

THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

Notes of Recent Exposition.

ON another page will be found the Guild proposals for the coming session. We shall be glad to receive the names of new members at convenience. The point of the Guild, it will be remembered, is the study, as distinguished from the mere reading, of the portion of Scripture chosen. Such study we all aim at, and a simple promise such as this will often secure that it become an accomplished fact.

In reference to Local Guilds for such study, we have received an interesting letter from Norway. The writer had already formed the intention of undertaking a class for the study of at least one portion of the Guild work, and only waited to know the portion selected, when he saw the recommendation of last issue. "Of course," he says, "as the members here are all Norwegians, our studies must be conducted in that language, and there can be no communications from them to THE EXPOSITORY TIMES direct. If, however, the editor desires it, I shall send the names of a few who will very willingly, I am sure, go in for the prescribed study. I do not see any reason why men of another tongue and nativity may not be members of the Guild."

Professor Huxley has gathered together his magazine contributions of the last ten years, and Messrs. Macmillan have published them in a fine

VOL. IV.—I.

octavo volume of 625 pages (*Essays upon some Controverted Questions*, 14s.).

The reviewers have mostly challenged the utility of the republication. But we venture to say that every Christian teacher, we might go so far as to say every Christian believer, will find that there have been few publications, within recent years, more timely or more useful than this. For in the great effort of the Christian ambassador to persuade men, it has always been an early requisite that he should know the state of the unbelief with which he has to deal. And to-day he will search far, and he will search wide, before he will find a better work for that purpose than these essays by Professor Huxley.

For there is no man living in England who so fairly represents the unbelief of to-day, there is none who expresses it so fearlessly and so well. When Professor Huxley makes a retreat, we know that the place he occupied is our own, and we need no longer spend our shot upon it. When Professor Huxley holds his ground, he does so openly, without ambush, in the broad face of the day, and then he returns our fire and spares not.

Thus it is useless for us to argue any longer against the old assertion that miracles are impos-

sible. Again, and yet again, in these essays Professor Huxley tells us that he knows of nothing in natural law which should make a miraculous occurrence impossible. "May I be permitted to repeat once more," he says (p. 306), "that the statements denoted by the terms 'natural order' and 'law of nature' have no greater value or cogency than such as may attach to generalisations from experience of the past, and to expectations for the future based upon that experience? Nobody can presume to say what the order of nature must be; all that the widest experience (even if it extended over all past time and through all space) that events had happened in a certain way could justify, would be a proportionally strong expectation that events will go on so happening, and the demand for a proportional strength of evidence in favour of any assertion that they had happened otherwise. It is this weighty consideration which knocks the bottom out of all *à priori* objections either to ordinary 'miracles' or to the efficacy of prayer, in so far as the latter implies the miraculous intervention of a higher power. No one is entitled to say *à priori* that any given so-called miraculous event is impossible; and no one is entitled to say *à priori* that prayer for some change in the ordinary course of nature cannot possibly avail."

But Professor Huxley is an unbeliever still. It is true he refuses the title of infidel and prefers the term agnostic, of which he is himself the original inventor. But to all those who accept the actual occurrence of a single miracle, say the resurrection of our Lord from the dead, he is an unbeliever, for he believes in the actual occurrence of none. It is a simple matter of evidence, he says; and there is no miracle in the Bible or out of it for which there is evidence enough to enable Professor Huxley to believe it.

So we ask at once, Has Professor Huxley considered the evidence for the resurrection of Christ—the evidence of the Gospels, of the Acts, of the Epistles, of the Apocalypse; the evidence of St. Peter's gigantic "Having loosed the pains of

death, for it was not possible that He should be holden of it;" of St. John's "We know," and "Our hands have handled," while the love in the life betrayed the truth of the spoken words; of St. Paul's "Whereupon as I went to Damascus," with its finger pointing to a career swept completely round by means of the risen Christ; the evidence of the sudden birth of Christianity, of its rapid and overwhelming progress, of the grip it has on the civilised world of to-day; the evidence of the Christian believer's experience, that unconquerable conviction in the individual soul of the reality and the power of Christ's resurrection, and the vast accumulation of that experience from the morning upon which Mary uttered the first "Rabboni"? Has Professor Huxley weighed the evidence for the resurrection of Jesus Christ?

