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THOUGHTS OF COMFORT.

BY THE LATE COUNT HELMUTH VON MOLTKE.

(TRANSLATED BY T. J. M'CORMACK.)

MAN feels himself a complete whole, detached from the rest of the world, and outwardly separated from it by the husk of the body, which serves here on earth as the dwelling-place of the soul.¹

Nevertheless, I am disposed to see in this whole, functions, intimately connected and ruled by the soul, which possess independent existence.

First, from the obscurity of birth, the body is developed. Its nature is incessantly at work in the growth of the child, already preparing in him the abode of higher organs. The body reaches the acme of perfection ere half the period of its duration has elapsed, and from its surplus-power creates new life. Thenceforward there is falling off and weary endeavor, only, to preserve its existence.

During probably a third part of our life, namely, that passed in sleep, the body receives no commands from its mistress, but the pulsations of the heart continue uninterrupted, the substances change, and respiration is performed—all without our willing.

The servant, even, can *rebel* against his mistress, as when a cramp painfully contracts our muscles. But the pain is the cry for succor and support, when the vital function of the body has lost its mastery over the dead matter—which we feel as the sickness of our vassal.

In all, we must look upon the body as a part of our being, but, yet, as something alien to ourselves.

But is not, at least, the soul, the ego proper, a unity and an indiscerptible whole?

Slowly unfolding, reason rises to ever higher and higher perfection up to old age, so long as the body does not leave it in the lurch. Judgment expands with the fulness of experience, but memory, that handmaid of thought, disappears earlier, or rather loses its capacity of absorbing new matter. Marvellous, this power of preserving, in a thousand drawers that open instantaneously at the mind's bidding, all that has been acquired, learned, and experienced from earliest youth!

It is not to be denied that old age often gives the impression of dulness, but it is impossible for me to think here of a real obscurity of reason, for reason is a bright spark of the divine, and even in insanity the obscurity shows only outwardly. A deaf man, striking the right notes on an instrument out of tune may be conscious of playing correctly, whilst all around hear only confused discords.

Reason is absolute sovereign; she recognises no authority above her; no power, not even we ourselves, can compel her to assume as incorrect what she has recognised to be true.

E pur si muove!

The thinking mind soars through the infinite distances of the shining stars; it casts its lead into the unfathomable depths of the smallest life; nowhere does it find *barriers*, everywhere *law*, the immediate expression of divine thought.

A stone falls on Sirius according to the same law of gravity as upon the earth. Arithmetical ratios underlie the distances of the planets, the chemical mixture of the elements; everywhere the same causes produce the same effect. Nowhere is there caprice in nature; everywhere, order.

The *origin* of things, reason cannot comprehend; but nowhere is she at variance with the law that regulates all. Reason and the order of the world conform, one to another: they must be of the same origin.

Though the imperfection of all created things leads reason into ways that depart from the truth, still truth is her only aim.

Reason, it is true, comes into conflict with many venerable traditions. Reason objects to miracles, "Faith's favorite offspring" [as Goethe calls them], and cannot be convinced that omnipotence in attaining its ends should find it necessary to abolish in individual instances the laws that rule nature for eternity. Yet the doubts of reason are not directed against religion but only against the form in which religion is offered to us.

Christianity has raised the world from barbarism to civilisation. It has abolished slavery after centuries of effort, has ennobled labor, emancipated woman, and opened a vista into eternity. But was it the letter of its doctrines the dogma that produced this bless-

¹In the first draft the words follow here: "In spite of the intimate union of the two into a whole, a certain dualism is unmistakable." This passage is omitted in the later versions.

ing? Men can agree on all things except on such to which human powers of comprehension do not extend, and concerning just such conceptions men have quarreled eighteen hundred years, have devastated the world, from the extermination of the disciples of Arius on through the Thirty Years' War to the fagots of the Inquisition, and what has been the outcome of all these struggles?—the same difference of opinion as before!

We may take dogmas as we take the assurance of a trusted friend, without putting them to the test. But the kernel of all religions is the morality which they teach, and purest and most comprehensive of all is the Christian.

And yet men speak of dry morality with a shrug, and lay the main emphasis on the form in which it is given. I am afraid that the zealot in the pulpit, who will persuade where he cannot convince, preaches Christians out of the church.

