

ARTICLE X.

CRITICAL NOTES.

BAD PHILOSOPHY GOING TO SEED.

OF late, there has been a marked tendency among Christian apologists to defend miracles, and supernatural intervention generally, by abolishing the doctrine of second causes and resolving everything into the direct acts of God. Calling this the theory of divine immanence does not, however, save it from the ultimate fruitage of pantheism, which, by doing away with the realistic view of nature, does away at the same time with the idea of the supernatural, and with the freedom of the human will, upon which are based the doctrines of sin and redemption through the truth. It is not difficult to see, that, in thus breaking down the barriers between the natural and the supernatural and destroying our belief in the bestowment by the Creator of a limited amount of independence upon the forces of nature, we are cutting from under us the ability to cherish with confidence any reasonable beliefs about anything.

In his anxiety to discredit the doctrine of the derivative origin of species, advocated by Darwin and his followers, a prominent philosophical writer maintained, not long ago, that, of course, each *species* was a separate creation, because each *individual* is such, being, with everything else, a direct product of the ever-present activity of the Creator. This denial of the reality of secondary causes is probably, in the minds of the writers referred to, largely a matter of confusion of words rather than of clear thought; but, for all that, it may be equally deleterious when the symbols are carried out in the substitutions of a long line of reasoning.

We do not suppose that the advocates of the doctrine of divine immanence mean to deny to man that amount of independence which makes him responsible for his character, or that they disbelieve in the persistence of force as the idea is involved in the ordinary reasoning of daily life; but they seem to deceive themselves in the use of inconvenient and misleading symbols of thought. In ordinary reasoning, when we refer to a chemical combination we mean that a certain quality and degree of force has been set up by the Creator in a position of limited independence, in a field from which the Creator has withdrawn counteracting agencies or acts of his will, and so, is left as a thing which can be

treated by itself. As it came into existence by fiat of the divine will, it can be destroyed in the same manner.

The extreme advocates of divine immanence attempt to express the same thought by resolving all the persistent phenomena of nature into the direct repetition of divine acts of a similar sort; thus securing a uniformity through the settled purpose of the Creator to act for a limited time in a definite manner. The uniformity in this case is like that of a business man who for a series of weeks and months and perhaps years never fails to meet his appointments at a particular hour. Limited observers might possibly confound such regularity of movement with that of the planets and their satellites! It is even possible that a child might grow up to regard the regularity of the passage of a railroad train as similar in its cause to that of the rising and setting of the sun! But to confound these classes of uniformity with each other must create great confusion of thought in the broader generalizations of life. The uniformities of nature are something more than the mere "habits of the universe."

We are led to make these observations by many things which have recently appeared touching the credibility of New Testament teaching and history. For example, the editor of a prominent religious newspaper (*The Outlook*), who is an advocate of the most thoroughgoing evolution, and saves his theism only by maintaining an extreme form of the doctrine of the divine immanence, favored the world not long ago with a partial list of what he considers useless theological controversies. Beginning with the Andover contention over the question of the continuance of probation in another world, he couples with it the controversy in the Presbyterian Church over the final authority of the Bible in religious matters; and the discussions, in which Professor Harnack is now prominently engaged, concerning the miraculous conception of Christ. More recently he added to this list the question concerning the reality of the resurrection of Christ's body upon the third day after his crucifixion. The editor believes the ordinary doctrine, it is true, but, nevertheless, is ready to consign it to the rubbish heap without any apparent regret.

With all such articles eliminated from the creeds of the Christian church, it is difficult to see what is going to be left worth contending for. If such obvious facts concerning the bodily resurrection of Christ as those witnessed to by the Evangelists do not establish the ordinary creed upon the subject, it would seem that little confidence can be placed in their testimony concerning anything. If by metaphysical subtleties the reality of the body of Jesus is explained away; and if the voice which was recognized by Mary Magdalene, the feet which were embraced by the women in the early morning, the wound prints which were offered to the doubting Thomas to experiment with, and the hands which presented the disciples with food to eat when he appeared to them upon Lake Galilee, are not satisfactory witnesses to the re-animation of his body during the period intervening between the resurrection morn and

the day of ascension, there would seem to be little encouragement to attempt to convey thought by the use of language.

To one who is caught in the toils of such metaphysical speculations about the reality of the life of Jesus we recommend a perusal of Balfour's "Foundations of Belief," where he will find drawn out the entirely similar lines of speculation which can be pursued concerning every department of knowledge, even the plainest cases of inference from direct perception. A sound philosophy lies at the basis of a correct interpretation; while an unsound system is sure to vitiate everything and pervert the plainest truths and the simplest statements of fact and history.

G. F. W.

PROFESSOR HERRON'S IMPRESSIONISM.