No. Professor Huxley has chosen another miracle instead. He has chosen the "Gadarene pig affair"—and he has chosen that name for it. Now, if each of the miracles of the New Testament were a link in a chain, and it were Professor Huxley's object to destroy that chain by breaking the weakest link in it, we can conceive him choosing this miracle for the purpose. For there are difficulties on the outward surface of it. There are difficulties which are felt and acknowledged by a loyal believer like Professor Sanday of Oxford. In an article on this volume in the current issue of *The Contemporary Review*, Dr. Sanday says: "There are difficulties about it which Mr. Gladstone's ingenious hypothesis hardly removes. The actual migration of the demons into the swine is not a point which I should venture to assert with confidence."

But it is not true that by destroying the credit of one of the New Testament miracles you destroy them all. It is not true that the resurrection of Christ stands or falls with the Gadarene miracle. It is all the other way. Professor Huxley insists upon it that the evidence required for a miracle is greater than for an ordinary occurrence.

Granted. If, then, the evidence for the resurrection of Christ is sufficient to establish that miracle as a fact, you have no right to demand the same amount of evidence for the miracle at Gadara. If one supernatural event is proved to have taken place, you, who already admit the possibility, must move on towards the admission of the probability, that other supernatural events have occurred also, and be content with a less overwhelming amount of evidence in their behalf. Your duty, therefore, was to commence with that miracle for which the strongest evidence was claimed. Destroy that, and the rest of your task is easy. But while that miracle stands, your work is not even begun. To commence with the Gadarene miracle may have been adroit polemics, but it was not science.

And yet Professor Huxley has done a more extraordinary thing than that. In a long and most interesting "Prologue" which he has written to this volume of essays, he claims that, having destroyed the credibility of the Gadarene miracle, he has destroyed the credit of every miracle in the Bible. These are his words: "Science may be unable to define the limits of possibility, but it cannot escape from the moral obligation to weigh the evidence in favour of any alleged wonderful occurrence; and I have endeavoured to show that the evidence for the Gadarene miracle is altogether worthless. We have simply three, partially discrepant, versions of a story, about the primitive form, the origin, and the authority for which we know nothing. But the evidence in favour of the Gadarene miracle is as good as that for any other." That last sentence ought to have been printed in italics.

But has Professor Huxley proved in these essays that even the Gadarene miracle is incredible? A few sentences will let us see. In the first place, having a desire to be "perfectly candid," Professor Huxley admits that he has no *à priori* objection to offer. "There are physical things such as

tania and *trichina* which can be transferred from men to pigs, and *vice versâ*, and which do undoubtedly produce most diabolical and deadly effects on both. For anything I can absolutely prove to the contrary, there may be spiritual things capable of the same transmigration with like effects." Thus, here as elsewhere, it is simply a question of evidence. Indeed, as Professor Huxley immediately shows, it is simply a question of the date of the Synoptic Gospels. For he admits that the Gospels are clear and decided in their statements of its occurrence. Well, we have a witness to our hand as to the date of the Gospels at least as competent and quite as candid as Professor Huxley; and Dr. Sanday not only shows that Professor Huxley adopts an indefensibly late date, but that his arguments throughout are quite inconclusive. But, more than that, Professor Huxley has himself afforded us an excellent instance by which we can test his capacity for unbiassed examination of the question.

In speaking of this miracle, we have called it the Gadarene miracle. We have done so partly because it is unfortunately the popular designation, but chiefly because that is Professor Huxley's word throughout. But it is quite certain that the miracle did not take place at Gadara at all, but at a place called Gerasa, close to the Sea of Galilee. Yet Professor Huxley deliberately tells us that he has examined the whole evidence, and that he has no hesitation in concluding that Gadara—a town seven miles distance from the lake—was the place from which the swine are represented to have commenced the run which landed them in the lake at last. No; Professor Huxley has not proved even the Gerasene miracle incredible. Principal Wace says: "He has removed the only objection to my believing it;" and that may be the judgment of many.