Must not every sincere prayer, whether it be directed to Buddha, Allah, or Jehovah, reach the same God, save whom there is none other? Does not the mother hear the entreaty of the child in what language soever it lips her name?

Reason is at no point in conflict with morals. The good is in the end the reasonable; but acting in accordance with the good is not dependent upon reason. Here the governing soul, *the soul of feeling*, determines volition and conduct. To her alone, not to her two vassals, has God given the two-edged sword of free-will—that gift which according to the Writ leads to bliss or to damnation.

But a trusty counsellor has been provided to us. Independently of ourselves, he holds his commission from God himself. Conscience is the incorruptible and infallible judge who pronounces at every moment his verdicts, if we will but listen, and whose voice ultimately reaches even him who has closed his heart to its warning, strive against it how he may.

The laws that human society has imposed upon itself bring only conduct before their judgment seat, not thought and sentiment. Even the various religions exact different requirements among different peoples. One requires the sanctification of Sunday, another of Friday or Saturday. The one permits enjoyments that the other forbids. Nevertheless, between what is permitted and what is prohibited a broad field of freedom is left, and it is here that conscience with more delicate sensitiveness lifts its voice. It tells us that *every* day should be consecrated to the Lord, that even legal interest wrested from the oppressed is wrong. In a word, it preaches ethics in the breasts of Christians and Jews, of heathens and savages. For even among the most uncultured races, to whom the light of Christianity has not shone, the fundamental notions of good and bad accord. They, too, denounce breach

of faith and lies, treachery, and ingratitude as bad. For them, too, the bonds uniting parents, children, and kin are holy. It is difficult to believe in the universal depravity of the human race, for however much obscured by crudeness and illusions, the germ of the good, the sense of the noble and the beautiful, lies in every human breast, and conscience dwells in it, that points out the right way.

Is there a more cogent proof of the existence of God than this feeling of right and wrong which is common to all, than this agreement of *one* law, in the physical as in the moral world; save that nature must follow undeviatingly this law, whilst it is given to man, because he is free, to infringe it.

Body and reason serve the governing soul, but they also assert rights of their own: they are co-determinative, and thus the life of man is a constant struggle with himself. If in that struggle, and hard pressed from within and without, the voice of conscience does not always determine man's resolutions, yet must we hope that the Lord that created us imperfect, will not demand of us the perfect.

For hard and great is the outward pressure on man in his conduct, diverse are his original endowments, unequal his education and position in life. It is easy for the child of fortune to abide in the right path, and rarely does temptation befall him, at least such as leads to crime; difficult, on the other hand, is it to the hungry, uncultured man, agitated by passions. All this must fall heavily in the scales in deciding on guilt and innocence before the universal judgment-seat, and here, moreover, mercy becomes justice, two ideas that otherwise exclude each other.

It is more difficult to conceive nothing than something, especially if that something has once existed; more difficult to conceive cessation than continuance. It is impossible that this mundane life should be a finality. We have not asked for it. It was given to us, imposed upon us. A higher destiny must be ours than to renew forever and ever the circuit of this sorrowful existence. Are the riddles that surround us never to be explained, to solve which the best men have labored their whole lives long? For what are the thousand threads of love and friendship that bind us to the present and the past, if there be no future, if all ends with death?

But what is it we can take with us into this future?

The functions of our mundane vestment, the body, have ceased, the materials that even in life constantly change enter new chemical combinations, and the earth holds fast all that belongs to it. Not a grain is lost. The Writ promises us the resurrection of a transfigured body; and certainly a separate existence without limitation is inconceivable; nevertheless, in

this promise, it is likely, only the continuance of individuality is to be understood, in contradistinction to pantheism.

That reason and with it the knowledge we have laboriously won shall accompany us into eternity, it is permitted us to hope; perhaps, too, the recollection of our earthly sojourn. Whether that is to be wished for is another question. What, if some time, our whole life, our thought and conduct should lie spread out before us, and we should become ourselves our own judges, incorruptible, merciless!

But above all, sentiment must remain with the soul if it is immortal! Friendship is based on reciprocity; in friendship, reason, too, is heard. But love can exist without being requited. Love is the purest, the divine flame of our being.

