

its effect than later on, they are much more disposed to make mutual concessions. Will the victors of the European War strike *at once* while the iron is hot, and insist at the outset on the one paramount issue, the absolute prohibition of all wars? Such a decision would radiate through all further proceedings of the Peace Conference and greatly facilitate its work. By thus making a certainty of the most important question of all history, no matter how difficult and delicate matters of greater or less importance may be, the Conference of Paris will have assured its success in advance as the greatest and most beneficent influence that the world has ever experienced, just as the Peace of Westphalia was in its generation.

In the Peace Treaty of Westphalia were these words: "The hostilities that have taken place from the beginning of the late disturbances, in any place of whatsoever kind, by one side or the other, shall be forgotten and forgiven, so that neither party shall cherish enmity or hatred against, nor molest nor injure the other for any cause whatsoever." Will the peace treaty of Paris contain as generous and noble words, and stop all political wars forever, just as the Peace of Westphalia put an end to all religious wars?

Will the twentieth-century Christianity, with its supposed greater liberality and enlightenment, be as far-seeing, unselfish, and effective as the Christianity of the seventeenth century?

Let the Conference at Paris answer: Yes.

Just as the spread of education and knowledge has gradually liberated the intellect so as to undermine the ideas upon which religious wars were based, so a similar process of enlightenment may be necessary to cause political wars to cease.

THE ONLY DEMOCRAT.

BY FRANKLIN KENT GIFFORD.

AS my friends are forever wondering why I have spoiled a good metaphysician to make a bad political economist, and why my promised volume on "The Mystery of Matter" is not forthcoming, I shall give a brief account of the singular experience that worked this miracle, leaving the public to judge whether my friend Professor Spiegelmann is right or wrong in pronouncing me crazy. I shall merely note in passing that any one is crazy, in Professor Spiegelmann's opinion, who devotes his time to anything but meta-

physics, or ignores the obvious fact that the mystery of matter is the only practical question before the public.

I was sitting in my fine old colonial house in Belle View on the morning of the incident about to be narrated. And I may here take occasion to testify that nothing is so favorable to metaphysical research as a fine old colonial house with a magnificent sweep of lawn visible from the library windows, and the shadows of ancient elms athwart the summer sunshine. Let the house be presided over, as mine is, by a perfect wife with a comfortable fortune derived from a model grandfather (to whom be peace), and two as fine children as the world contains; and crown all with a coachman-chauffeur who does not drink, a cook who does not waste, blunder, or give notice, and two other servants to match, and any reasonable man is prepared to grapple with the mystery of matter.

The only drawback I knew of to my situation was the lunatic asylum about one mile distant; and this institution was so well-kept and beautiful for situation that on the whole it seldom occurred to me as a disadvantage.

Under these circumstances, with a good breakfast recently Fletcherized, I indited the following familiar sentence. I say "familiar" because, in one form or another, it has been indited now, I forget how many thousand times, and each time with the pride of discovery:

"The mystery of matter was never so near its solution as at the present time. The hypothesis of Monism is the latest skeleton key to be applied to the door which has thus far resisted all attempts. If mind and matter shall be demonstrated to be one in ultimate essence, the door of this mystery swings open at last, and we realize once and for all that Mind is simply the inner shrine of the Phenomenal Temple whose outer integument is Matter."

I was contemplating this paragraph with the customary pride and happy oblivion to the fact that it says nothing at all, when I heard a step on the veranda, and turned to behold a remarkable presence standing in the library door.

The presence was that of a magnificent old man with a patriarchal white beard, the front of Jove himself, or more accurately, of Walt Whitman, and an eye like Mars to threaten or command; and yet, I could hardly say why, I was instantly reminded of the neighboring asylum and its celebrated lunatic who called himself "the Almighty."

"You are quite right," said the Presence, graciously. "I commend your penetration. You see, I have looked into that last book

of yours, and so I just stepped out awhile to give myself a little intellectual diversion. Those asylum people over there are no crazier than most people, but of course there *is* such a thing as variety." He smiled jovially.

"Then you *are* . . .," I began, and paused, unable to pronounce that awful Name.

"The Almighty? Well, that's what they *call* me. As for myself, I don't like the expression. It bores me."

I stared in amazement at this imperturbable, Olympian calm, and forgot all courtesy for the moment.

"I hope I don't disturb you?" suggested the Presence, glancing at a chair.

"By no means!" I hastened to assure him. "Please do me the honor to accept this chair. I am very glad of your call. I have always wanted to meet you and ask a few questions about this curious world of ours."

The Almighty seated himself in the vast armchair which seemed to have been shaped expressly for his Olympian form, and directed his gaze to the open wood-fire which cheered the shadows of the great library, and dispelled the unseasonable chill of a sharp summer morning.

