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THE

# Logic of Life,

Deduced from the Principle of Free-thought,

By G. J. Holyoake.

Honour to him, who, self-complete, if lone,  
Carves to the grave one pathway all his own;  
And heeding nought that men may think or say,  
Asks but his soul, if doubtful of the way.

SIR E. L. BULWER.

[THIRTEENTH THOUSAND.]

LONDON:  
AUSTIN & Co., JOHNSON'S COURT, E.C.

1870.

PRICE ONE PENNY.

## TO THE READER.

By those who decry or depreciate Freethought, it is alleged that its principles are either base and depraving, or loose, weak, poor, and mean; that they take no hold upon the heart and furnish no guidance, no inspiration to those who hold them. It is necessary to show that this impression is unfounded. It is also said by ill-informed partisans of Freethought that when they are delivered from the slavery of Superstition, and satisfied that the Bible is a human book; that Theism is unproved and the Future of the Soul uncertain; that they have nothing more to learn and nothing more to do. If this were true, Freethought would result in a fruitless self-complacency—better certainly than a state of terror-ridden superstition—but still rising no higher than a mere doctrine of comfort, fulfilling no condition of a proud and heroic progress. To some friends, therefore, as well as to all foes, I address these papers. I seek to show that Secularistic Freethought, apart from all Theology, is self-acting, self-sustaining, and necessitates the improvement of individual character.

Freethought, ever-fruitful, unfolds new aspects and applications to all who study it. To some this brief treatise may be suggestive of overlooked duties which the profession of Freethought implies. Such trust may be ill-founded. Yet duty is not to be measured by results alone—the duty which clear conviction implies, Carlyle has expressed in his noble injunction—“Cast forth thy act, thy word, into the ever-living, ever-working universe; it is a seed of grain, that cannot die; unnoticed to-day, it will be found flourishing as a banyan grove, perhaps also as a hemlock forest, after a thousand years.”

G. J. H.

## THE LOGIC OF LIFE.

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THE French have a saying which has always appeared to me very instructive. It is *s'orienter*, which signifies "to take one's bearings;" or, as the late Stanislas Worcell used to paraphrase it for me, "We must find the East for ourselves."\* To understand this is the first thing which can do any good to twenty-nine out of the thirty millions of the inhabitants of Great Britain. About one million of our population, those who inherit rank or riches, are born with the East found for them. A great number of the middle class know how to find that point of the compass very well; but the great body of the nation, who, as Mr. Bright says, "in all countries dwell in cottages;" the workers in mine, factory, and field; to whom sectarian disputes have denied education; who have no well-placed connections to clear the way for them; who must toil and endure penury—to these all ignorance is danger, all delusion is pernicious, all hope which is not justified on a survey of their situation, is traitorous. A working man who intends to advance must see clearly what his own position is. This knowledge is the first step in the logic of life to him—the key to any extrication or improvement possible to him. He who does not know what his social position is, is ignorant; he who does not want to know it, is imbecile; he who despairs on account of it when he does know it, is a coward; he who is content with it, if it be precarious, is a slave. Contentment with the ill which is inevitable, is fortitude; contentment where improvement is possible, is meanness. Therefore, in all cases of adverse destiny "it is," to borrow a phrase of Fielding's, "of no use damning the nature of things;" the sole question is their possible improvement. Strive for this without sullenness and with a buoyant heart.

Of means which depend upon the individual, and of which every person of sagacity, of resolution, and honesty may avail himself, I name as first, Freethought and its consequents—Truth, Independence, and Courtesy.

These are familiar words, but the full acceptance they bear is

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\* Il nous faut nous orienter nous mêmes.

not at all familiar. They have hitherto been used in the world as party words. Freethought has been understood chiefly as opposed to slavery of mind; Truth as opposed to Falsehood; Independence as opposed to Tyranny; Courtesy as opposed to vulgarity of manner. In the stages through which society has passed, these words, in these senses, were words of battle, and very influential words too: but they have a more abiding and fresher significance if we regard them, not as merely indicating antagonisms, but as expressing sentiments inseparable from a natural and manly character. In this sense they constitute the elements of a Logic of Secular Life.

