its refinement and exaltation. It lifts the mind above ordinary life, gives it a respite from depressing cares, and awakens the consciousness of its affinity with what is pure and noble.

“In its legitimate and highest efforts, it has the same tendency and aim with Christianity; that is, to spiritualize our nature. True, poetry has been made the instrument of vice, the pander of bad passions; but when genius thus stoops, it dims its fires, and parts with much of its power: and even when poetry is enslaved to licentiousness or misanthropy, she cannot wholly forget her true vocation. Strains of pure feeling, touches of tenderness, images of innocent happiness, sympathies with suffering virtue, bursts of scorn or indignation at the hollowness of the world, passages true to our moral nature, often escape in an immoral work, and show us how hard it is for a gifted spirit to divorce itself wholly from what is good.

“Poetry has a natural alliance with our best affections. It delights in the beauty and sublimity of the outward creation and of the soul. It indeed portrays, with terrible energy, the excesses of the passions; but they are passions which show a mighty nature, which are full of power, which command awe, which excite a deep, though shuddering sympathy. Its great tendency and purpose is to carry the mind beyond and above the beaten, dusty, weary walks of ordinary life; to lift it into a purer element; and to breathe into it more profound and generous emotion. It reveals to us the loveliness of nature, brings

back the freshness of early feeling, revives the relish of simple pleasures, keeps unquenched the enthusiasm which warmed the spring-time of our being, refines youthful love, strengthens our interest in human nature by vivid delineations of its tenderest and loftiest feelings, spreads our sympathies over all classes of society, knits us by new ties with universal being, and, through the brightness of its prophetic visions, helps faith to lay hold on the future life.

“ We are aware that it is objected to poetry, that it gives wrong views and excites false expectations of life, peoples the mind with shadows and illusions, and builds up imagination on the ruins of wisdom. That there is a wisdom against which poetry wars, the wisdom of the senses, which makes physical comfort and gratification the supreme good, and wealth the chief interest of life, we do not deny; nor do we deem it the least service which poetry renders to mankind, that it redeems them from the thralldom of this earth-born prudence. But passing over this topic, we would observe that the complaint against poetry, as abounding in illusion and deception, is in the main groundless.

“ In many poems there is more of truth than in many histories and philosophic theories. The fictions of genius are often the vehicles of the sublimest verities, and its flashes often open new regions of thought, and throw new light on the mysteries of our being. In poetry, when the letter is falsehood, the spirit is often profoundest wisdom. And if truth thus dwells in the boldest fictions of the poet, much more may it be expected in his delineations of life; for the present life, which is the first stage of the immortal mind, abounds in the materials of poetry, and it is the high office of the bard to detect this divine element among the grosser labors and pleasures of our earthly being. The present life is not wholly prosaic, precise, tame and finite. To the gifted eye it abounds in the poetic. The affections which spread beyond ourselves, and stretch far into futurity; the workings of mighty passions, which seem to arm the soul with an almost superhuman energy; the innocent and irrepressible joy of infancy; the bloom, and buoyancy, and dazzling hopes of youth; the throbbings of the heart, when it first wakes to love, and dreams of a happiness too vast for

earth; woman with her beauty, and grace and gentleness, and fullness of feeling, and depth of affection, and blushes of purity, and the tones and looks which only a mother's heart can inspire;—these are all poetical. It is not true, that the poet paints a life which does not exist. He only extracts, and concentrates, as it were, life's ethereal essence, arrests and condenses its volatile fragrance, brings together its scattered beauties, and prolongs its more refined but evanescent joys. And in this he does well; for it is good to feel that life is not wholly usurped by cares for subsistence, and physical gratifications, but admits, in measures which may be indefinitely enlarged, sentiments and delights worthy of a higher being. This power of poetry to refine our views of life and happiness, is more and more needed as society advances. It is needed to withstand the encroachments of heartless and artificial manners, which make civilization so tame and uninteresting. It is needed to counteract the tendency of physical science, which being now sought, not, as formerly, for intellectual gratification, but for multiplying bodily comforts, requires a new development of imagination, taste, and poetry, to preserve men from sinking into an earthly, material, Epicurean life. Our remarks in vindication of poetry have extended beyond our original design. They have had a higher aim than to assert the dignity of Milton as a poet, and that is, to endear and recommend this divine art to all who reverence and would cultivate and refine their nature." — Vol. I. p. 7.

And again, in his essay on the Life and Writings of Fénelon, he says:—

"Let not beauty be so wronged. It resides chiefly in profound thoughts and feelings. It overflows chiefly in the writings of *poets* gifted with a sublime and piercing vision." — Vol. I. p. 211.

In his address to the Mercantile Library Company, delivered at Philadelphia only a few months before his death, we find a more full confirmation of the views we have advanced of the essential truthfulness of poetry.

