

vicious. Indeed, they are in themselves evils of the worst kind; and not only so, but they are connected incidentally with scarcely any thing but evil, though sometimes, as theologians say, overruled for good.

Take next the common operations of nature, which, of course, have no moral character. Their leading design, as we have already seen, is to produce good to sentient beings; but incidentally they bring much evil. Food is intended for gustatory enjoyment and for nourishment; but it is often the occasion of severe suffering, and becomes an active poison. Gravity is intended to hold the material universe in a proper balance, and to attach every moving thing on earth to the surface; but it occasions a vast number of accidents, and a vast amount of suffering. Water and fire are of immense direct benefit; yet the first buries a vast amount of property and life in its bosom, and the latter is scarcely less injurious in its incidental effects. Indeed, what natural agency can be named, that is not armed with the power to do evil?

But the same principle extends also to benevolent actions. With our views of divine benevolence, we might expect that virtuous conduct would never be coupled with evil. But this notion does not accord with facts; for the incidental evils connected with benevolent action are often the most painful in life. Indeed, in how many instances has doing good been rewarded by the loss of life, and under all the aggravations of suffering which malignant ingenuity could invent! And the fact has been, that those whose motives in doing good were the purest have suffered the most. Witness the life and the death of Him who knew no sin, and yet was led as a lamb to the slaughter. Since wickedness in this world is sometimes allowed to have the power of annoying goodness, we might expect that the more disinterested the latter, the more malignant and persecuting would be the former, because its own deformity is made more manifest.

But the incidental evils connected with benevolent action are not limited to those resulting from the malice of the wicked. If, for instance, some huge system of iniquity has become incorporated into the very texture of society, benevolence cannot root it out without producing many a severe laceration of individuals, who are incidentally connected with the system, but to whom no blame attaches. The history of the efforts