He created an impression of the most absolute simplicity. There was no nonsense about him, and no pretension, such as we somehow infer in deities. He merely sat with a pleased expression before the fire, and spread out his hands gratefully. "A fire is a nice thing, isn't it?" he said. "A little one," he added thoughtfully.

I was somehow reminded of a certain *big* fire that I had heard of in my youth, and experienced an uncanny thrill. The more surprised was I, therefore, at the Almighty's next words:

"How ungrateful of them to turn such a good friend into a symbol of—ah—discomfort!"

"Why—why—I thought you approved of the symbol?" I stammered.

"Yes, but you see, it has been overworked. Besides, it was intended for use in a hot climate; whereas, here, so near the North Pole, you know, I should think people would be more afraid of—well, the coal trust?"

As I owned a few good shares in coal, I was hardly prepared to accept the amendment. However, one is instinctively respectful to a lunatic. Besides, he might think it was his divine prerogative to destroy me.

"Not at all," said the Almighty, placidly, as if I had spoken aloud, "they will all tell you I am perfectly harmless."

"You are a mind-reader!" I ejaculated.

"Hm! If there is any mind to read. But candidly, you merely looked like all of them when I announce myself. They seem to think the next step ought to be their destruction. Possibly they know why?"

I was getting interested in this novel conception of a somewhat hackneyed character; and the Actor's next move set me gasping.

"You have some good cigars, I notice," he observed, nodding toward the mantelpiece.

"You don't *smoke*?" I exclaimed.

"Try me," said the Almighty.

I placed a jar of good Manilas at the left hand of the Presence, extended a lighted match, and experienced the awesome sensation of watching the Almighty light a cigar.

"You are going to join me, of course?" he remarked; and I hastened to take the hint, though not without a positive sense of taking an unwarranted liberty.

"Thank you," said the Presence. "After all, you men have some advantages."

"But I thought you were opposed to smoking?" I stammered.

"Who says so?"

"Why—why—certain friends of mine."

The Almighty smiled. "Your friends are excellent people; but because they are virtuous, shall there be no more cakes and—ah—cigars? Besides, it helps a fellow, I find. One small vice will make you more friends than twelve full-sized virtues."

I breathed a sigh of relief. Really, it was very handsome of the Almighty to come down to the human level like this. "And you are really the—the—" I paused, still unable to pronounce that awful Name.

"Oh, say it, if you want to," encouraged the Olympian One. "As for me, I'm not partial to the expression. It bores me. Besides, who knows that there is any Almighty? Who says he is almighty?"

"But surely, the Bible. . . ." I remonstrated.

The Almighty looked askance. "You should quote authorities that you respect," said he, with a touch of severity. "Of course those primitive Hebrews would naturally use that title. Which proves what? Nothing, except that they were power-worshippers, like the moderns."

I smiled at the dismay of certain clerical friends of mine, could they but hear this lunacy. "That makes rather short work of theology, doesn't it?" I ventured.

"Theology! Hum! Theology may not tell you much about God, but it tells a lot about theologians. Some day, the enlightened peoples will dig in the old Bibles like gold-mines half worked; but meanwhile—you see!"

And reaching out an ironical finger, he wrote on the dusty cover of the Sacred Volume, under which, for safe-keeping, reposed certain manuscripts of mine. Why hadn't Mary Ann dusted that Bible in time?

"It makes a good paper-weight, doesn't it?" observed the assumed Author of the Work.

"The Bible is not the authority it used to be," I confessed, with decent regret.

"Oh well," said the Almighty, easily, "I've seen Bibles come and go. Yours will go too, before long."

"Mine?" said I, in blank bewilderment.

"Certainly. Your Spencer-Kant-Nietzsche-commercial Bible. It looks pretty infallible, just now; but I can see the rag-bag waiting for it."

Such blasphemy—and from the Almighty! "I should hope," said I with dignity, "that the results of great modern thinkers——"

"Oh, they were all great modern thinkers once; but you see what becomes of them,"—indicating his dusty autograph.

"But, your Majesty, . . ."

His Majesty looked annoyed, and objected mildly, "I really wish you wouldn't. I am a democrat. The only one there is," he added, with a gleam of irony such as Zeus might have cast at democratic Greece.

I suppose I looked astonished, for the Only Democrat went on:

"It really surprises me, sometimes, this belated talk about the King of Kings in a democratic age like this. I've nearly quit going to church, myself."

"What, you too?" I exclaimed.

"Certainly. Haven't you noticed it? How would you like to go and hear yourself worshiped?"

"Why, for my part, I could endure a little of it," I modestly confessed.

"A little! Yes, but this incessant deluge, when Isaiah told them better, centuries ago! I have no vanity that man can gratify.

