

give no account. Evidently, says, M. Levy-Bruhl, another of those writers who are just now making powerful assaults upon the dogmatism of materialistic science, "the molecular theory takes no account of objects and relations which exist in the universe, such as beauty, goodness, harmony, conscience. Shall we conclude therefore that these do not exist?" It is pretty clear that the pendulum of philosophy, having swung to the outer limit of its arc on the materialistic side, is now returning toward the centre to which it is constantly drawn by the gravitative force of the higher reason.

THE Democratic and independent papers of the United States are condemning with a good deal of vigour, and apparently with good cause, President Harrison's action in regard to the postmastership of New York. Mr. Pearson has been removed from that desirable position to make room for Mr. Van Cott. It is, we believe, admitted on almost all hands that Mr. Pearson was a model postmaster in every respect. His appointment, many years ago, was made on the sound principle of promotion, his qualification being able and faithful discharge of the duties of assistant. In recognition of his eminent fitness for the position and his general worth, he was, though a Republican, left undisturbed by President Cleveland. And now, though he has remained a Republican throughout, he is dismissed by a Republican President in order that his lucrative place may be given to a man whose chief claim to the position is that, though he knows nothing of the duties he is to discharge, he has been, as the *Tribune* says, "an active worker in behalf of his party for thirty years." The incident shows in a striking manner the beauties of the spoils system in politics. It also brings President Harrison's action into unpleasing contrast, not only with his professions, but with the record of his predecessor in office. It is noteworthy that President Cleveland seems to be steadily rising in public estimation since his dignified retirement. The merits of his administration are coming to be better appreciated than before he vacated the White House. Should President Harrison prove, as there seems reason to fear, not strong enough to resist the action of "the machine," it would be pretty safe to predict Mr. Cleveland's return to the chieftainship four years hence on the crest of a great wave of mugwump reaction.

"BOULANGER'S sympathizers are growing in numbers," says a recent press despatch. The statements of American correspondents in regard to European politics have usually to be taken with large grains of allowance, but the above corresponds so well with the shrewdest forecasts, based upon the course which the French Government and Senate are taking, that it but slightly taxes our credulity. If the authorities had been studiously aiming to give the demagogue a cry and the people a ground for suspicion and sympathy, they could hardly have taken a course better adapted to produce those results. Their refusal to bring the accused before a judicial court, and their determination instead to hale him before an extraordinary tribunal created for the occasion from the membership of their own body, could not fail to excite popular distrust. When it is now stated that a sub-committee has been appointed to examine more than ten thousand documents, including 3,000 newspaper articles, it becomes pretty clear to the simplest intelligence that no direct, unequivocal evidence of treasonable designs is to be forthcoming. A verdict resting on no more solid basis than the incoherent *residua* collected by passing such a mass of material through the fine interstices of a Senatorial sieve, will be more likely to arouse public indignation than to carry conviction. There are, we suppose, few disinterested on-lookers who believe Boulanger to be anything better than a self-seeking agitator and political *charlatan*, but it is quite among the possibilities that those who just now hold the destinies of the French Republic in their hands may give him a chance to become a Dictator or the author of a *coup-d'état*.

THE contest between the Jute-Bagging Combination in the United States and the Southern cotton farmers bids fair to go on with increased vigour this summer. The combination has, according to the *Boston Commercial Bulletin*, as its initial step, already cornered the supply of jute-butts. As the price, 12 cents a pound, demanded last year by the combination, led to the extensive use of substitutes, the price is to be reduced to 10 cents this season. In answer to statements made by those interested, that there is no combination and no corner in jute-bagging, the *Bulletin* says: "Nevertheless, the active parties in ques-

tion have succeeded in shutting some mills and coming to an understanding with others, and as far as the consumer is concerned it is a matter of little moment whether the elevation of prices and the restriction of the supply of bagging is effected by an organized combination or merely by a general understanding between certain large mills whose individual agreements with other mills are in harmony with a single line of policy, resulting in a handsome profit in individual cases. The former plan of campaign was adopted last year, the looser but equally effective method is arranged for the coming season." The Southern papers are advising their readers to give early orders for some of the various substitutes, thus encouraging their manufacturers, and to refrain altogether from the use of jute-bagging. At a convention of the Farmer's Alliance of Georgia, which is said to have 80,000 members, those present pledged themselves by an almost unanimous vote to use cotton bagging instead of jute as a covering for their products. The great struggle will be watched with interest as a kind of trial contest between combination and competition.

