

## Theological and Religious Literature

THE PEN OF THE successor of Theodore Parker and the historian of the doctrine of a future life is rarely idle. This time he appears as a son of consolation, and seeks to minister to the sorrowing. Yet it is not among the humble or ignoble company of the compilers that Mr. Alger moves. He gives to the printer for transmutation of manuscript to text no mere scrap-book, miscellaneous in contents and discordant in style. The name of William Rounseville Alger stands for original work of a high order. Himself a sufferer, and one who has pondered long on the experience and the mystery of pain, he has also a style marked by many attractive qualities. In 'The Sources of Consolation in Human Life' he pictures 'the weeping of humanity in all ages,' classifying and illustrating the sources and results of sorrow, but also enumerating and revealing the consolations in human life. 'To him evil is but 'the friction in the working mechanism of existence.' There is no such thing in the creation of God as designed evil. To the larger view, which he labors to impart to his readers, this friction in the divine order is limited, and is clearly contained in an incomparably greater integral good which could not be without involving it. For ordinary readers who are accustomed to rely for comfort upon the verities of faith as commonly taught, in simple language and familiar illustrations, there will be little use in attempting to fathom Mr. Alger's mysticism. His thinking is too profound and original for merely pleasurable reading, yet the thoughtful seeker beneath phenomena will enjoy the high philosophy that strives to extract solace and cheer by a survey of the facts of life in all their relations. Even death is looked at as 'simply the difference between an organism animated by a functioning principle and an organism bereft of that principle and fallen into the grasp of the cosmic circulation.' The author would soothe the pangs of dissolution by severe meditation on the real and cosmic meaning of death. 'Thus the realization of death is the destruction of death.' The author nobly seeks to banish the entire brood of superstitious terrors which have so long frightened and oppressed men in view of their latter end. In a word, our modern Boethius attempts once more the ancient method of consoling the sorrowful by means of philosophy. With what success his work will be crowned may be determined partially at least by the vulgar test of publisher's sales. Certainly the attempt is worthy of all praise, for original work in this department of mental activity is notably rare. (1.50. Roberts Brothers.)

---