Besides, if worship is what I'm after, I'd better swap places with John Smith."

"With *John Smith*?"

"Certainly; or John Anybody-with-the-money."

"But what are churches for?" I wondered in bewilderment.

"That's just what I've been wondering for some time. John doesn't need them. His worship goes right on, seven days in the week, church or no church."

"Why, as to that, John merely claims to be your Vicegerent, I believe."

"Vicegerent! Well, I admire his modesty," said the Only Democrat. "What do they take me for? I'd look pretty, wouldn't I, picking out that kind of vicegerent? Can't the fools see he is their choice, not mine?"

This sounded a trifle personal. Of course, any man may be allowed to feel like a fool in the presence of the Almighty; still, he hates to have it rubbed in; and I responded somewhat pointedly, "But surely, if this is your world. . . ."

"Mine, did you say? This world *mine*?"

"Why yes, isn't it?"

The Only Democrat stroked his beard and smoked thoughtfully. "Guess again," said he. "I always supposed it was John Smith's."

"John's world!" I ejaculated, appalled at the thought. "Well, but where did John get it?"

"Why, you boys handed it over to him, didn't you?"

I gasped in amazement. It all seemed so ridiculously simple! But I had him, yet! "And why," said I, sternly, "why were we such fools as to do such a thing?"

"Why shouldn't you, if you were such fools?"

Somehow, I resented this answer, and retorted with a sarcasm that I hoped would cut, "Oh, then, of course there is no help for it. Exactly what I have always believed!"

"Now just listen to that!" soliloquized the Almighty. "And yet this man is the creative principle incarnate, just as I am!"

"Oh, then you don't claim to have come down from heaven?"

"Down?—from heaven? What on earth do you mean by that?"

I felt childish and nonplussed, and suddenly realized that I didn't mean anything in particular.

"Very well, then, let us talk sense—before the keepers get here," resumed the Almighty. "True, there are higher stages of existence

than this one, difficult as it seems for this conceited age to realize it. You are really a very low type of animal, since you practise cannibalism and other things on that plane."

"What *we*—cannibalism?"

"Certainly. Didn't you know that? Well, the sooner you know it, the better."

"But the proof?" I insisted.

"Proof? Look at your moral maxims! Eat or be eaten! Struggle for existence! Law of survival! Ugh! Cannibals, cannibals!"

"But these are mere maxims," I retorted, flying to the defense of my race.

"Mere maxims! Didn't you know there is no such thing? A maxim is simply a concise statement of the way some one is behaving."

"It is possible that these maxims are—somewhat popular," I admitted. "But is that the whole story? What about our higher maxims; and what about all our prayers for light and leading?" I climaxed, marveling at my own orthodoxy.

"Prayers!—for things you don't want! Would you pay any attention to such twaddle?"

"But the real prayers? The natural longings of the human heart?"

"Well, who denies them? I? Not at all. What do people want that isn't right under their noses, if they had sense enough to grab it?"

"Then why not give them the sense?" I retorted, with some little shrewdness, I flattered myself.

"Give it to them? Did you ever try it? If there's one thing that human beings won't take as a gift, it's a grain of sense. Oh yes, I know what you *say*. You want more power and more knowledge; and at this minute, you have more than you know what to do with! If you'd make the first decent use of what you have, you couldn't help getting more. But no, you must whine and beg and bewail and call it prayer, or worse still, philosophy! It reminds me of the ass that died of starvation between two bundles of hay."

This sounded unjust and personal. "And why?" said I, accusingly. "Why are we—ah—in that animal's situation? After all, may not the pot reply to the potter, 'Why hast thou made me thus? What, did the hand then of the Potter shake?'" (I had always longed to get at the Almighty with that argument.)

"Ah yes, Omar's old-fashioned pot-theism!" said the Almighty, easily. "And Paul's too, as you suggest. 'The Ball no question makes of Ayes and Noes, but Right or Left as strikes the Player goes.' Despotism! Despotism! What a game of solitaire! I should think Omar would have guessed it *might* get tedious. Still, he made some good points on the Despot."

"Then you admit the justice of his insult: 'O Thou who Man of baser Earth didst make?'"

"Certainly. What do I care for these crockery gods? Let Omar smash them. More power to his arm, *I* say."

I stirred uneasily, feeling as if my prey were escaping me. "Still, you can hardly deny that having made us of the baser earth—"

The Almighty blushed and looked annoyed. "Made you? Baser earth? Nonsense! I thought you were an evolutionist? According to your own theory, you are only half-baked, if you'll excuse the vernacular."

It was my turn to blush, but my defense was ready. "In that case, you can hardly blame us, can you?"

"Blame you? Who's blaming you? Queer how you people set such a lot of store by blame! The only idea thus far seems to be, to smite somebody! As if *that* would do any good! What can you *do* about it: that is the question."