In THE EXPOSITORY TIMES for August, Professor Ryle wrote: "According to the Hebrew tradition, Nimrod was the founder of the kingdom of

Nineveh, and went forth from Babylon to build Nineveh. The Assyrian records, so far as they throw light upon the subject, seem to correspond in an interesting manner with this tradition. That Nineveh was founded from Babylon appears to be a thoroughly established fact. The further discovery that the earliest known rulers of Assyria were sprung from a non-Semitic race is thought to agree with the mention in this passage of Nimrod's Cushite origin. But the meaning of Cush is disputed. According to some the name denotes Ethiopian influence; according to others, Arabian; according to others, the Cossæan dynasty in the early Babylonian empire. Nimrod's name has yet to be discovered in the Inscriptions. The identification of Nimrod with Izdubar (Gilgamesh), an old Accadian divinity, rests on too precarious a foundation to warrant us in putting any confidence in it as yet."

As Professor Ryle was writing, Professor Sayce was in the British Museum translating the fragment of a cuneiform tablet belonging to the Kouyunjik collection. The fragment deals with what Professor Sayce believes to be the Babylonian version of the story of Nimrod. The statements it contains are in more striking similarity to what we are told of Nimrod in Genesis than anything hitherto discovered. The name of the Babylonian hero is lost in the cuneiform text, for the tablet is incomplete. But it distinctly states that he went forth out of his ancestral dominions in Babylon and founded the kingdom of Assyria. Here is Professor Sayce's translation: "In the [centre?] of Babylon a . . . he built; this palace he founded. This prince beheld sorrow; his heart was sick. Until his reign battle and war were not hindered. In his age (*or* during his dynasty) brother devoured his brother, people sold their children for silver, the lands were all distressed together, the freeman deserted the handmaid and the handmaid deserted the freeman, the mother closed her door against the daughter, the property of Babylon entered into Aram-Naharaim and Assyria. The king of Babylon, in order to become prince of

Asshur, transported himself, his palace, and his property to the midst of Asshur."

So the name of that "mighty hunter before the Lord" has not yet been discovered in the Assyrian Inscriptions. But in a letter to the *Academy* of 23rd July, Professor Sayce announces the discovery of a name of far greater interest than that of Nimrod. Many years ago he found, in the British Museum, the fragment of a tablet which had once formed part of the royal library of Nineveh. Its injured condition prevented him from discovering what it was about. All he could see was that it related to an otherwise unknown individual called Adapa. Then came the great discovery of the cuneiform texts at Tel el-Amarna in Egypt. Among these there is one which contains, not the first, but the second chapter in human history. It gives the Babylonian version, not of the creation of man, but of the way in which the first man became subject to death. Professor Sayce, reading Dr. Zimmern's account of this tablet in the *American Sunday School Times*, was struck with the fact that the name of this man was the same as that of his fragment—Adapa. Turning to it again, he was able to understand its meaning. It is the very first chapter in the history of man. If the tablet found in Egypt relates the story of how man became mortal, this tablet found in Assyria tells how he was created. "We already knew," says Professor Sayce, "that Ea, the culture-god of Eridu on the Persian Gulf, was regarded by the Babylonians as the creator of mankind; the text I have just translated shows that the first man so created was named Adapa. But in the Sumerian the character *pa* might also be read *ma*, so that the name of the hero of the legend would in this case be Adama, the biblical Adam."

"A young minister" recently wrote to the editor of *The Modern Church*, and asked what message he ought to bring to persons who were dying. He said he was in a dilemma. He knew the manner and the message of "the old evangelical

theology;" but "in the full light of modern thought," in which he felt himself standing, that message was discredited, and he found no other to take its place. What are we to do? "Are we to leave the soul to silence and to God? To do so is practically to confess ourselves beaten, and to accept spiritual agnosticism or fatalism." The editor sent his letter to a number of leading theologians and preachers.

Their replies may be found in Nos. 71-74 of *The Modern Church*. They are not always to the point. They often deal with the manner in which the young minister should deliver his message by the bed of the dying, while the difficulty of the young minister evidently is that he has no message to deliver. No doubt the things then said are in several instances well said. "It is tone that tells," says Dr. Clifford, "and tone is of the heart, and is true and magnetic as the heart is true and tender." Says Dr. James Black: "The Word of God should always be made use of at the visits, but the reading of a whole chapter is too fatiguing to the sufferer, especially when there is great bodily weakness. A suitable verse or two of Scripture is generally enough, and more profitable." One recalls how Dr. Guthrie, in his last hours, wanted what he called "a bairn's hymn" to be sung to him. Another tells us that "Dr. Macfadyen was called upon to visit a poor old Scotchwoman who had long been a member of the Church, and was now dying. He found her with her face turned to the wall, unconscious of, or indifferent to, everything around her. She made no answer when he told her who he was. He spoke of her drawing near home, and quoted texts of Scripture, but could not rouse her. He began the 23rd Psalm: 'The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want'— and still there was no response. Then he began the Scotch version of the Psalm—

