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ORDINARY MEETING.*

SIR J. RISDON BENNETT, M.D., F.R.S., IN THE CHAIR.

The Minutes of the last Meeting were read and confirmed.

The following Paper was then read by the Author :—

ON HUMAN RESPONSIBILITY. By the Right Hon.
Lord GRIMTHORPE.

I AM asked once more to write a paper for your Transactions, and this subject was suggested to me, for the second time, as one that had not yet been discussed here. But, since this paper was mostly in type, a friend has sent me one of your early volumes (IV), in which it was discussed at great length as long ago as 1869, which may account for its being forgotten. This is a sad practical commentary on one of the laudatory estimates of Dr. Irons's papers at the time, that they would rank with Butler's *Analogy*. He wrote an "Analysis of Human Responsibility," in three successive and most elaborate papers, which, with the discussions on them, fill a large part of that volume. If this paper of mine is too short, I must say I think Dr. Irons's "wood can hardly be seen for the trees." Or, in less figurative language, his papers were so complicated, as well as analytic, and his reasoning so abstract, that if this were (what it is not) an abstract of them in the legal sense, there would still be an excuse for writing it; though I do not think I should have done so if I had known that I had been

* Jan. 5, 1891.

so anticipated. Those discussions, however, are valuable to me now, because I find that the only person who disputed the author's main arguments or conclusion was one who confessed—not at all in the offensive and insolent language of some atheists—that his difficulty remained, that there was and could be no proof of the God on whom a future life depends. I had already written what you will see farther on, on the necessary connexion between the two doctrines. Mr. Holyoake's speech on that occasion still more convinces me that it is all but a waste of time to try to prove future responsibility independently of the proof of revelation, or what is called the Evidences of Christianity. I have not seen anything else in those papers or speeches which suggests any material addition to or alteration of what I had written before.

I have also found a paper written for the Christian Evidence Society in 1873 by Prebendary Row, who took part in those discussions here, and I am sorry to hear is very ill now, concluding: "My whole argument therefore stands thus: Mankind have asserted with unanimous voice that certain actions are virtuous and vicious. But they can be neither unless men are voluntary agents. All voluntary agency involves responsibility. Men therefore feel themselves responsible." He rightly combats the ordinary attempts of atheistic writers to make out that we are not voluntary agents, which I should think never persuaded anybody yet that he is not a voluntary agent, except under absolute compulsion, or some motive which he is literally, and not only figuratively, unable to resist, to do something dangerous to himself; in which case he is deemed, both by the law of England and common sense, irresponsible for his actions, or a lunatic. Such cases as that have nothing to do with the question of free will in persons possessed of proper reasoning faculties, nor have any other manifest exceptions: nor ought we ever to be frightened by the common claptrap difficulty of what is called "drawing the line" between normal and exceptional cases, either by abstract rules (which are never of any use) or in particular instances, where different juries might guess differently whether a man is in his right mind or not.

Dr. Row also exposed the fallacy of the late Mr. Buckle's paradoxical conceit, that, because all human actions which are reducible to statistics show approximate averages, or that about so many people per million generally commit murder or suicide or matrimony in a year at present, there-

fore it is a law of nature that each man who does so cannot help it, though the vast majority do help it—an absurdity which only needs stating in this naked way to become ashamed; and yet I will try to shame it a little more by applying Buckle's own mathematical test to it. It is certain that 1 in 100,000 people (or whatever is the number) will kill themselves generally in a year. That means, in mathematics, that the chances are 100,000 to 1 *against* any one man doing it. Buckle called that a necessity that all who do must. It is absolutely certain that in the long run an unbiassed halfpenny will as often come heads as tails. What is the certainty about each toss? The only certainty is that one is likely as the other. And so one might go on with any number of illustrations of such a piece of nonsense. No materialist ever treated himself as being a machine, or anybody else over whom he has power; and every man is a hundred times surer that he can generally do as he likes than anyone who has muddled his head with either misapplied physics or unintelligible metaphysics can be of any or all arguments to the contrary. I say "muddled with physics" as well as with metaphysics, because using physical facts to prove things entirely beyond them is mere darkening of counsel without knowledge, and making a pretence of omniscience under the guise of humility and agnosticism.

Still, I think Dr. Row's statement of his argument did leave a gap unfilled. Indeed I always distrust those neat epigrammatic statements which have the appearance of settling difficult questions in two or three lines of axioms and deductions. Generally it is the materialistic party that is fondest of them. I have exposed several of them in former papers here and elsewhere, and need not advert to them now. I am afraid his assertion that "mankind have unanimously asserted that certain actions are virtuous and vicious" will hardly carry all the weight he put upon it, either in fact or logic. If it were true that even all civilised mankind were agreed as to the virtue or vice of *every* action (not of certain actions), that might be a safe basis to work upon; but conscience is far too variable and dependent on external circumstances to be accepted as a basis for this demonstration. Certainly no opponent will accept it. Nor do I see how even that proves that we shall ever be held responsible by any power beyond human vengeance. Unfortunately, however, the assumed universal agreement is not universal. Some things which no Christian has the least doubt about being virtuous or vicious are

denied to be so by some people who set up for moralists; or who choose to neglect or to do them without setting up for anything except "being as good as their neighbours," which depends on "who is their neighbour," and, if true, proves nothing except that vice is common in their society, and therefore more noxious to the world than if they were solitary offenders. At what age does uneducated conscience begin to convince children that absolute selfishness is not the true guide of life: nay does it ever convince some educated adults?

