

THE ROMANCE OF M. RENAN.

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WE have, once and again, read "The Life of Jesus," by M. Renan. The book is a masterpiece of skill. We say this without any reference either to its style or to its scientific character, but with respect to the marvellous cleverness with which its author colours events and fashions men, in order to bring them before the reader under such an aspect as will conceal their true character. Up to the present time the adversaries of revelation had assailed it with coarse invectives: Christianity was "infamous;" Jesus, "an astronomical symbol;" the Gospel, "a collection of myths." The atrocity of these accusations produced the conviction of their falseness. This has been well understood by M. Renan, and he has protected himself from that danger. He has dropped the character of an accuser in order to affect that of the

historian, and it must be admitted that the imitation is successful. The position assumed is cleverly masked : blame is tempered with praise ; the hand that strikes falls with so much discretion that one might mistake a blow for a caress. M. Renan has so well drawn up his suit that he seems to have a real interest in the accused whose condemnation he demands. He knows that in order to gain the jury he must take care not to seem to dictate its verdict.

As for ourselves, we confess we do not possess this skill. At the outset we shall let it be seen where we desire to lead those who may read these pages. We do not aim either at a magical style or a refined criticism, but at simple uprightness, relying upon the force of truth itself.

It is in the Gospels that M. Renan obtains the documents out of which he composes the life of Jesus, and to this source of information he gives the following testimony : " In conclusion, I admit as authentic the four canonical gospels. All of them, I think, go as far back as the first century, and belong pretty nearly to the authors to whom they are assigned ; but their historical value is very diverse. Matthew evidently deserves by far the highest confidence with respect to the dis-

courses he reports : in these we have the *logia*, the notes taken from the living and clear recollections of the teaching of Jesus " (p. xxxvii).*

After reading these lines are you not reassured ? Has not the author already won your confidence by showing so much impartiality towards the Gospels ? Yes, but wait : he will not long delay in limiting in the most singular manner the effect of his concessions. He believes in the evangelical narrative, except in its miraculous portions. He has, beforehand, thoroughly made up his mind to reject as false everything which may be found to surpass the limits of ordinary history ; that is, he is resolved to see in Jesus nothing more than a mere man. Had M. Renan reached this result after examination, we could have understood it ; but, so far from that, he makes this conclusion his starting-point. Before he opens the Gospels he lays down the axiom that all their miracles must be false. He writes, "We do not say a miracle is impossible : we do say that hitherto no miracle has been clearly proved. Suppose that to-morrow a worker of miracles should present himself with credentials sufficiently serious to admit of discussion ; let him announce himself, for instance, as

* The references throughout are to the original French edition.

able to raise a dead man to life ; what course would be pursued ? A commission would be named, composed of physiologists, physicians, chemists, and adepts in historical criticism. This commission would choose the corpse, assure itself that death was real, fix upon the place in which the experiment should be made, and establish a whole system of necessary precautions, so that there should be no room for doubt. If, under such conditions, a resurrection were performed, a probability almost amounting to certainty would be obtained. Yet, as it must be possible always to repeat an experiment, and as in the region of the miraculous there can be no question of ease or of difficulty, the thaumaturgus would be invited to reproduce his marvellous achievement, under different circumstances, on other corpses, and in another scene of action. Should the miracle be always successful, two things would be proved : the first, that supernatural facts take place in the world ; the second, that the power to produce them belongs, or is delegated to, certain persons. But who does not see that a miracle was never performed under those conditions ?" (p. lii.).*

* Having entered upon this course of investigation, we think M. Renan has given proof of much moderation. He might, logically,

Do not take the trouble then to point out to M. Renan another method of attesting a miracle: he declares to you that he wants none. So be it; but then it must be confessed that it is a strange mode of consulting a book in order to extract a history from it, to lay down the *à priori* principle that the assertions with which the book is filled are either errors or falsehoods; and, placing one's self before the hero one wishes to portray, to say to him, I consent to see in you everything except what you pretend to be. I will

have gone much further, and have said, All this being accomplished, still nothing is proved; for one might yet suspect the good faith of the witnesses, and the knowledge of the experimenters, and suppose the thaumaturgus to be a mere clever inventor! If, a century ago, such a one had professed his ability to relate what was taking place at a distance of a thousand leagues, and to amputate the arms and legs of the spectators without their knowledge, the scientific men of the age might have proclaimed a prodigy; and yet the thaumaturgus had been no more than the inventor of the electric telegraph and the use of chloroform. Why should we not discover the art of raising the dead? Go a step further: suppose (a case in point) that really God gives to-day to the disciples of Jesus Christ the power to work miracles; what would this prove to certain minds? Nothing! The miracles would no longer be miracles, that is all. You cannot prevent my doubting. Thus the miracles of the gospel are not designed to convert the unbelieving and the doubting, but to strengthen the faith of believers. Jesus Christ himself said so in affirming of the brothers of the rich man, "Neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead" (Luke xvi. 31).

record your words and your deeds, but these words and deeds as inspired by the thought which I will attribute to you.

No matter, let us see whether the being who is to emerge from these "inductions" (p. l.) will possess the life-likeness, the naturalness, the truth, which will make us say, Such a man has lived.

In endeavouring to ascertain what constitutes the strength of our author, we have arrived at this principle (just in its proper limits, but erroneous in the extremes to which M. Renan has pushed it): *man is inconsistent*; we may find in him both good and evil, both the false and the true. Expressed in these vague terms, the assertion is not unfounded. But has he who uses the assertion the right to conclude from it that man is in such contradiction with himself that we may expect to find in the same person both crime and virtue, both uprightness and hypocrisy, both wisdom and folly, both candour and cunning? Are there no limits to this medley in the same individual? Then let him refuse to affirm anything in history, and let him renounce those "inductions" which he has made the basis of his judgments in "The Life of Jesus."

In attributing to his hero this mixed character, has M. Renan confined himself within the limits of probability, even in the estimation of those who see in Jesus no more than a man? or has he exaggerated, and has the portrait he has drawn been thrust beyond the truth? This is what the reader will be able to decide after his perusal of the following exposition :—

M. RENAN'S FIRST PROPOSITION:

JESUS WAS MORAL.

Let us for a moment accept M. Renan's conclusion as established, "All the ages will proclaim that among the sons of men there never was a greater than Jesus" (p. 459).

Granted. See now to what height this Jesus raised his humanity, even according to M. Renan himself: "It is allowable to call Divine this sublime person who, each day, still presides over the destinies of the world: Divine, that is, not in the sense that Jesus had absorbed all the Divine, or had been equal to it (to employ a scholastic expression), but in the sense that Jesus is the being who has helped his species to make the greatest step towards the Divine. Humanity in its aggregate presents an assemblage of beings, low, selfish, and

superior to the animals in this only, that their selfishness is more rational. But from the midst of this uniform vulgarity, some columns rise towards heaven, attesting a nobler destiny. Jesus is the highest of these columns, which show man whence he came and whither he must tend. In him is condensed all that is good and exalted in our nature" (p. 458).

What Jesus appears to M. Renan to be, from the documents which, with their goodness and defects, retrace his beautiful life, is still not all that he was in reality. Jesus was greater than his biographers have been able to make him. M. Renan says, "The evangelists who have bequeathed to us the image of Jesus, are so much below him of whom they speak, that they constantly disfigure him, through their not attaining to his altitude. . . . One feels, at every line, that a divinely beautiful discourse is given to us by reporters who do not understand it, and who substitute their own ideas for those which they but partially apprehend. In a word, the character of Jesus, so far from having been embellished, has been diminished, by his biographers" (p. 450).