"The great poet of our times, Wordsworth, one of the few who are to live, has gone to common life, to the feelings of our

universal nature, to the obscure and neglected portions of society, for beautiful and touching themes. Nor ought it to be said, that he has shed over these the charms of his genius; as if in themselves they had nothing grand or lovely. Genius is not a creator, in the sense of fancying or feigning what does not exist. *Its distinction is, to discern more of truth than ordinary minds.* It sees, under disguises and humble forms, everlasting beauty. This it is the prerogative of Wordsworth to discern and reveal in the ordinary walks of life, in the common human heart. He has revealed the loveliness of the *primitive feelings* of the universal affections of the heart." — Vol. VI. p. 155.

Those who accuse him of leaning to the side of a cold philosophy, and an exclusive and narrow rationalism, will hardly expect such sentiments from him as —

"Men may be too rational as well as too fervent." "Men will prefer even a fanaticism which is in earnest, to a pretended rationality, which leaves untouched all the springs of the soul, which never lays a quickening hand on our love and veneration, our awe and fear, our hope and joy." — Vol. III. p. 147.

That he was philosophic and rational we freely admit and assert; but his philosophy was not the mere unpractical result of abstract investigation, nor his rationalism the aimless refinement of cold reasoning. In both, there was infused the electric influence of the poetic element, which quickened them into life glowing with vital warmth, and gave them a pervasive expansibility by which they reached the most pure and delicate sensibilities of the heart, wrought upon the sublimest and the profoundest sentiments of our nature, lent a kindling spark to the deepest feelings and warmest affections of the soul, and inspired it with those fervent hopes, and lofty and holy aspirations, by which the religious sentiment is most fully developed.

In further illustration of the greater faith which he reposed in those truths which are perceived and felt, as compared with those which are the results of reasoning, we quote from his "Discourse on the Evidences of Revealed Religion."

“There is another evidence of Christianity, still more internal than any on which I have yet dwelt, an evidence to be *felt* rather than *described*, but not less real because founded on feeling. I refer to that conviction of the divine original of our religion, which springs up and continually gains strength, in those who habitually apply it to their tempers and lives, and who imbibe its spirit and hopes. In such men, there is a consciousness of the adaptation of Christianity to their noblest faculties; a consciousness of its exalting and consoling influences, of its power to confer the true happiness of human nature, to give that peace, which the world cannot give; which assures them that it is not of earthly origin, but a ray from the Everlasting Light, a stream from the fountain of Heavenly Wisdom and Love. This is the evidence which sustains the faith of thousands, who never read and cannot understand the learned books of Christian apologists, who want, perhaps, words to explain the ground of their belief, but whose faith is of adamantine firmness, *who hold the gospel with a conviction more intimate and unwavering, than mere argument ever produced.*” — Vol. III. p. 132.

He recognized these internal convictions as the immediate result of purity of mind, and though susceptible of advantageous combination with logical and scientific attainments, yet capable of distinct and independent manifestations. Speaking of Religion, he says : —

“It is a subject to which every faculty and every acquisition may pay tribute, which may receive aids and lights from the accuracy of the logician, from the penetrating spirit of philosophy, from the intuitions of genius, from the researches of history, from the science of the mind, from physical science, from every branch of criticism, and, though last not least, *from the spontaneous suggestions and the moral aspirations of pure but unlettered men.*” — Vol. I. p. 207.

In conformity to these views, he had great confidence in all the elements of human nature, and sought to give a good direction to its impulses, to elevate its passions rather than to eradicate them, and to make its instincts intelligent rather than to crush or wholly subjugate them to the despotism of the reasoning faculties.

For the reasons already stated, we have dwelt upon this feature of the character of Channing, and endeavored to fortify our view of it with copious extracts from his own record of his mind ; but we deem its importance a sufficient apology for remarking yet farther upon it.

That he possessed great power of some kind, is universally admitted by those who differed, as well as by those who concurred with him in his opinions and beliefs. That it was spiritual power, none will deny ; and moral qualities of the highest order are accorded to him by all. But it is remarkable, that, while his theological opponents accuse him of having converted religion into a philosophy, and of reaching his results through cold and barren abstractions, and arid and heartless theories, many of his friends appear to think him, at least comparatively, deficient in philosophical power, in metaphysical analysis, and in logical acuteness. By some, his influence is attributed to the peculiar beauty in which, with rare endowment, he clothed his thoughts. But it is not by mere coloring that genius manifests itself and makes its impression on the world. It is the conception which it embodies, the thought, the truthfulness that takes strong and lasting hold of us, and however successful Channing may have been in rendering his thoughts attractive, we have no doubt that the great source of his power is to be found in the direct, strong, natural, and earnest expression of great doctrines, which he clearly perceived and firmly believed to be important to the progress and happiness of mankind ; in the clear enunciation of that order of truths which are yet elevated beyond the reach of philosophical analysis, or if thus accessible to gifted minds, susceptible of being presented to the great mass of men, only by means of the poetic power, which he so happily and successfully applied to this object. But the diversity of opinion to which we have alluded, indicates of itself that his mind was well balanced in this respect, and that without any deficiency, either of the poetic or logical powers, it only accorded supremacy to that which in its own nature was supreme.