So I cannot accept conscience as an assumable proposition to base responsibility on. You know that Paley took this view, and I think proved it in his usual lucid way, in his *Moral Philosophy*, cap. v. An ingenious writer has sent me a paper called "Ratio Rationis," professing to refute it, by dividing morals into our own and other people's, and saying that the province of conscience is not to discover what is right, but to warn us to do what we believe to be right: "The question for my conscience is how far my present conduct tallies with my present light;" which obviously comes to this, in its simplest terms: Conscience only tells us that we ought to do what we believe we ought. So it is quite right and virtuous, and a thing to be rewarded here and hereafter, to act on the rule that selfishness is the true light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world, until he is taught better and convinced that that light is darkness; and if he should be seduced into an act of benevolence against his interest, his conscience will rebuke him. I daresay *something* will; but a diabolic or natural conscience of that kind is not a very solid basis for a doctrine of responsibility. So that queer piece of reasoning only ends in affirming, not contradicting, the great Senior Wrangler who wrote the *Evidences of Christianity* and *Natural Theology*, and could put more good reasoning, and more intelligible, into a page than most moral philosophy-makers in a dozen, or a volume. Dr. Row says: "Men *therefore* feel themselves to be responsible." It is no use saying "therefore" unless the conclusion as well as the premiss is a fact either demonstrable or self-evident. If it were a fact that all men feel themselves to be responsible, it would be a waste of time to write papers to prove it. It would indeed be not far from the truth to say that all men feel all *other* men to be responsible, and at any rate take care to treat them so, subject to reasonable excuses; and an excuse is only a mitigation, not a plea of not guilty. Every man

expects *everybody else* to do his duty—in the sense of demanding it.

And that I think really is a good argument for responsibility. "Securus judicat Orbis" when the whole world is agreed except those who have a plain interest in dissenting. It will be time enough to discuss non-responsibility as a practical question when we find any civilised nation or society dealing with its subjects or members on that footing. That has nothing to do with the particular things which the particular society may regard as crimes, and they might conceivably be quite opposite in different nations, or the same, as indeed they are in religious matters, and even the most glaring crimes are sometimes pronounced virtues for political objects or trade unionism. I suppose there is not, nor ever has been, a nation without punishments, and punishment *ipso facto* means responsibility.

So that the only open question is not about responsibility in this world, which is the very foundation of all society above the merest barbarism, but responsibility in another world. And here the difficulty of proceeding is that by "another world" everybody at once understands one where the virtuous and wicked will be treated differently, and therefore the argument becomes whether there will be another life or not. All arguments on that are so immeasurably short of the evidence of revelation that they are hardly worth discussing, except perhaps to answer new objections. Apart from revelation, it can hardly be said that we have any more convincing reasons for believing in a future life, and one of punishments and rewards, than the ancients, of whom the most intelligent evidently had a very faint belief in it, or none at all. I am not going to discuss Christian evidences here, and therefore all I can discuss is whether the modern arguments against responsibility are sufficient to raise any serious doubt about it, and, as the more practical issue, to furnish any rational excuse to those who wish to act as if future responsibility were disproved. For if an honest examination of the probabilities leave the conclusion only doubtful, no man of sense would run such a tremendous risk as he must know that it is to act as he pleases on the mere chance that he may escape all consequence of doing things which the vast majority of mankind agree are wrong, whether they acknowledge divine laws or not, merely because he sees some present advantage in doing so.

I remember a Judge answering an offender who pleaded that he did not know that the particular fraud of which he

was convicted was illegal, "If you choose to do what you know to be wrong in the hope that it is not also punishable, you have no right to complain if you are disappointed." One cannot but reflect that multitudes of people will some day hear the same kind of sentence, and feel that it is just. Now that the uniformity of laws of nature is universally acknowledged, far more than in ancient times, one may ask the deniers of responsibility for actions universally admitted to be bad on what ground they can hope to escape bad consequences any more than they generally do for physical excesses or follies, whether joined with immorality in general opinion, or perfectly innocent to other people, and in a proper degree innocent to themselves, like excesses in reading or exercise, or doing work which may even be for the good of others. Nature notoriously accepts no excuses. One man may indeed escape where most men suffer; but escaping is the exception, not the rule; and where laws are not simply mechanical like those of nature, but are administered with human discretion, the endeavour always is to make their action and effect certain—to make those exceptions as rare as possible.

Until men can prove that there is no discretionary power to govern the universe, it must be irrational to act as if there is no power to do that much better which human discretion is always trying to do. When they can prove that there is none (which agnosticism does not pretend to do) they may be justified in running vice against virtue and the laws of nature and the world; but even then they generally get the worst of it, and find that they have been responsible after all, and that their game has been as great a failure as continued gambling against a "bank" with the mathematical chances in its favour, which must ruin them if they go on long enough.

One of the crazes of modern rectifiers of the world on sentimental *v.* religious principles is that all criminals are irresponsible lunatics, and should be treated accordingly; in other words, that imprisonment, perhaps for life, should follow every conviction for a serious offence. If that is the meaning of being irresponsible, there is not much to dispute about; for non-responsibility would then be a great deal worse than the ordinary punishment of criminals who are still treated as responsible and reasonable by all other reasonable beings. Again therefore, the proposition of non-responsibility vanishes for all practical purposes; for the only remaining alternative is that everybody should be

allowed to do as much mischief as he likes until mankind irresponsibly disposes of him by Lynch law.

