

Our Contributors.

SLEEP VIEWED AS CRITICISM.

BY KNOXIAN.

The author of an essay, spring poem, or a literary effort of some kind—we forget what it was—asked a friend to listen to him read his effort, and give a criticism on its merits. While the reading was going on the friend fell soundly asleep. The reader became indignant, and lectured the sleeper for not keeping awake, and preparing his criticism. The drowsy critic blandly remarked:

"SLEEP IS CRITICISM."

Yes, sleep *is* criticism. It is much more intelligent and respectable criticism than some other kinds that we occasionally hear. It is *honest* criticism, which is a good deal more than can be said of all kinds. Criticism is always a revealer, and frequently it reveals much more of the character of the critic than it does of the merits of the person or thing criticised. Sometimes it shows that the critic is a candid, honest, generous, intelligent man, who can look upon all sides of a question, and do ample justice to every body and everything. Not unfrequently it proves, with painful conclusiveness, that the critic is narrow-minded, or warped, or invincibly ignorant. Sometimes it shows that he is a censorious nibbler. In other cases it proves that he is unfair, perhaps even malicious. In many cases it demonstrates, to a certainty, that the critic is nothing more than a chronic fault-finder. If you did, or said, or wrote the thing exactly as he says it should have been done, or said, or written, he would find fault all the same. Yes, criticism is a revealer, and it generally reveals quite as much about the character of the critic as it does about the merits of the person or thing criticised.

Sleep taken in church is criticism, as well as sleep taken anywhere else. This kind of sermon criticism certainly means something. It may not take a sermon to pieces, and examine all its parts carefully, as a professor of homiletics is supposed to do; but it certainly means something. It has a voice! It speaks. What does it say? What does it mean? Sometimes it means that

THE PREACHER IS PROSY.

With all due deference to the clerical profession, we fear it must be admitted that some preachers *are* prosy. There is a lack of freshness about their modes of expression which is very apt to produce soporific effects in hot weather. The matter is often of the best, but the form in which it is presented does not strike and keep hearers awake. The fault is not always the preacher's. The fault lay chiefly in his training. He was taught, at least indirectly, that he must repress his individuality, and do every thing just "so." He is not himself. He is one of a large number of excellent young men who were all run in the same collegiate mould some years ago. He is not working as nature intended he should work, and, perhaps, mainly for this reason, he is not an effective workman. Perhaps he is afraid that if he worked as the Creator made him, some of his hearers might be shocked. So he prefers the criticism of sleep to the criticism of people who cannot endure to see anything done except in the way they have been accustomed to, and prosed on.

The criticism of sleep may mean that

THE SERMON IS TOO LONG.

The *Globe* wrestles nearly every Saturday with the burning question, "How Long Should a Sermon Be?" The writer studiously avoids fixing the time, and shows his good sense by not coming down to particulars. All he insists on is that the sermon should not be too long. But what is "too long"? Some sermons are shorter at forty-five minutes than others are at ten. There are many things to be taken into consideration, such as the occasion, the subject, the atmosphere in the room, the wants of the people, the style of the preacher and other things. The fact that the clock-handle has come round is only one thing. If a preacher is in fine working trim, body, mind and voice at their best, he can go on much longer with edification than when he is in a poor working condition. People who attend church twice every Sabbath, and prayer meeting during the week, don't need to be preached to as long as people who seldom hear the Gospel. Who would think of putting off a Gospel-hungry crowd in a new settlement with a twenty-

minute sermon? The thing for them is an old Royal George of fifty minutes' delivery, loaded to the muzzle with red-hot Gospel truth. Giving them an evening twenty-minute sermon would be like giving a man a cracker who had not eaten anything for a week. But still the fact remains that sleep in church is criticism, and sometimes means that the sermon is too long. If a hearer keeps awake as long as he can, and drops over about "thirdly" or "fourthly," the fault may not always be his.

The criticism of sleep often means that the sleeping hearer

HAS WORKED TOO LATE ON SATURDAY NIGHT.

For him to keep awake is a fight against nature, and in all such fights nature usually wins. There is no denying the fact that the practice of keeping stores open on Saturday night, until within a few minutes of Sabbath morning, is one of the greatest hindrances to the preaching of the Gospel that Churches in towns and villages have to contend against. Some overworked in this way never come to church on Sabbath morning, and some come in a condition which makes it well-nigh impossible for them to worship. Here is a field for ladies to work in that, so far as we know, not one of them has ever touched in Ontario. Is it not a fact that a large number of ladies do their shopping on Saturday nights, and thus help to continue the practice which makes profitable worship impossible to many on Sabbath mornings?

The criticism of sleep often means that

THE CHURCH IS POORLY VENTILATED.

In many cases it is not ventilated at all. The wonder is not that a hearer cannot keep awake, and breathe air a month old. The wonder is that he can *live* and do it. Those timid people who are so much afraid of an open window forget that foul air gives cold as fast as anything else.

This criticism means sometimes that

THE HEARER IS OUT OF HIS ENVIRONMENT.