"God knows!" I ejaculated, "and he won't tell."

"Won't he! Man won't listen, you mean. Come, come, you've read history, and you know very well, the principal business of man thus far is chasing ideas off the earth with pitchforks. Now isn't that so?"

I was obliged to confess that something of the kind had happened.

"Something of the *kind*! Can you name a solitary idea that hasn't had to fight like a demon for centuries to get into the human head? No, Sir, not one. And that proves what an eager, inquiring, hospitable set you are."

"And how," I inquired, as civilly as possible, for rising ire, "how, with this ingrained hostility to ideas, has mankind progressed at all?"

"*Now*," said the Almighty, "you have touched on a wonder that *is* a wonder. Creation, you may guess, was something of a job; but let me assure you, if ever the entire host of heaven feels like going to bed, it's when they have finally succeeded in getting an idea into the human skull."

As a human being, I resented the insult. "And what of inventors—finders of good ways—better ways?" I demanded with indignation. "Are these the imbeciles you refer to?"

"Ha!" cried the Almighty, eyes alight. "You are prepared to do them justice, at last! And how long since? Even now, what do you permit them to invent? Trumpery! Catch-penny toys for your immediate comfort! But let one of them come forward with a new and improved brand of democracy or honesty or mere decency, and you know very well what will happen. You will stick at nothing to gratify your spite. The primeval hatred of ideas is not out of you—remember that! The ideas are your only hope."

"Oh, give us up as a bad job," I advised. I was not sulky, but I was tired of this tongue-lashing.

"Now, now," checked the Almighty. "Don't be a theologian. Remember evolution. You know the saying: 'Man is the tadpole of an angel.' Well, what is the proper business of a tadpole: Metaphysics, or to get rid of his tail?"

"His *tail*?"

"Certainly, his tail. A sensible tadpole becomes a frog; but a fool tadpole dies with his tail on."

"I fail to perceive what that has to do with it" was my dignified rejoinder.

"To do with it? Why, nine tenths of human beings are fool tadpoles!"

"But an omnipotent Power...."

"There you go again! Omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, and all that kind of human hifalutinism! I tell you, it's these big words that make fool tadpoles of everybody."

"Then you would intimate that...."

"Certainly. I have learned a few things myself."

"You?" I exclaimed.

"Of course! Why not? Do you take me for an everlasting dunce?"

"But I thought you were om- —that is, we have always been told...."

The Almighty frowned. "The last enemy that shall be overcome is the theologian," said he. "And scientists are even worse, if possible. They know too much."

"Then, if you will allow me, what *have* you learned, for instance?" I inquired, with no little curiosity.

"To follow my nose," said the Almighty. And with that, he looked at me!

I suppose I merely stared, and the Almighty kindly explained: "Certainly, haven't you noticed it? Look at this thing they call evolution! Growth! Creation! Call it anything you like: it's all one to me."

"Well, but what of it?"

"What of it?" The Almighty surveyed me curiously. "And there are all those books!" he meditated, glancing at the well-lined walls. "Burn them," he added, "and guess again. Meanwhile, here is just a hint, if you are to take it. Evolution follows its nose; but you evolutionists do nothing of the kind, nine tenths of you. You merely sit down in the mud and start out to scrute the inscrutable. 'Why, mud?' you ask, and such tom-fool questions; and then you give some tom-fool answer, or else you throw up your hands and bemoan your fate, like Faust. What business have you with such folderol, when the only thing that concerns you at present is how to get out of the mud?"

"The mud again!"

"Certainly, the mud. If your ancestors hadn't crawled out of their mud, where would you be now? Suppose they had all sat down in the primeval wallow and tried to scrute the inscrutable? A pretty mess they'd made of it!"

"True," said I; "but we moderns...."

"Tut, tut, you're not out of it, either—not one of you; and therefore all your philosophies are mud-philosophies, and your gods are mud-gods, as Carlyle said. First get out of the mud; then things will look different."

For the life of me, I could not forbear a bland, superior smile. "And so," said I, "you would have us defer all transcendental matters till after the millennium!"

"Not at all," said the Almighty promptly. "There is no harm in your little guesses; only, they are not the life-and-death matter you imagine them. But meanwhile, what about the mud? Are you going to stay there forever, worshiping your mud-gods?"

"Your opinion of civilization appears to be not very exalted," I suggested.

"Civilization!" mused the Almighty. "The philosophers of the Eocene period talked about civilization. Fortunately, there were some of them that got out of the mud. Are you one of that kind: that is the question?"

Doubtless I stared again and wished the keepers would hurry up.