I am old enough to remember when a political legal luminary, who passed for a great man till he outlived his reputation, invented for party purposes the maxim that "Man is not responsible for his belief," meaning his religious creed. Probably those who found the maxim useful never reflected that, if that dogma meant what it said, it was flatly contrary to the Bible, which the inventor did not repudiate at all, to do him justice, whatever his successors do now. I suppose they really meant that one man is not responsible to others for his religious belief. But that depends altogether on whether his belief generally produces actions injurious to them or not, of which they must be the judges and not himself. And though it may seem plausible *a priori* to say that abstract religious opinions not necessarily involving conduct towards others must be innocent and cannot produce actions affecting other people, all the history and present experience of the world contradict that *a priori* conclusion. Religious opinion has notoriously produced greater and often worse effects upon mankind than even the lust of money or of conquest, or grosser lusts. It is needless to spend time in giving proofs of a proposition which nobody is likely to deny, and of which we see ample proof daily. The lazy indifference of these days may not choose to see what is transparent to all who are not indifferent to everything but their immediate comfort, or to physical or sentimental evils which stare them in the face: and they may try to evade the question by the easy cant of "refusing to believe" that the same causes and motives which have disturbed the world before, whenever they became strong enough, will do so again as soon as those who are moved by them are strong enough again.

But the responsibility of men to society is not the subject of this inquiry. It is future responsibility, though that is not expressed in the title of the paper. Freedom of opinion, until it develops into actions hostile to society, is unquestionable now in all countries which have escaped from priestly and political tyranny. What they have to guard against is the danger of falling under it again, which is greater than indifferentists choose to recognise. But all this time the ledger of responsibility is posted up daily with unflinching accuracy somewhere. Even materialists admit and assert that nothing is forgotten by nature: the smallest act propagates some consequences to the remotest time. No doubt

that alone does not prove that we shall be personally judged by them. But he must be a very bold man who ventures to pronounce that, instead of that ledger being ever opened for business and a final settlement of accounts, it will be destroyed at the end of the world, which must come by cold if it is not anticipated by heat, science predicting one and revelation the other; so that the atheistic vision of the perpetual improvement of "Humanity" is a baseless fabric; and it is men and not humanity whose future has to be considered. "Continuity" is one of the accepted doctrines of the philosophy of experience or induction, and is combined in a famous book with "Correlation," or the permanence of the sum of all forces in the universe. Why are we to take for granted that the responsibility which is evidently a universal law of nature and society is to be broken and stopped before its work is half done? The *onus probandi* lies with those who say it will. If they answer that we see it broken every day by death, I reply that we see nothing of the kind. All we see is that people die and pass out of our sight. I do not pretend to prove without revelation what happens to them then. But those who deny that anything will, and teach men so, and act on that belief, contrary to the laws of every moral philosophy that has ever been generally received, have no kind of evidence that they are right nor any *a priori* reason for believing it.

This, like all such questions, up to the fundamental one of creation, admits of only two alternative answers, and of no middle one. Neither of them can be given with the certainty of either mathematics or induction from all the known instances, seeing that none are known. Therefore they can only be decided, or rather acted on, according to the balance of probabilities. In the case of creation the two alternatives are (1) that the world made itself, including all the laws of nature, which means (as I have shown elsewhere) the spontaneous resolution of every atom in the universe always to behave towards every other in a certain way whenever they have the opportunity; and (2) that all the laws of nature were made and are maintained by one supreme power. The latter theory needs no explanation. The former needs one so much yet that no half dozen philosophers, whose names are known to the world, have agreed on any. I showed in my first paper here* that the most popular

* "How did the World Evolve Itself?" 1884, to which my paper "On the Beauty of Nature," in 1887, was supplemental.

leader of those who fancy that they believe that the world made itself confessedly runs up all his prime causes at last into a thing which he calls Persistent Force, in no particular direction, which divided itself into the infinity of forces which are called Laws of Nature, by means which he calls "unfathomable mysteries;" and his latest expounder or rival (whichever it may be), Mr. Clodd, says just the same in a book which he designates *The Story of Creation*, beginning with "inherent forces" of two opposite kinds, and "the play" of them "causing the rearrangement of atoms," of course with the presiding genius Evolution waving his explanatory rod whenever a *dignus vindice nodus* can be untied in no other way. He may call that a Story and a Play. But it is only a confession that he cannot get his leading actors on to the stage; and the story is a fairy tale.

Similarly, the phenomenon called Christianity in every civilised nation in the world has to be traced up to some prime cause. It is no use quibbling about the amount of proof that we ought to demand for this or that miracle. That has long ceased to be the real problem. The existence of Christianity is the real evidence now, though ocular testimony was originally. As I have asked in my S.P.C.K. tract thereon, what have Hume and Huxley and all their followers done to account for that phenomenon which is as glaring as the sun and moon? And what is it to us if some weak-kneed people who call themselves Christians, but want to pose as philosophers too, fancy that preaching a thing called Non-miraculous Christianity is the way to convert the world to that religion which is the grossest of impostures if the miracles of which it fundamentally consists were fictions. Such people are only converting themselves into un-Christians, just as others pretend to bring converts into the Church by abandoning all distinctive doctrines and then calling themselves and those whom they have joined "the Church," though no such church was ever known before, or can live on that foundation of sand.

Now then see how this includes the responsibility question, even without bringing in the positive evidences of Christianity, on which so many books have been written without a shadow of real refutation. Here is a religion of which a primary doctrine is responsibility in a future life, which has grown from the smallest conceivable beginnings, with no earthly helps or advantages, and in the face of all sorts of difficulties, and no rational explanation of that growth and prevalence except the common historical one has ever been

invented or stated definitely and accepted as rational by any but some trumpety and temporary school or party till some other has come in. If the common history is true, as it must be unless a better is established as more probable, the doctrine of responsibility is true in just the same degree.