It is of little use that a poor man looks around him unless he *thinks* when he looks. He will find that every inch of ground, every flower of the field, every bird of the air, every spray of the sea has an owner; but there is one thing at least left him—he may be master of his own mind; his intellect at least is in his own keeping; and it is the first duty of man to maintain dominion *there*. It is part of a wise self-defence in a man to own no master, to brook no control, to obey no command, which contradicts his own deliberate judgment of the right.\* Be the interferer priest or king, society or custom, let him bid them stand aside. Let a man listen to those who advise; reverence those who teach; honour those who think, for they are donors; but let his opinions be *his own* and not second-hand. Poverty of means may be caused by others—poverty of thought is idleness or baseness of our own. The world, except to the masters of armies, is no longer an oyster to be opened with a sword—all conquests there by the people require thought. The upward avenues of society are guarded by the dragons of Privilege and Success. Industry may present itself, but intellect is its passport. Self-thought, which is the original name for Freethought, therefore, is the first means of self-help. He who fails to exercise Freethought is defenceless—he who relinquishes it is despised, even by those who encourage his submission or coerce him to it. The destitute at a mine who fear to gather the golden ore for which they have gone—the thirsty at a well who fear to drink of the stream for which they are dying—they who in danger see escape open to them and yet fear to flee—are types of him who fears to use his own reason when he should.

Freethought is a primary condition of Truth: we can never know much unless we are free to inquire into *all*. Freethought is the instinct of enterprise—it proceeds, Columbus-like, upon an

† It is not intended to say that a man may disregard the alleged "Will of God," or a precept of high human authority, upon mere impulse, caprice, conceit, or antagonism. Our words are, "his own deliberate judgment (or conviction) of the right." To act contrary to this would not be to honour or worship God, but to act the hypocrite knowingly.

Freethought not an agent of heresy, but of self-defence.

unknown sea to discover new lands. He who sets out knows not that he may ever return to what he has left behind him, and those who await his return know not what report of strange countries he may bring back. The stationaries, the timid, or comfortable, or component parts of vested interests, always look with suspicion on the thinker. To-day, or to-morrow—there is no telling when—he will raise the cry of "Progress," and the people will be setting off, leaving the fixture party behind. The watchword of the Freethinker is "Excelsior!" "Higher!" "Forward!" That of the fettered thinker is "Lower!" "Halt!" "Retrograde!" "Don't go too far!" "Better to be safe!" The Freethinker is, however, wiser. He hears the reverberations of Progress in every footfall of the march of Nature. When the vibration of a social earthquake is felt, apathy is fatuity. In every wreck of a human being around us, we witness the falling of some edifice of religious, social, or political superstition. It is in standing still when all around is moving, or in going back when all the prudent are escaping, which constitutes actual danger. If it be "better to be safe," it is better to be a Free Inquirer, whether the object be personal or public protection. Those who condemn Freethought as heresy, do not understand that it is self-defence; those who call it anarchy do not remember that order without progress is tyranny. But in practising Freethought there may be passion but not petulance, enthusiasm but not excitement. It must be patient, persistent, and independent, obviously seeking two things—*truth* and *deliverance*; and the sign of deliverance is independence, and the grace of independence is courtesy.

But if we claim to take Freethought as a fundamental and comprehensive principle of action, we must justify the claim. Others claim also now to act on the same principle, and to be freethinkers. So much the better if it be so. We desire no exclusiveness here. We will do injustice to none, but state our own case, and admit the degree in which others approach to our own rule, and define and explain what that rule is.

The Roman Catholic even seems to believe in Freethought, though, as it appears, in a very limited degree, and he never trusts it as we do. He so fears the independent use of Reason, that he only allows the inquirer to use it once, and that is to light him to the Church; and when he arrives at the door thereof the Priest meets him, takes the taper of Reason from his hand, assures him that he will have no further need for that, and the Priest keeps it henceforth in his possession. Once within the Church, the Inquirer finds that his reason is never to be had even on hire ever after. And the Roman Catholic Priest having been obliged with your soul, soon finds occasion to trouble you for your body. He cares for you spiritually and temporally, and woe to that man or that nation whose liberty is in such keeping!

