



Immortality.

By R. H. Horne.

What is this Immortality,
This dazzling prism beyond the range
of Time?

Far as my brain can climb,
Then, struggling on—and shimmering
back to me.

It is not possible to gain
A truthful comprehension of this tho't,
This dream so god-like and un-sane,
Fearing, resisting, hating to be naught.

Would not a million years,
In rising circles, satisfy man's hope?
Ten millions, then, of life midst dying
spheres—

Wouldst thou still cry "Give me yet
wider scope"?

We know not what we crave—
We plunge through wordy midnights
of the mind

And all because we dread our need-
ful grave,
Seeking to reconstruct the laws de-
signed.

What has the best man done—
What could the best that ever lived
e'er do

To justify a rank with Star and Sun?
Nay more, for they may end when
dates fall due.

Theology Explains Nothing.

By Jean Meslier

If we would believe the adherents of religion, nothing could be explicable in the world without it; nature would be a continual enigma; it would be impossible for man to comprehend himself. But, at the bottom, what does this religion explain to us? The more we examine it, the more we find that theological notions are fit but to perplex all our ideas; they change all into mysteries; they explain to us difficult things by impossible things. Is it, then, explaining things to attribute them to unknown agencies, to invisible powers, to immaterial causes? Is it really enlightening the human mind when, in its embarrassment, it is directed to the "depths of the treasures of divine wisdom," upon which they tell us it is in vain to turn our bold regards? Can the divine nature, which we know nothing about, make us understand man's nature, which we find so difficult to explain?

Ask a Christian philosopher what is the origin of the world. He will answer that God created the universe. What is God? We do not know anything about it. What is it to create? We have no idea of it! What is the cause of pestilences, famines, wars, sterility, inundations, earthquakes? It is God's wrath. What remedies can pre-

vent these calamities? Prayers, sacrifices, processions, offerings, ceremonies, are, we are told, the true means to disarm Celestial fury. But why is heaven angry? Because men are wicked. Why are men wicked? Because their nature is corrupt. What is the cause of this corruption? It is, a theologian of enlightened Europe will reply, because the first man was seduced by the first woman to eat an apple which his God had forbidden him to touch. Who induced this woman to do such a folly? The devil. Who created the devil? God! Why did God create this devil destined to pervert the human race? We know nothing about it; it is a mystery hidden in the bosom of the diety.

Does the earth revolve around the sun? Two centuries ago a devout philosopher would have replied that such a thought was blasphemy, because such a system could not agree with the holy book, which every Christian reveres as inspired by the diety himself. What is the opinion today about it? Notwithstanding the divine inspiration, the Christian philosophers finally concluded to rely upon evidence rather than upon the testimony of their inspired books.

What is the hidden principle of the actions and of the motions of the human body? It is the soul. What is a soul? It is a spirit. What is a spirit? It is a substance which has neither form, color, expansion nor parts. How can we conceive of such a substance? How can it move a body? We know nothing about it. Have brutes souls? The Carthusian assures you that they are machines. But do we not see them act, feel, and think in a manner which resembles that of men? This is a pure illusion, you say. But why do you deprive the brutes of souls, which without understanding it, you attribute to men? It is that the souls of the brutes would embarrass our theologians, who, content with the power of frightening and damning the immortal souls of men, do not take the same interest in damning those of the brutes. Such are the puerile solutions which philosophy, always guided by the leading-strings of theology, was obliged to bring forth to explain the problems of the physical and moral world.

Rewards of Conformity.

By F. L. Oswald.

There is a tradition that the ancient Thessalians made it a rule that the guests of their banquets must get drunk on pain of expulsion. To let anyone remain sober, they argued, would not be just to the befuddled majority, of whose condition he might be tempted to take all sorts of advantage. If the evils of drunkenness were undeserved afflictions, it would certainly be true that sobriety would give an individual an almost unfair advantage over the rest of his fellowmen. He would be an archer trying his skill against hoodwinked rivals, a runner challenging the speed of shackled competitors. There is not a mechanical or industrial avocation in which sobriety does not give a man the advantage which health and freedom confer over crippling disease. For the baleful effects of intemperance are by no means limited to the moments of actual intoxication, but react on the half-lucid intervals, and even on the after years of the reformed toper. Temperance, in the widest sense, of abstinence from unfit food and drink, would be the best gift which the faries could bestow on a favorite child, for the blessing of frugal habits includes almost all other blessings whatever. Spontaneous gaiety, the sunshine of the unclouded soul, is dimmed by the influence of the first poison-habit, and the regretful retrospects of the "lost paradise of childhood" are founded chiefly on the contrast of poison-engendered distempers with the moral and physical health of earlier years. Temperance prolongs that sunshine to the evening of life. By temperance alone the demon of life-weariness can be kept at bay in times of fiercest tribulation. Undimmed eyes can more easily recognize the gleam of sunshine behind the clouds. The prisoners of the outlawed Circassian insurgents admitted that, in spite of hunger, hardships, and constant danger, their captors contrived to enjoy life better than their enemies in the brandy-reeking abundance of their headquarters. The myth of the Lotus-eaters described a nation of vegetarians who passed life so pleasantly that visitors refused to leave them, and renounced their native lands. The religion of Mohammed makes abstinence from intoxicating drinks a chief duty of a true believer, and that law alone has prevented the physical degeneration of his followers. With all their mental sloth and the enervat-

ing influence of their harem life, the Turks are still the finest representatives of physical manhood. At the horse fairs of Bucharest I saw specimens of their broad-shouldered, proud-eyed rustics, whose appearance contrasted strangely with that of the sluggish boors and furtive traffickers of the neighboring natives. After twelve hundred years of exhaustive wars, alternating with periods of luxury and tempting wealth, the descendants of the Arabian conquerors are still a hardy, long-lived race, physically far superior to the rum-drinking foreigners of their coast towns. For more than six hundred years the temperate Moriscos held their own in war and peace against all nations of Christendom. Their Semitic descent gave them no natural advantage over their Caucasian rivals; but they entered the arena of life with clear eyes and unpalsied hearts, and in an age of universal superstition made their country a garden of science and industry. Their cities offered a refuge to the scholars and philosophers of three continents and in hundreds of pitched battles their indomitable valor prevailed against the wine-inspired heroism of their adversaries.

Frugality has cured diseases which defied all other remedies. For thousands of reformed gluttons it has made life worth living, after the shadows of misery already threatened to darken into the gloom of approaching night. Luigi Cornaro, a Venetian nobleman of the sixteenth century, had impaired his health by gastronomic excesses till his physicians despaired of his life, when, as a last resort, he resolved to try a complete change of diet. His father, his uncles, and two of his brothers had all died before the attainment of their fiftieth year; but Luigi determined to try conclusions with the demon of unnaturalism, and at once reduced his daily allowance of meat to one-tenth of the usual quantity, and his wine to a stint barely sufficient to flavor a cup of Venetian cistern water. After a month of his new regimen he regained his appetite. After ten weeks he found himself able to take long walks without fatigue, and could sleep without being awakened by nightmare horrors. At the end of a year all the symptoms of chronic indigestion had left him, and he resolved to make the plan of his cure the rule of his life. That life was prolonged for a century—forty years of racking disease, followed by sixty years of unbroken health, undimmed clearness of mind, unclouded content. Habitual abstinence from unnatural food and drink saves the trials of constant self-control and the alternative pangs of repentance. "Blessed are the pure, for they can follow their inclinations with impunity" —Bible of Nature.