It is no longer an isolated theory or creed depending only on its intrinsic probability, great as that is, but an essential part of a structure that has stood for ages, and grows stronger and larger every day, and of which, until some other architect is found and proved to be more probable, we are bound to say that "the builder and maker is God." That is the practical difficulty which deniers of future life and responsibility have to face and answer, before they can expect any man capable of reasoning to accept their denial as worth anything. Those who have their own reasons for wishing the denial to be true will probably succeed in persuading themselves that it is, or that professing ignorance about it is sufficient excuse for ignoring it. But nothing can be more certain than that, if they are wrong on the main question of the truth of the system of which this is a fundamental part, they have not the smallest chance of their agnosticism being accepted as an excuse. Agnosticism is *ipso facto* unbelief, and if the Bible is true we know what that involves.

Here I might well stop, and indeed I have no more to say on the bare question of whether it is rational to believe or to act as if we believed in no future responsibility. For it is quite a different question how that responsibility is likely to be administered, as we say of earthly justice. Some persons fancy that they have done all that need be done to make unbelievers easy by declaiming on the injustice of holding honestly ignorant or unwilling offenders guilty of death. That might be worth something if it were any part of our doctrine that no allowance will be made for such difficulties by the righteous Judge, though we have no means of knowing what that allowance will be in each case. All that I have to say on that point is that an excuse is only a demand for mitigation of punishment, not a plea of not guilty, and still less a proof of it. As for the plea of ignorance, nothing is more certain than that it is very often wilful. We hear men boasting of their desire to read both sides, while they practically mean that they read all that they get hold of against the accepted faith, and fancy they know all the reasons for it, and probably soon find objections to it which they cannot answer, and therefore yield to them. How few do we meet with who even try to balance the probabilities of

the only two possible alternatives which I have pointed out, or seriously reflect that there are only those two; and yet no axiom of Euclid is clearer than that, and those who reason in that way are mostly persons of quite intelligence enough to know better, and would be indignant if they were told that they do not know the elements of reasoning. If such people come to the wrong conclusion, even honestly upon the books they read, it was neither rational nor honest upon the whole transaction of choosing the books and reading them, and the plea of ignorance would not avail them in any earthly court. Why should it in the other? When a trustee, or any one accused of fraud, defends himself by the plea that he was ignorantly misled, the immediate question of the Judge is, Did he take all possible means of avoiding it by making all the proper inquiries, and not *some* inquiry only? If he did not, he is at once declared responsible for all the consequences. Even if he did make them and yet acted as a prudent man would not, he does not escape. Such cases are called hard, and in a sense they often are, when the person has derived and sought no benefit to himself. And yet it would be harder if those who have been ruined by his laziness or imprudence had to suffer instead. The case of rejecters of the doctrine of responsibility, because they prefer pleasing themselves, is evidently worse; for their professed inquiry has been biassed by their wishes as much as that of a trustee who had some indirect object, if only good-nature to somebody, in consenting to a breach of trust. However liberally we may interpret "He that knew not his Lord's will," we must feel sure that the alternative is to be read, "He that had *the means of knowing* his Lord's will and did it not."

The other suggestion, that it is unjust to punish involuntary offenders, and therefore incredible that they will be punished, requires much the same answer. We have no reason to doubt that the degree of genuine compulsion on which any one acts wrongly will be taken into account, as well as his amount of genuine and involuntary ignorance. All such difficulties as those, amounting sometimes to impossibility for us who do not know men's hearts, to say on which side of the line they really stand, do not affect the main question the least, and our business is not to speculate on the fate of individuals, but to see whether there is any rational ground for expecting that they will all have no fate at all, except annihilation. That is the question I have tried to throw some little light on by the only kind of reasoning which

seems to me worth anything in these matters which admit of no absolute determination.

The inquiry has run, of necessity, more into the nature of a sermon than of what is called a philosophical essay. But that is from the very cause just mentioned, that no reasoning which does not take the existence of the world, and of Christianity, now all over the civilised parts of it, as the phenomena to be accounted for can advance a step beyond the uncertain and shifting position in which the old philosophers were obliged to leave it in the most highly educated city in the world, with its "altar to the unknown God." For they knew better than to believe seriously in the impossible monsters of the Pantheon. They saw the world as it is, and generally assumed that it had some kind of a creator, and could perhaps say as strongly as we can that every other way of accounting for it that had been suggested was a transparent absurdity or begged the whole question. That was a great deal to say, and perhaps enough to say negatively: for unfortunately they had no positive information about a Creator which they could rationally accept. Their divine cosmogonies were not much better than our materialistic or atheistic ones. One nation alone had that positive information and believed it, and very likely its early revelation to their ancestors had somehow got diffused among others, though incurably corrupted by the want of a written record. We have abundant proof now that even civilised people have a tendency to run into ever-increasing superstition, or else into its opposite, as soon as they begin to depend on any pretended spiritual information beyond our original records of the creation of the world and its present religious condition, while no other rational explanation can be given of either of them. "Development" has invariably meant development of error, to which there is no assignable limit.

The CHAIRMAN (Sir J. RISDON BENNETT, M.D., F.R.S.).—I will first ask you to present your thanks to Lord Grimthorpe for this valuable paper.

Mr. W. GRIFFITH, B.A.—Lord Grimthorpe's paper is so lucid and consistent that one feels regret that it is so short, and wishes it had extended to the length of the three papers he mentions. I regret that his lordship has not only not touched on the

ground of responsibility, but that he has not also discussed the question for what actions we are responsible, and what are the duties we have to perform, as well as the reasons why we should perform them. With regard to what has been said about Paley. Dr. Paley has been very much criticised because he has made expediency the rule of conduct, and some have gone even so far as to say, like the Dean of a certain college at Cambridge at the present day, that he was not a Christian. Unfortunately, Paley adopts a tenet which I think is not based on responsibility or on Christianity; it is that a person is to obey the law because it is expedient that he should; and that is far inferior to the tenet of Bishop Butler, that right and wrong are independent of the individual, and the individual is to obey the dictates of his conscience. Paley's mistake was in making what may be the measure of legislation for any State the measure by which an individual might act, now expediency is not the proper motive of conduct in an individual.