". . . If religion be the essential element of humanity, through it he [Jesus] has deserved the divine

rank which has been allotted to him. An absolutely new idea—that, namely, of a worship founded upon purity of heart and human brotherhood—effected its entrance into the world through him; an idea so exalted that the Christian church could not but fail completely in its intentions on this point, so that even in our days only a few souls are capable of realizing it” (p. 90).

“Finally, let Jesus be judged by his work: the evangelical system of morals remains as the highest creation of human conscience, the fairest code of a human life, that any moralist ever drew up” (p. 84). “Jesus was more than the reformer of an antiquated religion: he was the creator of the eternal religion of humanity” (p. 332).

It would be superfluous to multiply these quotations: what precedes will suffice to show that, according to M. Renan, Jesus was not a religion-maker, but a being whose moral elevation had inspired him with the grandeur of his conceptions. Jesus was not God, but he was as divine as man can be, having even far surpassed the most just, the most moral, the most perfect of men. We too believe this; we believe these praises to be sincere; and we are only the more as-

tonished at finding the panegyrist attributing to a being endowed with these Divine perfections, the human defects we are about to enumerate.

M. RENAN'S SECOND PROPOSITION:

JESUS WAS DELUDED.

How could it be that this morally perfect being, Jesus, though without a Divine mission, yet came to believe himself sent from God? M. Renan will explain it.

In the first place, Jesus believes himself to be in communication with God (p. 75). Nothing can be more simple than this. His moral condition authorized the belief. There is not an impassable gulf between this spiritual union with God, and the assertion that one is his child, his son. In a certain sense, then, Jesus was able to believe himself a son of God (*ibid.*). From thence, by a gradation of thought which we will not undertake to explain, Jesus arrived at the identification of himself with his Father. This is the first transformation.

Again, Jesus had styled himself "Son of man." This was perfectly legitimate, for, as M. Renan tells us, the phrase *son of man* is, in the Semitic languages, the

simple synonym for *man*. But as, according to the interpretation of certain schools, this expression was applied by the prophet Daniel to the Messiah, it followed that the title "son of man," which in the thought of Jesus meant no more than merely *man*, was used, though seemingly without his connivance at first, to designate him as the Messiah. Hence, a second transformation, no less strange than the first: "Jesus found pleasure in the application of this title to himself." Thus already, through the effect of a simple metaphor, a child of God, like you and me, is transformed into a son in a special sense, into the *only* son, of God. This usurpation, which would have seemed blasphemy to an ordinary Jew, was accepted without conscientious scruples by this excellent being. Jesus, who believed himself a man; Jesus, veracious, humble, and moral—simply allowed himself to be styled God! But we have not yet done with these transformations.

Jesus having assumed the mission of advancing the kingdom of God on the earth, soon persuaded himself that "heaven, earth, the whole of nature, madness, sickness, and death, were but instruments for his use. In the paroxysm of his heroic determination he believed himself almighty" (p. 118).

If Jesus, without being almighty, nevertheless believes himself to be so, we cannot be surprised that he thought he could heal the diseased. "Healing was considered to be a sort of moral influence; Jesus therefore, being conscious of his moral strength, would necessarily believe himself to be specially endowed with the gift of healing. Convinced that the touch of his garment, or the imposition of his hands, did good to the sick, it would have been hard if he had refused to the sufferers a relief which he had it in his power to grant. . . . One species of healing that Jesus oftenest performed, was the exorcism, or expulsion, of devils" (p. 261).

That Jesus, in a sort of pious fever, should have persuaded himself that God would give him a super-human power, we might possibly understand. But that in his first attempt to exercise this miraculous power he should not have discovered that he was self-deceived, that the paralytic did not walk, that the blind man did not see, that the dead did not leave the tomb; in a word, that his delusive hope, disappointed at every step, should not have disabused him as to his imaginary endowment—surpasses our conceptions. We must remind ourselves of what M. Renan elsewhere tells us: "The madman walks side by side with the inspired

man" (p. 77). "Socrates and Pascal were not exempt from hallucinations" (p. 267). "The finest things in the world have been performed under feverish excitement. Every great creation entails a disturbance of equilibrium, a state of turmoil, for the being who evolves it from himself" (p. 453). It is true that this explanation annihilates the gospel miracles, and makes Jesus mad and infatuated. Such a state of mind badly harmonizes with the moral excellence ascribed to Jesus Christ by our author. And yet there is another which, if possible, agrees with it still less. This we shall now examine.

M. RENAN'S THIRD PROPOSITION:

JESUS WAS AN IMPOSTOR.

M. Renan does not charge Jesus with imposture any more openly than he charges him with hallucination: he is scrupulous as to the terms he uses. He covers over with the gloss of necessity even that which in the conduct of Jesus is ambiguous. In order to excuse Jesus, he attributes to him the old principle of all religion-makers, that we may conscientiously do evil that good may come.

"Merely to conceive what is good," says M. Renan, "is not sufficient: you must ensure its success among

men. To this end means not absolutely pure are necessary" (p. 92). "You must demand of humanity the greater, in order to obtain from it the less. The extraordinary moral progress due to the gospel comes from its exaggerations" (p. 316). After such a profession of principles on the part of our critic, we must not be surprised that he should apply them to his hero; but, at the risk of appearing ridiculously severe, we shall continue to regard as impossible the entrance of the least duplicity in the acknowledged moral character of Jesus Christ.

We have seen Jesus persuading himself that he possessed a miraculous power which he really had not: it seems that he had not always that persuasion, and that, when necessary, a little skill took its place. Thus, "sometimes," says M. Renan, "Jesus made use of an innocent artifice [*innocent artifice*!]. He professed to have some secret knowledge respecting a person he wished to gain. Dissembling the true secret of his power, I mean his superiority over that by which he was surrounded, he allowed the belief to satisfy the ideas of the time, that secrets were revealed and hearts opened to him by a revelation from on high" (p. 162). "Thanks to some fertile mistakes, Jesus, by

adopting the Utopias of his age, transformed them into exalted truths" (p. 284). "Even during the lifetime of Jesus, many charlatans, without being his disciples, cast out devils in his name. . . . Jesus, who saw in this a homage paid to his renown, was not very severe towards them . . ." (p. 295).

To recapitulate : "Not being severe towards charlatans who were well disposed towards him ;" "out of a Utopia to make a truth, thanks to fertile mistakes ;" "to allow the belief in a revelation from on high, which revealed secrets to him ;" "to dissemble and to use guile"—such are the means used by the sincere Jesus to proclaim the truth and to commend his morality ; such are the resources which explain his triumphs, and on which we are to congratulate the Divine founder of the religion of the human race ! Further developments would be useless ; we shall therefore bring this subject to a close by putting before the conscience of the reader this simple question : Does such a being seem to you to rise to the height of the task ascribed to him ? Do these opposite traits in his character appear to make a harmonious whole ? Have we here such a naturalness of type that, after having contemplated it, we are forced to say, It has existed ? If to-day a fifth gospel should

be discovered, presenting Jesus to us as M. Renan depicts him, should we be compelled to say, "Here is the impress of reality"? And, if it were necessary to attribute this gospel to a writer of the first centuries, should we fix upon Paul or Porphyry?