But though his elevation and sensibility rendered the poetic mode most congenial to his thoughts, and made controversy, in all its forms, repugnant to his feelings, yet when in resisting the attacks of his opponents, he meets them upon their own ground, and returns to those proximate principles which are within the limits of demonstration, or of logical deductions, we find no want of skill in the use of the weapons they have thus forced upon him. Do we often meet with more acute and conclusive logic than that with which he thus meets one of the arguments of a sect strongly opposed to his views ?

“It is no slight objection to the mode of reasoning adopted by the Calvinist, that it renders the proof of the divine attributes impossible. When we object to his representations of the divine government, that they shock our clearest ideas of goodness and justice, he replies, that still they may be true, because we know very little of God, and what seems unjust to man, may be in the Creator the perfection of rectitude. Now this weapon has a double edge. If the strongest marks and expressions of injustice do not prove God unjust, then the strongest marks of the opposite character do not prove him righteous. If the first do not deserve confidence, because of our narrow views of God, neither do the last. If, when more shall be known, the first may be found consistent with perfect rectitude, so when more shall be known, the last may be found consistent with infinite malignity and oppression. This reasoning of our opponents casts us upon an ocean of awful uncertainty. Admit it, and we have no proofs of God’s goodness and equity to rely upon. What we call proof may be but mere appearances, which a wider knowledge of God may reverse. The future may show us, that the very laws and works of the Creator, from which we now infer his kindness, are consistent with the most determined purpose to spread infinite misery and guilt, and were intended, by raising hope, to add the agony of disappointment to our other woes. Why may not these anticipations, horrible as they are, be verified by the unfolding of God’s system, if our reasonings about his attributes are rendered so very uncertain as Calvinism teaches, by the infinity of his nature.” — Vol. I. p. 234.

And from another portion of the same argument.

“It is an important truth, which we apprehend has not been sufficiently developed, that the ultimate reliance of a human being is and must be on his own mind. To confide in God, we must first confide in the faculties, by which He is apprehended, and by which the proofs of his existence are weighed. A trust in our ability to distinguish between truth and falsehood is implied in every act of belief; for to question this ability would of necessity unsettle all belief. We cannot take a step in reasoning or action without a secret reliance on our own minds.” — Vol. I. p. 226.

And again he thus contends for the necessity of exercising the reason in matters of religious belief: —

“But if once we admit, that propositions, which in their literal sense appear plainly repugnant to one another, or to any known truth, are still to be literally understood and received, what possible limit can we set to the belief of contradictions? What shelter have we from the wildest fanaticism, which can always quote passages, that in their literal and obvious sense give support to its extravagances? How can the Protestant escape from transubstantiation, a doctrine most clearly taught us, if the submission of reason now contended for be a duty? How can we even hold fast the truth of revelation, for if one apparent contradiction may be true, so may another, and the proposition that Christianity is false, though involving inconsistencies, may still be a verity?” — Vol. III. p. 68.

“We answer again, that if God be infinitely wise he cannot sport with the understandings of his creatures. A wise teacher discovers his wisdom in adapting himself to the capacities of his pupils, not in perplexing them with what is unintelligible, nor in distressing them with apparent contradictions, not in filling them with a skeptical distrust of their own powers. An infinitely wise teacher, who knows the precise extent of our minds, and the best method of enlightening them, will surpass all other instructors in bringing down truth to our apprehensions, and showing its truth and harmony. We ought, indeed, to expect occasional obscurity from such a book as the Bible, which was written for past and future ages, as well as for the present. But God’s wisdom is a pledge, that whatever is neces-

sary for *us* and necessary for salvation, is revealed too plainly to be mistaken, and too consistently to be questioned by a sound and upright mind. It is not the work of wisdom, to use an unintelligible phraseology to communicate what is above our capacities, to confuse and unsettle the intellect by appearances of contradiction. We honor our heavenly teacher too much to ascribe to him such a revelation. A revelation is a gift of light, it cannot thicken our darkness and multiply our perplexities." — Vol. III. p. 68.

And even in the didactic statement of his views, he often exhibits much logical skill in such an arrangement of the terms as presents the thought in clear and strong light, as for instance,

"God indeed is said to seek his own glory; but the glory of a creator must consist in the glory of his works; and we may be assured that he cannot wish any recognition of himself, but that which will perfect his sublimest, highest work, the immortal mind." — Vol. III. p. 216.

"In our apprehension, a conspiracy against the rights of the human race is as foul a crime as rebellion against the rights of sovereigns; nor is there less of treason in warring against public freedom than in assailing royal power." — Vol. I. p. 128.