Rev. Prebendary WACE, D.D.—I think Lord Grimthorpe has said all that is necessary on this occasion; the last speaker seemed to make some complaint that his Lordship had not discussed the whole moral law—as I understood him to say; but I fear that could hardly be done in an evening:—but, perhaps you will allow me to offer one or two short observations on the general spirit of what his lordship has advanced. I am disposed to put rather higher than Lord Grimthorpe put it in one or two places, the general conviction of mankind respecting permanent responsibility both here and hereafter. The most extraordinary phenomenon in that respect is, perhaps, the ancient Egyptian religion. We have old documents, particularly the “Ritual of the Dead,” which contain the most minute descriptions of the judgment passed on all souls in the other world, a complete account of a sort of judicial tribunal to which they were all subject. Whether these were partly, as the late Canon Cook used to think, the remains of primeval revelation or not, it is certainly a very striking phenomenon. There can be again no question at all that the very motive, so to say, of some of the most interesting and most momentous of the writings of the Greek poets, for example, is the sense of responsibility hereafter: the very reason that Antigone gives, for instance, for burying her brother against the express law of Creon is that she will have to live with the members of her family and

be subject to all the great principles of right and justice always, whereas she will only have to live with Creon and those she is dealing with now for a short time. It is impossible for a play of that sort to be acted before an Athenian audience without a sense of responsibility lying very deep indeed in their hearts, and there are many signs of its existing similarly in that nation which had even a still stronger sense of righteousness than the Greeks, I mean the Romans; and I am not aware, I confess, of any early civilized nation or any nation that had the germ of civilization existing without a very strong apprehension in their minds, amounting to an abiding conviction, of a judgment in the next world, and of actions and conduct being rewarded or punished according to their virtue or vice.

That is a consideration which, of course, only strengthens Lord Grimthorpe's general arguments; and it is desirable to recognize that these great principles are, practically, human principles—you may find exceptions to them, but take human nature as a whole and you get a wonderful sense of responsibility hereafter as well as here. As to responsibility here it is well observed by Dr. Row, that everybody thinks everybody else responsible. There is a very good epilogue that I remember reading in a Hindoostanee book. A sceptical Hindoo went to the Dervish and asked him to solve him three questions:—"First of all," he said, "why should I believe in God? I cannot see Him—why should I believe in what I cannot see? You teach me as part of your religion in respect of a future world, that the evil spirit is tormented by fire, and you tell me, at the same time, that he is made of fire. How can he be tormented by that of which he is made? Thirdly, why should a man be punished for his actions when he is not responsible for them?" The Dervish, instead of giving him an answer to his questions, took up a clod of mud and shied it at his head, which made the sceptic extremely angry, and he summoned the Dervish before the Cadi, who asked the Dervish what it meant. He said, "This man said he could not believe in what he could not see; let him show you the pain in his head before you take notice of it. He asked also how the evil spirit could be hurt by that of which he was made. He is made of mud, and I shied mud at him. Then he said men were not to be punished for their actions. Why does he want to punish me?" (Laughter and applause.)

No doubt, as the last speaker has said, perhaps next to the fact

that we are responsible for our actions, the most momentous question is what is the nature of that responsibility? If we are to be judged hereafter, what is the standard by which we are to be judged? Even in respect of that point there is, I consider, a deeper agreement in human nature than is sometimes supposed. The general principle, "Do as you would be done by," is one on which all the nations of the world are agreed, even in countries where paganism is not exterminated. You may take it for certain that in any nation of the world a man will expect you to treat him as you would expect him to treat you, and if that principle were worked out it would no doubt carry us very far through the whole range of morals. I have heard it said by an experienced missionary in respect to nations in which the greatest vice prevails, that, nevertheless, when the principle of the Christian moral law is stated to them, it has cordially commended itself to their conscience, *i.e.*, they felt that the principles of Christian moral law did correspond with what were the true relations in which they ought to exist towards one another; in other words, that Christianity is the re-establishment of the true relations of man to man, as well of man to God. Certainly, it would seem that nothing is more strikingly characteristic of our Lord's teaching than the way in which His parables appeal to what I may call the unsophisticated instincts of the human heart as the basis of the principles He lays down. He teaches men what is their duty towards each other and to God by appealing to the true and deeper instincts of human nature; but at the same time, when human nature once gets corrupted by false religion, evil habits, and vice, nothing is more certain than that it has no power to recover itself, and that man needed, therefore, a superior influence to reveal once more the true principles of action, and to enforce those principles by revealing the ultimate authority to which we are responsible. That is what the Christian religion did—it stated again what was the rule by which God intended man to be governed, and it also stated simultaneously, with equal earnestness, what was the tribunal by which this rule would be enforced. For practical purposes therefore, Lord Grimthorpe's contention in the latter part of his paper would seem to be unanswerable—that practical moral responsibility in corrupted human nature is based on religion—it is a revealed responsibility. Our Lord came forward as the Legislator for

mankind, and the Judge of mankind, and in that point of view I must own that it seems to me, more and more, nothing but a great waste of time to discuss questions of morality and responsibility apart from the Christian revelation. If the Christian revelation be true, all these questions are settled once and for ever; and the Christian religion, as Lord Grimthorpe has said, from its position and its command over human nature, from all the claims it has upon us, must be heard and ought to be heard before we go any further.

