

trolled by fear, or beggars governed by rewards—by alms.

Right and wrong exist in the nature of things. Murder was just as criminal before as after the promulgation of the ten commandments.

8. Many of the clergy, some editors and some writers of letters who have answered me have said that suicide was the worst of crimes—that a man should better murder somebody else than himself. One clergyman gives as a reason for this statement that the suicide dies in an act of sin, and, therefore, he had better kill another person. Probably he would commit a less crime if he would murder his wife or mother. I do not see that it is any worse to die than to live in sin. To say that it is not as wicked to murder another as yourself seems absurd. The man about to kill himself wishes to die. Why is it better for him to kill another man, who wishes to live?

To my mind it seems clear that you had better injure yourself than another. Better be a spendthrift than a thief. Better throw away your own money than steal the money of another. Better kill yourself if you wish to die than murder one whose life is full of joy.

The clergy tell us that God is everywhere, but that it is one of the greatest possible crimes to rush into his presence. It is wonderful how much they know about God and how little about their fellow-men. Wonderful the amount of their information about other worlds and how limited is their knowledge of this. There may or may not be an infinite being; I neither affirm or deny. I am honest enough to say that I do not know. I am candid enough to admit that the question is beyond the limitations of my mind. Yet I think I know as much on that subject as another human knows or ever knew, and that is nothing. I do not say that there is not another world, another life, neither do I say that there is. I say that I do not know. It seems to me that every sane and honest man must say the same. But if there be an infinitely good God and another world, then the infinitely good God will be just as good to us in that world as he is in this. If this infinitely good God loves his children in this world he will love them in another. If he loves a man when he is alive he will not hate him the instant he is dead.

If we are the children of an infinitely wise and powerful God, he knew exactly what we would do—the temptations that we could and could not withstand; knew exactly the effect that everything would have upon us; knew under what circumstances we would take our lives—and produced such circumstances himself. It is perfectly apparent that there are many people incapable by nature of bearing the burdens of life, incapable of preserving their mental poise in stress and strain of disaster, disease and loss, and who, by failure, by misfortune and want are driven to despair and insanity, in whose darkened minds there comes, like a flash of lightning in the night, the thought of death, a thought so strong, so vivid, that all fear is lost, all ties broken, all duties, all obligations, all hopes forgotten, and naught remains except a fierce and wild desire to die. Thousands and thousands become moody, melancholy, brood upon loss of money, of friends, until reason abdicates and frenzy takes possession of the soul. If there be an infinitely wise and powerful God, all this was known to him from the beginning, and he so created things, established relations, put in operation causes and effects that all that has happened was the necessary result of his own acts.

9. Nearly all who have tried to answer what I said have been exceedingly careful to misquote me and then answer something that I never uttered. They have declared that I have advised people who were in trouble, somewhat annoyed, to kill themselves; that I have told men who have lost their money, who had failed in business, who were not in good health, to kill themselves at once, without taking into consideration any duty that they owed to wives, children, friends or society.

No man has a right to leave his wife to fight the battle alone if he is able to help. No man has a right to desert his children if he can possibly be of use. As long as he can add to the comfort of those he loves, as long as he can stand between wife and misery, between child and want, as long as he can be of use, it is his duty to remain. I believe in the cheerful view, in looking at the sunny side of things, in bearing with fortitude the evils of life, in struggling against adversity, in finding the fuel of laughter even in disaster, in having confidence in to-morrow, in finding the pearl of joy amid the flints and chards, and in changing by the alchemy of patience even evil things to good. I believe in the gospel of cheerfulness, of courage and good nature.

Of the future I have no fear. My fate is the fate of the world, of all that live. My anxieties are about this life, this world. About

the phantoms called Gods and their impossible hells, I have no care, no fear.

I neither affirm nor deny, I hope for all of the children of men. I have never denied the existence of another world, nor the immortality of the soul. For many years I have said that the idea of immortality, that like a sea has ebbed and flowed in the human heart, with its countless waves of hope and fear, beating against the shores and rocks of times and fate, was not born of any book, nor of any creed, nor of any religion. It was born of human affection and will continue to ebb and flow beneath the mists and clouds of doubt and darkness as long as love kisses the lips of death.

What I deny is the immortality of pain, the eternity of torture. After all, the instinct of self preservation is strong. People do not kill themselves on the advice of friends or enemies, all wish to be happy, to enjoy life, all wish for food and raiment and friends, and as long as life gives joy the idea of self-destruction never enters the human mind.

The oppressors, the tyrants, those who trample on the rights of others, those who put wages below the living point, the ministers who make people insane by preaching the dogma of eternal pain, these are the men who drive the weak, the suffering and the helpless down to death.

It will not do to say that God has appointed a time for each to die. Of this there is and there can be no evidence. There is no evidence that any God sides with the right or helps the weak, protects the innocent or rescues the oppressed. Even the clergy admit that their God, through all ages, has allowed his friends, his worshipers, to be imprisoned, tortured and murdered by his enemies. Such is the protection of God. Billions of prayers have been uttered. Has one been answered? Who sends plague, pestilence and famine? Who bids the earthquake devour and the volcano to overwhelm?

10. Again I say that it is wonderful to me, that so many men, so many women, endure and carry their burdens to the natural end; that so many, in spite of "age, ache and penury," guard with trembling hands the spark of life; that prisoners for life toil and suffer to the last; that the helpless wretches in poor-houses and asylums cling to life; that the exiles in Siberia, loaded with chains, scarred with the knout, live on; that the incurables, whose every breath is a pang, and for whom the future has only pain, still fear the merciful touch and clasp of death.

It is but a few steps at most from the cradle to the grave—a short journey. The suicide hastens, shortens the path, loses the afternoon, the twilight, the dusk of life's day, loses what he does not want, what he cannot bear. In the tempest of despair, in the blind fury of madness, or in the calm of thought and choice, the beleaguered soul finds the security of death.

Let us leave the dead where nature leaves them. We know of nothing of any realm that lies beyond the horizon of unknown, beyond the end of life. Let us be honest with ourselves and others. Let us pity the suffering, the despairing, the men and women hunted and pursued by grief and shame, by misery and want, by chance and fate, until their only friend is death.

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