

*Past and future
are here and now*

On our cycle and the next



Train of Thoughts

We shall become what we already have been; and we shall gain what we have formerly lost.

Happy the optimist in whose heart the nightingale of hope can still sing, with all the iniquity and cold selfishness of the present age before his eyes!	3
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The world's great age begins anew,
The golden years return,
The earth doth like a snake renew
Her winter weeds outworn.

— SHELLEY¹

My friend, the golden age hath passed away,
Only the good have power to bring it back . . .

— GOETHE

Happy the optimist in whose heart the nightingale of hope can still sing, with all the iniquity and cold selfishness of the present age before his eyes!

What had the author of *Prometheus Unbound* in his mind's eye when writing about the return of the golden days, and the new beginning of the world's great age? Has his poetical foresight carried his "Vision of the Nineteenth Century" into the "One Hundred and Nineteenth," or has that vision revealed to him in gorgeous imagery the things to come which are the things that were?

Fichte assures us it is "a phenomenon of frequent occurrence, particularly in past ages," that "what *we shall become* is pictured by something which *we already have been*; and that what we have to obtain is represented as something which we have formerly lost." And he adds, "what Rousseau, under the name of the state of Nature, and the old poets by the title of the Golden Age, place *behind* us, lies actually *before* us."

Such is also Tennyson's idea, when he says:

Old writers push'd the happy season back, —
The more fools they, — we forward: dreamers both . . . ²

Happy the optimist in whose heart the nightingale of hope can still sing, with all the iniquity and cold selfishness of the present age before his eyes! Our century is a boastful age, as proud as it is hypocritical; as cruel as it is dissembling.

It takes a brave man to speak the truth fearlessly, and even that at personal risk and cost. For the law forbids one speaking the truth, except under compulsion, in its courts and under threat of perjury.

Oh ye, gods, how dissembling and truly sacrilegious in the face of every truth, is this, our century, with all its boastful sanctimoniousness and cant!³ Verily, "Pecksniffian"⁴ ought to be thy name, oh, *nineteenth* of thy Christian series. For thou hast generated more hypocrites in a square yard of thy civilized soil than antiquity has bred

¹ [*Hellas*, lines 1060-63]

² [*The Golden Year*, lines 65-66]

³ [Singing in a whining way, from the Latin *cantare*, to sing. Cant was at first a beggar's whine, hence hypocrisy. Cf. W.W. Skeat's *Etymological Dictionary of English*, 1835-1912. — ED. PHIL.]

⁴ [An extreme hypocrite, after Seth Pecksniff, a character in Charles Dickens "Martin Chuzzlewit."]

of them on all its idolatrous lands during long ages. And thy modern Pecksniff, of both sexes, is “so thoroughly impregnated with the spirit of falsehood that he is *moral* even in drunkenness and canting even in shame and discovery,” in the words of the author of *Martin Chuzzlewit*.

If true, how dreadful Fichte’s statement! It is terrible beyond words. Shall we then expect at some future recurring cycle to *re-become* that which “we already have been,” or *that which we are now*? To obtain a glance into the future cycle we have thus but to examine the situation around us in the present day. What do we find?

Instead of truth and sincerity, we have propriety and cold, cultured politeness; in one plain word, *dissembling*. Falsification on every plane; falsification of moral food and the same falsification of eatable food. *Margarine* butter for the soul, and margarine butter for the stomach; beauty and fresh colours without, and rottenness and corruption within. Life — a long race-course, a feverish chase, whose goal is a tower of selfish ambition, of pride, and vanity, of greed for money or honours, and in which human passions are the horsemen, and our weaker brethren the steeds. At this terrible steeplechase the prize-cup is purchased with the hearts’ blood and sufferings of countless fellow-creatures, and won at the cost of spiritual self-degradation.

Who, in this century, would presume to say what he thinks? It takes a brave man, nowadays, to speak the truth fearlessly, and even that at personal risk and cost. For the law forbids one saying the truth, except under compulsion, in its courts and under threat of perjury. Have lies told about you publicly and in print, and, unless you are wealthy, you are powerless to shut your calumniator’s mouth; state facts, and you become a defamer; hold your tongue on some iniquity perpetrated in your presence, and your friends will hold you as a participator therein — a confederate. The expression of one’s honest opinion has become impossible in this, our cycle. The just lost bill repealing the “Blasphemy Laws,” is a good proof in point.