The fact, however, that some of his most intimate friends and warmest admirers have suggested a deficiency in the power of metaphysical analysis and in logical acuteness, seems to require some explanation, as well as, perhaps, some apology from us for entertaining and expressing opinions differing from those of persons, who, to such opportunities for observing, united such abilities to judge correctly. In reference to this difference of opinion we would observe, that it was Dr. Channing's habit to endeavor to advance men, and to encourage their efforts in any good path which he found them pursuing, rather than to turn their thoughts into other channels. He took position beyond them and led them on. "He had a thought beyond other men's thoughts," and we apprehend that few have entered with him into the discussion, even of the most abstract portions of ethics and metaphysics, without feeling the truth of this marked expression of one who knew

him well, and well knew how to appreciate his excellence ; and it was upon these subjects that he usually chose to converse with the writer. On the other hand, those who have described him as wanting in metaphysical and logical power, are professed theologians, men who were engaged with him in inculcating the loftiest truths of a spiritual religion, in discoursing with whom these truths were most probably the absorbing theme ; and upon this sublime subject, his aspiring and fervent spirit would naturally soar above the limits of philosophical discussion, and lead him, in the didactic language of inspiration, to speak of what he perceived and felt, rather than of what he had investigated with metaphysical accuracy, or reduced to logical demonstration. With such men, he would portray his ideal of moral beauty and grandeur ; his lofty conceptions of the real dignity of man, and of that progress in virtue and religion which he deemed not merely a means of reaching Heaven, but as Heaven already attained.

With such men he would unfold his idea of the True, the Beautiful, the Godlike, and those sublime conceptions which he had reached, not by acute reasoning but by calm contemplation of Divine perfections. From these perceptions of grandeur and goodness, came his clear views of that delightful progression in truth and virtue, which he held to be the appropriate condition of man. It was not with men who agreed with him in these views, and who, from his utterance of them, derived a kindred inspiration, that he would feel the necessity of descending from such high themes, to make a logical examination of the foundation on which he had reared the lofty and beautiful superstructure. With such men, he would practically illustrate his own precept to one about to assume the high functions of a spiritual teacher. “ You will remember that good practice is the end of preaching, and will labor to make your people holy livers rather than skilful disputants.”

Such were the subjects, and such the manner of treating them, most congenial to his feelings ; and in this view, the

testimony of those friends and coadjutors to whom we have alluded, merely confirms our position, that his was of the *poetic order of philosophic minds*. While, on the other hand, the manner in which he met the arguments and assertions of his opponents, we think exhibits an ability for abstract reasoning of no ordinary character. Of this, we deem the passages we have selected sufficient proof; but the best specimens of logical power appear weak, cold, and narrow, when compared with the strong and fervid utterance, which, in other forms of discourse, he gave to his expansive views, and which carried conviction to the heart and to the intellect, through a higher and purer medium than that of verbal reasoning; and this is another reason why the logical power in him was not conspicuous. It paled under the influence of superior light. Again, the most marked and striking manifestations of the logical power are when it appears to succeed in forcing conviction against our consciousness, and boldly defies its supremacy.

Thus, the apparently conclusive reasoning of Edwards against the freedom of the will, and the subtle argument of Berkeley to prove the nonexistence of matter, being processes of logic which, if erroneous, elude detection, while they contradict our consciousness, are deemed masterpieces of the art. But Channing's reverence for the dictates of the moral judgment was so great, his confidence in them so unwavering, that he never attempted such a display of his reasoning powers. He would have looked upon it as moral treason, as an effort to dethrone the legitimate sovereign of the mind.

But there are other reasons for the impression alluded to as having obtained with some of his friends, which we will proceed to examine; and, in the first place, we would remark, that the temperament of Channing was of the most ardent character. Of that calmness, which in him was so marked, apathy was no element, nor was it natural to him, but rather the effect of strong and steady discipline, of great moral dignity, and an elevated, a rational and holy faith, which

raised him above the petty disturbances and conflicts of life. Yet this ardor occasionally broke through the self-restraint he habitually imposed upon it, and especially when his benevolence called it into action, when indignation for the oppressors of his race, who fettered the mind with error and tradition, or destroyed personal rights with the strong arm of despotism, kindled its latent fire. Though this spontaneous energy was, from its very nature, more apparent in his conversations, yet it is occasionally manifested in his writings; as, for instance,

“This system of *espionage* (we are proud that we have no English word for the infernal machine), had indeed been used under all tyrannies. But it wanted the craft of Fouché, and the energy of Bonaparte, to disclose all its powers.”—Vol. I. p. 85.

“Whoever gives clear and undoubted proof, that he is prepared, and sternly resolved to make the earth a slaughter house, and to crush every will adverse to his own, ought to be caged like a wild beast; and to require mankind to proceed against him by written laws and precedents, as if he were a private citizen in a quiet court of justice, is just as rational as to require a man in imminent peril from an assassin to wait and prosecute his murderer according to the most protracted forms of law.”—Vol. I. p. 123.

“To such I would say that this doctrine, (Unitarianism) which is considered by some as the last and most perfect invention of Satan, the consummation of his blasphemies, the most cunning weapon ever forged in the fires of hell, amounts to this:—That there is One God, even the Father; and that Jesus Christ is not this One God, but his son and messenger, who derived all his powers and glories from the Universal Parent, and who came into the world not to claim supreme homage for himself, but to carry up the soul to his Father as the Only Divine Person, the Only Ultimate Object of religious worship.”—Vol. III. p. 165.