"No," said the Almighty. "I'm afraid not, your kind of mud is so comfortable! Excuse my frankness, but our time is short; and

courtesy, you know, is the ruin of conversation. And don't worry about the keepers, because they'll be here right away. As I was saying, you are one of those who are always trying to see over the horizon, instead of what's under your nose. You want to scute the inscrutable, and jump over to the end and see how the book turns out. That's possible with your books, but not with mine. Why, for all you know, I can't tell myself how it's going to turn out!"

"Professor Jones!" I exclaimed. "That is his idea, precisely! His last book throws out the daring speculation that the increasing free will in the universe invalidates the hypothesis of a foregone conclusion."

"Ah, there's a man, now!" said the Almighty, rubbing his hands. "If Jones would only devote himself to something worth while!"

I plunged into a warm defense of my friend, Professor Jones, his work, and its *raison d'être*, till the Almighty lifted his hand for quarter.

"You show friendship, at least," he conceded: "and that's something, in a world like this. If I were Jones, I should be pleased. I admit, there are worse men than Jones: and anyhow, he follows his nose."

"Still, if the All-ruling Principle is conscious of itself. . . ."

"Oh these question-begging epithets! All-ruling, in a world ruled by John Smith! Still on the inscrutable, you see! In other words, if we could only do next week's work, or next eon's, instead of to-day's, how nice it would be!"

"If you refer to metaphysics," said I warmly.

"I refer to a fact. A whole lot of you want to understand all mysteries and all knowledge before you have mastered the A B C."

"Such as?"

"Such as how to get rid of cannibalism. As if a philosopher who has just dined on his brother could ever be anything but a fool!"

I mused on this clear evidence of lunacy. What in the world could he mean by *cannibalism*?

"What do I mean by it? Well, what do you do for the poor, in return for what they do for you?" said the Almighty, sternly.

"What they do for *us*?"

"Certainly. They support you, don't they?"

"Why, I always supposed—that is to say, there are four of them whom I provide with work in this family."

"You mean, you let them take care of you."

"Why, I suppose—well, of course,—that is to say—"

The Almighty lifted his hand for silence. "The first thing to do, in getting on with a conversation, is to admit a self-evident truth," he gently explained. "Now, it is self-evident that we do not support ourselves by doing nothing; therefore, if we are supported, it must be by somebody else. You admit that?"

I pondered whether I could safely admit it, or not.

"You, for example, do nothing," said the Almighty.

"Nothing but write," I amended, with an author's self-respect.

"Tut, tut! What do you write? Literary frozen pudding for other idlers and triflers. What do they do? Nothing that needs to be done. If all of you should get the measles and die to-morrow, what would happen? Nothing but your funerals. Stuff! The poor don't need *you*. It's just *vice versa*!"

"But under the circumstances, is it not true that my servants need me?"

"Ah, but man's place is not *under* the circumstances, but on top of them. All this, you observe, to bring you around to the question, what are you doing for the poor? Nothing, you would say, if you could afford to be honest."

"Nothing!" I ejaculated. "Why I have just given five hundred dollars to the Associated Charities!"

"Charities! And I have just demonstrated that you are an object of charity, not a dispenser of it! How long are you going to remain an object of charity: that is the question?"

"Of whose charity?" I stiffly insisted.

"Whose? The poor's, of course."

"The charity of the poor—to *us*?"

The Almighty began to look bored. "I suppose," he mused, "that this what they call an intellectual conversation. Excuse my frankness, but I was just wondering how long before the human race would learn to go straight to the point without dodging."

"If you refer to this unpleasant situation of the rich and the poor, I should say that in the course of a few centuries...."

"That's it, that's it! They all want to be dead and buried first! All afraid they'll do something decent before they die!"

"But is not this life a sort of antenatal condition out of which we are born at death into the real sphere of activity?" was my desperate suggestion.

"That may do for those who are fond of putting things off till the morrow; but what's the matter with to-day?"

I was unable to say. Really, what *was* the matter with to-day?

"I mean as a birthday, of course," explained the Almighty. "History, you know, is full of births. Why is every one of them belated and born after a hard struggle and waited for by a lot of Herods, thirsting for their blood? I will tell you. The explanation is—you!"

I was naturally staggered by such a load of responsibility, incurred, I wondered how?

"How?" said the Almighty, "...thank you, perhaps another cigar *would* help us out. Well, now, to resume. Personally, of course, you couldn't hold up the coach of progress and rob the passengers (to use the vernacular); but with the help of your fellow road-agents, you do pretty well."

"I confess, I was utterly unaware...."

"Of course! So are they all—utterly unaware. That's just why I'm here this morning—to make you aware, if possible. You have read history, and applauded all its births (reverting to our original figure). Stranger still, you have declared for the birth-process, under the name of evolution; and yet, no man more surprised and offended than you, to see the process going on under his nose! Thus you make yourself one with the forces that keep the world long in labor."