It used to be illegal to blaspheme against the gods but not any longer.

The *Pall Mall Gazette* had, in its issue of April 13th, some pertinent lines on the subject; its arguments, however, presenting but a one-sided view, and having, therefore, to be accepted *cum grano salis*.¹ It reminds the reader that the true principle in the Blasphemy Laws “was long ago laid down by Lord Macaulay,” and adds:

To express your own religious or irreligious opinions with the utmost possible freedom is one thing; to put forward your views offensively, so as to outrage and pain other people, is another thing. You may wear what clothes you please, or no clothes at all, in your own house, but if a man were to assert his right to walk down Regent Street clad solely in his shirt the public would have a right to object. Suppose some zealous man were to placard all the boarding of London with “comic” pictures of the Crucifixion, that surely ought to be an offence, even in the eyes of those who do not believe the Crucifixion ever happened.

Just so. Be religious or irreligious, in our age, as much as you like, but do not be offensive, and dare not “outrage and pain other people.” Does *other* people mean here

¹ [with a grain of salt]

Christians only, no other persons being considered? Moreover, the margin thus left for the jury's opinion is ominously wide, for who knows where the line of demarcation is to be drawn! To be entirely impartial and fair in their verdict in these particular matters, the jury would have to be a mixed one and consist of six Christians and six "infidels." Now we have been impressed in youth that Themis was a blindfolded goddess only in antiquity and among the heathen. Since then — Christianity and civilization having opened her eyes — the allegory allows now of two versions. But we try to believe the best of the two inferences, and thinking of law most reverentially, we come to the following conclusion: *in law*, that which is sauce for the goose *must be* sauce for the gander. Therefore, if administered on this principle, the "Blasphemy Laws," must prove most beneficent to all concerned, "without distinction of race, colour or religion," as we say in Theosophy.

Now, if law *is* equitable, it must apply impartially to all. Are we then to understand that it forbids "to outrage and pain" *anyone's* feelings, or simply those of the Christians? If the former, then it must include Theosophists, Spiritualists, the many millions of *heathens* whom merciful fate has made Her Majesty's subjects, and even the Freethinkers, and Materialists, some of whom are very thin-skinned. It *cannot* mean the latter, *i.e.*, limit the "law" to the God of the Christians alone; nor would we presume to suspect it of such a sinful bias. For "blasphemy" is a word applying not only to God, Christ and the Holy Ghost, not merely to the Virgin and Saints, but to every God or Goddess. This term, with the same criminal sense attached to it, existed with the Greeks, the Romans, and with the older Egyptians ages before our era. "Thou shalt not revile the *gods*" (plural), stands out prominently in verse 28 of chapter xxii of *Exodus*, when "God" speaks out from Mount Sinai. So much admitted, what becomes of our friends, the missionaries? If enforced, the law does not promise them a very nice time of it. We pity them, with the Blasphemy Laws suspended over their heads like a sword of Damocles; for, of all the foulmouthed blasphemers against God and the Gods of other nations they are the foremost. Why should they be allowed to break the law against Vishnu, Durgā, or any fetish; against Buddha, Mohammed, or even a spook, in whom a spiritualist sincerely recognizes his dead mother, any more than an "infidel" against Jehovah? In the eyes of Law, Hanuman, the monkey-god, has to be protected as much as any of the trinitarian godheads: otherwise law would be more blindfolded than ever. Moreover, besides his sacredness in the eyes of the teeming millions of India, Hanuman is no less dear to the sensitive hearts of Darwinists; and blasphemy against our first cousin, the tailless baboon, is certain to "hurt the feelings" of Messrs. Grant Allen and Aveling, as much as those of many Hindu Theosophists. We grant that he who makes "comic pictures of the crucifixion," commits an offence against the law. But so does he who ridicules Krishna, and misunderstanding the allegory of his Gopī (shepherdesses) speaks foully of him before Hindus. And how about the profane and vulgar jokes uttered from the pulpit by some ministers of the gospels themselves — not about Krishna, but Christ himself?