RENAN'S HISTORY OF ISRAEL.*

M. RENAN continues his work of destruction and construction in the pleasant, jaunty, flippant manner with which he has made us familiar. He is, of course, an inveterate and incorrigible naturalist. Anything which savours of the supernatural must be explained away. There can be no revelation, because there is really nothing to reveal. Of course we hear of *Dieu*, but that is a mere figure of speech, standing almost for anything. If we will accept these negations as our starting point, and allow M. Renan to exercise his charming fancy in reconstructing the history, we shall accompany him on his way with a certain amount of pleasure and enjoyment.

But we are afraid that these concessions are forbidden, not merely by religion, but by science. M. Renan imagines his theories to be religious; they are merely sentimental. He speaks in grand words of the ideal. Again it is a mere sentiment. He is resolved to be scientific; but he is simply arbitrary, his science consisting in following "the devices and desires" of his own heart. We cannot say that his book is of no value. It really is of some value as showing to what straits unbelief is reduced, also as proving that the most sceptical mind is unable to resist the testimony of history altogether. Moreover it gives us many graphic pictures of incidents in Hebrew history.

This second volume (the second of three which are to make up the whole work), M. Renan says, contains what he regards as the most important part of the history of Judaism. It extends from the reign of David to the destruction of the kingdom of Israel by the taking of Samaria. Within this period, according to our author, "Jahvé, the national god of Israel, undergoes a complete transformation. From a god, local and provincial, he becomes by a kind of return to the ancient patriarchal elohism, the universal God, who has made heaven and earth. He becomes, above all, a righteous god, that which the national gods, naturally full of partiality for their adherents (*clientèle*), never are. The entry of morality into religion is accomplished. Amos, Hosea, Micah, Isaiah, at the date at which the volume closes, have proclaimed it in passages, the beauty of which has never been surpassed."

The simple answer to all this rhodomontade is very simple. It is pure nonsense. It assumes that there is not and cannot be any revelation of a supernatural character made to man, and then proceeds to explain the progress of revelation on naturalistic principles. If it is said that Christian readers of the Old Testament start from the opposite assumption, namely, that God exists and has revealed Himself, the answer is simple. In the first place, religion does postulate the existence of a personal God, who can be known and worshipped. The assumption of atheism or pantheism or agnosticism can certainly not be allowed to settle this question. Which presupposition is the truer or the more reasonable must depend not merely upon abstract or *a priori* reasoning, but equally upon critical examination of that history which we believe to be supernatural, and of its culminating point in the New Testament, and more especially in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. This is a most important caution, since unwary readers may find that they are unable to escape from the tyranny of M. Renan because they have unwittingly conceded his fundamental principles. Throughout his whole writings there is a perpetual assumption that the Christian view of the Bible story is not to be entertained as a conceivable alternative, so that there is no weighing of the respective merits of the various themes. A good example of the somewhat flippant manner in which the development of divine revelation is treated on naturalistic principles will be found in his remarks on the relation of King David to the "progress of Jahvéism," in chapter V.

On this point very much might be said, far more than is here possible. It does not by any means follow that, because progress in the knowledge of God was very gradual, therefore the whole of that progress is to be ascribed to

**Histoire du peuple d'Israel*. Par Ernest Renan. Tome Deuxième. Paris: Colmann Lévy, 1889.

the mere efforts of the human mind. It stands to reason that God should educate mankind as wise parents educate their children, giving them in their infancy such lessons as they are capable of receiving, and suffering light to break in upon them, more and more, by slow degrees, as they can use it and walk in it. We maintain that such a theory of the progressive knowledge of God, obtained by the Israelites, is far more rational than that which ascribes it entirely to the peculiar action of the Shemitic mind. It is strange, indeed, if the whole religious history of Israel is to be explained on naturalistic principles, that the development of this people should have been so different from that of all others. The God of Israel progressively revealed in the Law and the Prophets, and made known in a supreme manner by Jesus Christ, is the God of mankind; and no one now could think of any other. How is this? On the Christian theory it is plain enough. Will any other account for it?