I think, therefore, apart from the general question whether we are responsible here or hereafter, the only question worth discussing is whether the law laid down in the Gospel is the true law that man should follow, and whether our Lord is the Judge by whom that law should be enforced. (Applause.)

Rev. W. J. ADAMS, D.C.L.—I think it is very important to observe that a knowledge and sense of responsibility should lead us up to God. If I tell a man he is responsible, the man naturally says to me, "Responsible to what?" I say, "To God's law;" and if he says, "Where is God's law?" I reply with St. Paul, "It is written in men's hearts." Now, Dr. Wace very aptly referred to the moral law of the old Egyptian Empire. It is a very remarkable fact that in the old Egyptian moral code, in respect to which every Egyptian had to clear himself before he could enter the Egyptian Heaven, there were forty-two mortal sins, any one of which would keep an Egyptian out of heaven, and every one of those is contained in the Law of Moses, that is to say, the old Egyptian moral code covered the whole Mosaic law. It is a very remarkable fact because that was in existence centuries before the time of Moses. Therefore there was a moral law, as St. Paul says, written in men's hearts from the very beginning, and the Christian faith, as I think Dr. Wace admitted, though he did not say so in so many words, claims not so much to be a new foundation for morality, as a sanction by an express Divine Person in an express Divine Appearance in the world of the old moral law; but from the very beginning the law was written on man's heart, and St. Paul argues therefrom. The Christian faith corroborates that law and gives it a Divine sanction and makes it clear. It found the moral law in men's hearts, and the Christian faith brings it to light and gives a Divine sanction for that moral law; but the moral law has been in the world from the very beginning, and so

leads us up to God, which is the point at which we are so anxious to arrive.

The CHAIRMAN.—I would like to ask Lord Grimthorpe his position in regard to the Egyptian "Ritual of the Dead," to which reference has been made by Dr. Wace, and to which my attention was called lately. I am more than ever impressed with the extreme importance of it, and especially when considering the age in which it was framed. In connection with the moral law being written in the heart of man, I would ask what is the difference between that and what we usually term conscience? Is not conscience itself a record of Divine influence which is granted to each individual coming into the world, whether civilized or savage? I cannot help thinking we mistake in separating conscience so entirely from the sense of moral law described by the apostle as being written in our hearts. It is difficult to distinguish between conscience in men and instinct in brutes; but I think it will be seen that there is a wide gulf between what we understand as the conscience of rational beings and the wonderful phenomenon of instinct in the lower animals. If that be so is not conscience, in point of fact, a revelation? In this Egyptian "Ritual of the Dead" the revelation is spoken of as being a moral law written in the heart. No doubt a moral law given as a revealed religion, is very much more definite, positive, and available, and in connection with responsibility, of a far higher and broader kind. I would venture to ask Lord Grimthorpe whether he could give any direct reference to these points which are not, I think, touched on in his paper.

Lord GRIMTHORPE.—When you speak of the conscience coming from revelation, you must recollect that revelation in this matter may mean two things—either original revelation, such as I have alluded to in my paper, of which the Jews alone seem to have kept a record, which has kept it from running into bad developments, or such a revelation as there may have been to earlier nations even than the Jews, or to the Egyptians themselves. Another kind of revelation may be said to be one that goes on continuously in the nature of instinct. If we can prove that people never inherited revelation, and have a conscience like ours, in the sense of approving or disapproving of certain things, that would prove, I think, a continuous revelation. As to the Egyptian

“Ritual of the Dead” any information as to its probable date from Dr. Wace would be extremely valuable.

Rev. Dr. WACE.—Well, it is at least 2,000 years before Christ—before Abraham.

Lord GRIMTHORPE.—We know well from the Bible that there were revelations of one kind or another long before that, and I cannot help thinking—of course it is only *think*, and may not be good for much—that some revelation was probably given to the very earliest people. I have no doubt that the tradition of that went down, and I believe from reading the stories of Abraham and Noah that a religion was known. Even Moses does not profess to have given all his religion as a novelty, and even the Sabbath observance, which was a great deal earlier than that, was a kind of revelation. I cannot help thinking everything tends in the same direction; that conscience, or whatever it may be called, that has always existed in the world, has probably come from original revelation handed down more or less accurately. When Dr. Wace talks of future rewards, tortures, and Elysian fields, the notion of Elysian fields is not very satisfactory, and a great Homeric hero said he would rather be the meanest slave on earth than the greatest man in the Elysian fields. That, again, looks like a revival of old revelation corrupted a good deal, and so much corrupted that that great poet, who I suppose represented the faith of many others, put that speech into the mouth of Ajax in the Elysian fields. I agree with much that has been said by Dr. Wace and you, Sir Risdon Bennett. I cannot pass by altogether the reflections that have been made on Paley. He happens to be a pet of mine. I cannot help thinking that no man ever lived in modern times who did so much to advance the Christian religion as Paley. I was at Cambridge about the time he began to be sneered at, and that was coincident with the rising of a very different school which has passed through many names and phases. Paley was not hot or strong enough for them. He talked too much common sense, and relied on the Bible too much for them, and relied on tradition too little for them. And taking all those things into consideration, I am not surprised at many who call themselves authorities on religion reviling Paley. And when we are told that a modern Dean at Cambridge reviled him, I am still less surprised, because a certain tutor at another University spoke

still more disrespectfully of Butler, in language which I dare not quote, in the opposite direction. When Paley is accused, as Mr. Griffith has accused him, of dwelling on the doctrine of expediency, I must remind you that Paley was a man who expressed himself in a manner that might be misunderstood. He said short, sharp things, and people may take up and use a single term or sentence of his and say, "Paley only believed in expediency." But see what he meant by it. I will not quote from him now; but go home and read, and you will find that it is very different to what is commonly called expediency. I suppose you all agree that it is expedient to believe in Christianity, and Paley said so, and he would soon satisfy you that he is right; but it shows the mistake of taking words used originally in one sense and using them in another: one of the commonest logical fallacies.