“Did I believe, what Trinitarianism teaches, that not the least transgression, not even the first sin of the dawning mind of the child, could be remitted without an infinite expiation, I should feel myself living under a legislation unspeakably dreadful, under laws written, like Draco’s, in blood; and instead of thanking the sovereign for providing an infinite substitute, I

should shudder at the attributes which render this expedient necessary." — Vol. III. p. 196.

With what significance could he at a later period of his life say, —

" *I call not on God to smite with his lightnings, to overwhelm with his storms, the accursed ship which goes to the ignorant and rude native freighted with poison and death ; which goes to add new ferocity to savage life, new licentiousness to savage sensuality. I have learned not to call down fire from heaven.*" — Vol. VI. p. 166.

With such ardent feelings, and that intense interest in the welfare of his race, which was manifested in his every thought and act, how could he wait the slow inculcation of metaphysical abstractions, and their yet slower influence upon the practical opinions, the habits, the sentiments, the feelings, and the voluntary actions of the mass ? His sympathies were with the whole human family. He sought to increase the happiness of all, and through the medium of periodicals, popular lectures and professional discourses, brought himself most immediately in connection with the multitude. He saw them degraded by sordid and narrow views, and strove to inspire them with high and liberal thought, to awaken in them a sense of the true dignity of their nature, and animate them to noble and virtuous effort. In accomplishing this, he knew human nature too well to rely mainly upon the arts of logic. He knew that the loveliness of virtue, and the brightness of proximate truths, have a stronger hold on the affections, and a more direct influence on the moral feelings and actions of men, than the subtle abstractions from which the acute metaphysician may deduce their verity, or into which he may generalize and condense them ; that the foliage and the flowers have more direct influence to gladden the heart, than the roots which sustain them. Yet no one better appreciated the value of that deep research, which determines the firm foundation of truth, and, surrounding it with logical defences, renders it impregnable to the assaults of skepticism, and secure from the wily approaches of sophistry. He knew that

the tendency of all error and of all truth, however apparently removed from the springs of action, was, eventually, to work out some practical result ; and he knew that in the last analysis, the deep thinkers are they who move the world ; that they give impulse and direction to the great current of events and ideas, in which shallow errors, superficial thought and perverted action, only cause some temporary eddies and counter currents, destined to be swept away in the tide of truth resistlessly onward.

In the following passages we find this great and cheering thought shadowed forth : —

“The great sources of intellectual power and progress to a people, are its strong and original thinkers, be they found where they may.” * * * * “The energy which is to carry forward the intellect of a people, belongs chiefly to private individuals who devote themselves to lonely thought, who worship truth, who originate the views demanded by their age, who help to throw off the yoke of established prejudices, who improve old modes of education or invent better.” — Vol. I. p. 162.

“But as society advances, mind, thought, becomes the *sovereign* of the world ; and accordingly at the present moment, profound and glowing thought, though breathing only from the silent page, exerts a kind of omnipotent and omnipresent energy. It crosses oceans and spreads through nations ; and at one and the same moment, the conceptions of a single mind are electrifying and kindling multitudes through wider regions than the Roman eagle overshadowed. This agency of mind on mind, I repeat it, is the true sovereignty of the world, and kings and heroes are becoming impotent by the side of men of deep and fervent thought.” — Vol. III. p. 141.

“Perhaps some silent thinker among us is at work in his closet, whose name is to fill the earth. Perhaps there sleeps in his cradle some Reformer, who is to move the church and the world, who is to open a new era in history, who is to fire the human soul with new hope and new daring.” — Vol. VI. p. 181. “Great ideas are mightier than the passions.” — Vol. V. p. 184.

And his mission was to unfold great ideas, to ennoble his

fellow men by lofty thought, and encourage them to virtuous effort. But, as we have already observed, he did not present these great ideas through the medium of metaphysical reasoning, nor make its abstractions the foundation of his notions of virtue. Though the result of deep and fervent thought, there is in them no appearance of laborious or ingenious manipulation of words or ideas. He seemed to perceive them merely because he had attained an elevation from which his sphere of vision was enlarged. They were the revelations of an inspired mind, acting under the stimulus of intense interest in all that affected the welfare of his race. He ever preferred the useful to the curious. He saw his fellow men enslaved by their own passions and prejudices, or by an external, arrogant authority, and was more solicitous to inspire them with the spirit of freedom, than to investigate the sources of ecclesiastical and political power. He saw them suffering from error, and preferred rather to inspire them with a love of truth, than to trace out the subtle distinctions between the relative and absolute ; and was more anxious to turn them from evil, than to discover its origin.