And here steps in the comical discrepancy between theory and practice, between the dead and living letter of the law. We know of several most offensively "comic" preachers, but have hitherto found, "infidels" and *atheists* alone sternly reproving for it those sinning Christian ministers, whether in England or America.

The world upside down!

Profane blasphemy charged upon gospel preachers, the orthodox press keeping silent about it, and an Agnostic alone raising his voice against such clownish proceedings. It is certain that we find more truth in one paragraph of "Saladin's"¹ writings than in half the daily papers of the United Kingdom; more of reverential and true feeling, to whatsoever applied, and more of fine sense for the *fitness of things* in the little finger of that "infidel," than in all the burly, boisterous figure of the Reverend-irreverend Mr. Spurgeon. One is an "agnostic" — a "scoffer at the Bible" he is called; the other a famous Christian preacher. But *Karma* having nought to do with the dead letter of human laws, of civilization or progress, provides on our spinning ball of mud an antidote for every evil, hence a truth-worshipping *infidel*, for every money-making preacher who desecrates his gods. America has its Talmage, described very properly by the *New York Sun*² as a "gibbering charlatan," and its Colonel Robert Ingersoll. In England, Talmage's imitators find a stern Nemesis in "Saladin." The Yankee preacher was more than once severely taken to task by infidel papers for leading his flock to heaven not in a reverential spirit, but trying to shorten the long and tedious journey with sundry Biblical anecdotes. Who in New York has forgotten the *farce-pantomime* performed by Talmage on April 15th, 1877? We remember it well. His subject was the "trio of Bethany," when each of the three *dramatis personae* was "mimicked to perfection," as declared by the congregation. Jesus was shown by the reverend harlequin, "making a morning call" on Mary and Martha, throwing himself "on an *ottoman*," then taking up the time of Mary "the lover of ethics," who sat at his feet, and finding himself "*blown up* for this" (*sic*) by Martha, "left to serve alone." Colonel Sandys said the other day in the House of Commons in his speech on Mr. Bradlaugh's Blasphemy Bill which he opposed, that "while we punished those who killed the body, the object of the bill was to allow those who would murder the souls of men to do so with impunity."

Does he think that making fun of *sacred* beliefs by a Christian preacher fills the souls of his listeners with reverence, and *murders it* only when that fun comes from an infidel? The same pious "commoner" reminded the House that: "Under the law of Moses those who committed blasphemy were to be taken out of the camp and stoned to death."

We have not the slightest objection to Protestant fanatics of the Mosaic persuasion, taking the Talmages and Spurgeons, and stoning them to death. We will not even stop to enquire of such a modern Saul, why blame in such a case the Pharisees for acting on that same Mosaic law and crucifying his Christ, or "certain of the Synagogue of the Libertines" for stoning Stephen? But we will simply state this: — If *justice*, like charity, does not stop "at home," such unfairness as Freethinkers, Agnostics, Theosophists, and other *infidels* receive generally at the hands of law, will be a subject of scorn for future history.

¹ The fine poet and witty editor of the late *Secular Review*, now the *Agnostic Journal*. The works of Mr. W. Stewart Ross ("Saladin") *e.g.*, *Woman, her glory, her shame, and her god, Miscellaneous Pamphlets, God and his Book, etc., etc.*, will become in the XXth century the most powerful as the most complete vindication of every man and woman called *infidel* in the XIXth.

² *The Sun* of April 6th, 1877

And history repeats itself.

For history repeats itself. Spurgeon having poked fun at Paul's *miracles*, we recommend every fair-minded person to procure the *Agnostic Journal* of April 13, and read Saladin's article "At Random," devoted to that favourite preacher. If they would find out the reason why, day by day, religious feeling is dying out in this country, *murdered* as it is in Christian *souls*, let them read it. Reverence is replaced by emotionalism. The Salvationists glorifying Christ on the "light fantastic toe," and Spurgeon's "tabernacle" is all that remains in this Christian land of the Sermon on the Mount. Crucifixion and Calvary are solely represented by that weird combination of hell-fire and "Punch and Judy show," which is pre-eminently Mr. Spurgeon's religion. Who, then, will find these lines by "Saladin" *too* strong?