There are sundry other points upon which Paley might be quoted, and which look like heresy, and perhaps absurdity, but that has arisen, as I say, from his short and sharp way of writing.

Dr. Wace has said all that is necessary in answer to Mr. Griffith about my not taking up more of the moral law; but at this time of night, in this cold weather, and at my age, I am not equal to entering upon that.

The HON. SECRETARY (Captain F. PETRIE).—With regard to the Egyptian "Ritual of the Dead," it will interest members to know that twenty years ago, when it began to be somewhat discussed among English Egyptologists, this Institute was the first to draw public attention to it; the late talented Mr. W. R. Cooper, who had specially devoted himself to its study, prepared a careful paper for this Institute entitled, "*Observations on the Serpent Myths of ancient Egypt*," in which he thoroughly described the teaching of the "Ritual of the Dead." This paper, valuable then, December, 1871, is so still, for Mr. Cooper's object in writing it was to place a complete and correct description of the subject before the world.

Rev. Dr. WACE.—Is the paper in our Transactions?

The HON. SECRETARY.—Yes, in the sixth volume, which is still in print.

The Meeting was then adjourned.

COMMUNICATIONS.

The following communications have been received in regard to the foregoing paper :—

The Rev. R. COLLINS, M.A., writes—

“ I have read the proof of Lord Grimthorpe’s paper with some interest. No doubt a man’s conviction of his responsibility to God depends upon his apprehension of God ; and the responsibility remains so long as there is the opportunity of that apprehension. Lord Grimthorpe’s contention is sound, that a conviction of the truths of Revelation must come before a conviction of future responsibility.

“ But perhaps in many minds there is a question that is needed to be met, as to the causes that lead up to our actions : are any of them the result of causes over which we have no real control ? If it be so, there can scarcely be responsibility. Many questions are involved here. Responsibility means that a man must be able to know his actions as his own, the result of his own will ; he must also be in possession of a knowledge and sound judgment, as to whether the actions are right or wrong. And even when there is not sound knowledge there may be responsibility in not taking advantage of opportunities of obtaining knowledge. Now the general sanity of mankind should be enough, perhaps, to prove their responsibility. But the difficulty will be in a certain class of minds in regard to the actual nature of the will ; with those, for instance, who regard will as a mere ‘ conflict between two sets of ideal motor changes which generally tend to become real, and one of which eventually does become real ’ ; in other words, as something quite different from a voluntary and original determination of a being who is an originating free agent. The real nature of the recipient of a revelation from God, as well as the fact of the revelation itself, seems to me to be a necessary part of the groundwork of a discussion on this subject, if the object be to meet the actual difficulties that exist in some minds as to the nature of human responsibility.

“The motto over the doors of the old Temple at Delphi might well be inscribed still on prominent places farther west. No doubt many hold loose views as to human responsibility, because they refuse to believe in a divine revelation ; but I think there is equally no doubt that there are those whose belief as to this subject is vitiated by a false view of man as man, and of his relation to the universe itself.”

Dr. D. BIDDLE, the author of *Ratio Rationis*, referred to by Lord Grimthorpe in the 4th page of his paper, sends “A summary of what Paley has said on the subject under discussion, and his own words in refutation thereof”:—

“Our next instance shall be taken from Paley’s celebrated disquisition on a *moral sense*, its existence in man or otherwise, given in the work on Moral Philosophy (Book I., Chap. 5). He begins by giving the case of Caius Toranius, who betrayed his own father to arrest and death ; and, after depicting the deed in all its malignity, he says, ‘The question is, whether, if this story were related to the wild boy caught some years ago in the woods of Hanover, or to a savage without experience, and without instruction, cut off in his infancy from all intercourse with his species, and, consequently, under no possible influence of example, authority, education, sympathy, or habit ; whether such a one would feel, upon the relation, any degree of that sentiment of disapprobation of Toranius’ conduct which we feel or not ?’ And that we may be in no doubt as to what he considers to be the matter in dispute, he further says, ‘They who maintain the existence of a moral sense ; of innate maxims ; of a natural conscience ; that the love of virtue and the hatred of vice are instinctive, or the perception of right and wrong intuitive (all which are only different ways of expressing the same opinion), affirm that he would. They who deny the existence of a moral sense, &c., affirm that he would not.’ After saying that ‘what would be the event can only be judged of from probable reasons,’ he proceeds in the most lucid language to give the various reasons adduced on either side. Thus, the one party assert that a certain approbation of noble deeds and a corresponding condemnation of vice, are instantaneous and without deliberation ; and also uniform and universal. But the other side show that nearly every form of vice has at some time or in some country been countenanced by public opinion, even by philosophers and others in high position ; that we ourselves do not perfectly agree as to what is right and what is wrong ; and that the general though not

