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THE SLOUGH OF DESPOND.

An American correspondent of the *British Messenger*, subscribing himself "A Blind Sinner," and writing in the name of twenty or thirty acquaintances in a similarly unhappy condition, applies to the editor of that excellent periodical for help out of the Slough of Despond, into which unbelief, together with certain philosophical difficulties, has cast them. The essence of his complaint is that he, a sinner unable to believe or to pray in faith, should be bidden to pray or to believe in order to salvation, and be held responsible for not rightly doing so. It is perplexing and discouraging, he says; it is unreasonable, he evidently thinks. They have "prayed for many years, and with all the praying powers with which they are endowed," and still, after a quarter of a century, in some instances, they are no nearer the kingdom of heaven than at first, and he asks, "What must we do to be saved?"

The difficulties suggested are met with by every Christian pastor, and have been felt, to a greater or less extent, by anxious inquirers after salvation in all ages, although only here and there one is found capable of analyzing the processes of his own mind with sufficient accuracy to record them. Such a frank and earnest statement of them has, therefore, called forth a considerable amount of correspondence, as well as of editorial comment, from which we venture, on a subject of such surpassing interest, to make a few extracts.

The editor very truly remarks that:—

"The complaint of inability to pray aright, or to believe, may arise in one or other of several ways. It may be connected in one man's mind with philosophical and metaphysical speculations about God, and fate, and necessity, and free-will. It may arise in others from seeing in the Bible, and hearing from the pulpit, that man must be born again, and that saving faith is the gift of God. Or, thirdly, it may arise from sceptical distrust of the