

THE MYSTERY OF EVIL.

BY PAUL R. HEYL.

I. THE ANTAGONISM BETWEEN NATURE AND MAN.

THERE is an old stumbling-block, an obstinate rock of offense, which has lain long in the path of those who would tread both reverently and logically the way of life. From the earliest records of human thinking the best minds of all ages have been sorely perplexed by the mystery of evil. This it was which prompted the wife of Job to counsel her husband to curse God and die; which urged the Prince Siddhartha forth from his palace to wander poor and alone that he might perchance find the truth that should save mankind; which wrung forth the bitter cry: "Eloi! Eloi! lama sabachthani?" and which has wrung as cruelly multitudes of souls before and since, parents, lovers, friends, helpless witnesses of that which they are powerless to alleviate. A mystery profound, yet all-compelling; if we cannot solve it, we cannot let it alone.

In its ultimate analysis the mystery lies in the antagonism between what man regards as his finest instincts and the operation of the established order of nature. Man finds himself in a wonderland of phenomena, in the midst of a play of forces which he can control only by cunningly pitting the one against the other. He finds laws which he must obey. If he rebels, he dies; if he conforms, he may live a little season; yet is his strength labor and sorrow. And among these laws there are some whose operation he cannot view with approval, aye, many which cause him to cry aloud in horror; and his first experience of this kind is his introduction to the mystery of evil.

II. MAN'S CONCEPTION OF GOD.

Man's conception of God has undergone an evolution comparable to his own, and may fairly be taken as a barometer of his own spiritual progress. In the highest and most spiritual form which this conception has reached there are three elements of the first rank in importance.

The first is that God is one. Man has not always insisted upon this point, and polytheism is still common. While it is true that it is, generally speaking, the less advanced races of the present day that are polytheistic, this has not always been the case. The Greeks of the age of Pericles, the Romans of Julius Cæsar's day, our own Anglo-Saxon ancestors, all were polytheists. It is the pride of the Semitic race that it was the first to proclaim monotheism. In this both Hebrew and Moslem are agreed. "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord!" "There is no God but Allah!" The Christian religion, being of Hebrew descent, is also monotheistic in type, but, probably on account of its having rapidly become the most cosmopolitan of all faiths, it is not free from traces of the polytheism of those non-Semitic peoples who became absorbed by its spread. As such we may regard the intricate, scholastic doctrine of the Trinity, and the practice of the adoration of the Virgin and the saints.

The second point is that God is omnipotent. With this attribute monotheism stands or falls. God is defined as the Supreme Being, and without omnipotence there is no supremacy. To admit that God's power is limited in any way, whether by some vague higher power, or by some essential stubbornness or viciousness inherent in "brute matter" simply passes the scepter into other hands. That which is mightier than God is a greater God; with the slightest abandonment of omnipotence we revert at once to polytheism. Monotheism being postulated, God's omnipotence is a logical necessity.

Even if we are willing to abandon monotheism, omnipotence in some quarter still remains inevitable. Assuming that the God of tradition is not omnipotent, that His benevolent efforts are balked in some manner, there is then another power to be reckoned with. This power may be superior or equal. A super-god, if there is none of still higher degree, is then the Omnipotent One. And if there be any finite number of gods in an ascending hierarchy, the last one must be omnipotent. The only escape would be an infinite series.

On the other hand, let us suppose, after the old Persian fashion, that there are two equal, opposite and continually striving principles of good and evil. Because of these cross purposes the cosmos must suffer a constant and enormous waste of energy and be in a state of chronic disorder. Is any responsibility to be assigned for this state of affairs? Of the two contending principles, one is benevolent and the other malevolent, and the acts of neither can be assigned a place in the plans and purposes of the other. If these opposing principles are part of a rational plan at all, such a plan

must proceed from a power or intelligence superior to both Ormuzd and Ahriman. In this higher power the question begins anew, and omnipotence finally comes into its own. And if we say that there is no rational plan, that no one is responsible for the order (or disorder) of the Cosmos, this is atheism. We cannot give up omnipotence without abandoning not only monotheism, but theism itself.