No, this is not the Jesus of our Gospels: it is Jesus put a second time into the hands of Herod and Pilate, of the soldiers and the servants; that is, Jesus humiliated, spat upon, and smitten, a Jesus invented. I can understand that the old portrait of *our* Jesus should not please M. Renan: he must repaint it, cover it with his own colours, and disfigure it, that we might learn to despise it. Thus, as he advances, our author treats Jesus with less respect; blames him more freely, and without regret tarnishes his virtues. His morality ceases to be sublime, and becomes "frenzied" (p. 314). He praises his disciples "for being unworthy sons and bad patriots, provided it be for Christ's sake that they resist their parents and rebel against their country" (p. 314). Henceforth "this morality, made for a moment of crisis," is blamed "for having become a Utopia which few care to realize. . . . The man according to the evangelical type is a dangerous being" (p. 315). The point is reached at last, when it is fearlessly declared

that Jesus "was, if we may so speak, altogether unnaturalized: family ties, love, country, had no longer any meaning for him" (p. 316). And, lest his touching conduct towards his mother and his disciples, in his last moments, should be put in opposition to this idea, the fact itself is questioned (p. 422).

Our author has such a strong wish to accuse Jesus, that he is "inclined to believe he deliberately designed to be put to death." His forebodings—but too true—of the sufferings of his disciples, are changed into a "taste for persecutions and punishments" (p. 316). He is led through false interpretations to such a fearful degree of enthusiasm that "sometimes one might have said he was mad" (p. 318). Of this, M. Renan takes as witnesses "his disciples" (p. 318), when he should have said his parents, who did not believe in him (p. 323, 327). Finally, "his ill-temper at all opposition led him to unaccountable and apparently absurd acts" (p. 319). "Passion, which was at the basis of his character, drew forth from him the strongest invectives" (p. 325). And "many of his recommendations to his disciples contain the germ of a true fanaticism" (p. 326). To this day the whole world has agreed with Jesus in his admiration for the widow who put into the treasury the feeble gift

of her poverty, rather than for the rich who cast in of their abundance ; but now M. Renan discovers here "a carping spirit, which takes pleasure in exalting the poor who give little, and in humbling the rich who give much." As to the idea of proportion, which completely overturns this view, and which gives to the story its real point, it does not even suggest itself to our author. To this day all have agreed in recognising the profound humility of Jesus. M. Renan changes all this, and discovers that Jesus "is fond of honours" (p. 374) ; in proof of which he adduces the vindication of Mary's act in anointing him for his burial ! And whilst writing these words he does not remember that Jesus washed his disciples' feet ; that he styled himself the servant of all ; that he refused the crown, repudiated the appellation "good," and was "lowly of heart" !

But the most striking proof of the determination to slander Jesus, is the way in which the story of his death is told. We take no notice of the fact that, blended with the recital of the crucifixion, simple and touching as this is in the Gospels, we have details given us here on the various kinds of this punishment, on the drink of the Roman soldiers, and on "the singular coincidence that Barabbas, the murderer, was also called

Jesus," &c. No ; though these things tend to lessen both Jesus himself and his glorious conduct during his last hours, we prefer not to see a wrong intention in them. But who can fail to discover hostility in what follows ? If we find it said that Jesus uttered the noble words, "Father, forgive them ; for they know not what they do," it is "according to a tradition ;" "and if they were not on his lips, they were in his heart." "John declares that he was present, standing the whole time at the foot of the cross. We may, with more certainty, affirm that . . ." (p. 422). How, then, with more certainty ? Surely the aim of this is clear.

At the same time that Jesus and his friends are lowered, his adversaries are cautiously vindicated. Thus, however the evangelist may explain it, Jesus truly pronounced the fatal word, "I will destroy the temple of God, and rebuild it in three days." "From the stand-point of an orthodox Judaism, Jesus was truly a blasphemer, a destroyer of the established worship : thus his crimes were legally punished with death" (pp. 396, 397). One sees that, if the judges did no more than administer the law, their sin was much less serious. As to Iscariot the betrayer, whilst without denying that "he aided in the arrest of his Master,"

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M. Renan nevertheless thinks that "the curses heaped upon him are somewhat unjust. . . . There probably was, in the deed he perpetrated, more awkwardness than wickedness. . . . But if the foolish covetousness of a few pieces of silver turned the head of poor Judas, he does not seem to have completely lost all moral sense, since when he saw the consequences of his fault he repented [such repentance !] and, it is said, committed suicide" (p. 382). The indulgent biographer even tries to free "poor" Judas from the charge of suicide, by insinuating that his death might have been the work of some Christians. "Possibly," he says, "the fierce hate which raged against him led to acts of violence in which people saw the finger of God." To transform the suicide of Judas into a crime of the Christians—does this reveal nothing ?

After having nearly justified Judas, M. Renan also nearly justifies Pilate. He traces the first wrong through a labyrinth of religious intolerance, Spanish kings and Romish clergy, up to the law of Moses, and he excuses the criminal weakness of the governor by recalling the clerical cruelty which, later on, did what was just as bad ! This forensic ability to put out of sight the crime of one's client by recalling the future

wrong doings of the pretended disciples of the victim, deserves attention : it discloses both the wish and the inability of the author to tarnish the image of one so held in universal respect that he must not be openly attacked. But we will not be the judges ; we will be content with quoting M. Renan's words : " Seeing the attitude the Romans had taken in Judea, Pilate could scarcely help doing what he did. How many sentences of death, prompted by religious intolerance, have constrained the hand of the civil power. The king of Spain, who, in order to please a fanatical clergy, gave up to the flames hundreds of his subjects, was more blameworthy than Pilate, since he was the representative of a power more absolute than that of the Romans at Jerusalem. It is a proof of weakness when, at the instigation of priests, the civil power persecutes and annoys. Let the government without fault in this respect cast the first stone at Pilate. The secular arm, behind which clerical cruelty shelters itself, is not the guilty party. No one is permitted to say that he dreads blood-shedding, when he performs it by the hands of his servants." " Neither Tiberius, then, nor Pilate, condemned Jesus. This was done by the old Jewish party, by the Mosaic law " (pp. 410, 411).

Every attentive reader of "The Life of Jesus" will perceive that its author has taken great pains to appear as a simple historian, and not as an adversary. We admit that, so far as art could reach this end, M. Renan has well succeeded; all his words are weighed and balanced; yet it was impossible not to reveal his ideas, and we have seen how this has been done. We do not, in this short review, pretend to discuss historical facts; but we wish simply to signalize the intention which directs the ready and clever pen of the writer, and to prove that it is not so impartial as it is declared to be. We do not complain that M. Renan, or any one else, should say that he does not believe in Jesus Christ; but we could wish for more openness and candour. Possibly we may be judged rather uncouth. At any rate we shall not be accused of having wished to give currency to our thought under the shelter of an apparent indifference. We think it possible to be impartial, whilst confessing at the same time our confidence in revelation.

In order to reduce Jesus to the stature of an ordinary man it is not sufficient to lessen him, but it is also necessary, by a concurrence of natural circumstances, to explain how he, simple mortal as he was, could raise

himself to that work which, even to this day, astonishes the unbelievers themselves. We shall see how M. Renan, in order to reach this result, lays under tribute the times, the country, and the men in whose midst Jesus lived. For the sake both of fidelity and conciseness we shall, with some abbreviations, quote our author :—

“ . . . No historical scene was so fit as that in which Jesus grew, to develop those hidden forces which humanity keeps, as it were, in reserve, and which it does not bring forward except in days of excitement and peril.”