The Evangelical Protestant Priest will, we say it to his credit,

## The Catholic, Protestant, and Secular conception of Freethinking.

leave you considerable political liberty; but he considers every man utterly depraved by nature, and he has little more confidence than his brother of Rome in the results of Freethought. He indeed places the Bible before you, and tells you to use your "private judgment" upon it; but he places the Devil on the top of it, and Eternal Perdition at the bottom of it, and hangs up a Creed before it, and warns you that if you do not go through the Bible and come to that Creed, that the dark Gentleman at the top will pay his respects to you, and conduct you to his subterranean chambers at the bottom. And this is the Protestant idea of Freethought! This is not often said, it is not always seen to amount to this by those who act so, and this representation of it will be denied; but to this Protestant Freethought ever resolves itself in the English Church, and among all the tribes of Evangelical Dissenters.

Freethought, as the Secularist understands it, differs from the Roman Catholic and Protestant conception of it. Freethought from the Secular point of view, is not pride of reason\* (if that be wrong), it is the *use* of reason. It is not caprice or wantonness, or stiff-neckedness, or wickedness, or rebellion, or enmity against God. It is the duty of inquiry—it is rebellion against Ignorance—it is enmity against Error. Freethinking is not "loose thinking," as the Rev. Charles Kingsley perversely puts it. It is the quiet, resolute, and two-sided search for Truth without fear of the Bible, the Priest, or the Devil—or what in these days is the same thing, fear of that social intolerance, that tyranny of the majority, which frightens many people as much. Freethought is sensible, not sensual; it is fearless wherever error has to be attacked or truth to be discovered. It proves all things, with Paul; or it proves them in spite of Paul, if need be; it inquires if the Bible permits, and it inquires if the Bible forbids. Its inspiration is self-development; its object is truth; its reward self-protection; its hope progress; its spirit is reverent and resolute.

Secular Freethought is the assertion of mental liberty. It is the beginning of intellectual life and manhood. It is the first step from mental slavery. It is the indication that a man is setting up in the world of opinion on his own account. Freethought signifies free trade in intellect. It is the proof that a man is not a toy or a tool, but that he has something in him. It is a sign of self-respect and emulation. It implies a sense of responsibility to God on the part of those who are Theists, and to Conscience, to Truth, and to Society, on the part of him who is not. And he who seeks to arrest Freethought by penalties, by opprobrium, or disapproval, is the enemy of his kind, of their liberty, growth, and development, whatever may be his motives, base or honest.

\* I never could see that the "pride of reason" is anything wrong. To take pride in the noblest endowment of man is a good sign.

Truth is the first issue of Freethought—certainly the first object that the Freethinker sets before him. The miracles and wonders of nature and life incite to thought, and to solve with requisite advantage any mystery, thought must be free. Freethought is but a means, truth the end. But if we lose sight of the means, we may never reach the end. People who think for us, sometimes do for us. Self-thought is policy as well as duty.

Why do we want Freethought? Plainly for self-protection and power—and the power is the power of truth. Freethought is labour and responsibility, irksome and onerous. It is a luxury to lie down without ideas. One might bless the priest or politician who would undertake the labour of thinking. The Church of Rome, or the reign of Despotism and Toryism, is the paradise of the lazy, the reckless, the sensual, and the supine. Freethought is intrepidity and duty. It is the instinct of Secular and Political safety. Freethought is the revolt of manhood, conscience, diligence, and the noble thirst for truth.

The definition of Truth given by Samuel Bailey is probably the simplest and wisest that can be found:—"Truth is a term by which is implied accuracy of knowledge and of inference."\* The meaning here is obvious and practical. Let us inquire into the nature of its legitimate significance. "I am a lover, utterer, and observer of the Truth." How many make this boast! All in some way think themselves entitled to make it; yet how few understand what is meant by this high profession!

Let a man resolve that he will seek the truth, speak the truth, and act the truth: what an education lies in that resolve! To seek the truth implies the power of distinguishing it. It implies calmness, observation, penetration, and impartiality. The excited discern nothing distinctly; the unobservant miss half of that which is to be seen; those who lack sagacity are imposed upon by counterfeits; the partial see only half a truth, and never know *which half*. The study of the truth is the study of the Real. The *real*, for practical purposes, may be described as that which we can verify by the senses and enable others to verify, or as that of which we can furnish to others the conditions of its reproduction; which may be submitted to the most searching investigation and experiment. Accuracy of observation is the beginning of truth. Error is the misapprehension of nature—disaster is mistaking the way to it. All thoughtful life is a search for the real; all philosophy is the interpretation of it; all progress is the attainment of it; all art is the presentment of it; all science the mastery of it. Here the question arises, What is the test of the real? How do we know that we know it? For the purposes of ordinary certainty about it, we require to be able to identify the thing we mean; to show it or demonstrate it to others; to challenge

\* Essay on the Pursuit of Truth, chap. i., p. 1.