Now, the Writ tells us we shall love God before all, an invisible, utterly incomprehensible being, who causes us joy and happiness and also self-denial and pain. How can we do that, otherwise than by obeying his commands and loving our fellowmen whom we see and know.

If, as the Apostle Paul writes, some time faith is to be transmuted into knowledge, hope into fulfilment, and love only shall obtain; we may be permitted to hope we shall confront the love of a lenient judge.

CREISAU, October, 1890.

MOLTKE'S RELIGION.

THERE is no thoughtful man but has tried to answer the great questions of life: "What are we, where is the root of our being, and what is our destiny after death?" The great battle-thinker, Count Helmuth von Moltke, the German field-marshal who never lost a battle in three great wars, was a deeply religious man. In the last year of his life he wrote down his thoughts on religion, calling them *Trostgedanken*, or thoughts of comfort, which he left his family as a precious testament, embodying his views of reconciliation between knowledge and faith (*Versöhnung zwischen Wissen und Glauben*). How serious the venerable nonagenarian was in these *Trostgedanken* appears from the fact that he worked them over several times; he kept them on his desk in Creisau and read them again and again, improving their form and adding corrections. There are four complete drafts which are slightly different in several parts, but all of them written in his own firm hand-writing, and we can observe in the changes how he weighed every sentence into which he cast his ideas. We present to our readers in an English translation the latest version, which in style and thought is the most matured form of his reflexions on religion.

In his *Trostgedanken* Moltke accepted with pious reverence the spirit of the religion of his childhood, the moral kernel of which he recognised as pure and

nowhere in conflict with reason. But with critical discrimination he set aside the dogmas of Christianity. "Reason," he said, "objects to miracles, and yet our doubts are not directed against religion itself but only against the traditional form of religion." He came to the conclusion that "reason is unquestionably sovereign; she recognises no authority above herself; no power, not even we ourselves, can force her to assume to be incorrect that which she recognises as true." And this statement was made with a conscious consideration of the irrationality of religious dogmas, for Moltke adds the weighty words attributed to Galileo when his inquisitors had succeeded in making him retract the conclusion of scientific investigation, *E pur si muove*.

Moltke's religion is still imbued with the traditional dualism which represents life after death as a mysterious existence in a transfigured body; but he avoids any speculation on this subject and limits his interest to the thought that "our earthly life cannot be a finality; we must have a higher destiny than the constant repetition of the circuit of this miserable existence." Moltke takes comfort in the scriptural promise of resurrection, which he understands simply to mean "the preservation of our individuality."

We, who no longer think of heaven as a Utopia, reject the dualism implied in the conception of the soul as a distinct entity, but appreciate, nevertheless, the great General's belief in a preservation of our individuality. Indeed, "it is more difficult" (as Moltke says) "to think the nothing than the something, annihilation than continuation;" and the science of evolution justifies his trust, not, indeed, in the dualistic sense in which he understands it, but in a monistic sense which is free from the mystical vagaries and not less noble and inspiring. Science teaches us that the individuality of our soul is preserved in the following generations. The pantheistic notion that the soul continues to exist after death in the same way as the energy and substance of the body are preserved, that it is scattered, we know not where, so as to lose its definite character, is wrong; for all the individual features are transmitted, partly by heredity, partly through education by example and instruction. The soul is treasured up in the evolution of life.

"And ever the appropriated gain,
In stern heredity's bequeathment held,
From generation unto generation,
Following fast, is yielded to the years."

Life on earth does not consist of isolated souls, but forms one great whole which marches onward in the path of progress. The soul of a man is the greater the more it contains of the spirit of the whole which consists of the hoarded-up soul-treasures of all past generations, and not one individuality whose life has

been a part of this evolution can be lost. Hence Schiller's advice :

"Art thou afraid of death? Thou wishest for life everlasting.
Serve as a part of the whole, when thou art gone, it remains."

Taking a view of life which eliminates all mysticism and confines itself to purely scientific results, we come to the conclusion that the old dualistic world-conception with its religious dogmas of heaven and hell, God and Satan, soul and immortality are allegorical formulations of conditions that have definite equivalents in reality. When accepted literally, religious dogmas are self-contradictory and even absurd, but when understood as symbols representing ideas which in their abstract purity are difficult to communicate, we cannot deny their significance and truth.

