

**THE MYSTERY OF
MATTER, AND OTHER
ESSAYS, PP. 1-54**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649340101

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

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BY
J. ALLANSON PICTON,
AUTHOR OF "NEW THEORIES AND THE OLD FAITH."

CHEAPER ISSUE, WITH A NEW PREFACE.

London:
MACMILLAN AND CO.
1878.

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ROBERT MACLEOD, PLISTER, GLASGOW.

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PREFACE TO THE CHEAPER ISSUE.

THE five years that have elapsed since the first publication of the following essays have given many indications of the rapid increase of that mood of mind to which it was thought they might possibly give a little help. This mood is not one of irreverence or of unsusceptibility to spiritual inspirations. It is rather a painful sense of incongruity between the alleged history of revelation and the actual facts of universal evolution, which, fragmentary though our knowledge be, do more and more impress upon us the conviction that they are "parts and proportions of one wondrous whole." There is no such schism between religion and intellect as that which characterized the last century. On the contrary, side by side with a growing independence of traditional creeds, there is a more marked tendency than the

world has ever known before to associate the emotions of religion with the discoveries of science. To those whose only notion of alliance between religion and science consists in the futile compromise of a "Bridgewater Treatise" this may appear a bold assertion. But those to whom the most obvious emotion of religion is reverential awe, and its chief fruits self-subordination, uncompromising truth, and charity, will gladly allow that science, as represented by its most distinguished masters, is increasingly affected by the inspirations of the spiritual life.

This spirit, too, descends upon the undistinguished crowds whose eyes are opened by the teaching of these masters to the actual order of the world. In the columns of many periodicals, circulating mainly amongst religious circles, there is unmistakable proof that the two movements mentioned above show themselves, with more or less force, in almost all sects alike. The letters from correspondents reveal a prodigious ferment going on in the minds of a class who twenty-five years ago were, in regard to religious opinion, as placid and clear as one of Professor Tyndall's solutions in the germless Alpine air. But some unlooked-for breeze

has disturbed their serenity. It has borne amongst them the germs floating in another atmosphere, and the inevitable process has begun. Yet this also is to be noted, that very rarely indeed is there any symptom of scornful scepticism. These people are not less religious, but much more so than when their cosmogony was that of Moses, and their vista of human development was blocked by the deluge. Their consciousness of God is not diminished, but enlarged. They find Him where once they sought Him not. Like Jacob, they see in common skies an angels' ladder, and in a mountain boulder an altar of the Eternal.

But this new wine of a more spiritual religion cannot be kept in the old bottles manufactured by the early church councils. Sad rents in one and another definition create alarm for all the rest. And many, like the Sanhedrim of old, "wonder whereunto this will grow." That question cannot be answered, as some would have it, by drawing a hard and fast line at some minimum of metaphysical creed. What we want is, some method of interpreting the signs of the times which will open our eyes to what is in truth not