“ . . . A gigantic dream had, for ages, pursued the Jewish people, perpetually renewing its youth in its decrepitude. . . . Judea had concentrated the whole strength of its love and desire upon the future of its national existence. It had faith in divine promises of a boundless destiny. . . . At the period of the captivity a gifted poet saw the splendour of a future Jerusalem, to which the nations and the distant isles would be tributary, under colours so fair that one might suppose a ray from the looks of Jesus had reached him across a distance of six centuries.”

“The victory of Cyrus seemed for some time to realize all that had been hoped from it, . . . but

the triumphant and frequently brutal entrance into Asia of the Greek and Roman civilization threw him back upon his dreams. More than ever did he invoke the Messiah as the judge and avenger of the nations."

" . . . If Israel had held the spiritualistic doctrine, so called, which divides man into two parts, the body and the soul, and thinks it quite natural that whilst the body decays the soul should survive, this paroxysm of rage and energetic protestation would not have occurred. . . . The Pharisees had recourse to the dogma of the resurrection. The just will live again to participate in the Messianic reign. They will return in the body, and to a world of which they will be the kings and judges. . . . The idea of the resurrection, totally different as it is from that of the immortality of the soul, springs very naturally both from the earlier beliefs and the position of the people. Combining with the belief in the Messiah and with the doctrine of the future restoration of all things, that idea formed the basis of these apocalyptic theories which were hatching in every man's imagination, and which caused an extreme fermentation throughout the Jewish world."

" . . . Jesus, as soon as he began to think, entered into the burning atmosphere created in Pales-

tine by the ideas we have described. Freed from egotism, he had no thought but for his work, his race, and humanity. These mountains, this sea, this azure sky, those lofty plains in the distant horizon, were to him, not the melancholy vision of a soul which interrogates nature on its fate, but the unmistakable symbol, the transparent shadow, of an invisible world and a new heaven."

"He never attached much importance to political events. . . . Perpetual seditions, excited by the zealots of Mosaism, did not cease to disturb Jerusalem. The death of the seditious was certain; but death for the sake of the integrity of the law was sought with avidity. At no time had the law a larger number of impassioned partisans than when *he* began to live who, by the full authority of his mission and of his genius, was about to abrogate it."

" . . . An undertaking which exercised a great influence on Jesus was that of Judas the Gaulonite, or the Galilean. Judas was, evidently, the chief of a Galilean sect, preoccupied with Messianic aspirations, but attempting at last a political revolution. The procurator Coponius crushed the sedition of the Gaulonite but the school survived, and preserved its chiefs. . . .

Jesus may have seen this Judas ; . . . at any rate he was acquainted with his school, and probably it was in opposition to his error that he pronounced the axiom respecting Cæsar's penny. The wise Jesus, far enough from all thought of sedition, profited by the mistake of his predecessor, and dreamed of another kingdom and another deliverance."

" . . . Galilee was a verdant, well-shaded, smiling country, the true land of the Song of Songs, and of the hymns of the well-beloved. During the two months of March and April the country is a thick mass of flowers of an incomparable richness and variety of colours. The animals here are small, but extremely gentle. Turtle-doves, delicate and lively ; blue-birds, so light that they scarce bend the grass on which they perch ; tufted larks, which place themselves almost under one's feet ; small river turtles, with quick, mild eyes ; grave and modest-looking storks—all, free from timidity, allow the very near approach of man, and seem to call him to them. In no country in the world do the mountains stretch themselves out with more harmony, or inspire loftier thoughts. Jesus seems to have specially loved them.* The most important scenes of his divine career

* Matt v. 1 ; xiv. 23 ; Luke vi. 12.

were on the mountains: it was there he was most inspired; it was there that he held secret interviews with the ancient prophets, and that he seemed to the eyes of his disciples as already transfigured."

" . . . The country was certainly charming: it abounded with cool waters and fruits; the large farms were shaded with vines and fig-trees; the gardens were masses of lemon, pomegranate, and orange trees. The wine was delicious. . . . So quiet and easily satisfied a life . . . spiritualized itself into ethereal dreams, into a sort of poetic mysticism, blending together both heaven and earth. . . . Why should the friends of the bridegroom fast whilst the bridegroom was with them? Shall not joy be a part of the kingdom of God? Is she not the daughter of the humble-hearted, and of the men of good-will?"

"The whole history of the rise of Christianity has thus become a sweet pastoral. A Messiah at a marriage-feast; the courtesan and the honest Zaccheus invited to its festivals; the founders of the kingdom of heaven like a bridal-train—this is what Galilee has dared, and what she has made the world accept. . . . Galilee has placed within the region of the popular imagination the most sublime ideal; for behind its idyl moves the fate of

humanity, and the light which illuminates the picture is the sun of the kingdom of God."

"Jesus lived and grew in this intoxicating scene" (chap. iv. *passim*).

Here, then, we have what lay at the basis of the projects of Jesus: "a gigantic dream" of his nation, falsely believing itself called by God to rule and govern the world. What gives to the doctrine of the sublime reformer its heavenly direction, is the fact that, before his very eyes, a political aspirer fails through taking a different course. And, lastly, that which paves the way for the success of his moral teaching, is the harmony between the fauna and flora of Galilee and the sweet pastoral of a growing Christianity!

Let us take up again these three data.

(1.) "This gigantic dream," of a Messiah who should deliver Israel, like all dreams, probably has its origin in reality. And indeed M. Renan tells us that, six centuries prior to the attempt of Jesus to realize this dream, a poet (read *prophet*) had announced it in such terms that one might suppose him to have been "penetrated by a look from Jesus." Elsewhere M. Renan himself translates a passage from this same Isaiah, respecting the future servant of God, thus: "The servant of God grew up as

a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground : he had no form nor comeliness ; he was overwhelmed with disgrace, abandoned by men ; all turned away their faces from him : covered with shame, he was set at nought. It was because he had taken upon himself our sufferings and our pains. You might have supposed him smitten of God, touched by his hand. He was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities ; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep had gone astray, and Jehovah laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth : he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb ; so he opened not his mouth. Men looked upon his grave as that of a sinner, and on his death as that of an ungodly man. But, from the moment of his death, he was to see the birth of a numerous posterity, and the interests of Jehovah would prosper in his hand " (pp. 8, 9).

On another page of the chapter we are analyzing (chap. iv.) we learn that the Jew, "thanks to a sort of prophetic insight which sometimes made the Semitic marvellously apt at seeing the broad outlines of the future, made history enter into religion ;" and the

author teaches us that "these ideas ran through the world and reached even Rome, where they inspired a cycle of prophetic poems." In a word, the idea of a Messiah, conceived in the midst of the Jewish people, had spread itself through the world, and M. Renan sees nothing wonderful in this. . . . Jesus lays hold of this opinion, and transforms it into a great fact which, two thousand years later, according to his own prediction, covers the world. This harmony between Isaiah's time and that of Jesus, and between this latter and the long history of the church, realizing the prophecies both of Isaiah and Jesus, proves nothing : the prediction is realized, but this realization is vain, since all miracles are impossible. Be it so ; but let it be admitted that the miracle introduced to us by our author is the greatest of all. A people, in virtue of its "Semitic" origin, is apt to foresee the future ! A poet, six hundred years in advance, portrays the Messiah in such a way that at all points the life of Jesus verifies the prediction ! During nineteen centuries after the death of this Jesus his word fulfils itself, and that because this extemporized Messiah was fortunate enough to attribute to himself a mission which existed only in a dream ! All these things make up a greater miracle

than all the prophecies of Isaiah with their Christian explanations.