He chose to encourage men to make those voluntary moral efforts, which he considered as the essence of virtue, rather than engage himself in the controversy with the advocates of necessity, or attempt a verbal demonstration of free agency. With his acute sense of the suffering and degradation which arose from erroneous and narrow views, his clear convictions of the happiness and elevation of which man is susceptible, and his intense anxiety to relieve and to advance his condition, he could not coldly apply such slow remedies, and wait the tedious result of the circulation of doctrines so apparently remote from the practical concerns of life. Yet he did not undervalue the investigation of these truths, and many were the words of encouragement which he spake to those whose dispositions led them into these abstruse inquiries. To such he had not only words of encouragement, but aid ; for few men had a clearer perception of the actual position of such problems, and of their various relations, than

himself ; and few could more readily detect a too hasty generalization, or point out any portion of the subject, or collateral question, which had been passed without sufficient examination ; and though, as we have observed, the action of his mind was generally in the poetic mode, yet the student of mental philosophy cannot fail to observe, that some of his most beautiful and popular thoughts appear to have been evolved from abstruse metaphysical inquiries, and that a large portion of them bear the impress of its influence ; — that beneath them lies the intricate and unseen apparatus of mental assimilation, which penetrates, with innumerable fibres, the richest soil of the intellect, and thence derives sustenance for the bloom and verdure which appear on the surface.

To elicit deep and hidden truth, by the logical processes, is a high effort of philosophy ; but it is yet a higher, to give these truths a practical application, and make them immediately conducive to pure feelings, elevated piety, and energetic virtue. This, the highest of all philosophical attributes, was Channing's peculiar power, and will ever give him a high rank among

“The dead but sceptred sovereigns, who rule
Our spirits from their urns.”

Among those legitimate sovereigns of the world, “who by their characters, deeds, suffering, writings, leave imperishable and ennobling traces of themselves on the human mind ; who penetrate the secrets of the universe and of the soul ; who open new fields to the intellect ; who give it a new consciousness of its own powers, rights, and divine original ; who spread enlarged and liberal habits of thought, and who help men to understand that an ever growing knowledge is the patrimony destined for them by the Father of Spirits.” * *

Among these, a high place will be assigned to the “moral and religious reformer, who truly merited that name ; who rose above his times ; who, moved by a holy impulse, assailed vicious establishments sustained by fierce passions and inveterate prejudices ; who rescued great truths from the corruptions of ages ; who, joining calm and deep thought to

profound feeling, secured to religion at once enlightened and earnest conviction ; who unfolded to men higher forms of virtue than they had yet attained or conceived ; who gave brighter and more thrilling views of the perfection for which they were framed, and inspired a victorious faith in the perpetual progress of our nature.”

Such was Channing as a philanthropist and philosopher ; so nearly realizing his own ideal of the lofty and noble in humanity, that his eloquent description of it seems better to delineate his own character, than any other language in which we can portray it. His whole mind partook of this excellence. Gifted with clear and far-reaching poetic vision, which made him familiar with the loftiest sphere of human thoughts, and the sublimest of human aspirations, with reasoning faculties, and a power of philosophical analysis, which restrained and diffused the electric fervor of the poetic element, checked its exuberance, and enabled him to give its discoveries and inspirations that palpable form and practical application to which he was strongly moved by a benevolence which warmed his whole soul. And these faculties, thus harmonizing and lending mutual aid to each other, warming while they enlightened ; deriving energy from the earnestness of his disposition, yet preserved by the purity of his life in all their native delicacy and sensibility ; made vigilant by an abiding sense of the just responsibilities of man to God, to his fellow beings, and to himself, of his high susceptibilities and the great duties of self-restraint and self-cultivation, and stimulated by these considerations and an intense, a burning interest in the welfare of his race, to the highest and most constant activity which his fragile health permitted.

The result was such as might be anticipated from so rare a combination of mental faculties, directed by such pure and lofty motives, animated by such glowing thoughts, and invigorated by such virtuous and thrilling impulses.

He consecrated himself to the elevation and advancement of his race, and few have so happily moved the world with

great truths, or so successfully warmed into activity the intellectual and moral effort which had been rendered torpid by the chilling influence of religious despotism. We cannot name a writer who has done more to awaken in his readers a true consciousness of the sublime attributes of their spiritual natures, or who has contributed so much to enlighten and liberalize the public mind upon the high truths of religion, and to place these truths on a firm and rational ground, or who has breathed into it a more vital, purifying and ennobling influence.

The perusal of his works must ever awaken the soul to the contemplation of sublime and glorious truths, animate it with lofty and magnanimous purpose, quicken its hallowing aspirations for moral beauty, truth and holiness, and incite it with glowing ardor to press forward in the path of duty and virtue, to the fulfilment of its noblest destiny.

The improvement of his fellow beings was the great object of his life. This was the absorbing theme of his philosophy, and the incentive to his action. His prevailing ideas of the proper condition of man, may be comprised in three words, — Freedom, Progress, Happiness. And in his view, freedom was mainly important as it accelerated progress, which, in its turn, derived its value from its relation to happiness.

Hence his whole theology was based on freedom, as essential to that elevation and improvement of the moral nature, most favorable to the development of the religious sentiment, and to the highest and purest enjoyment of spiritual existence.