The profession of Truth, and what it involves.

their resources to combat it; to dare their judgment upon it; to give them the means of testing it; to conquer prejudice by its force and scepticism by its proofs. In fine, in some way or other to display or explain the immediate causation of phenomena. Men are never satisfied—never feel beyond the chances of delusion till then. If any one would see the influence of a simple principle like that of the search for truth over character, let him reflect merely on the ordinary processes which common sense and common power may adopt for the acquisition of truth. By observation the materials of thought are collected. When we can identify facts they become knowledge, which, as Whately was first to teach, implies truth, proof, and conviction. When knowledge becomes methodised, and assumes the form of science, it becomes for the first time power. This, however, occurs late, because science is the hardest step in attainments. It is popular to talk of science, but science is not popular. Its strictness, its care, its patience, its discipline, its caution, its experiments—various, laborious, and incessant—imply qualities of which the populace, generally speaking, are deficient. A high state of general culture must be reached before science can be popular. Thus the profession of “seeking” the truth involves the question of self-education.

Next, the resolution “to speak” the truth tells advantageously upon a man’s character—no undertaking is nobler. A man rises in his own esteem the moment he enters upon it, and in that of others as soon as he is seen acting up to his profession. Falsehood is the mark of meanness, cowardice, and slavery the world over. A lie is the brand of servitude. In every part of the world we instinctively despise the race that is weak enough to lie. The mob are false before they are contemned. Truth is the child of courage as well as of honour. The high-spirited alone are habitually frank. It is weakness to affect singularity, but it is worse than weakness not to be singular, if the singularity lie in acting out a conviction of the right. Better even be eccentric than false. It is sometimes dangerous to dissent from the public, and painful to dissent from your friends. It is often very *expensive* to have an opinion of your own, and avow it; but the partizan of truth must be content to brave many penalties; and he is badly educated in his art if he be not apprised of this. He must leave to valetudinarian moralists to utter timid, base, and comfort-seeking acquiescences, in the hypocrisies of sects and society.

One whose noble words have been an inspiration to the workman of this age, and who, above all writers, has invested art and industry with higher purposes than were felt before, tells us that “there are some faults slight in the sight of love, slight in the estimate of wisdom; but truth forgives no insult and endures no stain. We do not enough consider this, nor enough dread the slight and continual occasions of offence against her. We are too much in the habit of look-



Mr. Ruskin's delineation of the lies which harm.

ing at falsehood in its darkest associations and through the colour of its worst purposes. That indignation which we profess to feel at deceit absolute, is indeed only at deceit malicious. We resent calumny, hypocrisy, and treachery because they harm us, not because they are untrue. Take the detraction and the mischief from the untruth, and we are little offended by it; turn it into praise, and we may be pleased with it. And yet it is not calumny nor treachery that does the largest sum of mischief in the world, they are continually crushed and felt only in being conquered. But it is the glistening and softly-spoken lie; the amiable fallacy; the patriotic lie of the historian, the provident lie of the politician, the zealous lie of the partizan, the merciful lie of the friend, and the careless lie of each man to himself, that cast that black mystery over humanity, through which any man who pierces, we thank as we would thank one who dug a well in a desert; happy in that the thirst for truth still remains with us even when we have wilfully left the fountains of it."\*

The courage of Truth also implies purity; because the utterance of truth implies the power of publicity. Now a man who undertakes "to speak the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth" on all occasions, must take care what he thinks and what he knows. He must keep watch and ward over his thoughts and his ears. There is sometimes tragedy in the resolution. Lucius Junius Brutus had to condemn his own sons; the father of Jeannie Deans to hang his own daughter. No virtue tries a man's soul like incorruptible and uncompromising veracity, nor tries it so frequently.