The third point is that God is benevolent. It should be carefully noted that this attribute rests not upon logic but upon sentiment. This in no way belittles its importance, for it is well known that sentiment is often a more potent motive than logic in human conduct. If anything, the attribute of benevolence is more firmly grounded than that of omnipotence, as we shall presently see. That its basis is purely one of sentiment is clearly seen by inquiring what changes would be introduced into our conception of God were this attribute to be denied. He would still be the Supreme Being; monotheism would be in no way affected. The only difference, and a great one from a human point of view, would be the loss of the sentimental regard, the love and respect of His creatures.

Man has not always regarded the objects of his worship as benevolent. The Hindus had their Kali, among whose minor attributes may be mentioned the fact that she was the goddess of small-pox and cholera. The Aztecs had their Huitzilopochtli, whose most acceptable sacrifice was a living human heart; but by centuries of evolution man's conception of God has advanced from a naive anthropomorphism which regarded God as "man's giant shadow, hailed divine," endowed with human frailties and weaknesses as well as human strength and virtue in glorified measure, to an idealistic conception which has made of God a sort of repository and expression of what man regards as his finest instincts. Imperfect as he knows himself to be, since his eyes are opened to the good and the evil, he delights in attributing to God in a magnified form all that he considers noble in himself and his fellows.

Man's insistence upon the utter benevolence of God may indeed be due in part to an uneasy subconscious feeling that it is at least possible for God to be otherwise; that while a non-omnipotent God is logically impossible, a non-benevolent God is not only possible, but from the characteristics of some of His Creation a sinister probability. From such a conclusion our finest instincts recoil in horror. Of such a God we might say boldly and firmly, and yet modestly and with dignity: "Even I would be holier than He!" Toward such a doctrine the attitude of the mind is: "I will not believe it!" Purely sentimental, it will be noted, but none the less firmly

grounded. Man demands of his God benevolence in infinite measure as well as omnipotence.

III. THE MYSTERY OF EVIL.

And this brings us face to face with a great mystery; for, alas, the world is not all good. We may say that it is presided over by a Power utterly benevolent, and with the ability to exercise that benevolence to the utmost if He chooses; yet it is full of

". . .wasted lands,
Blight and famine, plague and earthquake, roaring deeps and fiery sands,
Clanging fights and flaming towns and sinking ships and praying hands."

I cannot make a better statement of the mystery than that put by Edwin Arnold into the mouth of Prince Siddârtha, when as a young man the prince saw for the first time the pain and suffering of others less fortunate than he.

"But lo! Siddârtha turned
Eyes gleaming with divine tears to the sky,
Eyes lit with heavenly pity to the earth.
.

Then cried he, while his lifted countenance
Glowed with the burning passion of a love
Unspeakable, the ardor of a hope
Boundless, insatiate: 'Oh! suffering world,
.

Perchance the gods have need of help themselves,
Being so feeble that when sad lips cry
They cannot save! I would not let one cry
Whom I could save! How can it be that Brahm
Would make a world and keep it miserable,
Since, if all-powerful, he leaves it so,
He is not good, and if not powerful,
He is not God? Channa! lead home again!
It is enough! Mine eyes have seen enough!"

IV. THE FREE-WILL ARGUMENT.

At first glance the problem may seem easy of solution. It is often said that God created man a free moral agent, and that if he runs afoul of nature's laws or sins otherwise he must expect to suffer or be punished. In so acting, God is said to be moved by a wise and benevolent purpose. Man, it is held, being what he is, could probably in no other way learn his lesson so well as by experience, and a few rough bumps in the process of his education will have a salutary effect. Moreover, it is pointed out that a merely innocent virtue which has not been tried in the fire cannot

be compared with the virtue of a soul which has known temptation has fallen, perhaps, but has struggled upward until at last it stands free, strong, and glorious.

Taking up these various arguments in succession, it may be said in answer that the claim that all suffering is the consequence of some law transgressed by the sufferer will not hold water for a moment. Too many cases may be cited where the innocent suffer for the sin of another, who often may go unwhipt of God' to the end of his days. Theology early recognized this weakness, and provided an express defense for it. Did not Yahveh Himself declare that He was a jealous God, visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation? This, it is true, is nature's way, and, if once accepted as a general principle, explains much evil as a consequence of ancestral sin. As to the justice of such a procedure we shall have something to say later. But even this explanation does not go far enough. There is still much evil that cannot be included in that category. Some other explanation than that of sin, either personal or ancestral, must be given to include those who suffer from such occurrences beyond their control as tornadoes, droughts, and earthquakes.