universal approval of certain lines of conduct may be accounted for in various ways. For instance, 'having experienced at some time, a particular conduct to be beneficial to ourselves, or observed that it would be so, a sentiment of approbation rises up in our minds, which sentiment afterwards accompanies the idea or mention of the same conduct, although the private advantage which first excited it no longer exist.' By these means the custom of approving certain actions *commenced*: it is kept up by authority, by imitation, by inculcation, by habit. Besides, say they, none of the so-called *innate maxims* are absolutely and universally true, but all *bind* to circumstances. Thus, veracity, which seems, if any be, a natural duty, is excused in many cases towards an enemy, a thief, or a madman; and so with the obligation to keep a promise. Nothing is so soon made as a maxim: Aristotle laid down, as a fundamental and self-evident maxim, that nature intended barbarians to be slaves. 'Upon the whole,' says Paley, 'it seems to me, either that there exist no such instincts as compose what is called the moral sense, or that they are not now to be distinguished from prejudices and habits; on which account they cannot be depended upon in moral reasoning; that is, it is not a safe way of arguing, to assume certain principles as so many dictates, impulses, and instincts of nature, and then to draw conclusions from these principles, as to the rectitude or wrongness of actions, independent of the tendency of such actions, or of any other considerations whatever'; and he finishes by dismissing the question as of no concern except to the curious."

"But a very different complexion is put upon the matter by a careful classification of the chief terms. *Morals* may be divided into our own and other people's, and under both these heads we may place on one side *overt acts, habits, &c.*, and on the other side, what are summed up under the designation of *motives*—those secret sprigs of thought and action which may be inferred, but cannot be perceived, by outsiders. These motives act in the higher regions of the being's nature, in those parts which are in immediate relation with the sentient power, and they produce an impression, agreeable or otherwise, according to their harmony or discord with what the being himself accepts as *right*. As the rain-drops descend upon the sides of a mountain, and, percolating through the several strata, reach the central reservoir whence the streams receive their supply, and as the set of the strata determines in great measure the particular side of the mountain on which the spring will appear, so a man's deeds are the resultants of the various influences brought to bear upon him, and, in his reaction upon the outer world, he is able, by his Will, to determine more or less the character of his acts. It is at this juncture that the conscience comes in, its province being to perceive the equality or inequality of a nascent act to the being's accepted standard of right, that is, to the degree of *light* he possesses. If, at the critical

moment, temptation prevail, a painful impression is produced, but, if the temptation be withstood and overcome, the result is pleasing. In these respects the moral sense is like the other senses, which perceive equality or inequality in the things which concern them, and produce corresponding impressions. But the conscience or moral sense of one man is not concerned with the overt acts, much less the motives, of another man. The overt acts of others may be judged of by the Reason, and, if good, followed, if bad, shunned; but it must not be forgotten that what is good, or at least harmless, for one man, may be extremely blameworthy in another. The rules that suit everybody are broad indeed. Caius Toranius may have been, and probably was, the greatest blackguard imaginable; but to reprobate his conduct will not mend matters for me. The question for *my* conscience is, how far *my* present conduct tallies with *my* present light. Moreover, the moral sense can be blunted and destroyed, or educated and refined, much as any other. This and various circumstances concur to produce at different times, and in different localities, habits and customs which differ greatly on the score of morality. But to deny the existence of a moral sense on this account, is like denying the sense of hearing, because the accepted music of one nation is discord and confusion to another; or like denying the sense of sight, because one man beholds beauty where another sees only so much canvas and paint."

The author of that paper adds, "I do not think Lord Grimthorpe means us to swallow Paley whole, simply because he was Senior Wrangler, the writer of several useful books, and a generally sound logician. Even at Cambridge, his influence has long passed its zenith, and to show how pendulums swing, the Dean of one of the Colleges there lately told me that he could hardly regard Paley in the light of a Christian—quite an undeserved aspersion.

"But to appeal to Scripture. If there be no authoritative principle in the natural man, how comes it that St. Paul in the text on which Bishop Butler's three sermons on Human Nature are based, speaks of those who, having not the law, 'do by nature the things contained in the law,' of the 'work of the law written in their hearts,' of their 'conscience bearing witness,' and their 'thoughts accusing or else excusing one another.' That which is chiefly condemned is, 'holding the truth in unrighteousness.' But if the conscience were infallible, St. Paul would not have spoken of doing a thing 'ignorantly in unbelief' as a reason for obtaining mercy, nor would Christ Himself have foretold that certain persons would think they were 'doing God service' in persecuting His Church.

"At the same time, as I have elsewhere said, the only moral sentiment with which, by nature or grace, we are endowed, excepting that which though higher in degree we have in common with the beasts, is to be found in the struggle described by St. Paul: 'The flesh lusteth against

the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh, for these are contrary the one to the other, in order that ye may not do the things that ye would.' This is the influence of God in the hearts of His people. The natural conscience is only a higher degree of the moral censor possessed by a *dog*, who, when caught stealing a tempting bone, disappears with his tail between his legs."

ORDINARY MEETING.*

SIR GEORGE GABRIEL STOKES, BART., M.P., V.P.R.S.,
IN THE CHAIR.

The Minutes of the last Meeting were read and confirmed, and the following Elections were announced :—

LIFE MEMBER :—The Rev. Henry Lansdell, D.D., M.R.A.S., F.R.G.S., &c.,
London.

MEMBERS :—Professor A. S. Carrier, B.A., United States ; Professor J. B. Sears, United States ; Professor J. Harry Deems, United States.

LIFE ASSOCIATES :—Rev. T. B. Tress, New South Wales ; S. Taylor, Esq.,
Cambridge.

ASSOCIATES :—F. Sessions, Esq., M.R.A.S., F.R.G.S., Gloucester ; Alan Lambert, Esq., London.

HON. CORRESPONDING MEMBER :—J. Theodore Bent, Esq., Mashonaland.

The publication of the incomplete paper read on this occasion is necessarily delayed.

* Feb. 2, 1891.