Unless truth becomes the very essence of personal character, the highest appeal of the moralist is without effect. The golden injunction in Hamlet—

To thine own self be true;  
And it must follow, as the night the day,  
Thou canst not then be false to any man,

implies that man himself must be true, or the response of his nature will be untrue. The true echo of a false nature will be false. You can only trust the true.

There is however capacity as well as purity implied in the pursuit and utterance of truth. He who succeeds must know how to test a rumour, how to avoid being imposed upon by report. He must be cautious and wary; suspicious of the lurking prejudice which unconsciously distorts; quick to detect omissions in statements, and able by preserving measure in his own thoughts, to repel exaggerations by instinct. He requires to judge look, tone, language, and logic. He who undertakes to utter only the truth undertakes not to be imposed upon by the prepossessions, malice,

\* John Ruskin.

Exactness the only measure of strength.

incompetence, or sophistry of others; else he becomes a mere retailer of falsehood second-hand. On his own part also there are some requirements. The truth-speaker should be master of the art of explicit statement. He should know the value of terms and the force of speech. He requires to explain to others not only what he means, so that they can understand it; but, as Cobbett puts it, "so that they cannot possibly misunderstand it," otherwise he misleads them in spite of himself. A truth speaker must look all round his statements to be sure that there is nothing discoloured reflecting a false light; nothing redundant which overstates; nothing deficient which obscures; nothing ambiguous which can leave a doubt. A piece of meaning, properly expressed, is incapable of being abridged, else it is too long: it is incapable of being amplified, else it is too brief: the very terms are unchangeable, else they were not well chosen. The perfect expression of a thought is a work of art, and when perfect is a study and a delight. We see in Beranger how a studious fitness of expression was a part of his genius. A man who has judgment to cast, and, if need be, recast his language, may attain excellence. This success costs no money; it costs only reflection; and it may be done at the workshop as well as in the study. If it be worth while speaking at all, it is worth while speaking to some purpose. He who strives to do everything well may do little; but that little will be worth much. It is a great gain to guard against that voluble feebleness which enervates your own mind, and wastes the time of others.

Let a man be clear as to what he really knows, and confine himself to that, and look round and note the effect of what he is saying on those who credit his words, and he will often find silence a virtue and a mercy. We make tragedies every day by our speech. Some words are like poisoned arrows, and affect fatally the blood of those pierced by them.

But if the policy of truth has difficulties, it has also advantages, which ambition itself might covet. A man whose words are measured and independent, and can be trusted, makes a place for himself in the esteem and deference of his contemporaries which no other qualities can win. All exactness (if I may repeat, for the sake of illustration here, what I have said elsewhere) imposes restriction; but exactness is strength. The rustic dancer, who is the admiration of the village green, hesitates to take a step in the presence of the dancing master; the confident instructor of the private class falters before the professed grammarian; the singer who is rapturously applauded at the evening party, cannot be prevailed upon to utter a note at a concert; the provincial actor, who nightly "brought down the house" in Richard the Third, is timorous in a rehearsal before Macready, Phelps, or Fechter; the orator who sets the country on fire, stammers in the House of Commons, finding that, as Canning said, "the atmosphere in which

Independence a second consequence of Free-thought.

the demagogue shrinks to his natural dimensions." These persons, once placed in higher society than their own, are in that light where their defects can be seen; and, what is more to the purpose, where they cannot be hidden. The single step which is right; the single sentence which is correct; the single note which is perfect; the single passage rendered by the actor with cultivated success; the shortest speech which has the grace of close sense and suitable delivery, is a source of more confidence to the individual, and gives him more power to command the applause of all whose applause is worth having, than all gyrations, display, screaming, gabble, gesticulation, and declamation, which make up the bulky acquisitions of the novice, the pretender, or the quack. The moment we step into the circle of those better informed than ourselves, we feel our deficiencies, and are suddenly contracted down to the little that we really know. A man may deceive those who know less than himself, or the same as himself, but he can never deceive those who know more. Knowledge once challenged, pierces instantly through the thickest cloak ingenious ignorance can put on. Our actual knowledge, whatever it is, is the measure of our actual power; and to know what that knowledge is, is to know upon what we can rely. Truth alone is strength. As Shakspere makes Mark Anthony say—

Who tells me true,  
Though in the tale lie death,  
I hear him as he flattered.\*

Independence is one of the high attributes of character which the passion for truth begets as the necessity of the enjoyment of its conquests. Independence is self-direction, self-sustainment, but not lawlessness. It is freedom from vice, from ignorance and superstition, from the tyranny of all power and all opinion which violate reason and nature. It is admitted that independence so perfect is unattainable in existing society, yet the adequate conception of it will assist those who desire to approximate to it. We must not, however, suppose that there is such a thing as absolute independence. Independence is relative only. Man is dependent on Nature for existence and subsistence; on the observance of the laws of nature and the laws of society, legal, social, and moral, for they are necessary for his development, culture, happiness, and security.