To meet this weakness theology formulated the doctrine of Original Sin. As defined in the New England Primer, this doctrine declares that

"In Adam's fall
We sinnèd all."

No matter how conscientious one's conduct, how stainless his life, there rests upon him from birth a load of sin sufficient to warrant his eternal damnation. No act of his can remove that load or atone for it. No amount of suffering in this life is deemed worthy by the Supreme Judge to measure up to the degree of the guilt and balance the account.

As a defensive move, it must be admitted that this is all-inclusive. No variety of evil can escape it. All suffering becomes the punishment for sin, personal, ancestral, or original. Yet this defense is a desperate one: for if punishment for ancestral sin runs counter to man's sense of justice, punishment for original sin outrages it utterly. And it leaves unanswered the question why, in a moral universe, under the care of a benevolent and omnipotent Deity, anything so apparently contagious and transmissible as sin should ever have been allowed to originate at all.

To meet this objection the free-will advocate takes the further ground that "evil is good in the making"; that man's struggles with

evil are for his own benefit; that education is reached by no royal road, and that character is the reward of struggle. In this conception of God's relation to His creatures we find much that is anthropomorphic. To make the parallel closer, the evil with which man must struggle is minimized and slurred over. It is true that a human parent must often allow a wilful child to come to grief in some minor degree, even to the extent, let us say, of slightly burning its fingers, in order to teach a lesson that could not be taught otherwise; but no sane parent would, either in himself or others, countenance for this purpose such an extreme as serious injury, to say nothing of torture or death, even though the suffering of one child might teach a needed lesson to another. Yet, logically, this is what the free-will argument attributes to God; and then, as if frightened at the ferocity it connotes, the evil is euphemized, referred to as parental chastisement or loving correction. In human affairs, other things being equal, a teacher is judged by the relation between the results achieved and the violence of the effort necessary to attain them; and nothing half as violent as those processes of nature supposed by the free-will advocates to be educational would be tolerated for a moment. Either God will not or cannot achieve His ends otherwise than by methods often violent in the extreme, and we have presented to us the alternatives of abandoning either God's omnipotence or His benevolence.

Sometimes these apparently unmerited catastrophes to the individual are explained as merciful dispensations of Providence, forestalling a more terrible evil that would otherwise have descended upon his devoted head. It is true that the friends of the martyrs under Bloody Mary sometimes tied bags of gunpowder about the victims as they were being bound to the stake, but this was because they lacked the power to do more. It was no question of lack of omnipotence on their part; even a very moderate measure of human force would have prevented the impending tragedy. What, then, are we to say of the explanation that attributes to an omnipotent and benevolent God a similar motive? Was the evil from which He saved them, by so desperate a remedy, deserved on their part? If so, why are not other men, aye, all men thus saved from their deserts? Is God, then, a respecter of persons? And if the evil was undeserved, how explain its existence at all?

But what shall we say of the argument which forgets the sacrifice of the sub-standard souls in the contemplation of the greater glory of the stronger? The most and best that can be said of it is that this, too, is nature's way. Man himself must often follow it

for self-preservation. From top to bottom of animated nature the weakest go to the wall. The only exception is found in the human species, where this stern law is sometimes modified by pity; and even this, we are warned, saps the vitality of our race. Yet this way of nature is in itself no small part of the mystery of evil. Nature's way is wasteful; it is cruel; it says, "Might makes right." And we are taking much upon ourselves to say that it is always the fault of the weaker souls that they are as they are. Personal sin cannot be regarded as the cause of all spiritual weakness any more than it can be held responsible for all bodily infirmity; and a retreat to ancestral sin at once absolves the sub-standard soul from blame, according to human standards of justice. In fact, it is probable that in most cases spiritual weakness is the cause and sin the effect. The "black sheep of the family" is the spiritual analogue of the frail constitution. And, surely, God is the Creator and Father of all?—

"What, did the hand then of the Potter shake?"

Or is it only those more fortunately endowed souls who are of more value than many sparrows?

