

demand a reason; sheer hatred of the body is sufficient. Again 'The carnal mind is enmity against God'; suppress it; faith and obedience are enough; reason will surely destroy them and the soul as well.

"Now, even those unfortunate persons, who, like myself, not being Christians, cannot assent to so much, can at least admit that some one man, in some one strange circumstance, may rightly lay violent hands upon himself. Then who is to judge of such a circumstance? Is the man to consult his lawyer, or to ask for a referendum? Absurd, you will agree. Then what is left but a private judgment? And if it seem good and sufficient cause for self-murder that 'I am idle; also, it is true, I have no more money,' as in the case of Prince Florizel at the Suicide Club, who shall judge me? You may disagree; you may call me mad and wicked and all manner of names; I can do the same to you with equal right, if I wish to be discourteous. But I can imagine many a situation, incomprehensible to any but its central figure, which would justify such an act in all men's eyes if they understood the case. Every man is commander-in-chief of his own life; and his decisions must always be taken in the sanctuary of his own soul. The man who goes to others for advice abdicates his godhead, except so far as he does it merely because he wishes to hear the case argued by another. The final decision is his own responsibility; he cannot really evade it, even if he would, except by a subservience and slavishness which is more horrible than any suicide of the body could be to those who most object to it."

"Of course, the law forbids suicide," urged the young man, puffing violently at his seventh cigarette, "on the ground that a man owes service to the King."

"It is a convenient weapon, like religion itself, and all its other precepts, of the tyrant against the slave. To admit this argument is to confess yourself a slave. It is a wise weapon to have forged, moreover. If one hundred workmen were to commit suicide simultaneously, instead of starting silly strikes, the social revolution would arrive that day. I did not ask the King for permission to be born; I came here without my own volition; at least allow me the privilege to depart when I please! In the Middle Ages the necessity of preventing suicide was so well understood that they devised horrible and ridiculous maltreatments of the body—as if any sensible suicide would care. Nowadays populations are larger, and it does not matter so much. The tyrants rely on silly superstitious terrors. I am supposed, by the way, to have a great deal of what is called occult knowledge, and when I make a magical disappearance, as I do now and then, without warning, my most devoted disciples always console my anxious paramours with the remark that I can't have killed myself because I 'know only too well what the penalties are.' It would be more sensible to retort, 'Anyhow I bet he hasn't killed himself for your sake, you cuckoo!' But my disciples have no sense; they prefer to utter pompous and blasphemous nonsense, and to defame my character. James Thomson makes Bradlaugh say, in that stupefying sermon:

'This little life is all we must endure;
The grave's most holy peace is ever sure;

We fall asleep and never wake again;
Nothing is of us but the mouldering flesh
Whose elements dissolve and merge afresh
In earth, air, water, plants, and other men.'—
that sermon which concludes on the grand diapason:

'If you would not this poor life fulfill,
Then you are free to end it when you will,
Without the fear of waking after death.'

I know of nothing to reply to that. I tell you on my magical honor that it is so. I will admit that I know of states of Being other than that familiar to you as a man. But does the ego persist after death? My friend, you know very well that it does not persist after one breath of the nostrils! The most elementary fact in Buddhist psychology is that! Then (to pursue Gotama into his jungle) "What can be gained, and what lost? Who can commit suicide, and how?" But all this metaphysics is more unsatisfying than chopped hay to an alderman. I counsel you, my young friend, to avoid it in your next incarnation, if you have one. (It doesn't matter to you whether you have or not, since you won't know it. What has posterity done for you, anyway?) At least let us avoid it for the few brief moments that remain to us. To revert to the question of the right to make away with yourself—if it be denied that you have the right to end your own life, then, *à fortiori*, I think you must admit, you have no right to end another's. Then you should be in revolt against a government whose authority rests in the last resort on the right of capital punishment. You are particeps criminis every time a murderer is hanged; you deny the right of peoples to make war, and possibly that of doctors to practice medicine. You have excellent reasons for hanging and shooting others, and do so, by your own hand or another's, without a qualm. Surely then you are on unassailable ground when you sacrifice a victim to Thanatos not against his will but at his express desire. The only objection I know to allowing doctors to offer a fuller euthanasia to hopeless sufferers than is now permitted is that it might facilitate murder. Well, do any further objections to your very sensible decision occur to you?"

"People say it's cowardly," ventured the young man, who was now enjoying a cigar, slipped to him by the adept, and lit with the acquiescence of one half-hypnotized.

"Shame, foul shame!" returned the Master with indignation, as he started to his feet and began to pace the path to and fro in his honest wrath. "Shame on the slanderers who try to mask their own cowardice by branding with that stigma of indelible infamy the bravest act that any man can do. Is not Death the Arch-Fear of Man? Do we not load with titles and honors and crosses and pensions the man who dares death even by taking the small chance of it offered in battle? Are we not all dragged piteously howling to the charnel? Is not the fear of death the foundation of religion, and medicine, and much of law, and many another form of fraud and knavery? But you, in perfectly cold blood, face this fiend calmly and manfully—you with no chance of temporary escape like the soldier or the man in the consulting-room—you who face a certainty when the rest of the world tremble at a chance—they call you coward! Why, death is such a fear that the very word is taboo in