The nineteenth century bids fair to go out witnessing the fields of literature and art dominated by impressionism. Socialistic thought in its very nature loves glittering generalizations, and abhors details as nature does a vacuum. That socialism as a theory, and socialistic thought, has had its influence in literature, no one can deny who reflects upon the enormous sale of such a book as Bellamy's "Looking Backward." There is a growing tendency to impatience of details, to paint truths of impression rather than truths of fact, to aim at tone and effect without proper regard to exactness and truth. The motive is the desire to make a striking picture.

In art, this desire for effect ignores and even despises photographic accuracy, and rebounds "into the extreme of fleeting and shadowy *impressionism*." (See Century Dictionary, "Impressionism.") "It is the doctrine that natural objects should be painted or described as they first strike the eye in their immediate and momentary effects—that is, without selection, or artificial combination or elaboration."

Professor George D. Herron has painted another impression piece,—for he can paint none other,—and the result is before us in the form of a tasty and modest appearing book entitled "The Christian State."¹ He is frank to admit that his book may have no more than an inspirational value, and this confession reveals the fact that he is aware of the limits of the practical utility of impressionism. There have been many and conflicting opinions of the real need and influence of such writings as Professor Herron's. By many he has been hailed as a new apostle full of divine truth and inspiration and an impetus for the rapid development of Christ's kingdom; while others have deemed him a destructionist,—

¹ The Christian State. A Political Vision of Christ. A Course of Six Lectures delivered in Churches in Various American Cities. By George D. Herron. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell & Co. 1895. (Pp. 216. 5x3.) 75 cents.

tearing down, with no effort to rebuild, and going through the Lord's vineyard plucking its half-ripe fruit, and pounding it to make it ripe, while all it needed was but time and sunshine to develop and mature it. Of course it rots.

There need be no such conflicting opinions, however, of Professor Herron's work. He is simply an artistic impressionist, an impatient idealist, and, as such, has an abundance of merit. He is poetical, striking, and oftentimes, even inspiring. He is emotional but never judicial; full of fancy but not of fact; theoretical but not practical. His sayings run easily and sometimes naturally into the hysterical, the fanatical, and even the crazy. They have the merit of possessing passion and fire, but are rhetorical and sensational.

Professor Herron writes for effect and not for truth. In this particular he is a quasi-Jesuit, justifying the means by the ends; for so long as his theme is Jesus, or the principle of sacrifice, or the "kingdom," he deems exaggeration justifiable, and fancy an honorable substitute for fact.

We account for the large number of able minds that have been captivated by Professor Herron's style, precisely as we account for the admiration for Turner's *Slave Ship* which Ruskin expressed when he said it was the greatest work of the greatest living master. Ruskin simply read into that canvas what was in his own mind, and the very haze and mist of such an impression piece enabled him easily to do so. Many minds that have been captivated by Professor Herron's writings are able to read into them their own knowledge of detail, and hence they find in him an abundance of merit, an inspiration which is stimulating and often exhilarating. So Goethe saw his ideal in Marguerite, and Keats saw in Fanny Brawne what the practical and everyday mind could never discover. It is a truth of everyday life. And here Professor Herron has genuine merit, for he does stimulate thought, and awaken an earnest desire to know the truth and to follow it.

But to the trained mind, suspicious, accurate, careful, patient, in love with the truth only as the truth is painted in colors of fact, much that Professor Herron writes seems but a series of shrieks or mental spasms, the fruit of a nervous temperament, even of a disordered brain, oftentimes fanatical in spirit, purpose, and tendency. Such a mind evades a critical analysis as successfully as the screams of a spoiled child, no less than its questions, outwit the reflections of a philosopher, or the whims of fashion evade the sanctions of the reason. The petulance of a Xantippe may even defeat the quiet contemplative reflections of a Socrates, and leave unproved the doctrine of immortality.

Professor Foster has so ably analyzed Professor Herron from the standpoint of the class room, that we have no desire to do it again. The arguments against the union of church and state have been so unanswerable, even before Macaulay wrote in 1839 his remarkable essay on Glad-

stone's "The State in its Relations with the Church," that we find no time or disposition to go into the subject in reviewing this book.

We take it that it is conceded by all earnest and careful thinkers that as anything but an impressionist Professor Herron has been weighed in the balances and found wanting. How such a mind found its way into the class room must remain a mystery, for the emotions, spasms, and shrieks have no more merit because they play on the word "Jesus" than if they shouted "Great is Diana of the Ephesians," or "Hosanna to the Son of David," or "Crucify him."

But as an impressionist, Professor Herron is delightful reading, warm in his sympathies, earnest in purpose, original in his way of putting things, but so erratic and unreliable as to lose the confidence of accurate thinkers. He reveals a loving and forgiving nature that charms and captivates even the most critical. No one can call these qualities in question, and we would not underestimate his great power for good when his sphere and mission are rightly understood. He has genuine merit, and with all his faults we respect him and admire him. And we wish it understood that this is an impression review of one of the leading impressionists of to-day.

Z. S. H.