I was far from flattered, I confess, by this description of my function, even from a lunatic who, had he been in his right mind, would have known that I was in the foremost files of time. "You refer, I presume, to these modern fads and innovations?" I observed, with irrepressible satire. "This recrudescence of liberty, equality, and fraternity! Yes, I confess, I am not anxious to be reduced to that level."

"Reduced!" said the Almighty, without surprise. "Elevated, you mean. Yes, that is just the trouble. You are below the level of the age, and you don't know it; and therefore you have to be dragged up by the hair of the head. Now, the object of my little call was to drop you a hint that you could be about better business. I often do that much for the dead ones. Of course, if you are determined to stay dead, that's your affair. We'll simply have to get rid of you."

I felt my hair rising, as I stammered, "Why—what do you mean?"

"Don't you know? And you an educated man! Why, what becomes of the poison and excretions of the human system? Well, it's precisely so with society. The dead things are got rid of. What

did you think death was made for? Or did you expect to live forever?"

I was silent and staring with a dread fascination, while the Almighty continued:

"Oh, don't be alarmed. This is not a threat. I'm simply reminding you of the inexorable law which is no respecter of persons. The danger *you* have to apprehend is that fatty degeneration, or something that flesh is heir to, will catch you some fine day with nothing done. And what does that mean? Simply disgrace."

"But my book on metaphysics?" I protested, forced into self-defense.

The Almighty smiled. "Metaphysics! Oh yes, I think thy thoughts after thee, O Kant! Well, Kant was sufficiently dark; but that book of yours darkened Kant, if possible. I should think you fellows would get tired of explaining one mystery in terms of another. What's that but big words?"

"Big words!"

"Certainly, don't you remember how Mephisto fooled that poor callow student with big words? The Devil himself didn't know the answer, of course; because—well, the Devil is an ass; but then, he wasn't *quite* such an ass as to believe he knew, or ever could know, the key to those mysteries. And yet, you educated, intelligent superior beings go on playing with big words and calling it philosophy, when the right name for it is logomachy! Pleasant little game, of course; but no game for men, if the Devil *did* invent it."

"What game would you have us play?" I demanded, resolved to call this Almighty bluff.

"Now *that's* another question. If you found yourself up a blind alley, what would you do?"

"Go back," said I reluctantly.

"To the main alley! Precisely! Now, the question is, what is the main alley in these days?"

I made a wry face and replied, "The main alley seems to be this everlasting bread-and-butter problem."

The Almighty surveyed me Homerically. "You are not altogether devoid of sense," he reflected, "but you are fastidious as Faust. You are up a blind alley, but you hate to get out. You remember, Faust never got out till Part Two, and Goethe never got out at all."

"But Goethe's life! His survey!"

"True, nothing is quite in vain, not even blind alleys; but what a place for a man like that!"

"Is this justice to Goethe?" I protested.

The Almighty suppressed a yawn. "To tell the truth," said he, candidly, "I'm not much interested in justice to Goethe. I guess he's got his share. Is this justice to mankind—that's what you mean, isn't it?"

I felt that this was descending to lower ground; however, I swallowed my repugnance and said wearily, "Oh, by all means, let us stick to the everlasting bread-and-butter problem."

"Tut, tut! No problem is everlasting, not even the mystery of matter—when the time comes. As for bread and butter, the only mystery is, how came you with such a problem, in a world composed, so to speak, of bread and butter? A race of maggots living in a cheese would have as much right to a cheese problem as you have to a bread-and-butter problem. Why, then, are you worse off than maggots?"

"Selfishness?" I suggested. "Of course, there is the question of the origin of selfishness; however, let us waive that point."

The Almighty eyed me Socratically. "Thank you," said he, "for waiving that point. It will save us a thousand years or so. But since you are curious, I will tell you. It is not selfishness: maggots are as selfish as men. It is the forbidden fruit."

He smiled blandly and smoked a moment while I digested the point. Heavens, was he harking back to that old story?

"A little knowledge—is a dangerous thing," mused the Almighty. "And that was what Eve plucked. The thing for *you* people is to rob the tree."

"Beginning, I presume, with the bread-and-butter bough?" I sarcasmed.

"Well, hardly, in your case! You've robbed that, already. That's why you are not interested. No, the limb for you to rob is the limb called Democracy."

I contemplated the program with disgust. "Oh, of course, if Walt Whitman is the true prophet," I insinuated.

"Come, come, don't be personal. Leave that to me. There isn't any true prophet, in that sense. There's nobody to lead you by the nose and relieve you of the trouble of thinking. Of course, you could learn a thing or two from Walt, and five hundred others; but the safest guide is the outcry."

"The outcry!"

