

chamber in the dreamy house, and solaced herself with the thought that,—

"Be the day weary, or be the day long,
At length it ringeth to evensong."

But for us the day had been neither long nor weary; but full of the charm that George Eliot somewhere says all February days have about them, when the beautiful year lies all before one, full of promise.

W. W. H.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR.

THE SUPERNATURAL AND THE MIRACULOUS.

[TO THE EDITOR OF THE "SPECTATOR."]

SIR,—Your recent article on "Humanist Theology" must have afforded many readers that lively satisfaction with which we feel dim instincts and beliefs receive the definiteness of clear expression. Will you allow space to one of them for a few remarks suggested by comparing that article with a review, shortly preceding it, of the striking volume called "The Kernel and the Husk?" Alike among those who welcome and recoil from the spirit that denies the supernatural, your protest against the attempt to harmonise that spirit with the teaching of Christ will meet with sympathy; for religious feeling is not more interested in rejecting the compromise than are scientific accuracy or intellectual coherence. If we mean no more by the Will of God than that group of sequences which we know as Nature, the Church has nothing to say that would not be much better said at the Royal Institution, and her continued existence becomes mere waste of power. Natural selection, if it show us as much of the divine character as does the life of Christ, shows us infinitely more; and the changed proportions of what was once thought the focus of the world's history will be found the least element in the reconstruction of belief. To many minds, I suppose, this seems equally true if what is rejected be not the supernatural, but the miraculous; yet in "The Kernel and the Husk" we have an attempt to disentangle Christianity from all association with miracle, which not only implies no rejection of a supernatural world, but even may be said to translate the belief in the supernatural into a form which makes it more intelligible to the mind of our day. The author of "The Kernel and the Husk" believes that we sojourn, for some three score years and ten, in a world of fixed sequences, which we have come to call laws, dealing with a certain definite amount of force which we may husband and transmute, but neither increase nor destroy. He believes, also, as I understand him, that we inhabit another world in which we are in contact with an Infinite Will, the fountain of all law, in approach to which we may unseal new springs of creative energy, and find the irrevocable past subject to mysterious transformation; that the change which we call "death," severing us from the fleshly organism which is a part of Nature, will reveal this eternal world as our home; but that we inhabit it at this moment, and may at any moment enter into a vital experience of its most pregnant influences. What I mean by calling this a supernatural world is that it is impossible to translate that experience into language intelligible to the part of the mind which corresponds to Nature as the ear corresponds to the vibrations which cause sound. Vain were the effort, for instance, to construe to the rationalising intellect that which he believes who has ever uttered in prayer the word "forgive;" the claim that he should describe the hope which then fills the heart as an anticipation, busy with the world of event discovers to him that the logic moulded on the processes of Nature has no dialect available for an experience to which those processes afford no analogy. This world of the supernatural, as I understand the writer to whose work I refer, he accepts with a fullness of belief in which he is not surpassed by St. Paul, while he is forced, as a thinker of the last half of the nineteenth century, to give to the world of the natural a prominence and vividness which perhaps were hardly possible before the scientific triumphs of our own time. What is original to him is the belief that while every man is an inhabitant of both these worlds, they never, as it were, overlap each other, so that the outward world should bear witness to an influence that it does not include, as a felled tree tells the spectator that a man has been at work in a forest. This view seems to me to possess a value for our time which a truer belief would lack. It disengages the question for each one of us from that complication with which the student of history alone is fitted to deal, and shuts off from that question a side-light which our time finds specially bewildering. Is

there a God who answers prayer? a Redeeming Will with which we may co-operate, in harmony with which we may enter into communion with the absent, the estranged, the dead?—a divine sympathy with our desires, not in proportion to their effectiveness, but on some principle of which we see no shadow in Nature, so that in this mysterious inverted world the achievements of a Napoleon go for nothing, the aspirations of the insignificant and the meek for everything? No book published in the last score of years seems to me to meet that question with so emphatic a "Yes!" as "The Kernel and the Husk" does. Indeed, I should venture to say that the issue was never before so clearly accepted by any one who gave it an affirmative answer. I think the author right in what he accepts, and wrong in what he denies. But that a logical mind, rejecting all invasion of the natural by the supernatural, should yet believe in the existence of a world above Nature, as much more important to each of us as our home is more important than an inn,—this seems to me a translation of the meaning of Christianity into a dialect in which, if in any, it may be received by the mind of our own day;—while that in it which is negative will sift away a problem for the historian, and bring it back to the field of belief on ground where it perplexes no fundamental issues, and leaves personal conviction untroubled with evidence it cannot judge.—I am, Sir, &c., F. JULIA WEDGWOOD.

RETICENCE ON THE IRISH PROBLEM.

[TO THE EDITOR OF THE "SPECTATOR."]

SIR,—I noticed recently in the *Daily News* a complaint that, whilst the Gladstonian Liberals were quite outspoken as to their own views on the Irish problem, the Unionists, on the other hand, were provokingly reticent as to the nature and amount of the local government which they would grant to Ireland. But it may surely be retorted that the Gladstonians are no more explicit than the Unionists. The real question is,—What degree of control over affairs in Ireland is to be reserved to the Imperial Parliament? Sir George Trevelyan last week appealed to the influential Mr. Schnadhorst as assuring the Liberal Party that Mr. Gladstone's Bills are dead. If so, what takes their place?

We continually hear Gladstonian speakers declaring that they hold by the "lines" of those Bills. And Lord Thring, in a recent able vindication of the Bills, has justified Home-rule on the ground that the restrictions incorporated in them, if firmly maintained, would prove adequate to the maintenance of order in Ireland and to the preservation of its effective union with England. It is also commonly announced that Mr. Gladstone, who when he brought in his Bills despaired of devising a practicable method of giving Ireland any representation in the Westminster Parliament, sees his way now to the contriving of such a scheme. But this, I think, has not been stated with authority. It would be extremely interesting to have at least a sketch of the arrangement to be proposed. It might have two results. It might give the British Parliament a manifest title to control both legislation and administration in Ireland,—a reason which, together with the difficulty of putting the leading politicians into both Parliaments, may have induced Mr. Parnell not to desire such representation; and it might also give to the Irish Members opportunities of extorting concessions which the British Parliament would otherwise be unwilling to grant.

On the other hand, I think Mr. Morley not long since declared that, in his opinion, the settlement of the question must involve a degree of independence for Ireland beyond what was contemplated in the Gladstonian Bills, and that it was worth while to wait some years for a settlement, in the hope of its being more complete and final. And one of the most ardent of English Gladstonian candidates at the last Election, in a pamphlet on Home-rule, condemned all restrictions on Irish independence as "idle and irritating." The difference is so great between an independent Ireland acknowledging a Sovereign represented by an Irish Ministry, and an Ireland governing itself under the strict supervision of an Imperial Parliament in which Ireland should be represented, that I think we have a right to desire from Mr. Morley some more explicit account of the policy which he advocates. At all events, it cannot be said that the electors know sufficiently what would be meant by bringing Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Morley back to power. And what is in Sir G. Trevelyan's head as to a substantial agreement between him and Mr. Morley, it is difficult to imagine.

That some experiment will be tried, whether by Lord Salis-