This specimen gives us an idea of the admirable art of our writer. A general expectation, the result of Jewish prophecies, is spread throughout the world at the very time when Jesus comes and responds to it. To this day this very fact has been accepted as a proof in favour of Christianity. This, M. Renan tells us, is an error, and proves nothing. The Messiah does not respond to a providential expectation, but a chance expectation creates the Messiah, and from the moment that he is credited his success is no longer astonishing! We do not attribute these words to M. Renan, but they contain his thoughts.

(2.) Suppose this granted: we will not dispute this point, but we shall transfer the discussion to the adversary's own ground. If Jesus were so anxious to realize the Jewish expectation, why did he so grossly deceive it by pretending to fulfil the Messianic prophecies in a sense quite other than that anticipated by the Jews? The children of Abraham expect a temporal kingdom, flattering to their pride: the son of Mary offers them a spiritual one, which frustrates their hopes, humbles them by putting them on a level with the other nations,

and restrains their passions by demanding holiness. Such a kingdom of God must have been, as indeed it was, supremely distasteful to the Jews ; yet, amongst these very Jews, Jesus preached it and obtained its acceptance. Now, would we know how Jesus was led so to transform the kingdom of heaven as dreamed by Israel? It was by his witnessing the failure of Judas in his ambitious designs. "It was probably as a reaction against his error that he pronounced the axiom about Cæsar's penny." Jesus "profited by the fault of his predecessor, and dreamed of another kingdom and another deliverance" (p. 61).

Is not such a use of words an abuse of them? Is it not putting an image in place of an idea? We can easily understand that an ambitious man, finding that course to be dangerous which at first he had thought easy, should turn aside from it to enter upon a new one on the same ground, and thus satisfy his restless ambition. But can we conceive that, finding the earth occupied, he should turn towards an imaginary heaven? that, no longer able to do his own work, he should devote himself to the work of a God, and specially of a God of whom he falsely alleges that he had intrusted him with a mission? What possible agreement of

thought can there be between a Gaulonite who incites insurrections, and a Jesus who forbids the use of the sword, and declares that "his kingdom is not of this world"? No; he who both preached and practised devotedness even to the giving up of his life; he who had such a love for truth and such a horror for every exaggeration of language that he put upon the same level the most solemn oath and the simple yea and nay—must have had more unity of character: we cannot listen to one of his words without being filled with confidence in his perfect sincerity. The thought that the conspirator Judas the Gaulonite could react upon the conduct of the author of the Sermon on the Mount, is so loathsome to us that we have not the courage to discuss it.

According to our author, Jesus also modified his ideas of the kingdom of God to suit times and circumstances (p. 271). Thus, at one time, he saw nothing in it but "the accession of the poor." "The kingdom of God," says M. Renan, in altering the Master's thoughts, "was: 1st, for children and those who were like them; 2nd, for the world's outcasts, victims of the social scorn, which rejects the good but humble man; 3rd, for heretics and schismatics, publicans, Samaritans, and pagans of Tyre and Sidon" (p. 179).

Put in these terms, we see, as M. Renan truly says, "an appeal to the masses." "It is the doctrine that the poor alone will be saved, and that the kingdom of the poor is at hand" (p. 179). Let us go further, and say, it is the court paid to the populace in order to bring it over to the side of him who allures it with false promises, that he may make use of it when the proper time shall have come.

Did such a thought enter the mind of Jesus? Still less, even putting out of sight the selfish aims attributed to him, did Jesus ever promise the kingdom of heaven to the poor, simply because they were poor? Never. To suppose it would be to falsify his thought, and what his true thought was, M. Renan himself will help us to discover. Rightly does our critic say, "The prophets had, without ceasing, thundered against the great, and had established an intimate relation, on the one side, between the words rich, impious, violent, wicked; and, on the other, between the words poor, humble, meek, pious" (p. 181).

Here, then, is the knot of the difficulty: in the language of the Bible "poor" often means "humble," and hence the doctrine of Jesus. The poverty contemplated by the Messiah is not the poverty of silver or of gold: it is the poverty of virtue and of righteous-

ness. Hence the humility of which he speaks is not the sense of material indigence, but the sentiment of the want of moral qualities. The saved man is not he who has felt and confessed his physical misery, but he who has wept over his spiritual wretchedness: in a word, the man who is forgiven is the penitent, not the mendicant.

This interpretation is so simple as to be self-evident. We shall see that it is that of Jesus himself. To this end let us take the examples quoted by M. Renan. We shall begin with the best-known, the parable of the Prodigal Son, in which our author tells us, "the faulty one is presented to us as having a sort of privileged love above him who has always been upright" (p. 186). We have here two mere assertions, and both of them mistakes. For, *first*, the parable concerns, not "the faulty one," but him who returns, saying, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants." That is, the parable brings into prominence repentance as the ground of pardon. And *secondly*, it is a mistake to imagine here a privilege in favour of the guilty and to the exclusion of the innocent; since the father, speaking to the latter, says to

him, "Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine" (Luke xv. 31). And observe further, that this "innocent one," as M. Renan will have it, reproaches his father for the feast he has made, accuses his brother of vices of which the story tells us nothing, and complains of never having had a kid that he might make merry with his friends !

Take the example of Zaccheus the publican, who runs to meet Jesus, receives him in his house, gives half his fortune to the poor, and offers a fourfold restitution to any one he may have wronged. According to M. Renan, Jesus forgives the wealthy Zaccheus because, "on account of some prejudice, he was unfavourably received by society" (p. 189). No ; Jesus forgives him because he is in such a state of mind as that he is willing both to confess his wrongs and to repair them ; because he humbles himself and repents.

"He avowedly preferred," our author goes on to say, "people whose lives were doubtful, and who stood low in the esteem of the orthodox notabilities." Yes, Jesus preferred these persons, not because "their lives were bad," but because they repented of having led such lives ; and if he had not the same regard for the "orthodox notabilities," it was because they, in their pride, did

not feel the need of conversion. Let us not, then, oppose the sinful life of the one party to the respectability of the other, but rather the faith and trust of the former to the impenitence of the latter.

We are not anxious here to give our readers a lesson in exegesis: we ask to be allowed, therefore, to cut short this subject by the decided affirmation, that Jesus never flattered the poor, never courted the mob; but that he always forgave the repentant, and always stigmatized the vices alike of the small and of the great.*

* Here are some examples of misrepresented evangelical sayings:—

Jesus, in his teachings, subordinates the interests of this fleeting life to those of eternity. It is not a question of abandoning earth for heaven, but of making the possession and the use of earthly blessings contribute to the increase of spiritual and moral treasures. What can be wiser or more simple than this? Yet M. Renan boldly affirms that Jesus “often proclaimed that whosoever would find the kingdom of God must purchase it at the cost of all his goods, and that even at that price he is a gainer.”

How is that to be bought which Jesus gives freely? And how could the Master who said, “Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added unto you,” demand that we should sell our earthly goods? Is not this a forcing of words one is anxious not to understand? And does not the paradoxical form of the precepts of Jesus explain the whole? For instance, would we contend that Jesus did actually wish his disciples when smitten on the right cheek to turn the other also, when he himself, being smitten on the cheek, calmly

Finally, among the number of causes which contributed to the success of Jesus, M. Renan places—what?

said, "If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why smitest thou me?"