"Certainly. The cry of the people—that is, if you want to do something besides coddle yourself. You are a father, aren't you?"

Again I felt the creepy-creepy feeling. "How could you know that?" I demanded.

The Almighty gazed at me incredulously. "Why, look at that little cap under the chair! Besides, there's one of them now in the doorway!"

I looked and saw my little daughter Elsa, round-eyed and awe-stricken, staring at the majestic visitor.

"Papa, is it God?" she whispered.

The Almighty smiled. "What if it is? He wouldn't hurt you," he coaxed; and thus reassured, Elsa came confidently forward and climbed on the august knees; and I had the sensation of beholding my daughter in the arms of the Almighty!

Then followed the usual catechism—by Elsa, of course—and I noticed with satisfaction that even the Almighty may be hard put to answer the questions of children.

"How was the weather when you left heaven?" said Elsa.

"Blowing up a storm," said the Almighty.

"Oh, I thought it was always clear?"

"Did you? Well, that's a mistake."

"Oh!" said Elsa. "Well, I don't care; I've got an umbrella. Where are the angels?"

"Everywhere," was the prompt reply.

Elsa looked suspiciously around. "What do they do?" she demanded.

"Take care of children."

Elsa pondered half an instant. "Is Mamma an angel?"

"Of course. Ask your father."

"Is Papa an angel too?" said Elsa, aghast.

"Hm!" said the Almighty. "He's way above that. He's a metaphysician."

"What's that?"

"It's a kind of archangel."

"What's an archangel?"

"An archangel," said the Almighty, "is a metaphysician."

With that, he shot me an ironical glance, and I somehow inferred that archangels alone were fit to be metaphysicians!

"Oh!" said Elsa, abundantly satisfied with two big words; and again I blushed, to think that she had it from her father. "When do we have to go to heaven?" was Elsa's next.

"You're there now."

"Well, that suits *me*. 'Cause, you see, God, I never wanted to go; but if I'm there now, I'm satisfied—all but one thing."

"Well, what's that?"

"Will I *ever* get that doll I'm praying for?"

"You will. One of the archangels will attend to that."

I took the hint and made a mental note to get that doll this very day.

At this moment, a voice on the stairs called, "Elsa?" and the shorter catechism slipped down and ran out, calling back, "Good-bye, God. I got to go take a baf."

The Almighty heaved a sigh of mingled pleasure and relief as he remarked, "In another minute, I should have been stuck. Well, you're going to get the doll, I see?"

"Of course!" said I.

"Of course! Why of course?"

I had no reason for so obvious a proceeding as getting a doll for Elsa.

"You see!" observed the Almighty. "When *your* children cry, what do you do: spank them?"

"By no means! That is to say, of course there are *times* . . ."

"True, there are *times*," said the Almighty grimly, with his eye on *me*: whereat I hastily rejoined:

"But first, I should try to interpret their wants and give them some reasonable answer."

I thought this was tit for tat; but the Almighty never noticed it. "Good! I have hopes of you!" said he. "Now apply the same method to the cry of the people. What are they crying for?"

"Pretty near everything," was my ironical reply.

"Of course! Why not? Therefore, your duty is clear."

I stared in cold amazement. This was indeed lunacy! "You would say that it is my duty to aid and abet this childish popular clamor for. . . ."

"Everything? Certainly, why not?" said the Only Democrat. "What was everything made for? You?"

I could not conceal a smile at this *reductio ad absurdum*. "Everything for everybody! Rather a large program!" I suggested.

"True; and large programs require large men."

Another personality! But I restrained myself and retorted, with the civility that makes satire a virtue, "Doubtless, you would have college educations for coal-heavers?"

"Of course!" said the Almighty. "And brains for metaphysicians."

Well, I had locked horns with the Almighty, and had come off about as well as Job, save that, unlike my prototype, I finally lost

my head and remarked with some asperity, "Really, this is *certainly* democracy run mad!"

"Mad!" said the Almighty. "That word is *certainly* the last ditch of a cornered conservatism! Well, well, it is several centuries too soon to say much to the human race. They won't stand for it."

I felt that this was uncalled for, so say the least, after a patience on my part such as Job himself might have envied. "And yet," I suggested, "you have said considerable to *me!*"

"What have I said? Next to nothing! And you tell me it is too much! What would you do if I should say. . . ."

He eyed me thoughtfully, shook his head, and went into a brown study; and to this day, I experience a sense of loss as I wonder what words he withheld. But at the moment I was sore with defeat and contemptuous with "sanity"; moreover, I could not deny that my impression of the Almighty's views was of something rather wild and iridescent—in short, unpracticable. Or, if such views were ever to be practicable, we should need a long course of training, and. . . .

"If only we had a few wise men!" I concluded, aloud.