V. THE SOLUTION BY RETREAT.

A common way of dealing with the mystery of evil is to abandon one of the two incompatible attributes of Deity which cause the trouble; to retreat, as it were, from an untenable position. One case where this occurs was mentioned in the preceding section. Of the two attributes, it is more often the omnipotence which is thus yielded, illustrating the fact that sentiment is often more potent in human affairs than logic. Those who choose this horn of the dilemma usually cloak the bald fact of the retreat in an attractive verbiage. We are told, for instance, that "this is the best of all possible worlds," or that "with all reverence be it spoken, God Himself could not do otherwise." There is pictured for us the Creator of the universe, benevolent and mighty, but mysteriously hampered and limited in His benevolent purposes to a certain extent by some inherent inertia or viciousness in the material of His creation, including the human mind. Patience and time are necessary to whip this intractable material into shape. Progress is slow, and man is impatient, chiding God for the state of things which He is doing His best to improve.

Disregarding for the moment the downfall of monotheism which necessarily accompanies the abandonment of omnipotence,

the relief from the mystery of evil is but momentary. If matter thus defies God, who, then, created its vicious properties? Was it some higher or malignant power? If so, than in this new God omnipotence is restored to its place and benevolence disappears. Or is God to be likened to some mighty Frankenstein, from whose keeping His creation has escaped, and who must painfully follow and recapture it? Such was the only course open to that human inventor, but then he lacked omnipotence.

Turning now to the other alternative, the benevolence of God is abandoned far less often than the omnipotence. The position is perfectly logical, but too horrible. It is not easy to cite actual instances of this attitude. Probably the best illustration of what it would mean is found in Mark Twain's *Mysterious Stranger*. The time is in the Middle Ages. A visiting supernatural being, under human form, first amuses and then horrifies some mortals by creating under their eyes a tiny village peopled with little immortal souls, and when tired of watching them at their daily activities calmly sending them unbaptized to perdition. To his scandalized audience he points out that they possess a moral sense with which he is not burdened any more than are the beasts of prey, to whom carnage and violent death are all in the day's work.

VI. THE CYNIC'S POSITION.

Following up the idea that it is the assumed benevolence of God which is making all the difficulty, the cynic says to the troubled soul at this juncture:

"You are too sensitive; you are setting too high a standard; you have outrun Mother Nature, and think that you know more than she. Than Nature's Law there is no higher Right, and evil, pain, and suffering are the most natural things in the world. Benevolence, altruism, pity, all these are myths, vagaries of a hypertrophic intellect. Self-interest is the only natural motive in human conduct."

The cynic raises an interesting question. Has not man evolved to such a degree as to be out of spiritual harmony with nature, and is not much of the mystery of evil due to consequent lack of sympathy or even to antipathy on man's part for nature's way of working? There is no doubt that much of nature's law would be considered immoral if carried into human relations. There is no more significant illustration of this point of view on man's part than the connotation of the word "bestial."

Polygamy, for instance, is an ancient and wide-spread custom in nature. It is the practice of the majority of living creatures.

both in the lower orders and in man.¹ At least one race of mankind (the Hebrew) has abandoned it within historic times. Yet even those races which profess the greatest abhorrence for it as a human institution recognize and encourage it among their fowls and their cattle.

Again, there is no more characteristic law of nature than the visitation of the sins of the fathers upon the children. How man has come to regard the justice of such a proceeding may be seen in his reaction toward children born blind from congenital venereal disease. In no instance we might cite is the correctness of the cynic's diagnosis more clearly evident. Man is squarely at odds with nature over the justice of such a procedure, and the mystery of evil owes much of its formidable character to just such occurrences.

As a further illustration we may adduce the feeling of shame at bodily nakedness. Peculiar to man, and not exhibited by all races of men, there is, in the opinion of civilized mankind, no more characteristically bestial quality than the absence of this feeling. Because this sense demands, at certain seasons, more clothing than is absolutely necessary for bodily warmth, it acts as handicap in the struggle for existence, and to a certain extent opposes rather than assists man in attaining harmony with his environment. The correctness of the cynic's diagnosis is again illustrated by the slight importance which man attaches to this physical handicap compared with the demands of his higher self. It is of interest in this connection to observe to what extremes man's irresistible tendency to outrun nature may carry him. The extreme development of this sense of shame is found in the doctrine of those ascetics who regard the necessary intercourse of the sexes as bound up with a certain measure of degradation. St. Paul's upholding of celibacy as a desirable principle is well known; the extreme respect paid by the Romans to the Vestal Virgins, and the severe punishment meted out to those of their number who transgressed their vows is another instance. There is also the Christian theological dogma of the Immaculate Conception, in which the very adjective is significant. This philosophy, or rather the answer to it, furnishes the motive of Kingsley's *Hypatia*.