As another specimen, M. Renan tells us that during the first Christian age "property was interdicted," and in a note he justifies his assertion by quoting the following passage: "And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common" (Acts iv. 32). We ask, Is this an interdiction or a law? Is it not the simple declaration of a fact? Was this fact general and absolute? If common sense did not already reply, we should observe that immediately after, when Ananias and Sapphira put into the hands of the community part of the price of the land they had sold, affirming that it was the entire sum, Peter tells them that they might have kept the land; that even after having sold it they had a right to keep the proceeds, and that their crime was not that they had kept back a part of the money, but that, by saying they had brought the whole, they had "lied unto God."

How, again, can M. Renan take *literally* the precept regarding those "which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake"? (p. 309). Are not the words which immediately follow, "He that is able to receive it let him receive it," a sufficiently clear intimation that the literal sense must be put aside? Surely it is neither critical acumen nor intellect that is wanting to M. Renan.

Again, when M. Renan affirms that "the cessation of intercourse between the sexes was often considered as a sign and condition of the kingdom of God," would he seriously have us believe that the kingdom of God on earth is meant, when we are distinctly told that "*in the resurrection* they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven"? (Matt. xxii. 30).

Lastly, on the eve of his death, Jesus gives expression to his agony

The climate, the vegetation, the valleys and the mountains of Galilee!

We can very easily understand how our author, on his return from the East, should wish to describe to us the famous places he had visited, and even to invite us to share in the impressions he had there received: his great talents are sufficient to make us desire this for ourselves. But when in serious reflection he said to himself, I will show the world the causes which inspired in Jesus the doctrines which have renewed the moral universe, how could he summon courage enough to put among the number of these causes the configuration of the country, its wells, its leafy shades, its lake, and its birds? When the question presented itself to him as to what were the affinities by which Jesus

in the expectation of martyrdom, and to his wish that the hour might come, for it must come, to be passed through. This was the shrinking of human nature, which, in the distant prospect of a terrible trial, was anxious to shorten the suspense, since the trial could not be avoided. Luke xii. 49 and 50, read without break, will be sufficient to make us understand this. M. Renan prefers to divide the context, and to put into the former part a meaning quite contrary to that of the whole: "His blood," says he, "appears to him as the water of a second baptism wherewith he was to be baptized, and he seemed to be urged by a strange haste to meet that baptism which alone could quench his thirst" (pp. 316, 317).

could gain acceptance for his precepts among the inhabitants of Galilee, how could he discover them in "an enchanting nature, which helps in the formation of a spirit less austere, less harshly monotheistic, and which impresses upon all the dreams of Galilee an idyllic and charming tone"? How could he characterize the history of infant Christianity as a "sweet pastoral," in order to bring it into harmony with a Galilee which "obtains credit for a Messiah at a wedding feast, the courtesan and the honest Zaccheus invited to his festivals, and the founders of the kingdom of heaven as a bridal train"? Are we to suppose that Jesus frequented worldly feasts? that he invited a harlot to his table? that his apostles formed the procession of a bridegroom at a wedding? Do not these two or three traits, awkwardly brought together and misrepresented, unveil the writer's wish to lessen his hero? Was it Jesus who invited the courtesan, or was it his host? Are we not told, on the contrary, that she came unbidden, and not as guilty, but repentant? Is this bridal train of apostles anything more than a metaphor? Did Jesus *often* go to marriage feasts? Do not all these efforts to exaggerate and distort the facts betray a hostile intention? And these "mountains

which inspired lofty thoughts," and where "Jesus was most inspired ;" "this wine, which is so delicious and so much drunk;" "this quiet life, which spiritualized itself into a sort of poetic mysticism, blending earth and heaven"—does not all this disclose the wish to lower the lofty work of Jesus to the level of earthly joys, and to humanize what others have thought Divine? We admit that there is something new and striking in the attempt. With a few of the *litterati* it will succeed ; but its very novelty proves how far it is from being natural and true. Its author who, for the sake of his design, finds Jesus at first so easy and so joyful, will later, for the same sake, discover in him a "harsh and sad feeling of disgust of the world, of extreme abnegation—the characteristic of Christian perfection," and will reproach him because "in his moments of hostility against the most lawful wants of the heart" "he forgot the pleasure there is in living, loving, seeing, and feeling" (p. 313).

But, of all the helps furnished to Jesus in the foundation of his religion by his age and his country, the most important was the belief of his countrymen in the possibility and even the frequency of miracles. Not only did the people believe in miracles, but they

loved them, and would have them. Hear M. Renan : "A miracle is, ordinarily, much more the work of the public, than of him to whom it is ascribed. Had Jesus persistently refused to work miracles, the crowd would have worked them for him. . . . The miracles of Jesus were a constraint put upon him by his age, a concession forced from him by the necessity of the moment" (p. 268).

Starting from this supposition, M. Renan strives to reach two results apparently opposed to each other, but in reality both helping to support his theory. We have seen that, according to our author, Jesus was both a virtuous being and an impostor ; and it is by means of this hypothesis of the blending of good and evil in the same being that he hopes to gain the approbation of his readers. In attributing to Jesus this inconsistent character, one has the advantage of seeming to be impartial. And besides, is not the want of strict moral consistency at the basis of human nature ? The biographer is therefore likely to obtain a favourable hearing when he tells us that "Jesus came out as a worker of miracles only late and unwillingly ; that it was with a sort of ill-temper that he performed his miracles, and only after having been pressed to it ; and

that he performed them in secret, and with a recommendation to keep silence respecting them." *

* We may say in passing, that the line of conduct Jesus pursued when asked to perform a miracle was this: he granted the request of faith, but he refused that of unbelief. A little reflection will show us the excellence of this rule. In fact, Christian faith is not an act of credulity, but of confidence; that is, it springs from a moral disposition. To believe in a God who is good and powerful, and in a Saviour who forgives and bestows eternal life, is already to love that God and that Saviour; and so to request a miracle is really to seek a favour which will augment faith and love, and thus lead to greater obedience. Hence in the Gospel narratives we find that the believers whose requests Jesus grants generally follow and serve him. On the contrary, the unbelievers, in asking for a miracle, reveal their perverseness: all they seek is to perplex him whom they affect to solicit. They have beforehand resolved not to believe. If the favour be granted, they will ascribe it to the devil rather than to God, for the sake of resisting the appeals of him who grants it. This explains why Jesus, in his own neighbourhood, could perform no miracles (Mark vi. 5). Matthew adds, "because of their unbelief" (Matt. xiii. 58); an explanation with which M. Renan was acquainted, and which he might have given us. This is why Jesus, besought by the Syrophenician woman, at first is silent, then refuses; and when by his delay the great faith of the woman is brought to light, liberally grants what she asks (Matt. xii. 16). This, too, explains the command Jesus gives to the sick whom he has healed, to keep silence, whilst they go directly to the high priest who was to verify the cure (Matt. viii. 4, &c.). Sometimes this prohibition is explained in the text itself by the application of a prophecy to the Messiah who does good without seeking publicity (Matt. xii. 16—20). At other times we learn from the context that Jesus, in enjoining silence, wished to avoid the premature persecutions which would have hindered the

Further still, it is the friends and the disciples of Jesus who, in their imprudent zeal, and without his connivance, prepare miracles for him. His hand is constrained ; innocently enough he comes to weep at the tomb of a friend ; all at once he is to be made believe that he has raised his friend ; and if he cannot believe it, he is at least to consent to allow it to be believed. . . . But this illustration is worth quoting : we shall be careful in abridging it :—

“The friends of Jesus were anxious to have a great miracle. . . . Jesus, in despair and pushed to an extremity, was no longer self-possessed. . . . It seems that Lazarus was sick ; and probably, Lazarus, still pale with sickness, had himself attired like a dead man, and laid in the family tomb. Martha and Mary came to meet Jesus, . . . and led him to the cave. The emotion Jesus felt at the grave of his friend whom

accomplishment of his task (Mark viii. 30 ; Luke ix. 21). M. Renan may either have ignored or despised these explanations ; but how could he, to make his accusation more acceptable, affirm that Jesus refused or delayed his miracles because “of the grossness of their minds” (p. 264), whereas it was because of the perverseness of “an adulterous, unbelieving, and wicked generation” ? (Matt. xii. 39 ; xvii. 20). This alteration may be without intention, but certainly it is not without influence on the argument.

he believed to be dead, may have been taken by the attendants for the agitation, the trembling which accompanied miracles. . . Jesus . . wished to see once more him whom he had loved, and on the removal of the stone Lazarus came forth bound with grave-clothes, and his face bound about with a napkin . . .” (360 to 362).