. . . Edward Irving was a severe mystic and volcanic Elijah; Charles, Spurgeon is a grinning and exoteric Grimaldi. Newly returned from Mentone and gout, he presided over the annual meeting of the Metropolitan Tabernacle Church Auxiliary, held in the Tabernacle. At the commencement of the proceedings he remarked to those about to pray: "Now, it is a cold night, and, if anybody prays very long, somebody will be frozen to death. (Laughter.) I remember that Paul preached a long sermon once, and a young man tumbled out of the window and killed himself. If anybody gets frozen tonight, I am not like Paul, and cannot restore him, so please don't render a miracle necessary, as I cannot perform it." (Laughter)

Such a jester as this, if he had been alive and in Palestine, contemporary with the "blessed Lord," out of whom he makes such a profit, would have poked the said "blessed Lord" jocularly in the ribs with a "Well, and how are you, old boy from Nazareth?" There would have been Judas, called Iscariot, who carried the bag, and Charles, called Spurgeon, who wore the cap and bells.

I make light of the Galilean fables, because to me they are simply fables; but to Mr. Spurgeon they are "the very word of very God," and it is not for him to make light of them, even to please the holy mediocrities of the Tabernacle. I venture to recommend to Mr. Spurgeon's devout attention a sentiment to be found in Cicero's *De Legibus*, and which runs thus:

*De sacris autem haec sit una sententia, ut conserventur.*¹

As Mr. Spurgeon has all his life been so prayerfully absorbed that he has had no time for study and knows no language save a voluble gush of washerwoman English, I may tell him and his that the words mean, *But let us all concur in this one sentiment, that things sacred be inviolate.*²

Amen, we utter, from the bottom of our soul, to this noble advice. "But his pen is dipped in sacrilegious gall!" we heard a clergyman say to us the other day, speaking

¹ [Lib. II, xix (47):

" . . . *De sacris autem, qui locus patit latius, haec sit una sententia, ut conserventur semper . . .*"

"as regards religious observances, let this be our single decree that they shall be maintained forever"

— *Boris de Zirkoff.*]

² *Agn. Journal*, April 13th

of "Saladin." "Aye," we answered. "But his is a diamond pen, and the gall of his irony is clear as crystal, free as it is from any other desire than to deal justly and speak the truth." In view of the "blasphemy law" remaining on hand, and the equitable law of this country which makes a libel *more libellous* in proportion to the truth it contains, and especially with an eye to the pecuniary ruin which it entails upon at least one of the parties, there is more heroism and fearless self-abnegation in speaking the truth *pro bono publico*, than in pandering to public hobbies. With the exception, perhaps, of the brave and outspoken editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette* there is no writer in England whom we respect more for such noble-minded fearlessness, and none whose fine wit we admire more than "Saladin's."

The lethal emanations of modern civilization kill all goodness and truth.

But the world, in our day, judges everything on appearance. Motives are held as of no account, and the materialistic tendency is foremost in condemning *a priori* that which clashes with skin-deep propriety and encrusted notions. Nations, men, and ideas all are judged according to our preconceptions, and the lethal emanations of modern civilization kill all goodness and truth. As observed by St. George, the savage races are fast disappearing, "killed by the mere contact of civilized man." No doubt, it *must be* a consolation to the Hindu and even the Zulu, to think that all their surviving brethren will die (thanks to the missionary effort) linguists and scholars, if not Christians. A Theosophist, a colonist born in Africa, was telling us the other day that a Zulu had offered himself to him as "a boy." This Caffre was a graduate of a college, a Latin, Greek, Hebrew and English scholar. Found unable with all these achievements to cook a dinner or clean boots, the gentleman had to send him away — probably *to starve*. All this has inflated the European with pride. But, as says again the above-quoted writer,

. . . he forgets that Africa is fast becoming Mussulman, and that *Islam*, a kind of granite block which in its powerful cohesion defies the force of the waves and winds, is refractory to European ideas, which, so far, have never seriously affected it.