Environment is a pretty big word, but we cannot think of any other that seems to suit as well. This hearer works all day in the open air without his coat, and on Sabbath he wears his Sabbath suit, closely buttoned, and breathes stuffy, soporific air. Don't be too hard on this man. Of course, he should not sleep in church, but if you were in his place perhaps you would sleep yourself.

The criticism of sleep in some cases means that

THE SLEEPER'S LIVER IS TORPID.

One of the best men we ever knew could not keep awake in church. He tried hard. He tried everything. He almost tortured himself to keep awake. The doctor knew the reason why. His digestive apparatus was no more use than a coffee mill. It would not even grind. There are such cases. They should have our sympathy. Still it is hardly fair for a man who can keep awake every other place to blame his liver. The liver has enough to answer for. The worst form of sleeping in church is that which comes from *habit*. Like every other bad habit, this one soon conquers.

THE SELF REVELATION OF GOD*

BY REV. S. H. KELLOGG, D.D.

It is safe to say that at no time since the Christian era has there been such a universal and earnest engagement of the minds of men in the great problems concerning the being and nature of God, and His relation to the world, as at present. The causes for this are manifold, and to review them in detail were a fruitful theme for a lengthy article. Especially should be noted, however, the unprecedented advance which has been made during the past half-century in the various physical sciences. Just in proportion as the advance of scientific discovery has revealed to us the incomprehensible vastness of the physical universe in space and time, and the marvellous nature of the processes by which it has been brought to its present condition, has the question of its origin pressed more and more urgently for an answer. Theist and atheist, agnostic, pantheist and materialist with ever-increasing earnestness contend over the question with an interest which ever increases the more that increasing knowledge reveals how funda-

* THE SELF REVELATION OF GOD. By Samuel Harris, D.D., LL.D., Professor of Systematic Theology in Yale University. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons; Toronto: William Briggs.

mental to thought and practical life the answer to the question must be.

It is often said, and that with abundant reason, that the various works in defence of Christian theism which were produced during the last century, are far from meeting the present need. Their argument is as valid as ever, but the progress of knowledge has started new difficulties which they do not touch, and in many instances has seemed to many to cast doubt on what the apologists of those days could assume as admitted truths.

Already, therefore, this last half of the nineteenth century has seen the beginnings of a new Christian apologetic, designed to meet the difficulties raised by unbelief, in view of the new data given to thought in our own day. Already such works as the Lectures of Professor Flint on "Theism" and "Antitheistic Theories," "The Unseen Universe," of Professors Balfour-Stewart and Tait; the admirable work of Paul Janet on "Final Causes," the remarkable essays of Professor Drummond on "Natural Law in the Spiritual World," not to speak of others of perhaps no less merit, have taken a most worthy place in apologetic literature.

Of such works, the latest, as probably the most complete and elaborate in the English language, is the book by the Rev. Professor Harris, D.D., LL.D., of Yale University, New Haven, Conn., U. S. A., bearing the title given at the head of the present article. Those who have read the still more fundamental work published by Professor Harris in 1883, "The Philosophical Basis of Theism," will not need any assurance of the exceptional value of this new contribution of his to the apologetics of our time, a work which, if we mistake not, is destined to take its place as one of the most important apologetic works of this generation. The scope of the argument may be gathered from the following brief analysis of its contents.

Rightly laying down the principle that "any statement of the evidences of Christian theism, which is to meet the thinking of this age, must take and hold the position that man's knowledge of God begins in experience," it is then shown, first, that, as a matter of fact, God is known in the experience of men; then, that this fact of necessity implies that God has revealed himself to man, and that this self-revelation of God must be in historical action. And then it is further involved in these propositions that there must also be an activity on man's part in the way of receiving and interpreting the revelation. Thus, "the three factors in the knowledge of God are divine revelation, religious experience and rational thought," and it is by the synthesis of these three that we may attain a correct knowledge of the Supreme Being.

But this subjective revelation of God needs to be, and in fact is, supplemented by a revelation which is objective. This objective revelation is threefold. It is presented in nature, in man and in Christ. And by this public and historical revelation "the revelation of God in consciousness, and the spontaneous beliefs arising from it, are tested and corrected, and, so far as true, verified and amplified."

In pursuing this branch of the argument, Professor Harris begins with the so-called *a priori* argument for the being of God, showing that God is revealed in the universe, as—not indeed "the Absolute," with many,—but as "the Absolute Being," and discusses the relation of this fact to antitheistic theories and to theism. Then in the last section of this part of his book it is inquired what the Absolute Being is revealed to be. The answer is sought, first, in the constitution and course of nature, and, secondly, in the constitution and history of man. Under this section are discussed what have been most commonly called the cosmological, the teleological, and the moral arguments for theism. The last part of the work deals with the revelation of God in Christ, not indeed with the purpose of giving a full discussion of the evidences of Christianity, but of "ascertaining and defining the essential idea of Christianity, of the revelation of God in Christ and of the miraculous, and to find a reasonable basis for the possibility of miracles without interrupting the continuity of nature in its true sense."

Such, very briefly, is the outline of the argument of this goodly volume. To criticise it in any worthy manner would be to write another book. We can only note a few points deserving special remark.

The work is as notable for its precision of definition, clearness of statement and affluence of pertinent illustration, as it is attractive for the deep spiritual