What is true of the dogma of the immortality of the soul is equally true of the belief in God. While no scientific man is able to retain the idea of a dualistic God who, in spite of the conclusions of reason, would overthrow by his miracles the cosmic laws of existence, we insist most positively on the truth that the physical and moral world-order which science reveals to us in the formulation of so-called natural laws and which appears in our moral aspirations is not a mere subjective ideal but an objective reality, which in its omnipresence constitutes the ultimate authority of conduct and is the deity after whom all the religions of the earth grope if haply they might feel after him and find him.

P. C.

SCIENCE OF SPIRIT.

BY HUDOR GENONE.

IT IS very curious, but no one seems to think of "spirit" except either as an immaterial substantial shape, or as a thing so tenuous as to be a practical negation of all things or anything.

Now, as it happens, in the very constitution and fabric of everything this principle holds good always and everywhere—that the more tenuous things get the more stable they become.

A block of ice holds its life by the frail tenure of climate or condition of its environment.

If the environment of temperature rises ever so little above the point of freezing it is a question of time only how long it will be before the solid dies.

The block of ice becomes a bucketful of water.

And the water becomes vapor, and the vapor in its turn, if the conditions serve, is resolved into its constituent gases, and the divorced elements hydrogen and oxygen go their several ways to coquette with new paramours, and form, as the fancy nature has given moves them, more or less enduring alliances.

Solids, liquids, vapors, gases, elements, each after his kind, each fulfilling his functions; each amenable to his own laws of being, and each seeking always in

his own way a stable equilibrium through reconciliation with that universal of which he constitutes a part.

To be at peace with his environment is the constant effort of all that exists, from the primordial cell to man; from the intelligent atom to the intelligent God.

In the great flux of forces in the universe the spirit of being is the meaning of its action, that which on this planet culminates in man, the meaning of whose existence consists of his factors,—motive in his volition and result in his character.

The spirit of volition is that which impels to a change of relation. This spirit is not necessarily conscious; it is not necessarily free. In the effort of the element to seek "affinity" it seems to be purely mechanical; in the endeavor of the monad, the instinct of the dog, and the conscience of an enlightened man it is found in various degrees, reaching forth towards that perfect condition where mechanical action gives invariably the most perfect result, or where choice being free inevitably chooses the best.

The atom is intelligent because it always chooses inerrantly. Whether that choice is a blind and unre-sisting yielding to destiny, or a deliberate balancing of reasons, the result, being constant, is trustworthy, and being trustworthy, is right.

The lower we descend in the scale of creation, the more and more absolute and inerrant becomes the spirit of volition, which finds apparent perfection in the ultimate atom.

The higher we rise the more and more freedom of volition seems to grow possible, and more and more choice seems to tend away from absolute right.

Man claims to have what he calls a conscience, and there are some who by that assumption consider the human species as of a different order, as made of finer clay than the rest of animal creation.

Manifestly Carlyle was nobler than a cat, Shakespeare greater than a dog, and Emerson more intellectual than an elephant.

But the same spirit of volition is in all, and it is simply that principle which impels upward or perhaps compels downward, which tends towards absolute right or away from right. There is no such thing as the supernatural; but there is high and low, good and evil, and the "spiritual" is the highest and best development of the natural.

As solids, liquids and gases differ; as solids, areas and lines differ; as colors differ, so man differs from the brute, and the brute from the vegetable, and the vegetable from the mineral.

There is an ill-defined frontier always and a continuous merger, or progression, but, each in his own domain, has a proper and distinct individuality.

Intellectual or scientific right is a condition of facts

and their relations; but moral right is a condition of relations of facts. The former is found by laborious investigation; the latter by the dictates of feeling.

There is but one right, one Truth, but there are the two paths to truth: the rigorous logic of reason and the imperial incentive of emotion.

It is this imperial incentive in man, which, not content or unable to execute the self-evident decrees of the majesty within, delegates its godlike powers to some creed or scheme or plan or church or system, and sometimes from education, sometimes from inheritance, sometimes from sheer lethargy or cowardice, becomes the obsequious servant of credulity.

Destiny is either tyrant or slave; man either her minion or her master.

Destiny and divinity are one, except as man's motive submits or commands.