'The Lord's my Shepherd, I'll not want;
He makes me down to lie
In pastures green'—

There was a stirring of the bed-clothes; and as he went on the old woman turned round, looked him in the face and spoke: 'Hey, I mind o' learnin' that when I was a lassie.' She took his hand and joined him in repeating the verses." And then the editor makes this comment upon these things: "One other observation is suggested by what Dr. Macmillan states regarding the late Dr. Guthrie, that in his last hours he wanted 'a bairn's hymn' to be sung to him. It is that for sick people with delicate nerves poetry is better than prose, and singing better than reading. The writer of this article discovered this many years ago, before he had been long a minister. He instinctively felt, as he stood by the bedside, say of a consumptive patient, that his own words were clumsy and awkward, and that speech was harsh compared with the soothing power of musical tones. So, instead of trying to say something edifying in his own language, he selected some well-known hymn as a vehicle of instruction, and sang, rather than read, its stanzas."

"The writer of this article" is Professor A. B. Bruce of Glasgow.

But the young minister's difficulty is what to say, not how to say it. "The old evangelical theology was certainly strong at this most crucial point, and left a minister in no doubt as to what he should say and do. His duty was to preach the doctrine of justification by faith alone, and to endeavour to get an assent to that doctrine from the dying." Those are his words.

"Where did he learn this?" asks Dr. Garden Blaikie. "Certainly not from the Shorter Catechism. I have, during the whole course of my ministry, admired and loved two of the answers of that Catechism as precious beyond expression, alike for the living and the dying. One is: 'What is effectual calling?' The process there described culminates in the sinner being enabled to 'embrace Jesus Christ freely offered to us in the gospel.' The other is: 'What is faith in

Jesus Christ?' The answer is, 'Faith in Jesus Christ is a saving grace whereby we receive and rest on Him alone for salvation as He is offered to us in the gospel.'" And Dr. Blaikie asks if either of those answers in the least degree justifies the representation that the old theology made the reception of salvation turn on giving assent to the doctrine of justification by faith.

They do not. And yet it may be that men who had learned the Shorter Catechism so misapplied it. For, while it is true that, as Mr. Clow says, a man is often wiser than his creed, it is true also that he is sometimes not so wise; and in the same letter Mr. Clow himself gives a striking and painful instance of it. "I recall an American story," he says, "which puts the evil to which your correspondent refers rudely, but memorably. A soldier had received his death-wound, and the chaplain—an earnest, zealous man—was endeavouring to prepare him for death. He poured upon him a flood of questions: 'Are you looking to the Cross?' 'Are you clinging to the Rock?' 'Are you trusting in the Blood?' and so on to a score of similar intent. The dying man lay in silence, with his face to the wall. At length he turned, and said in a feeble voice: 'Look here, parson, ain't you about done with them con-un-drums?'"

But the question for our young minister, and for all of us, is not what the old evangelical theology taught, but what one may teach who stands "in the full light of modern thought." And it is a question of the utmost need. For here a distinct and profound cleavage is made at our feet, and the letters of these eminent pastors range themselves on either side of the gulf. "No doubt," says Dr. Marshall Lang, "in the old evangelical theology there was sometimes too much of a doctrine of justification, a scheme of redemption; but Dr. Andrew Bonar's Manual, to which I have referred, shows how anxiously and faithfully 'the old evangelical' dealt with the spiritual state of the dying, emphasised the need of repentance as well as faith, and pointed

directly to 'the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.' Surely the minister who stands most fully 'in the light of modern thought' would not wish to do less or else than this." Yes; it is proved from the letters here that there are modern ministers who do less and else than that—ministers who do immeasurably less, and therefore else impassably.