Europe may yet awaken one day to find itself Mussulman, if not in "durance vile" to the "heathen Chinees." But when the "*inferior* races" have all died out, who, or what shall replace them in the cycle that is to mirror our own?

There are those, also, who with a superficial eye to ancient as also to modern history, slight and disparage everything ever achieved in antiquity. We remember reading about heathen priesthods; who "built proud towers," instead of "emancipating degraded savages." The Magi of Babylon were contrasted with the "poor Patagonians" and other Christian missions, the former coming out second best in every such comparison. To this it may be answered that if the ancients built "proud towers" so do the moderns; witness, the present Parisian craze, the *Eiffel* Tower. How many human lives the ancient towers cost, no one can tell, but the Eiffel, unfinished as it is, has cost in the first year of its existence over one hundred workmen killed. Between the latter and the Babylonian Tower, the palm of superiority in usefulness belongs by rights to the *ziggurat*, the Planet Tower of Nebo's Temple of Borsippa. Between a "proud tower" built to the national God of Wisdom, and another "proud tower" con-

structed to attract the children of folly — unless it is urged that even modern folly is superior to ancient wisdom — there is room for a diversity of opinions. Furthermore, it is to Chaldean *astrolatry* that modern astrognosy owes its progress, and it is the astronomical calculations of the Magi that became the groundwork of our present mathematical astronomy and have guided discoverers in their researches. As to missions, whether to Patagonia or Anam, Africa or Asia, it is still an open question with the unprejudiced, whether they are a benefit or an evil which Europe confers on the “degraded savages.” We seriously doubt whether the “benighted” heathen would not profit more by being left severely alone than by being made (in addition to treason to their earlier beliefs) acquainted with the blessings of rum, whiskey and the various ensuing diseases which generally appear in the trail of European missionaries. Every sophistry notwithstanding, a moderately honest *heathen* is nearer the Kingdom of Heaven than a lying, thieving, rascally Christian convert. And — since he is assured that his robes (*i.e.*, crimes) are washed in the blood of Jesus, and is told of God’s greater joy “over one sinner that repenteth” than over 99 sinless saints — neither he, nor we, can see why the convert should not profit by the opportunity.

True charity shuns fame, and is never ostentatious.

“Who,” asks E. Young, “gave in antiquity twenty millions, not at the bidding of an imperious monarch or a tyrannical priesthood, but at the spontaneous call of the national conscience and by the immediate instrumentality of the national will?” The writer adding, that in this “money grant” there is “a moral grandeur that sinks the Pyramids into littleness.” O, the pride and the conceit of this our age!

We do not know. Had each of the subscribers to this “money grant” given his “widow’s *two mites*,” they might claim collectively to have *cast* “more than all,” more than any other nation, and await their reward. England being, however, the wealthiest nation in the world, the intrinsic merits of the case seem slightly altered. Twenty millions in a lump represent indeed a mighty engine for good. But such a ‘money grant’ could only gain in Karma, were it to pander less to national pride, and were the nation not to feel itself so exalted for it, in the four quarters of the globe, by hundred-voiced fame trumpeted by public organs. *True* charity opens her purse strings with an invisible hand and:

Finishing its act, exists no more . . .

It shuns Fame, and is never ostentatious. Besides which, everything is relative. One million in specie, 3,000 years ago, represented tenfold more than twenty million today. Twenty million are a Niagara inundating with Titanic force some popular want, and creating, for the time being, as great a commotion. But, while helping for a certain lapse of time tens of thousands of hungry wretches, even such an enormous sum leaves ten times as many unfortunate, starving wretches still unrelieved.

To such munificent bounties we prefer countries where there are no needy people at all, *e.g.*, those small communities, the remnants of once mighty races, which allow no beggars among their co-religionists — we mean the Parsis. Under the Indian and Buddhist Kings, like Chandragupta and Aśoka, people did not wait, as they do now, for a national calamity to throw the surplus of their overflowing wealth at the head of a portion of the starving and the homeless, but worked steadily on, century after cen-

tury, building *rest-houses*, digging wells and planting fruit trees along the roads, wherein the weary pilgrim and the penniless traveller could always find rest and shelter, be fed and *receive* hospitality at the national expense. A little clear stream of cold, healthy water which runs steadily, and is ever ready to refresh parched lips, is more beneficent than the sudden torrent that breaks the dam of national indifference, now and then, by fits and starts.