It goes without saying that those who hold this view have so far outrun nature's law as to have become justly regarded as impracticable theorists; but whether the standard of their philosophy

¹ China is counted as a polygamous nation. It is legally monogamous, but tolerates concubinage.

is to be regarded as higher or lower than nature's level is a question not so easily settled. The whole argument might be placed on a new basis if at any time the human race, like certain of the lower orders in nature, should achieve some measure of parthenogenesis. And the man of the world is far from always disapproving the position of the ascetic. For every practical celibate, such as a priest or a nun, there are dozens of what may be called theoretical celibates, of the same household of faith, who regard such a life as more meritorious than their own, and hold it up as an example to their children. And even to those not bound by churchly tradition the ascetic philosophy makes, at times, a strong appeal. It is impossible not to sympathize with the runaway monk, Philammon, when he again turns from the world which held Hypatia's murderers to the peace and quiet of the desert monastery.

The diagnosis of the cynic is correct in so far as he points out that man's "hypertrophied intellect" has at least increased and intensified the mystery of evil; but his prescription, every one will agree, is worse than the disease. He practically adopts the second Solution by Retreat, abandoning all benevolence and altruism, both in God and man. Yet, as we shall see later, there is in this position, viewed constructively, the seed of a great hope.

VII. THE DOCTRINE OF THE HEAVENLY REWARD.

There are those who freely admit that the evil that fills the world is, as far as it goes, inconsistent with an omnipotent and benevolent God; but they look further, and say with St. Paul: "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." Were there no hereafter of compensation for earthly sorrows they admit that these sorrows would be intolerable and incompatible with the truest theism; but they hold that such apparent flaws in Divine benevolence as may now appear through a glass, darkly, will disappear when our eyes shall see the King in His beauty and behold the land that is very far off.

In answer to this position we may first point out that the universal incidence of suffering demands so broad a measure of compensation as practically to dispose entirely of a state of future punishments. This may nowadays be no great objection, but we must go even further. We must admit that the lower orders of Creation are to be included with man in the Heavenly Reward, as no small measure of the suffering in this world falls upon these creatures. However we may minimize the sufferings of dumb animals

by saying that the lack of memory or of anticipation robs their suffering of its keenest pangs, there still remains a vast uncompensated balance of misery.² What, then, of an omniscient God, noting the fall of every sparrow?

The doctrine of the Heavenly Reward is also open to the objection that it savors too much of making amends, which is or ought to be inconsistent with Divine perfection; that it resembles human attempts to atone for wilful or accidental injuries. It is not asking too much to require perfection in the handiwork of the Perfect. Why should an omnipotent and benevolent God, even for a short time, permit such things to be? Is evil to be condoned merely because it is temporary? Such a view is sometimes necessary in human relations; the surgeon cuts to cure, but privately wonders, after a distressing case, why God should permit such a state of things as to make his services necessary. The obvious answer is that God either could not or would not have arranged matters otherwise. If we assume that He could not, we take the attitude of the first Solution by Retreat, the abandoning of omnipotence. If we say that He would not, we either abandon the benevolence, or take the free-will position that God, though benevolently inclined, holds aloof for man's own ultimate good. The doctrine of the Heavenly Reward has no independent solution to offer.

It is interesting to note in this connection that the hope of Heaven is not an unmixed blessing. It is, in fact, largely to blame for the persistence of evil in the world. The roof of my house leaks. If I expect to continue living in it I will have it fixed; but if I do not own the house and expect to move to a better place tomorrow it is likely that I will do no more than set a pan to catch the drip. In like manner, the saying of St. Paul quoted above has doubtless palsied the hand of many a potential reformer.

ATHANASIA.