To what end, then, are the rites of religion? Are they all futile?

No; religious systems are figures of thought as allegories, metaphors, and parables are of speech; they are figures for multitudes, as in common speech every one speaks figuratively and only seldom directly.

The spirit of emotion is found in that form of expression, and those symbols which best convey to the individual his ideal of the eternal.

Few there are capable of thinking abstractly, and yet abstract thought is the equivalent of pure feeling.

Thought is not made for slavery; the brain is not an empire but a democracy. If it submits to the despot Credulity, it is unworthy of freedom.

The condition of men's minds on the subject of religion is the same now as it was hundreds of years ago regarding physical science.

Then authority was supreme, and the humble investigator was the serf of custom.

We are yet in these matters in the era of phlogiston, astrology, and alchemy.

The divine right of creeds and theologies, priests, ministers, and books must go the way of the divine right of kings.

The great central ideas of the Christian religion: an angry God and a vicarious atonement, are not, as rational thought, unacclimated to the air of philosophic certainty, declares, untrue; on the contrary, they are, of all things of which the human mind can form conception, most supremely true.

But they are true in a rational and scientific sense, not in an irrational, dogmatic, bigoted sense.

The whole world teems with testimony of the angry god. He is that intolerant, implacable, unyielding power which nature displays whenever vexed or crossed. Violate what is called a "law" of nature and woe to him who violates. The earthquake, and

the tempest, and the avalanche; the arctic cold; the equatorial fever heat, the savage beast, and the venom of plant and serpent. These are some emissaries of that satanic power which lies in wait to devastate and destroy, and mocks when our fear cometh.

But for every ill that nature has for us, nature has provided also the good; for every bane its antidote. Some of these specifics for evil man has discovered; others remain yet undiscovered.

The object of life and the sole legitimate, intelligible, rational reasons of living is to lessen the evil and increase the good, not only to replenish the earth by making it first arable and then fruitful, but by overcoming wrong, by mastering hate, by conquering nature in all those hydra-headed shapes she takes to allure us, to foil us, and to destroy us.

From the dawn of history man has been engaged in this great business of subduing and overcoming. The more animal he is the more he devotes himself to the work of the animal—the sensual life, the reproduction of his kind, the replenishment of the world—but as he advances in the path of being, as his greater powers, one by one, slowly, like wings, unfold, he becomes prepared for better, and purer, and loftier flights. The more godly he becomes the more he devotes himself and his energies and talents to the subduing of the world, to the slow and sure uplifting of his race towards perfection, so that finally all may be, as they of right ought to be, in the image of God.

In this sublime advance how seemingly futile were the beginnings! how slow the march! how illusory the aim! how far away the end!

Yet science, rich with the spoils of time, can now show in her sacred treasure-house innumerable trophies of the past,—trophies won by bloody battles with savage forces of nature and with mistaken and misunderstanding men.

Her armies conquering, not to plunder or to devastate, have, one by one, annexed greater and greater extents of territory, imposing upon these new dominions not tribute but beneficence.

So earth has come in some few respects to blossom as the rose, and in all the broad dominions where the banner of Truth has flown the buds have bloomed of culture, of refinement, of dignity, and peace, and plenty.

Science has either triumphed or is on its triumphant march in every region save one.

The region of "spirit," strong in the fastnesses of tradition, impregnable in the multitude of the minions of ignorance refuses to welcome her legions.

Mythology governs still, and the myth-god reigns supreme.

The myth is the mental expression for the religious feeling of an epoch. It is the condensation of thought

from the warmth of emotion on the cool heights of intellect.

The ancient Greek myth represented accurately the consensus of the emotions of the race in its childhood.

The Mosaic myth represents with surprising accuracy the expanding youth of mankind; its better coherence of thought, its concentration towards the perfection of principle.

This form of the myth was in full dominance over the Hebrew mind when a great reformer—Jesus Christ—came, not to destroy the law, but to fulfil it, by giving to it a perfect significance.

The Christian myth, divested of all the apparatus of narrative, of miracle, of the supernatural, is simply the significance of motive.

Far from being a negation, spirit is the one thing, the only thing that is infallibly destined to an immortality of existence.

Truth may be beyond reason, but it cannot be contrary to reason.