In thus daring to parody the character of Jesus and of his friends, M. Renan must reckon largely on the ignorance of the evangelical text in his readers. He must be very confident of the sympathies of his admirers, to offer them, as probable, the most absurd and the most revolting of suppositions. Here is a man (I do not say a God, not even a prophet, but simply a man), endowed, as M. Renan thinks, with the loftiest soul of which history has preserved the remembrance ; so pure, so noble, so holy, that his friends at Bethany loved him even to adoration. And then his friends, who adore him for his holiness, combine together to play a comedy which goes to the extent of profaning the grave, and of feigning a dead man, in order to simulate a resurrection ! How becoming all this is for a friend who is serious and ill, and of Jesus, the creator of a moral world ! How simple, how natural ! How ridiculous, if it

were not so sad ! To say nothing of the fact that a joke will be made to pass for a miracle, and that the Master will receive the honour of a resurrection, can we conceive a convalescent, still pale with sickness, shrouding himself in grave-clothes, and putting himself in a tomb, there to wait for the Divine physician sent to cure him, and who will be very agreeably surprised at seeing Lazarus whom he believes to be dead come forth from the sepulchre living ? If the best friends of Jesus, if even Jesus himself, had been able to lend themselves to such an infamous masquerade, they would not be worth the trouble of even a refutation.

We agree with M. Renan in thinking that in all ages the masses of the people, and especially the Jewish people in the days of Jesus, have been very credulous. If necessary, we might even allow that the number of miracles attributed to Jesus has been exaggerated by tradition ; and, moreover, to complete our hypothetical concession, we may suppose that even the importance of each of these miracles has been magnified ; but, after all this, do miracles disappear from the life of Jesus ? Can it be forgotten that his life is completely interwoven with them, and that, if we strike out one from every page, ten will still remain on each sheet ? that if

the two multiplications of the loaves be reduced to one, and the five thousand persons fed to five hundred, there will be enough of miracle left to prove the intervention of God? If it be demanded that all the miraculous should be subtracted from the life of Jesus, we must be prepared to maintain that in a reputation and a success acquired solely by miracles, all is without foundation; that the people who followed Jesus through town and country; that the rulers who opposed him even to death; that his apostles, stubborn even to the point of giving up their lives in attestation of his wonders; that this whole generation of witnesses, people, rulers, and apostles, acted without motive and without reason. . . .

In order to keep within the strict boundaries of fact, we shall have to maintain that all disturbed themselves, disputed, and fought, during their whole lifetime, simply because a popular man once spoke a few words on a mountain or at the corner of a street! For, at least, we must agree that this man had neither arms, nor money, nor influence at his service. Friends and foes alike ascribe but two things to him—words and miracles. If the miracles be false, the words only remain; and to these few words are owing the overturning of all Judea! If so, the miracle comes back to us in another

form, and one might with truth exclaim, "It is the voice of God, and not of a man !"

Among all the natural explanations of the success of Jesus in his day which M. Renan might have given us, there is one which, we think, would have been the best. We shall indicate it.

Of all the pretensions put forth by Jesus, the highest was that of forgiving and saving sinners. We abstain here from claiming for him this Divine power. We simply affirm that he professed it ; that he once said to a man who came to him in faith, "Thy sins are forgiven ;" and that to the Pharisees who blamed him for receiving the visits of disreputable persons he said, "I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." "I am come to seek and to save the lost." On the cross he promised paradise to a thief who confessed his crimes and prayed to him. In the temple court he absolved an accused woman who, far from justifying herself, was humbly waiting the execution of her sentence. At the institution of the Supper he declared to his apostles that his blood was shed for the remission of the sins of many. Many times, whilst speaking of his sufferings and death, he said that it was for this very purpose he had come. Zaccheus, the prodigal son, the

publican, the courtesan in Simon's house, all are great sinners who had been saved, that is to say, forgiven, and entitled to heaven, without any merit or claim : in a word, everywhere, and under a thousand forms, we find the remission of sins. Suppose this pardon to have been an illusion, still the offer of it had a powerful influence upon the hearts of those who believed they had it from the lips of a God. This persuasion was sure to result in obedience to precepts, the practice of worship, and the endurance of persecutions ; and an eternity granted by Jesus and accepted by his disciples could not but have an influence on the life and the conduct of the faithful. How could M. Renan not perceive this ? And, if he saw it, why did he not mention it ? Without being obliged to believe in the pardon of sins in virtue of the expiatory death of Christ, the mention of the historic fact would have secured an explanation to the enthusiasm of a whole people for a man who indeed wrought no miracles, but promised heaven to the repentant. Must we suppose that M. Renan has been silent respecting every idea of salvation, because he knew it was dear to those whose faith he combats with an apparent indifference ? Did he, perhaps, imagine that the most efficacious expedient to ruin this doctrine would be not even to seem to have perceived it in the Gospels ?

After having removed miracles from the gospel, to take salvation away from it also would indeed be a sure means of obliterating every trace of Christianity in the world. Vain attempt! There exists in the depths of upright and humble souls so true a need of mercy, that no "Life of Jesus," by M. Renan, Strauss, or any other writer of their school, will succeed in turning away these souls from that source of living waters in the gospel of salvation, at which, to this day, they have quenched their thirst. You may tell them they are mistaken, that miracles are impossible, and that salvation is a Jewish deception; these souls will nevertheless remain firmly attached to Jesus Christ their Saviour. Discuss as much as you will, their reply will be, "We do not know whether or not a transcendental criticism has revealed to you secrets hidden from common mortals; but what we do know is, that whereas once we were blind, now we see; whereas once we were athirst, now we thirst no more; whereas once we were full of unrest and misery, now we are calm and happy."

This reply, excellent as it is, is nevertheless not the one we wish to make: to some readers it may appear inconclusive. We shall attempt therefore to give a more explicit account of our own faith. In our own way we shall trace the life of Jesus Christ.

We say with M. Renan, that in order to the satisfaction of our reason, we must have presented to us "a doctrine which shall be *unique* and adopted by the whole of humanity." * But one cannot exact of this universality that it shall be complete from all eternity, especially when the doctrine admitted is supposed to be subject to a perpetual process of development. All that can be reasonably demanded is, that this religion shall reveal itself from the very origin of its history. Now this demand is met. From M. Renan's own avowal, "The Semitic race has the honour of having made the religion of humanity. Far beyond the confines of history, under his tent, uncontaminated by the disorder of a world already corrupt, the Bedouin patriarch (not to say Abraham) prepared the faith of the world. The superiority of this faith consisted in a strong antipathy to the licentious worship of Syria, great ritual simplicity, the complete absence of all temples, and the reduction of idols to mere insignificant teraphim. Among all the tribes of the nomadic Semites, that of the 'Beni-Israel' was already marked out for great destinies. A very ancient law, written on metallic tables and attributed to their great liberator Moses,

* "Études historiques et religieuses," vii.

was even then the code of monotheism, and, compared with the institutions of Egypt and Chaldea, contained powerful germs of social equality and morality" (p. 6).