Fair Hope of Heaven! Yet double-faced thou art;
 A blessing or a cursing—who shall say?
 Encouragement on many a weary way,
 Yet lotus food to him of valiant heart.

Wrong and oppression thrive in every part.
 Foulness and darkness meet us day by day.
 Up and destroy them! No—we still delay,
 We hear thee singing with the siren's art:

“All this is for the moment just at hand.
 E'en though it seemeth more than man can stand,

² Dwight, *Thoughts of a Catholic Anatomist*, pp. 82-83.

Forget thy troubles—lo! a better land!"
 How many strong, brave hearts have heard thy song!
 Their hands they folded to endure the throng
 Of needless evils that have thrived so long!

VIII. THE CHRISTIAN SCIENCE POSITION.

"The things that are seen are temporal, but the things that are not seen are eternal."

In these words St. Paul expressed the essence of the subjective idealism of Berkeley, the unreality of the apparently real, and the reality of the intangible and the immaterial. The same fundamental idea is found in *The Tempest*.

"We are such stuff
 As dreams are made on, and our little life
 Is rounded with a sleep."

This philosophy involves an inversion of the common-sense estimate of the relative positions of mind and matter which is curious and, to many, fascinating. According to it, mind, not matter, is fundamental; matter is known to us only as a mental sensation. Whether there is really a thing-in-itself as the objective basis of that sensation is a matter of indifference; it may be denied; it cannot be proved. For aught we know we may inhabit a universe of "mind-stuff" only.

Probably not the least remarkable thing about this philosophy is the fact that it numbers to-day many more followers than its early exponents ever deemed probable, most of these followers being unaware of their proper philosophical classification. To multitudes of Christian Scientists to-day its essentials are a living faith. It may be doubted whether Mrs. Eddy was acquainted with the pages of Berkeley or of Clifford, but her doctrine that "evil is error," arising not from an ugly material fact, but from an equally ugly state of mind, and that "the remedy for error is truth," the recognition of which presupposes an opposite state of mind, is exquisitely idealistic.

We shall not enter here upon a discussion of the pros and cons of idealism and realism. Such arguments have usually proven barren of conviction. There will come at once to mind the classical instance of the idealist who persisted in doubting the real existence of muscular force even after he had received a sound box on the ear from his exasperated opponent. Let us rather assume for the moment that the idealist is right and trace the consequences of this position with respect to the mystery of evil.

In this view of things evil is not objective, but subjective; the

trouble lies not without us, but within. This subjective evil must be either under our own control or beyond it. In the latter case the mystery is just as great as before, since the evil is equally distressing whether its origin be without us or within our own consciousness. In the former case the idealist says there needs only the proper mental attitude, the correct perspective, and the evil is no more.

There is in this position a remarkable parallel to the free-will argument. Man suffers, but through his own shortcoming, in this case his defective mental attitude, and suffer he must until he learns to assume the proper position. But it may be urged that this defective mental attitude is not altogether a matter of personal responsibility. Every one is born with it; the idealistic philosophy is an acquired taste. Here we have in the mental realm a perfect parallel to that physical situation which called into existence the doctrine of Original Sin, and the same answer holds as before, but in a mental rather than a physical setting. This innate crookedness of the mental attitude, this natural lack of proper perspective, is a fault in the constitution of things of which it is difficult to explain the origin. Says Royce, himself a professed idealist of a different type: "If evil is error, then error is evil."³

To use a mathematical figure of speech, the Christian Science argument is the free-will argument with all the terms multiplied by the same imaginary factor, converting them into imaginary quantities, but leaving unchanged the logical relations between them.

IX. THE DOCTRINE OF CONTRAST.

There are those who hold evil to be a necessary background or contrast to good. Professor Royce says: "It (moral evil) exists only that it may be cast down."⁴ Mr. John Fiske lays stress upon the argument that we cannot know anything whatever except as contrasted with something else, and concludes that "the alternative is clear; on the one hand a world with sin and suffering, on the other hand an unthinkable world in which conscious life does not involve contrast," and puts the question "to him who is disposed to cavil at the world which God has in such wise created, whether the prospect of escape from its ills would ever induce him to put off this human consciousness and accept in exchange a form of existence unknown and inconceivable."⁵

Mr. Fiske evidently expects every one to answer with a resounding "No!" or to commit suicide at once; and as a matter of

³ Royce, *Studies of Good and Evil*, p. 17.