Independence, as it is possible to the emulative, is attainable in two ways; one by abridging our wants to the minimum com-

\* Elsewhere I have quoted these lines, to which I am attached; and the preceding passage occurs in another work, and I have no excuse for repeating it except its relevance to the argument. In this licence I follow the example of Archbishop Whately; but what has not been forgiven in him who has the right of genius to repetition, is infinitely less likely to be pardoned in me.

Independence is self-direction and self-sustainment.

patible with wealth, the other by acquiring ample means for the gratification of the wants we elect to retain. Of course the shortest way is by the simplification of wants, and most persons have something to gain by this course.

Government is necessitated by the tendency of men to injustice, disorder, and excess. A just man capable of self-direction and self-control, is independent of government in his own case. Rulers are necessitated by the blind, vicious, and violent. A weak man is at the mercy of the strong, hence a lover of independence seeks strength and skill as resources. Intelligent love of independence will influence personal education in many ways. In point of knowledge the independent man endeavours to put himself on a level with those around him, that he may not be imposed upon by the cunning, nor defeated by the subtle, nor borne down by superiors. Ignorance is slavery, and he acquires knowledge that he may be free. He practises economy in the use of his means—he lives within his income, that he may be above the necessity of extreme labour, which is serfdom. A man's private habits are revised when he is animated by a spirit of independence. He chooses truth because it is simple and brave, rather than falsehood, which is perplexing and cowardly. Temperance is not with him an arduous virtue of self-denial; but is part of that policy by which he preserves health, means, liberty, and power. A true freeman will not be the slave of dress, of stimulants, or of diet, or doctors, or custom, or opinion, any more than the slave of priests or kings.

To cover a neglect of duty, a loss of time, a defect in work—to conceal a petty abstraction or an overcharge—what lies, prevocations, and deceptions, employers often detect in the working class. For what petty and fleeting advantages the independence of veracity is thoughtlessly sacrificed! The employer may be guilty of this as well as the employed. There is often meanness in the counting-house as well as in the workshop. The tradesman may overcharge as well as the customer higgler; but this conduct bears the same mark in each class; it is the badge of the slave spirit all round.

Again, independence implies self-possession as well as self-respect. He who is excited is no longer master of himself. He can neither see his way nor take it if he sees it. Events, real or imaginary, are driving him; he has forfeited self-direction—his liberty is lost.

Independence also exercises other influences. Independence must fluctuate unless there be security around. But to attain this there must be fairness and justice to others, or antagonisms will arise; well founded, and therefore inveterate, which will occupy the passions imperiously, and such stimulated and coerced occupation is a species of slavery. Independence, therefore, understood as a consistent principle, is a check upon the lawlessness or excesses of liberty. Liberty is no longer a capricious shout

The principle of courtesy is the consideration of others.

taken up in irritation and persisted in in antagonism; but is a manly, positive, persistent, and rational principle, having inspiration and purpose—influencing personal and public character.

Courtesy is that quality of Freethought which gives to truth its agreeableness and to independence its grace. Without courtesy Freethought may be perverted to wanton aggression, truth into outrage, independence into rudeness. Conviction of every kind must be associated with the consideration due to others, a desire of service and a feeling of kindness to others. Conviction, service, and kindness to others must be regarded as inseparable. Separate them and there is danger. "Conviction" by itself, however sincere, may be ferocity, as was the case with the Puritans; "service" alone may become selfishness; "kindness" alone may become weakness. Free inquiry pursued on the principle of self-protection is invincible; made an annoyance to others it is endangered; truth made disagreeable is betrayed; independence which is inconsiderate of others is insolence. Bluster, objuration, rudeness, are the crimes which cowardice, ignorance, and selfishness commit. If justice and considerateness to others were widely cultivated, there would be no need of charity in the world. If a man hate the world, the world can acquit itself by multitudinous retaliation. If a man will profess indifference to the world, he may perish amid the omnipresent apathy he invokes. But if he would serve the world, or endeavour to serve it, mankind may not reciprocate the disposition, but such a man alone has established a claim upon their good offices.