But with these ultimate and prevailing views of the chief value of liberty, he did not overlook its important influences on the physical and social condition of man.

He occupied a similar position in regard to physical advantages arising from any other cause. His benevolence led him spontaneously to rejoice at their increase, and to regret their absence or diminution, while his more matured thought found in their influence to elevate the mind, their principal utility and final cause. In this respect he may be said to have united the old and new philosophy, — through the material, comfort-

seeking utilitarianism of the Baconian arriving at the soul-elevating, etherial views of the Socratic school. With reference to the popular opinion of the two systems, we might say the means he employed or indicated were often Baconian, the end he proposed was always Socratic.

His effort to place theology on a rational ground ; to test its formulas by the results of observation, and give it a more practical influence, were consistent with the new philosophy ; while his desire to make the power, which through this philosophy, mind had acquired over matter, conducive to a higher spirituality, was in harmony with the sublime doctrines of the leaders of the ancient school. The disciples of Socrates and Plato disdained the application of philosophy to material objects, for the purpose of contributing to our physical wants.

The followers of Bacon receiving their impulse, rather from their leader's prevailing bias, than from any necessary consequence of his theory, directed their efforts principally to this object. Under the varying circumstances which existed at the two periods of their action, both were probably right. In the times of Socrates and Plato there was little diffused intelligence among the people, and the quintessence of it which constitutes the philosophy of every age would not bear general diffusion as to the objects of its power. It was then a wise foresight, or a noble instinct, which directed it exclusively to the greatest object of all philosophical thought, — the moral and intellectual condition of man. By thus separating it from the vulgar uses of organic life, they maintained its purity and brightness unsullied, gave it a dignified and lofty character which commanded the reverence and admiration of the world, thus rendering it attractive to a portion of that talent which had previously found exercise only in warlike achievements, or dissipated itself in wrangles for political supremacy, and which, accustomed to such exciting and brilliant modes of aggrandizement, would have found no allurements in a utilitarianism which had for its end the mere addition to human comforts, or in any philosophy which proposed for its object anything less than the grandest achieve-

ment of thought, — the elevation and improvement of the soul. Its application then to the common uses of life, would have protracted the iron rule of military despotism, and probably also have led to low and grovelling views among those who might still apply themselves to philosophical pursuits.

But aside from these speculations, the results of the efforts of the Sophists and the Epicureans indicate that at that period, and for a long time after, the union of philosophy and the arts was impracticable, or at least incompatible with the highest interests of humanity. That early stage of society in which physical force is the principal element of government, had not yet been past. It was first requisite that philosophy should bring to its aid precisely that order of talent which was quite as likely to seek distinction in the camp as in the portico. It needed this active power to influence the popular mind, to diffuse the desire of knowledge by making its possession honorable, and thus multiply readers to an extent which should stimulate invention to supply the increased demand for books. It was further necessary, that the increased means of circulating information should have time to produce some practical effects. To have proposed the application of intelligence to the manual arts, when the artists had no intelligence to apply, and before there were any means of communicating to them the results of philosophical investigation, would have been at least premature, and could have produced no beneficial result. The invention of printing removed these difficulties. Intelligence became more abundant and more diffused. Philosophy was carried to every man's door, and every artist, and eventually every laborer, could apply its discoveries to his daily pursuits. This movement had commenced before the time of Bacon, but the feeling against such application, to which we have alluded, had an influence in retarding it until his vigorous mind, confident in clear perception, and unswayed by those sentiments which in reverence for time-honored doctrines and sympathy with lofty views and noble thoughts, might have restrained a less hardy intellect, broke down the barriers, and the accumulated power of the age acquired an impulse towards material science, which

was soon after much accelerated by the magnificent discoveries of Newton and his contemporaries. The splendor and magnitude of these discoveries in those portions of physical research, which are farthest removed from a narrow and selfish use of the intellectual faculties, were associated with the utilitarian movement, and gave it a dignity which reconciled it even to those who would otherwise have contemned it as a desecration of mental power.

It has since been long sustained by the rapidly increasing demand for the tangible comforts of life, to the production of which it has been made subservient.

These in turn have reached a point where they are again conducive to spiritual progress. The great current of philosophic thought has ever been in that channel, and we here find that the Baconian system is but a collateral portion of it, which, during an overflow, has found or formed a new channel, but eventually returns with accumulated volume to the parent stream.

To hasten this return was a grand result of Channing's efforts, and though in the progress of knowledge this reunion was necessary, and the tendency of the age had already set in that direction, yet we deem the services he performed in its achievement sufficiently important, and sufficiently in advance of his contemporaries, to entitle his name to the most conspicuous place in the history of its accomplishment. His partiality for the spiritual side of philosophy was not exceeded by that of Socrates, Plato and Seneca, yet he did not condemn the material, but, on the contrary, endeavored to make it the vehicle of the most sublime and ethereal truths to the mass of mankind.