⁴ Royce, *ibid.*, p. 28.

⁵ Fiske, *Through Nature to God*, p. 37.

fact, that is about what every one does. Evil is not uniformly distributed in this world; some of us have more of it to bear than others: some are so constituted that they can carry without falling a load of trouble which would crush a weaker brother. With some, pleasure clearly outweighs pain, and they answer in the negative. With others pain outweighs pleasure, but they are persuaded that the balance will soon be shifted to the other side of the account, and they answer also in the negative. With still others, pain outweighs pleasure, and hope is absent. Such persons either end their own existence, or, if deterred from doing so by religious scruples, hope, watch, and pray for their release to come.

The doctrine of contrast has had other notable defenders. According to the old Puritan divines even the joys of Paradise might pall upon the blessed were it not for the fact that from the battlements of Heaven they could look down upon the torments of the damned below. Mr. Fiske is too modern to take this position, but does go so far as to say that the deep impress of evil upon the human soul is the indispensable background against which shall be set hereafter the eternal joys of Heaven.⁶

This position is not quite the same as the doctrine of the Heavenly Reward, since it assumes the presence or at least the recollection of evil to be necessary to the full enjoyment of heavenly bliss; but it is open to the same answer, that any such justification of evil must include a similar provision for the patient work-horse which is unmercifully beaten by a cruel master. It is further open to the objection that it denies the perfect bliss of Heaven to those who have never suffered this deep impress of evil, such as those dying in early infancy. And above all, it is unsatisfactory from a philosophical point of view as it reverts to the Solution by Retreat, inasmuch as it describes our world of contrast as the only conceivable one. It may be as far as we are concerned, but a world which at times outrages our sentiments of justice, mercy, and decency can hardly be held to be the only one possible to an omnipotent and benevolent Creator.

X. THE DOCTRINE OF THE DEVIL.

Strange as it may seem, the introduction of the Devil into a modern discussion of the problem of evil seems to demand some sort of apology. However real the Devil may have been to St. Dunstan, to Dante, to Luther, to Milton, to the witch-hunters of the old Salem days, however real he still may be to a portion of

⁶ Fiske, *ibid.*, p. 56.

the world to-day, there is no doubt that that once famous potentate has degenerated, broadly speaking, into a semi-comic character. He is frequently called into requisition for advertising purposes, he appears in comic pantomimes and Punch and Judy shows, and his entrance, far from causing the audience to cross themselves, arouses shouts of laughter. But however the mighty may have fallen, there was once a time when the conception of Satan was inseparable from the consideration of the mystery of evil, and this particular philosophy is not yet wholly extinct.

The role of the Devil in this connection is usually to take upon himself all the responsibility for the evil of nature, leaving to God the credit for all that is good. God's omnipotence, or at least His superior power over Satan is always carefully preserved by modern doctrine: at the most Satan works by God's tolerance and permission.

"It is Lucifer,
The son of mystery;
And since God suffers him to be,
He, too, is God's minister,
And labors for some good
By us not understood!"

Ancient doctrine was not so careful to subordinate the Devil. Malevolent deities were often regarded as of the first magnitude in importance, and the Persian doctrine of Ormuzd and Ahriman seems to have been a nearly perfect balance of two opposite contending principles of good and evil. There is no doubt that the introduction of the Devil, in either a superior or a subordinate capacity, relieves the mystery of evil of a measure of the baldness it would otherwise possess. There was a time before Satan had a place in Hebrew theology when Yahveh is said to have tempted David to sin and afterward punished him for yielding.⁷ But after the advent of the conception of Satan (probably gained by the Jews during the Captivity) all the dirty work falls to his share, and Yahveh becomes a more benevolent and lovable character. Yet we are really as far as ever from a solution of the mystery. If God is not Satan's superior He loses at once His omnipotence, and we abandon monotheism; and if He is, His benevolence is equally open to attack. In either case the doctrine of the Devil reduces to the Solution by Retreat. And to say that God chooses to operate through the Devil for the attainment of His own benevolent purpose is to take one form of the free-will position.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

⁷ 2 Sam. xxiv. Also Ex. vii, 3 and ix. 12; Is. xlv. 7.