It will be seen that our revelation is ancient enough, since it comes from "far beyond the confines of history;" and also that in that remote region it was well protected, since, "intrusted to the care of a Bedouin, it remained superior, on the points of social equality and morality, to anything in Chaldea and in Egypt." And this religion was so marvellously preserved in the midst of the idolatrous nations, that the same writer could find no better way of describing its influence than by saying, "The desert is monotheistical." * If this phrase explains nothing, at least it declares a fact—the surprising existence of a monotheistic race in the midst of a circle of idolatrous nations; and, in spite of daily contact, the strict preservation of this monotheism. Our reason, therefore, for believing that this monotheism is a revelation is, that we find it among the Bedouins from the very commencement of history, and that down to our own days the *élite* of the philosophers have never got beyond it. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, without toil,

* "Études historiques et religieuses," p. 67.

started from the point at which—aided by the Bible—Cousin, Jules Simon, and perhaps Ernest Renan, have at length arrived.

Our religion, tending towards universality, as is needful in order that we might believe in its divinity, having commenced under the tent of a patriarchal family, extended over a whole tribe and then over a whole people. M. Renan himself tells us this: "The depositaries of the spirit of the nation seem to write under the action of an intense fever. . . . Never had man undertaken the problem of the future and of his destiny with a more desperate courage. . . . Never separating the fate of humanity from that of their inconsiderable race, the Jewish thinkers [say prophets] were the first who occupied themselves with a general theory of the progress of the species. The Jew possesses a sort of prophetic instinct by which the Semite is sometimes endowed with a marvellous aptness to see the broad outlines of the future" (p. 47).

Lest we should be deceived by our own wishes, we shall take, among all these prophets, only him who is praised by the adversary of Christ's Divinity ; and further, in order not to multiply erroneously these predictions, we shall confine ourselves to the only one

M. Renan has quoted and translated. The predicted servant "was overwhelmed with disgrace, abandoned by men, covered with shame. He took upon himself our sufferings and our pains ; he was wounded for our transgressions ; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and Jehovah laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth : he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers, so he was dumb. Men looked upon his grave as that of a sinner, and on his death as that of an ungodly man. But from the moment of his death he should see the birth of a numerous posterity, and the interests of Jehovah would prosper in his hand."

Still careful not to go astray, we adhere to our wise critic, and we find that subsequently to these predictions the expectation of a Messiah is spread among both Jews and pagans, reaching even to the very centre of Roman civilization, where we meet with "a cycle of prophetic poems" (p. 48). When this expectation has become general, a man appears who styles himself the Son of God. According to our author, this man performs no miracle, but at least he is the first who proclaims "the God of humanity. . . Rising boldly

above the prejudices of his nation, he establishes God's universal Fatherhood, . . . he founds that true kingdom of God which each man bears in his heart . . .” (p. 78). “His system of morals is the highest creation of the human conscience, the fairest code of a perfect life that ever moralist drew . . .” (p. 84). “An absolutely new idea, that of a worship founded upon purity of heart and human brotherhood, effected its entrance into the world through him; an idea so exalted that the Christian church could not but fail completely in its intentions on this point, so that, even in our days, only a few souls are capable of realizing it” (p. 90). “Jesus was more than the reformer of an antiquated religion: he was the creator of the eternal religion of humanity” (p. 332). This Jesus, still without the aid of miracles, casts into the world a few words which become so many fertile germs, such as, “Render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar’s; and unto God the things which are God’s.” This, M. Renan says, is an axiom “of the most perfect spirituality and the most wonderful justice, one which has established the separation between the spiritual and the temporal, and has laid the real basis of true liberalism and true civilization . . .” (p. 348). This Jesus, without performing miracles in

Judea during his lifetime, after his death achieves the most astonishing of marvels : he regenerates the soul of humanity ; just as God created a physical world, so he creates a spiritual world, by his word alone. Understand, not by wonderful cures, not by unheard-of resurrections, but without miracles, without wonders. The fact is admitted, that, by simply articulating a few syllables, Jesus transforms the moral universe ; and yet we are not permitted to see in this transformation the proof of his Divine mission ! He has done what no other founder of religion could do, and in such an admirable way as to put him, beyond comparison, above every other ; and yet we are not to deem him truthful ! Is it more rational to suppose that he has established morality and civilization by means of a falsehood rather than sincerity ? Let us be allowed to oppose to all this a saying we ourselves have heard from the lips of a man who is held by M. Renan himself to be one of our modern lights. The learned Bunsen, speaking one day upon miracles, said, "There are for me two undeniable miracles : the creation of the universe by God, and the salvation of the world by Jesus Christ." Bunsen's premises are sufficient for me, and I conclude from them, "Like Father, like Son."

Two great facts may be brought forward in opposition

to us. The one is, that other religions have enjoyed results no less considerable. The worshippers of Buddha are not less numerous than those of Jesus Christ. We grant this, but we say that the force of our argument lies in the nature of the work accomplished. The work of Christ upon earth is totally different from that of all other founders of religion. It is not *more* moral; it *alone* is moral, it alone leads to true civilization.

The other is, that the church is full of faults. To this all we have to say is, that Jesus never said that in order to become his it would be sufficient to *call* one's self a Christian. On the contrary, he foresaw that there would be both hypocrites and cowards, and he has left every man free to resist conversion.

Thus, all the efforts made to lessen the origin of Christianity do but succeed in better establishing its Divinity. Prove, if possible, that the Gospels are not authentic; that the Scriptures are not inspired; that no miracle ever took place; that Jesus and his apostles were no more than poor Jews, simple country folk, that they were ignorant of history and of all science, and that they had not the least literary knowledge: let all this be very clearly proved, the triumph of Jesus is thus secured, and our answer will be:—This man of the people,

though without miracles, has nevertheless changed the world's aspect ; he has done so after having predicted it. The transformation is such, that no science and no skill can imitate it, neither can they undo it. Observe that the case is not that he has succeeded better than any other founder of religion ; it is, that he *alone* has succeeded. His system of morals, compared with others, is not simply superior to them ; it is totally different from them. By the side of the gospel such precepts as those of Socrates are even immoral ; and if we would find something analogous to the New Testament, we must go back to the Old, from whence, after all, it came.* Jesus did not simply compose and preach this morality : he has inoculated the world with it, he has put it into human hearts and into the lives of millions of men during a long succession of ages ; and all this without miracle, ancient or modern ! If the world becomes civilized, it is in the countries where Jesus is known. If there exist some true sciences and some real virtues, it is among the nations where the gospel is read. If any people seek to instruct and to civilize the barbarians, that people

* M. Renan finds pleasure in repeating that Hillel preceded Jesus. True ; but Hillel's inspiration came from the prophets, and thus we must always be sent back to the first source, the Bible.

is Christian. No good is done here below except in those spots where the faith of Jesus has been. We therefore repeat, the better it is proved that miracles had no place in the commencement of Christianity, the more will the immense, magnificent, unique results obtained without them appear to be Divine. According to a principle laid down by M. Renan, "facts must be explained by proportionate causes." We say, *these results are above man; their causes therefore go back to God.*