There is one mode of success in the world in which ambition is itself legitimate, a mode of success available to all, in which there is little competition; it is the unselfish service of others. The avenues to this kind of promotion are open always and open to all, and the porches are never crowded. Thus courtesy is good sense as well as good feeling. The indispensability of courtesy every one upon reflection may see. By its own nature independence is unsocial. It sets up for itself, acts for itself. It proposes to keep other persons at a distance. Its principle is to owe nothing to others, and is therefore under no obligation to oblige them. It is self-reliant and defiant. Without courtesy independence is repulsive. But courtesy practised by the independent wears the air of chivalry.

Courtesy implies fortitude and justness. Without fortitude to bear much himself, a person will impose or obtrude on others a consciousness of his sufferings, at times when it will extinguish their enjoyment, and in no way relieve his own. It implies a sense of justness in this way:—No man, unless he is always judiciously wary and inquiring, can determine the guilt of his neighbour in suspicious cases, and a man always on the judgment-seat is a nuisance. A detective dogging you is not an agreeable follower; a detective friend is a sort of private policeman. Courtesy is trusting and unsuspecting.

Courtesy is something distinct from etiquette and politeness.

It is to be understood that, by courtesy, I do not mean mere etiquette, compliments, or conventional politeness, which may co-exist with hypocrisy and hateful selfishness. I do not mean a ceremony, but a sentiment. By courtesy, I mean service—the disinterested service of others in thought, speech, and act. I mean that sentiment which, in the family circle, in company, in society, in all human intercourse, pauses to ask, “How can I promote, or avoid impairing, the personal comfort or convenience of others?” Courtesy is often shown more by what it does not do, than by what it does. The thoughtless word, the irritating tone, the vexatious remark, anger, and impatience; observations upon the appearance or manners of others, which do not affect us, nor injure us, nor concern us, and which we are not called upon to correct, and which are part of the proper personal liberty of others—these are the wanton crimes of social tyrants, from whom there is no escape. This is misery which all have the power to inflict, and many inflict it all their lives without appearing to know it. The simple and considerate omission of these things would be true courtesy, though no acts of kindness or attention were added. Courtesy may be known by this—it gives what your neighbour or your friend cannot ask; the grace of it consists in this—that it volunteers what cannot be exacted. The poorest man who understands it may distribute around him the riches of enjoyment. It needs no wealth but that of the mind, and is the sign of a nobler character than wealth itself. Wealth is but the emblem of refinement; courtesy is the possession of it. Independence consults its own interests. Courtesy consults that of others. The difference between etiquette and courtesy may be seen in this—etiquette lies no deeper than the manners, courtesy has its seat in the judgment; one is the creature of the accredited custom of the hour; the other is a dictate of moral thoughtfulness. Etiquette is conventionality, courtesy is a conviction. Mere etiquette begins in politeness and ends in proprieties; it is fair spoken to your face, and may scoff at you, defame you, and revile you behind your back; while true courtesy denotes the spirit; it is honesty as well as kindness; it is the same in your absence as in your presence. It pays unseen compliments; if it professes regard, it is a perpetual regard upon which you may count.

Such are some of the obvious significations involved in the familiar terms, Freethought, Truth, Independence, and Courtesy. In pointing them out, I have no doubt laid myself open to the objection of all who have something to excuse in themselves, and of others who have not reflected upon the subject; that I set up a standard so high that ordinary men, despairing of attaining excellence, will be discouraged from attempting improvement. To such I answer, that I do not exact perfection; I only give information, and contend that every man should understand the nature and purport of his own profession, for no one is likely ever to advance unless he is made clearly conscious of what it is that he ought, in

## The principles of a Secular Logic of Life.

consistency, to attempt. If he does mean what his words imply, he will not object to be judged by them. If he does not mean that, let him choose other terms which express what he does mean, and no longer dilute high words with weak meanings. The reason why great words grow pale in the memory of men, and tame in their influence, is because their high significance is not insisted upon. I hold that it may be no reproach that a man does not excel; but it is a reproach if he never strives after excellence, and does not even know in what it consists. But how can any one be expected to strive after it, unless it be shown to him? The majority of men do not do their duty, because they have never been clearly shown what their duty is.