Hate nothing but wrong, despise nothing but error, defy nothing but malice, and envy, and lust, and all other slaves of the vindictive god. So shall you inevitably rise to the height and breathe the purer air of the universal spirit in whose likeness you are made.

The spirit of sobriety was consistent in that ancient ascetic of weak stomach, loathing strong drink who yet for his soul's sake made himself an inebriate in honor of Bacchus.

The spirit of love is found rather in that which chastens than in that which indulges. And the Christ spirit, when we have it, shall show us clearly that the life and death of the God-man for the race is a type of perfect and perpetual character that lives and dies not for itself but for all.

When all really believe what now a few do believe and many profess; when that belief shall have virtue and knowledge added unto it, and prejudice and superstition eliminated from it, then life shall overcome death, and the Truth shall prevail.

But this must be wrought out patiently, serenely, earnestly, for as man came with ignorance, so by man shall come wisdom; and as by man came death by man comes also the resurrection from the dead.

“THE MODERN HABIT OF THOUGHT.”

BY ATHERTON BLIGHT.

IF IT IS true, as Carlyle said, that the most important thing about a man is his religion, then the weekly perusal of *The Open Court* should be our duty as well as a great pleasure. For where shall we find the religion of the cultured, thoroughly emancipated “modern man” more clearly and admirably presented?

You have been good enough from time to time to allot me some of your valuable space to call attention to one or two books or reviews bearing upon the great subject of your life-work, which may, perchance, have escaped the notice of some of your readers. With your kind permission I should like to say a word or two, first, about an interesting article in the *Nineteenth Century* for December, 1894, by the Duke of Argyll, entitled “Lord Bacon versus Professor Huxley.” The old question of the distinction between the natural and the so-called supernatural is the gist of the article. The writer says “. . . he adopts and dwells upon a separation between what is called ‘the natural’ and the ‘supernatural’ which is perhaps the grossest of all the fallacies of modern philosophy.” Further on the Duke adds, and what he says is very significant, “For myself I must declare that I do not believe in ‘the supernatural’—that is to say, I do not believe in any existence outside of what we call Nature, which is not also an existence inside of it, and even filling it to the very brim.” What more do we ask? Is not this the teaching of Dr. Carus? If the thoroughly orthodox Duke of Argyll will surrender the “supernatural,” or, which is the same thing, include it in the “natural,” the battle is won.

But I fear that our congratulations are premature. The Duke would call many things “natural” which we should be obliged to rule out. Doubtless he would call, from his point of view, the whole miraculous account of the birth and life of Christ as recorded in the Gospels, “natural.” Even to the narrative of what took place after the crucifixion; “and the graves were opened and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.” What a mental confusion is here. Nevertheless, let us be grateful to the Duke of Argyll for declaring that he does not believe in the “supernatural.” The whole article is well worth reading.

Secondly, let me mention an important notice by Lord Farrer in the *Contemporary Review*, for June, 1894, of *Kidd's Social Evolution*. Mr. Kidd maintains that “religious beliefs are essentially supra-rational or extra-rational; and a rational religion is a scientific impossibility.” To this extraordinary statement Lord Farrer replies, “. . . Passing to the history of Christianity he admits that in its earlier period, indeed for some fourteen or fifteen centuries, the supra-rational element contained in it produced a great variety of excesses and of evils. Is it fair to treat these as merely adventitious growths, proving only its native vigor? Is it not quite as reasonable to conclude that they were the natural consequences of an essentially false and bad element in the organisation—viz., the subjection of human reason to the supra-rational?”

The whole article is conceived in an admirable vein and full of the spirit and tendency of *The Open Court*.

Thirdly, in the *Popular Science Monthly* for October, 1894, there is, in my opinion, a very remarkable article by Prof. Wm. H. Hudson, entitled "Poetry and Science." Every one truly interested in the great work of *The Open Court* should read it and ponder it. Professor Hudson begins, "In his able and suggestive essay on 'Cosmic Emotion' the late Professor Clifford pointed out the significant fact that in the development of thought the feelings never quite keep pace with the intellect." It is quite impossible to make any quotations from the article—every word of it must be read. How clear it is now to many of us that in religion, which is *the highest poetry*, our feelings lag behind our intellect. Is not this the complete key to the orthodox position? I cannot forbear transcribing the closing sentence of Professor Hudson's charming essay, "The business of the poet in his capacity of spiritual teacher is to help us to clothe fact with the beauty of fancy; not to try to force fancy into the place of fact. Let us understand what is scientifically true, socially right, and our feelings will adjust themselves in due course. It is for science to lead the way, and the highest mission of the poet is ever to follow in the wake, and in the name of poetry and religion claim each day's new thought as his own."