"The old cry!" mused the Almighty. "And what is the fact of the matter? There are more wise men on earth to-day than ever before. I could mention ten or a dozen at this minute. And where are they? Some are in jail, some are in the lunatic asylum, some are starving, and every mother's son of them is wearing the dunce-cap."

I was silent and suffering for the first time under a feeling of deprivation. Never had the world's hardness and obstinacy loomed so large and regrettable. Then a crucial question darted into my mind:

"Would it be too much to ask how you came to be in your present position?"

"The asylum? Not at all. I am there because they put me there. Why did they put me there? Because they pronounced me mad. Why did they pronounce me mad? Well, why do you?"

I had nothing to say in the extremity of my embarrassment.

"You never supposed that if God were to come on earth, they'd clap him into a lunatic asylum, did you?" said the Almighty, grimly. "But that's what they've always done, invariably; and why not? It's perfectly logical. If man is sane, then God is insane."

"Why, *hozv*. . . ." I began.

"How? You know the saying: 'The wisdom of man is foolishness with God?' Well, it isn't half as true as the obverse: the wis-

dom of God is foolishness with man. Don't take my word for it. Look out of the window there, and see the sun, shining on every one alike. If man could have his way, there'd be no more of that. You'd have it shining on John Smith and a few others; but fortunately for you, you can't do it; because *God* is a *Lunatic*."

He rose with a large, tranquil, Olympian leisure, and stroked his magnificent white beard, his eyes resting on a fine portrait of Richard Wagner.

"That man too was pronounced mad—by madmen," he soliloquized. "Well, here come the keepers."

I had seen or heard nothing of any keepers; but at this moment the front door-bell rang; I answered it in person, and sure enough there they were!

"Is there a lunatic here—an old fellow who calls himself the Almighty?" inquired a pleasant-faced young man.

"Well," said I regretfully, "there is a person of that description in here, and all I can say is, if he is not the Almighty, he ought to be."

"That's so," admitted the keeper. "He's got more sense than all of us put together. If I had my way, I'd let him loose, and shut up the board of directors."

"Then why is he not let loose?" said I severely. "Because he is God Almighty?"

The young fellow smiled. "Well, that's the ostensible reason; but I guess the real one is, his relatives needed the money, so they could be God Almighty themselves."

Strange as it may seem, I was fairly shocked when the keepers came. It seemed a profanation to lay hands on this august lunatic. In fact, the keepers laid no visible hands on him, but merely stood waiting his royal convenience.

"Coming right along, boys," called the Almighty, cheerfully. "Sorry to bother you, but I needed a little outing. Much obliged for our talk," he added to me. "Don't mind anything I said. People never do." And he smiled humorously.

"So much the worse for them!" said I; and the Almighty responded gratefully, "Thank you. Oh, after a while, they sometimes take a hint—after two or three centuries," he added, with another smile. "Well, come and see *me* some time." And so saying, he departed.

A sense of tragedy—of vast and nameless irony was on me, as I saw the Almighty led away to Bedlam; and with a sudden revul-

sion of feeling I muttered, "After all, he may be more than half right. *God is a lunatic in the eyes of men.*"

It was a mere coincidence, of course, but there was something uncanny in the way the Almighty, who was well out of ear-shot, turned and called back to me, with his Olympian smile:

"Better look out, or they'll have you in there next.—And say!" he added, "don't forget Elsa's doll."

Returning to my lonely and Presence-haunted library, I looked at the dust on the family Bible and found the Almighty's autograph It read:

"THE LUNATIC."

I got the doll that afternoon and presented it to Elsa, with the compliments of her friend, the Almighty; and ever since, I have been planning a sort of doll-fest for the kindergarten in general (I refer, of course, to the world), because I am convinced by the "Lunatic" that it is the only rational thing to do. Perhaps life is a toy, and perhaps it is an awful necessity; but in either case, every one seems to want it.

And that is why I have spoiled a good metaphysician to make a bad political economist (or so Professor Spiegelmann will have it), and why my promised volume on "The Mystery of Matter" is not forthcoming.

SAVAGE LIFE AND CUSTOM.

BY EDWARD LAWRENCE.

X. THE RITUAL OF DEATH AND BURIAL.

ALL savages, without exception, believe that death does not end all. To them there is no real death, the passing hence to "death-land" being but the continuation in another sphere of life which appears to have been interrupted on earth by some base means. If the ceremonial initiation of the adolescent savage into the mysteries of manhood is the great event of life, then death or the permanent separation of the ghost from the body is the next important. Out of those customs and ceremonies which form such a feature of their funeral rites, a whole system of ritual has grown, and out of that system have evolved the great and complex religions of civilization.

As soon as the breath is out of the body, and frequently before, preparations are made to get on good terms with the ghost, and