We have dealt thus fully with the fundamental question between M. Renan and the Christian believer, because it is only thus that we can put ourselves in a right position for the study of his book. Some parts of it are very provoking; but we are not insensible to many of its merits, its charming style, and the vivid and picturesque manner in which the events of history are placed before the mind. Occasionally we are impressed with even higher qualities, a kind of human sympathy and insight, by means of which he helps us to a knowledge of men and their motives, for which we sometimes feel grateful. Thus a great deal of the history of the reign of David is told with considerable point and force, and with charming lucidity and gracefulness, although every now and then the irrepressible levity of the French *littérateur* breaks out and annoys. For those who care to be amused by sacred literature, there will be no lack of entertainment in these pages. To M. Renan, of course, it is a mere coincidence that the name of Solomon should signify the Peaceful, and that peace should have been the characteristic of his reign; but science does not deal in accidents. In spite of occasional freakishness, there is a great deal that is very interesting in the author's elaborate treatment of the reign of Solomon.

We select some specimens: "Solomon does not count in the history of theology and of the religious sentiment in Israel, and yet he marks a decisive moment in religious history; he gave a house to Jahvé. Like his father, Solomon held Jahvé for the tutelary deity of Israel; he honoured Him in all the consecrated localities, made offerings on the high places, and burnt incense there. The most famous of the high places at that period was that of Gibeon. Solomon often frequented this place, and made superb sacrifices there. It is there that the legend places the dream in which Jahvé promised to give him wisdom." Here, as usual, M. Renan assumes the historical character of the narrative as long as it suits his purpose, and in the same arbitrary manner introduces the legendary explanation. The description of the building of the temple has the same mingling of the true and the fictitious. Here is not a bad historical parable: "Apart from external power, the reign of Rehoboam did not differ so much as might be supposed from the reign of Solomon. It was Louis XV. after Louis XIV. The prophetic movement seems to have been entirely null. The kind of mental enlargement, not without something of moral relaxation, which characterised the last years of the reign of Solomon, continued under Rehoboam. Religious eclecticism covered the country with high places, with sacred groves," and so forth.

The following is amusing: "Ahab, so much calumniated by the Jahévist historians (a bold statement! What authority has the author for it?) was, in short, a remarkable sovereign, brave, intelligent, moderate, devoted to the ideas of civilization. He equalled Solomon in openness of mind and 'wisdom.' He surpassed him in military valour and in the justice of his general views. He built several cities, developed Samaria, embellished the palace which had been commenced by his father, and constructed the residence called *Beth has-sen*, 'the ivory house.' Jezreel, thanks to him, received great expansion, and became like the second capital of Israel. Under his reign, poetry seems to have shone forth." All this is a very pretty mingling of history and romance. It reminds us of the rehabilitation of Henry VIII. and other potentates, and of the toast proposed by the old gentleman who had suffered much from the annoyances of little children: "Here's to the much calumniated memory of King Herod the Great!"

"The prophets of the ninth century [B.C.]," says M. Renan, "in spite of dark passions, and what we should call grave theological mistakes, certainly deserve to occupy a place of the first rank in the history of human progress." It would be a deeply interesting event if M. Renan should ever return to the faith of his childhood, and should rewrite these charming books. How much he might leave untouched. How much purer a light he might cast upon the story which he tells. "A peculiar feature in the history of the Hebrew people," he says, "is the fact that, in their case, the religious crises corresponded with the crises of nationality." This is true and important. How could it be otherwise with the people of God?

A REPORT comes by way of Germany that a novel use of electricity has been made in India for the prevention of the intrusion of snakes into dwellings. Before all the doors and around the house two wires are laid, connected with an induction apparatus. Should a snake attempt to crawl over the wires, he receives a shock of electricity which either kills or frightens him into a hasty retreat.