We shall become what we already have been; and we shall gain what we have formerly lost.

Thus, if we have to become in the future cycle *that which we already have been*, let this be as in the days of Aśoka, not as it is now. But we are reproached with forgetting “*Christian heroism*.” Where will you find, we are asked, a parallel to the heroism of the early martyrs and that displayed in our day? We are sorry to contradict this boast like many others. If casual instances of heroism in our century are undeniable, who, on the other hand, dreads death more, as a general rule, than the Christian? The idolater, the Hindu and the Buddhist, in short every Asiatic or African, dies with an indifference and serenity unknown to our Western man. As for “*Christian heroism*,” whether we mean mediaeval or modern heroes or heroines, a St. Louis, or a General Gordon, a Joan of Arc, or a Nightingale, there is no need of the adjective to emphasize the substantive. The Christian martyrs were preceded by the idolatrous and even godless Spartans of many virtues, the brave sisters of the Red Cross by the matrons of Rome and Greece. To this day, the daily self-tortures submitted to by the Indian Yogi and the Mussulman Fakir, tortures often lasting through years, throw entirely into the shadow the unavoidable heroism of the Christian martyr, ancient or modern. He who would learn the full meaning of the word “heroism” must read the *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan*, by Colonel Tod . . .

“Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s; and unto God the things that are God’s,”¹ is a golden rule, but like so many others from the same source, Christians are the first to break it.

Pride and conceit are the two hideous cancers devouring the heart of *civilized* nations, and selfishness is the sword handled by evanescent *personality* to sever the golden thread that links it to immortal INDIVIDUALITY. Old Juvenal must have been a prophet. It is *our century* that he addresses when saying:

We own thy merits; but we blame beside
Thy mind elate with insolence and pride!

Pride is the first enemy to itself. Unwilling to hear anyone praised in its presence, it falls foul of every rival and does not always come out victorious. “I am *the ONE*, and God’s elect,” says the proud nation. “I am *the invincible* and the foremost; tremble all ye around me!” Behold, there comes a day when we see it crouching in the dust, bleeding and mangled. “I am the ONE,” croaks, the private crow in peacock’s feathers. “I am *the ONE* — painter, artist, writer, or what not — *par excellence* . . . On whomsoever I shed my light, he is singled out by the nations; on whomsoever I turn my back, he is doomed to contempt and oblivion.”

¹ [Matthew xxii, 21]

Vain conceit and glorification. In the law of Karma as in the truths we find in the gospels, he who is the first will be the last — hereafter. There are those writers whose thoughts, however distasteful to the bigoted majority, will survive many generations; others which, however brilliant and original, will be rejected in the future cycles. Moreover, as the cowl does not make the monk, so the external excellence of a thing does not guarantee the moral beauty of its workman, whether in art or literature. Some of the most eminent poets, philosophers and authors were historically immortal. Rousseau's ethics did not prevent his nature being far from perfect. Edgar Poe is said to have written his best poems in a state verging on *delirium tremens*. George Sand, her magnificent psychological insight, the high moral character of her heroines, and her elevated ideas notwithstanding, could have never claimed the *Monthyon* prize for virtue. Talent, moreover, and especially genius, are no development of any one's present life, of which one ought to feel personally proud, but the fruition of a previous existence, and its illusions are dangerous. "Mâyā," say the Orientals, "spreads its thickest and most deceitful veils over the most lovely spots and objects in nature." The most beautiful serpents are the most venomous. The *Upas* tree,¹ whose deadly atmosphere kills every living thing that approaches it, is — the Queen of Beauty in the African forests.

Shall we expect the same in the "coming cycle"? Are we doomed to the same evils then that befall us now?

Whether the new cycle will bring new horrors or herald days of pure sunlight and happiness for all will depend on those who few who fight the battle of Truth against the powers of Darkness.