Fourthly, in the *Contemporary Review* for December, 1894, there is a very interesting confirmation of the burden of the teaching of our learned editor, in an article by Professor Seth, called "A New Theory of the Absolute." Allow me a quotation, "Hegel was right in seeking the Absolute within experience and finding it, too; for certainly we can neither seek it nor find it anywhere else. The truth about the Absolute which we extract from our experience, is, doubtless not the final truth. It may be taken up and superseded in a wider or fuller truth, and in this way we might pass in successive cycles of finite existence from sphere to sphere of experience, from orb to orb of truth. But even the highest would still remain a finite truth, and fall infinitely short of the truth of God." As a reply to the so-called agnosticism of Professor Huxley and the unknowable of Mr. Herbert Spencer the whole article is admirable and very suggestive.

Fifthly. In the *Nineteenth Century* for October, 1894, there is a curious article by Prof. Max Müller, called "The Alleged Sojourn of Christ in India." At the close of the article Professor Müller says: "All this, no doubt, is very sad. How long have we wished for a real historical life of Christ without the legendary halo, written not by one of his disciples, but by an independent eye-witness who had seen and heard Christ during the three years of his active life and who had witnessed the crucifixion and whatever happened af-

terwards? And now when we seemed to have found such a life, written by an eye-witness of his death, and free as yet from any miraculous accretions, it turns out to be the invention of a Buddhist monk at Himis, or, as others would have it, a fraud committed by an enterprising traveller and a bold French publisher." So then a distinguished scholar in a popular magazine tells us in the simplest way that we have "no real historical life of Christ without the legendary halo." And yet what an elaborate superstructure have theologians built upon a foundation of little or no historical value. It is high time to press home in season and out of season the modern critical, scientific *historical* method of reasoning so ably upheld by *The Open Court*.

Sixthly. A friend of mine sent me the other day a deeply interesting little book by Bernard Bosanquet, called *The Civilisation of Christendom and Other Studies*, being the first volume, I think, of a promised "Ethical Library," published by Swan Sonnenschein & Co., London. The chapters on "Some Thoughts on the Transition from Paganism to Christianity," "The Civilisation of Christendom," "Old Problems Under New Names," and "Are We Agnostics?" are as good serious and thoughtful reading as I have enjoyed for a long time. I will give one quotation from "Old Problems Under New Names," "Do we seriously imagine that man's soul, the much exercised mind of each separate person when most he feels his separateness, has become, as Mr. Swinburne tells us, man's only God? Should we not run the risk of justly appearing ridiculous if we maintained this to be so? . . . The old problem of the conflict in man's nature remains a fact under every new name. In the greater life of the world, and more especially of mankind, there is something which the animal individual may or may not make his own, a principle on which he may or may not lay hold, a direction in which he may or may not set his face. . . . But if we think that the will to be good grows up as a matter of course in every man, and maintains itself in his mind without help from a greater power than his, then we are in a fool's paradise, and have still much to learn from the Catholic Church. . . . When we read of God and sin we must not think complacently to ourselves that 'we have changed all that.'"

Those who welcome *The Open Court* every week with keen interest will surely appreciate this admirable work.

One more book and I am done. *A Modern Zoroastrian*, by S. Laing. It has been published several years. If it should have escaped the notice of some of your readers I am sure they will thank me for mentioning it. One quotation from the introductory chapter, "Science and miracle have been fighting out their battle during the last fifty years along the whole line,

and science has been at every point victorious. . . . The result of these discoveries has been to make a greater change in the spiritual environment of a single generation than would be made in their physical environment if the glacial period suddenly returned and buried Northern Europe under polar ice. The change is certainly greater in the last fifty years than it had been in the previous five hundred, and in many respects greater than in the previous five thousand."

