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ESSAYS AND REVIEWS.

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TO THE READER.



It will readily be understood that the Authors of the ensuing Essays are responsible for their respective articles only. They have written in entire independence of each other, and without concert or comparison.

The Volume, it is hoped, will be received as an attempt to illustrate the advantage derivable to the cause of religious and moral truth, from a free handling, in a becoming spirit, of subjects peculiarly liable to suffer by the repetition of conventional language, and from traditional methods of treatment.



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THE EDUCATION OF THE WORLD.

IN a world of mere phenomena, where all events are bound to one another by a rigid law of cause and effect, it is possible to imagine the course of a long period bringing all things at the end of it into exactly the same relations as they occupied at the beginning. We should, then, obviously have a succession of cycles rigidly similar to one another, both in events and in the sequence of them. The universe would eternally repeat the same changes in a fixed order of recurrence, though each cycle might be many millions of years in length. Moreover, the precise similarity of these cycles would render the very existence of each one of them entirely unnecessary. We can suppose, without any logical inconsequence, any one of them struck out, and the two which had been destined to precede and follow it brought into immediate contiguity.

This supposition transforms the universe into a dead machine. The lives and the souls of men become so indifferent, that the annihilation of a whole human race, or of many such races, is absolutely nothing. Every event passes away as it happens, filling its place in the sequence, but purposeless for the future. The order of all things becomes, not merely an iron rule, from which nothing can ever swerve, but an iron rule which guides to nothing and ends in nothing.

Such a supposition is possible to the logical understanding; it is not possible to the spirit. The human heart refuses to believe in a universe without a purpose. To the spirit, all things that exist must have a purpose, and nothing can pass away till that purpose be fulfilled. The lapse of time is no exception to this demand. Each moment of time, as it passes,