I sum up the Logic of Life in four inter-dependent things, easy to remember, essential to practise, and which I endeavour explicitly to insist upon—namely, Freethought, Truth, Independence, Courtesy.

Freethought is self-instruction and self-defence. Truth is guidance, discipline, and mastery. Independence is self-direction and security. Courtesy is tenderness and courage, and a perpetual letter of recommendation, which each may provide for himself, everybody respect. These are personal qualities that must underlie all manly character: they are as inseparable from, and as essential to, excellence, as temperance to health, as exercise to growth, as air and food to life. These are qualities which ought to exist in all conditions, and which are possible in the lowest. The points which I have enumerated comprise a Logic of Life which can be self-acquired, and is, therefore, as possible to him who graduates in a workshop—to whom the priceless advantages of learning are unknown—as to him who graduates in a college. In the school of experience to which all the world go, every scholar may be proficient, who has the sagacity to observe and the patience to think. Of course a man may know with advantage more than the four things I have enumerated, but he ought not to know less; and he will be able to conduct his life with intelligence and dignity if he knows as much.

Of the connection of these views with the future little need be said. He who lives a life of truth and service is always fitted to die. If a religion of reason exists, it is one in which priests have no monopoly of interest, and God no sectarian partialities—it is one in which work is worship, and good intent the passport to salvation.

This is not an argument against Christianity. It is one independent of it. It does not question the pretensions of Christianity, it advances others. Christianity may even indulge in an exaggerated estimate of its powers and influences. Nothing is here said to the contrary. Undoubtedly Christianity is a Logic of Life to those who accept it. This argument is addressed to those who do not. Christianity may claim to appeal to noble passions, and to

The relation of the whole argument to Christianity.

inspire lofty hopes, but it cannot deny that there are other principles, other appeals, other guidance independently of it.

An intrepid, two-sided Freethought is hardly the growth of Christian soil. It is one thing to tolerate inquiry, it is quite a different thing to inculcate inquiry as a duty. Secularism regards the love of truth as native to the heart of man—as an instinct of human nature—as deeper than Christianity—as the austere power of character which bends all influences before it: which exists independently, acts independently, and acts for ever. The simple precept, seek the truth, respect the truth, speak the truth, and live the truth, is one without which no character can be perfect; and it is one which will make a character for a man though he never read a line of theology, never listened to a single sermon, never entered the portals of a church.

Mental independence can scarcely be said to be cultivated by Christianity. All Evangelical religion is the wail of helplessness. It teaches that self-reliance, that iron string to which all noble pagan hearts have vibrated, in all ages of the world, is mere sinful self-sufficiency. Yet an intelligent sentiment of Independence, which trusts the right, works for the right, which guards and holds it, is a lion precept, considerate, equitable, impassable.

It would be well were I wrong in maintaining that courtesy is an independent Secular sentiment. Unfortunately popular Christianity recognises no sincerity, no good intention in opponents. It keeps no terms with unbelievers. An outrage upon them it regards as faithfulness to Christ. It still denies them social recognition and civil rights.

It is necessary, therefore, to find other ground of inspiration and guidance, and such Secular Freethought furnishes. There is reason to maintain that soon after a man makes the simple profession of Freethought, and understands all that that implies, and acts up to it, he becomes another person, that his whole character changes, and his whole mind begins to grow, and never ends till death.

The Principle of Freethought, with its consequents of Truth, of Independence, of Courtesy, is capable of influence for good where Theology is detrimental or powerless. I do not say, nor assume (my argument does not require it), that there is no light or guidance elsewhere; but I do say what is sufficient for the purpose, and what I maintain is—that there is light and guidance here; that the light of Nature is neither dim nor flickering, but bright and steady: that those who accuse Secularism of being merely negative; who allege that it pulls down and does not build up; that its instinct is to destroy, and that it has no capacity for construction; that it points out what is wrong and never what is right; that it finds fault, and never commits itself to the responsibility of indicating what should be or might be; accuse Secularism without knowledge or accuse it in spite of it.