Nevertheless, and though Fichte's speculation will have proved correct and Shelley's "Golden Age" will have dawned upon mankind, still Karma will have its usual way. For we shall have become "the ancients" in our turn, for those who will come long after us. The men of that period will also believe themselves the *only* perfect beings and show scorn to the "Eiffel" as we show scorn to the Babel-tower. Slaves to the *routine* — the established opinions of the day; what they of the next cycle will say and do, will alone be well said and done.

"Wolf! wolf!" will be the cry raised against those who, as we defend the ancients now, will attempt to say a good word for us. And forthwith the finger of scorn and every weapon available will be directed at him who falls off from the beaten track, and at the "blasphemers" who may dare to call by their right names the gods of that cycle, and presume to defend their own ideals. What biographies shall be written of the famous infidels of today, one can foresee in reading those of some of England's best poets; *e.g.*, the posthumous opinions passed on Percy Bysshe Shelley.

Yea, he is now accused of what he would have otherwise been praised for, because, forsooth, he wrote in his boyhood "A Defence of Atheism"! *Ergo*, his imagination is said to have carried him "beyond the bounds of reality," and his metaphysics are said to be "without a solid foundation of reason." This amounts to saying that his critics alone know *all* about the landmarks placed by nature between the real and the unreal. This kind of orthodox trigonometrical surveyors of the absolute, who

¹ [*Antiaris toxicaria*]

claim to be the only specialists chosen by their God for the setting of boundaries and who are ever ready to sit in judgment over independent metaphysicians, are a feature of our century. In Shelley's case, the metaphysics of the young author of "Queen Mab," described in popular encyclopaedias as a "violent and blasphemous attack on Christianity and the Bible," must, of course, have appeared to his infallible judges without "a solid foundation in reason." For them, that "foundation" is in the motto of Tertullian, "*Credo quia absurdum est.*"¹

Poor, great young Shelley! He who laboured so zealously for several years of his too short life in relieving the poor and consoling the distressed, and who, according to Medwin, would have given his last sixpence to a stranger in want, he is called an *Atheist* for refusing to accept the Bible *literally!* We find, perhaps, a reason for this "Atheism" in the *Conversations Lexicon*, in which Shelley's immortal name is followed by that of Shem, "the eldest son of Noah . . . said in Scripture to have died at the age of 600 years." The writer of this encyclopaedic information (quoted by us *verbatim*) had just indulged in saying that "the censure of extreme presumption can hardly be withheld from a writer who, in his youth, rejects all *established* opinions," such as Biblical chronology we suppose. But the same writer passes without a word of comment and in prudent, if not reverential, silence, the cyclic years of Shem, as indeed he may!

Such is our century, so noisily, but happily for all preparing for its final leap into eternity. Of all past centuries, it is the most smilingly cruel, wicked, immoral, boastful and incongruous. It is the hybrid and unnatural production, the monstrous child of its parents — an honest mother called "mediaeval superstition" and a dishonest, humbugging father, a profligate impostor, universally known as "modern civilization." This unpaired, odd team which now drags the car of progress through the triumphal arches of our civilization, suggests strange thoughts. Our Oriental turn of mind makes us think, as we gaze at this orthodox piety harnessed together with cool sneering materialism, of a fitting symbol for our century. We choose it in the colonial productions of European ethics (alas, *living* productions!) known as the *half-castes*. We fancy a coffee-coloured, oily face, looking insolently at the world through an eye-glass. A flat and woolly head, surmounted by a tall hat, enthroned on a pedestal of white-starched collar, shirt, and fashionable satin cravat. Leaning on the arm of this hybrid production, the flat swarthy visage of a mongrel beauty shines under a Parisian bonnet — a pyramid of gauze, gay ribands and plumes . . .

Indeed, this combination of Asiatic flesh and European array, is no more ludicrous than the bird's-eye view of the moral and intellectual amalgamation of ideas and views as now accepted. Mr. Huxley and the "Woman clothed with the Sun," the Royal Society and the new prophet of Brighton, who lays letters "before the Lord" and has messages for us in reply "from Jehovah of Hosts," who signs himself unblushingly, "King Solomon" on letters stamped with the heading, "Sanctuary of Jehovah" (*sic*), and calls the "Mother" — (the said *Solar* "woman") "that accursed thing" and an *abomination*.