Practically to unite intelligence and elevating thought with the pursuits of the artisan, the laborer, and the distributor of their toil, is the prominent and ostensible object of many of his essays, among which we would instance his "Address before the Mercantile Library Association of Philadelphia," "Lectures on Self Culture," and those "On the Elevation of the Laboring portion of the community."

In the aid which philosophy brought to physical effort, he

saw a means of lessening the manual labor required to supply our bodily wants, and of thus relieving the mind of the laborer from the depressing influence of physical exhaustion, while by making thought a necessary portion of his occupation, he was elevated above the mere machine of sinews, bones, and muscles, to which he had been degraded by an ignorance which rendered him unable to resist oppression. In the increased physical comforts produced by this aid, he saw the basis of a higher spiritual condition for all classes, though more especially for those to whom education had already been one of its results.

In the less time required to feed and clothe the body, he saw the means of applying more to the cultivation of the mind. In short, he looked upon the whole movement as a means of accelerating that higher progress which God ordained to be the chief end of man's existence, and to which all his designs as manifested in his works so obviously refer.

From causes, to some of which we have alluded, the time of Bacon was favorable to the impulse he gave. The incipient stage of abstract thought in physics had past; the time to make it practical, — to reap the fruit, had arrived. We have witnessed its prodigious results, — the discoveries of the modern astronomy displaying the wonders of the heavens, — geology divining those of earth, — the time and space destroying railroad and telegraph, — the servitude of steam, light, and lightning, and the universal subjugation of less ethereal forms of matter, attest the magnificent and stupendous achievements with which his name is so gloriously associated. The labors of Channing embraced a period when these results were consummating, when success and the plentitude of acquirement in physics led men to look for a higher application, — an ultimate use for the accumulation. The victories of mind over matter had been so splendid and so rapid, that it began to feel the want of another world to conquer. It was the office of Channing to direct this victorious energy to spiritual progress, and in this object to the find ultimate use of its previous acquisitions. The utilitarian was thus again merged in the parent philosophy.

The results of this union are yet to be unfolded. Imagination can hardly picture them as vast and brilliant as those just developed ; yet when we compare the mundane character of the region which philosophy has just traversed, with the etherial sphere which is to be the theatre of its future progress, we ought not to anticipate less, either in magnitude or splendor. The union of the two philosophies indicates a further change. The Baconian had inclined far to the material side, and its junction with the main current must now have the effect to give the whole a more spiritual direction than its usual channel. The metaphysical age must succeed the mechanical. An age commencing like that which has preceded it, with abstract speculation and disinterested thought, which in the uniform mode of progressive knowledge, will also at last work their way to a practical result, and lend their influence to quicken the moral sensibilities, ennoble the sentiments, purify the affections, and strengthen and refine the whole spiritual nature.

This is obviously the goal, or a goal, of mental science ; and it is because these practical results are not yet developed, that the philosophy of mind finds so little favor with the great majority of mankind. Before the sowing of the seed is completed, they complain that the harvest is not ready to be gathered. We think it requires no supernatural prophetic vision to see these results in the future. When they shall be realized, a just and impartial judgment may be formed of the incipient efforts to reëlevate the spiritual, and make it the great object of thought and progress.

In that day, the services which Channing has performed in uniting the new and the old philosophy, though now little thought of, and unconsciously performed, may appear the most prominent of his useful life, and constituting an important epoch in the history of philosophy, place him in a rank as high among the great and wise who have contributed to its advancement, as his benevolence has already obtained for him among the benefactors of his race, and give him as valid a title to philosophical fame as by elevated virtue, enlightened philanthropy, and disinterested devotion to the cause of hu-

manity, he has acquired to the admiration, love, and gratitude of mankind. In this view we have endeavored to exhibit the influence which he has had on that great current of philosophy, whose present force and direction is the composition and last result of the individual thought of past ages.

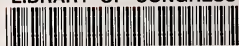
In this connexion we would also mention another instance of his influence, more immediately relating to political and social improvement. The progress of social organization is from physical force to intellectual power : from intellectual power to moral influence.

In his articles on Napoleon, Channing gave the first decisive blow to that manifestation of intellectual energy, which is most nearly allied to brute force, and thus weakening the alliance of the intellectual with the physical, as a means of governing, prepared the way for the substitution of the intellectual, united with the moral powers, which makes the next step in that progression of which *love* is the last term.

There are some cheering indications of progress in this respect. Governments are learning to recognize the rights of subjects, and in their intercourse with each other the obligations of justice are more regarded. They are now ashamed to confound might with right, and the strong deem it necessary to preserve at least the appearance of fair dealing with the weak. In glancing over these marked results of his labors, we are again reminded of that harmony in his intellectual and moral character to which we have before alluded, and which thus made his efforts equally effective in the loftiest region of speculation, and in the ordinary sphere of practical life. We have already suggested that it is yet too early to estimate the extent of his influence on human progress, but it is even now obvious that he has made benevolence more universal, religion more rational, philosophy more spiritual, and action more moral.



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 027 293 058 2