We do Dr. Clifford no injustice, his letter is so frank and fearless, if we name him one. We do him no injustice, for plainly he means to do less and he means to do else. Here are his words: "But what is our message to be? Never have I hesitated to utter to the most sinful and depraved the glad tidings of God's redeeming love for His children, for His wandering, self-destroyed, prodigal children, and to assure men in the near prospect of death that God is their Father, and regards them, their sins and guilt notwithstanding, as His sons, and seeks to save them from their sins."

So "the most sinful and depraved" is a son of God, and, dying in his sins, will surely inherit the promises, of which already he is an heir. That is the one message. And the other is that he is now a son of the devil, and that he will receive power to become a son of God only through repentance and faith in Christ Jesus. And these two messages are distinct and contradictory. Plainly "the question of your correspondent is one of intense practical importance to every Christian minister," and it is time we had discussed it even in our religious periodicals.

With which of these messages, then, does the full light of modern thought send us to the dying bed? There is an article in a later issue (August 25) of this same periodical which supplies us with an unmistakable, though a most unexpected, answer. It is the review of a Dutch novel. Within recent years there has arisen in Holland a new school of fiction. This new school, we are told, has behaved as new schools

generally do. Its members have rebelled against the traditions of the fathers; they have reviled these traditions, and the fathers also; they have floated a new review, and they have published several novels. Surely it belongs to modern thought, and stands in the full light of it.

Now the novel before us is typical both of the fiction and of the theology of this new school. The fiction, with which we have nothing to do, is utterly worthless; but the theology is most significant. "Had he known his Bible," says the reviewer, "the writer of this novel might have taken as the motto of his book: 'Lust, when it has conceived, bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death'" (James i. 15). "Undoubtedly," he continues, "this is a somewhat old and trite saying for a *fin de siècle* story to develop through a few hundred pages; but that is precisely what lends for the theologian peculiar interest to this novel, and many other novels of our time. It is that this trite theological phrase is being repeated as though it were a new discovery, and with all the vigour and power with which men proclaim every new discovery. *The world of fiction is rediscovering sin.* Only a century ago, during the flush of the Revolution, we had beautiful and idyllic pictures of what the state of the world would be, if only the forms and institutions of society could be removed. Let these forms which cramped and warped the fair nature of man be taken away, and man would grow up in perfect beauty. Man to Rousseau was naturally good; it was circumstances—such circumstances as the priests and the royal authority and society—which polluted him. In the glorious burst of that fiery vigour of youth which filled the veins of the world with a new faith in itself and a new hope for itself, everything was possible. Nothing was or could be too hard for man. It was his morning-time, and joy was it in that dawn to be alive, but to be young was very heaven. Let man only shake off the clinging fragments of the old kings, and at once he would bring about that new

heaven and new earth which had tormented the thought, and haunted the dreams of the prophets. And now'—!

"And now," says this skilled reviewer, standing in the full light of modern thought, "see how far we are from that to-day." And he tells how the strongest novelists are hovering with wide wings over the abyss of man's iniquity. "Everywhere the new school is preaching such things, as few preachers dare do it, with a loathsomeness of detail which haunts the memory." And he names Guy de Maupassant, Emile Zola, and George Moore. They force us to see how sordid life is, with no delicate colouring and no daintiness—sordid to the core. No doubt all this is exaggerated, as every recoil exaggerates. It is largely due to the wide swing which the pendulum took in the early years of the century that it is now swinging so heavily in the opposite direction. But fiction is rediscovering the fact of sin. Its explanations and theories about it are multiform, but it is almost unanimous in insisting upon the fact of it. Almost everywhere it is laying an unexpected emphasis upon the words of Browning when he said that Christianity is the faith which launched its dart at the head of a lie, taught original sin, the corruption of man's heart.

"On the question itself," says Professor James Orr, "as one who *still* believes in the main lines of the 'old evangelical faith,' that is, in the ruin of man through sin, in the need of redemption through Christ, in His atoning work as the ground of a sinner's hope, in the regenerating and sanctifying work of the Spirit, in faith in Christ (not 'assent' to a 'doctrine of justification by faith alone') as the gospel presents Him to us as the means of salvation, and in repentance for sin and a changed heart and life as the evidence of genuine faith—I think that a minister's duty at the death-bed is very plain."

Professor Orr says so "in the full light of modern thought."