¹ [This is the often misquoted sentence from Tertullian's *Came Christi*, II, v., which runs: "*Certum est quia impossibile est,*" "it is certain because it is impossible." — *Boris de Zirkoff.*]

Yet their teachings are all authoritative and *orthodox*. Just fancy Mr. Grant Allen trying to persuade General Booth that “life owes its origin to the chemically-separative action of ethereal undulations on the cooled surface of the earth, especially carbonic anhydride and water”; and “le brave général” of England, arguing that this cannot be so, since this “cooled surface” was only called into being 4004 B.C.; thence, that his [Grant Allen’s] “existing diversity of organic forms” was not in the least due, as his new book would make the unwary believe, “to the minute interaction of dynamical laws,” but to the dust of the ground, from which “the Lord-God formed the beast of the field” and “every fowl of the air.”

These two are the representatives of the goats and the sheep on the Day of Judgment, the Alpha and the Omega of orthodox and correct society in our century. The unfortunates squeezed on the neutral line between these two are steadily kicked and butted by both. *Emotionalism and conceit* — one, a nervous disease, the other that feeling which prompts us to swim with the current if we would not pass for retrograde fogeys or infidels — are the powerful weapons in the hands of our pious modern “sheep” and our learned “goats.” How many swell the respective ranks merely owing to one or the other of these feelings, is known to their *Karma* alone . . .

Those who are not to be moved by either hysterical emotion or a holy fear of the multitudes and propriety; those, whom the voice of their conscience — “that still small voice” which, when heard, deafens the mighty roar of Niagara Falls itself and will not permit them to lie to their own souls — remain outside. For these there is no hope in this departing age, and they may as well give up all expectation. *They are born out of due time*. Such is the terrible picture presented by our present cycle, now nearing its close, to those from whose eyes the scales of prejudice, preconception and partiality have fallen, and who see the truth that lies behind the receptive appearances of our Western “civilization.” But what has the new cycle in store for humanity? Will it be merely a continuation of the present, only in darker and more terrible colours? Or shall a new day dawn for mankind, a day of pure sunlight, of truth, of charity, of true happiness for all? The answer depends mainly on the few Theosophists who, true to their colours through good repute and ill, still fight the battle of Truth against the powers of Darkness.

An infidel paper contains some optimistic words, the last prophecy by Victor Hugo, who is alleged to have said this:

For four hundred years the human race has not made a step but what has left its plain vestige behind. We enter now upon great centuries. The sixteenth century will be known as the age of painters, the seventeenth will be termed the age of writers, the eighteenth the age of philosophers, the nineteenth the age of apostles and prophets. To satisfy the nineteenth century it is necessary to be the painter of the sixteenth, the writer of the seventeenth, the philosopher of the eighteenth, and it is also necessary, like Louis Blanc, to have the innate and holy love of humanity which constitutes an apostolate, and opens up a prophetic vista into the future. In the twentieth, war will be dead, the scaffold will be dead, animosity will be dead, royalty will be dead, and dogmas will be dead, but man will live. For all there will be but one country — that country the whole earth; for all, there will be but one hope — that hope the whole heaven.

All hail, then, to that noble twentieth century which shall own our children, and which our children shall inherit!

If Theosophy prevailing in the struggle, its all-embracing philosophy strikes deep root into the minds and hearts of men, if its doctrines of Reincarnation and Karma, in other words, of Hope and Responsibility, find a home in the lives of the new generations, then, indeed, will dawn the day of joy and gladness for all who now suffer and are outcast. For real Theosophy IS ALTRUISM, and we cannot repeat it too often. It is brotherly love, mutual help, unswerving devotion to Truth. If once men do but realize that in these alone can true happiness be found, and never in wealth, possessions, or any selfish gratification, then the dark clouds will roll away, and a new humanity will be born upon earth. Then, the GOLDEN AGE will be there, indeed.

But if not, then the storm will burst, and our boasted western civilization and enlightenment will sink in such a sea of horror that its parallel History has never yet recorded.

