

3. The children of parents in better circumstances who are not in the habit of using infant schools would without invidious distinction be able to enter the higher schools at the higher fees, in free competition with poorer children at lower fees whose previous training in the lower schools would place them on a merited equality.

4. The bottom round of the educational ladder would be placed within reach of the poorest child, and form the proper prelude to the scholarships which are to connect the elementary with the grammar schools.

5. The average of school fees would probably remain much as before, owing to the higher fees obtainable from the children who would enter the higher schools without having passed through the lower. A rearrangement of the Government grant, increasing its amount as regards children with certificates from the lower schools, and lessening it as regards children entering at the higher fees, but without altering its total amount, would probably be all the financial arrangement required.

6. As the certificates would be given by the Inspectors, and be Government certificates, there would be no reason why they should not be available in reduction of fees at any higher elementary school in the district according to the parents' choice, or even, under proper rules, at the schools of any other district into which the child might remove.

Lastly, this marshalling of the schools, whilst it would not, I think, unduly interfere with their freedom of action, would tend to accomplish what the conscience of the nation is more and more demanding, viz., that proper subordination of their sectional to their national object, which alone can justify their receipt of so large a share of Government grant. Probably a good deal more marshalling will be needful before national provision is made for half-time schooling, and before compulsory education is made universal.

Is not something like this what is wanted to make the educational system of England truly national? And would it not be worth while on the part of both Nonconformists and Churchmen to merge some sectarian differences and to take down some red flags in order to attain such an object?—I am, Sir, &c.,

Hitchin, October, 21, 1871.

F. SEEBOHM.

MR. ERSKINE'S VIEW OF LIFE.

[TO THE EDITOR OF THE "SPECTATOR."]

SIR,—Believing, with Mr. Erskine, that the earthly life of every individual should be regarded as an education rather than a probation, I am glad to have the opportunity of considering Dr. Thirlwall's objection—perhaps the most forcible that can be urged in opposition to that view—viz., the apparent failure of the divine purpose in the case of many who "grow worse and worse, more and more hardened, blinded, and depraved the longer they live." If thorough sympathy with Mr. Erskine's views can give any insight into his spirit, I may venture to say, that while maintaining the doctrine of perfect freedom of choice for every man, he could not have accepted as regards any man, without great qualification, the statement "*God cannot make him good.*" On the contrary, I think he would have said, "None but God can make any of us good;" and he has said in more than one letter of the series to which Dr. Thirlwall refers, that "God's purpose is to make man good." What he did maintain was, that man is not created good, but created to be made good. For the experience of every Christian confirms the Lord's words:—"Except a man be born from above, he cannot see the Kingdom of God." "No man can come to Me except the Father draw him." There is a divine compulsion by which Satan's bondsman becomes the Lord's freed-man:—"Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power."

Dr. Thirlwall's objection, though free of that leaven of the Pharisees which causes many to estimate degrees of iniquity and inward hardness of heart merely by the outward signs of social evil, seems to limit somewhat the fullness of God's saving power to the few years of natural life. "What hope," he asks, "of a better result, if they [the hardened and depraved] bring into the second school the habits and character which they have formed in the first?" I reply, the sure and certain hope of God's unlimited mercy and long suffering. If we read in the light of this hope Leviticus xxvi. 14-46, Amos iv., and many other similar passages in the prophets, we shall see the brightness of the eyes of love shining through the mask of anger. If one grievous infraction or series of infractions will not bring the people to their God, they shall receive another, and yet another still more grievous, until the end has been accomplished. There is not a word of vindictiveness in the threatenings; we simply see the fixed purpose of love that no measure of suffering shall be spared until the children have

returned to their Father. Can we seriously believe that the everlasting patience and long-suffering of God are wearied out at the end of threescore and ten years? "Must He not know," as Bishop Thirlwall rightly asks, "what fits every man best?"—and, so knowing, assign to every one the place in this life and the next which will best fulfil the purpose of his creation? The difficulty is not one that attaches merely to Mr. Erskine's view, it is inseparable from every view of man's destiny except the most ultra-Calvinistic doctrine of election and reprobation. God knows antecedently to every man's entrance into the world whether he can be saved or not, and we may feel assured that the Allwise makes no fruitless efforts towards the unattainable. If Saul of Tarsus, after resisting all that he had heard of Jesus of Nazareth before the Crucifixion, and after hardening his heart against the eloquent testimony in word and deed of the martyr Stephen to the truth and power of the Gospel, had been struck dead on his way to Damascus, he would doubtless have been spoken of as one cut off without remedy by the just judgment of God. Is it too much to hope that the sight of Jesus glorified, though in the other life, may avail much in the case of many like Saul the persecutor? He had, as Paul, to begin *de novo*, but there was not one event in his past experience that did not aid his mission and give weight to his words. He loved much, because much had been forgiven. If Love has less power to save in the other life than in this, the best has not been done for any who die impenitent, for they might have been taken away in childhood. I would not over-estimate the influence of the mere event of physical death, one way or the other. No doubt many, for a time, become worse after than they were before their departure from this world; but the only instance throughout the whole of Scripture in which the veil that divides the seen from the unseen world has been lifted for a moment reveals the germ of the divine life asserting its presence and capacity of growth in spite of, and because of, the torments that follow a selfish life. Granting that the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus is mainly to teach the lesson in its concluding sentence, I must believe that every expression of the Logos is as truthful in detail as every tree and every lily in the field of his Creation. There is a great gulf between Dives and Lazarus, but not so great as existed between them in this world, for they can see across and recognize each other as sons of Abraham; and not so great that the cry of a suffering soul cannot be heard and responded to on the other side. Then though the first petition is naturally "Have mercy on me," the second is "Save my brethren." Have we not here more than ground of hope that this was not the last nor the best result of the spirit of heaven-directed prayer new born in the breast of the rich man, and that he would learn to cry to One mightier and more compassionate than even father Abraham? It is some ground of consolation also to believe from the history of Judas that the evil nature in the case of the most criminal may be something *in* them, rather than *of* them,—a demoniac possession of the soul from which the immediate presence of Christ can alone deliver, though first, as in the case of the body of the child at the foot of the Mount of Transfiguration, the evil spirit is permitted to throw down and tear its victim, inasmuch that many say of the man, "He is dead."—I am, Sir, &c.,

J. W. F.

"THE GOD OF BATTLES."

[TO THE EDITOR OF THE "SPECTATOR."]

SIR,—Without venturing to maintain in your columns that to a really Christian nation war can never be a necessary evil, I yet cannot help objecting to an appeal to "the God of Battles" in the mouth of a professed minister of Christ. For the phrase to be appropriate there must be one of two things; either a belief, with the ancient Greeks and Romans, in a specific God of War; or else a belief, with the ancient Israelites, that God specially interposes in battle to cause victory to be on the side of justice,—a belief, however, which is naïvely belied by the historian when he records (Judges i. 19), "And the Lord was with Judah; and he drave out the inhabitants of the mountain; but could not drive out the inhabitants of the valley, *because they had chariots of iron.*" Cromwell shared this latter belief, or at all events used language implying it, at the battle of Dunbar, when, on seeing the infatuation of Leslie, the Scottish General, in descending with his army to the plain from his secure and well-chosen position on the heights, he exclaimed, "The Lord hath delivered them into our hands."

And had Cromwell been in the place of Wellington at Salamanca, when his eagle glance detected that Marmont had separated his right wing too far from his centre; or in the place of Von Moltke, when the fatally false move of the French opened the way for the disaster of Sedan, he would probably have used the same expres-