All this is very encouraging and strikingly confirmatory of the position so boldly taken and so nobly maintained by *The Open Court* now for some years. Yet we must not forget that a writer in the *Contemporary Review* at the time of Taine's death warned us that there is a reaction setting in in France against the *only true method* of reasoning, viz.: the scientific, historical method of which the distinguished French historian was a bright light. Think of Dr. Alfred Russell Wallace with his so-called spiritualism, and Mr. St. George Mivart with his *The Happiness in Hell* in the scientific world, and Mr. Gladstone with his *Impregnable Rock of Holy Scripture* in the literary world. As a watchword for the new year let us always remember:

"Wo immer müde Fechter
Sinken im müthigen Strauss,
Es kommen frische Geschlechter
Und fechten es ehrlich aus."

CANNES, January, 1895.

BOOK NOTICES.

Mathematicians may be interested in the *Punktrechnung und projektive Geometrie* of Dr. Hermann Grassmann of Halle, son of the famous mathematician of Stettin. The first part, twenty-eight pages, all we have so far received, treats of *Punktrechnung*. (Reprint from the *Festschrift der lateinischen Hauptschule, Halle-Wittenberg*, 1894.)

Life in Ancient Egypt. By Adolf Erman. Translated by H. M. Tirard. (London and New York: Macmillan & Co. 1894. Pages, 570. Price, \$6.00.) A fascinating volume, elegantly published. It constitutes a complete compendium of the leading facts of ancient Egyptian civilisation, and is richly and appropriately illustrated. Though designed especially for the general reader, it will serve the purposes of historical students who have not much time to spend upon the subject. The work was well received in German, and as it is fluently translated, and stands practically without a rival, should meet with equal success in English.

Under its competent commissioner, Dr. W. T. Harris, the United States Bureau of Education is doing excellent work. We have received recently the Report of the Commissioner for the year 1890-1891—Vol. I, Part 1. It gives the statistics of our State common-school systems, interesting reports of secondary education in New Zealand, of education in France, Great Britain, Russia, Japan, Italy, Corea, Hawaii, and of the systems of legal education in nearly all the countries of the world, with a bibliography of the subject. Appended is a full report of the status of colleges of agriculture and the mechanical arts in the United States. A glance at the tables of contents of Parts II and III reveals the incredible amount of work that is doing in this statistical department of the government, and which no one seems to be

aware of. Every variety of information is to be found here concerning the educational condition of the country. We may add that the Bureau of Education is also publishing as circulars of information and under the title of "Contributions to American Educational History," edited by Herbert B. Adams, a series of volumes ranging from two hundred to four hundred pages on the history of education in the different States. We have lately received the "History of Education in Delaware," "Higher Education in Iowa," "Higher Education in Tennessee," and "The History of Education in Connecticut." The last-mentioned series is the work of Dr. Harris's predecessor, N. H. R. Dawson.

The Special Kinesiology of Educational Gymnastics. By Baron Nils Posse, M. G. With 276 Illustrations, and an Analytic Chart. Pages, 380. Price, \$3 00. Baron Posse, who was a special Swedish Commissioner to the World's Columbian Exhibition, is a graduate of the Royal Gymnastic Central Institute of Stockholm, and in this country at least is the most prominent representative of what is known as the Swedish system of educational gymnastics, which phrase constituted the original title of the book, now in its third edition. In a popular sense the new title is not an improvement upon the old. But it expresses better the nature of the work, the author claims. The word "kinesiology" means literally the science or art of motion, and is employed in the present case to denote the mechanics, effects, and classification of special gymnastic exercises. Its subject-matter has remained the same; for, according to the author, Swedish gymnastics, as initiated by Ling, having been derived scientifically from mechanics, anatomy, physiology, and psychology, and subjected to the rigorous scrutiny of scientists all over the world, *must be*, and is *par excellence*, the basis of all rational gymnastics. In this sense it is opposed to the eclectic school which takes from all and is worse than none. The views of Baron Posse seem to be in accord with physiological and anatomical theory and not at variance with common sense. They have the advantage of being founded on scientific principles, which is an exceedingly rare quality in this field, and are stated in simple and clear terms. The illustrations are profuse and self-explanatory. A useful appendix, charts, and glossary are appended. (Boston, 1894, Lee & Shepard, 10 Milk St.)

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