

**SUNSET GLEAMS;
OR, PROGRESS FROM
DOUBT TO FAITH**

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Sunset Gleams; Or, Progress from Doubt to Faith by Ad. Schaeffer & Frederick Ash Freer

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Progress from Doubt to Faith.

SUNSET GLEAMS;

OR,

Progress from Doubt to Faith,

AS RECORDED IN THE JOURNAL OF AN OLD MAN.

FROM THE FRENCH

(*'AU DÉCLIN DE LA VIE'*)

OF

A. D. SCHAEFFER,

LICENCIÉ EN LETTRES, DOCTEUR EN THÉOLOGIE,
Pastor at Colmar, Alsace.

Translated by

FREDERICK ASH FREER,

WITH THE SANCTION OF THE AUTHOR.

LONDON:

ELLIOT STOCK, 62, PATERNOSTER ROW.

1883.

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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

THIS book, recently published in French under the title 'Au Déclin de la Vie,' and now presented to the reader in an English form, is a fresh contribution to the discussion of those important problems relating to the future which have engaged so much attention of late years; the subject being here presented in its relation to an individual life, and thus invested with the interest which always attaches to the records of personal experience. By the adoption of this method the author has been enabled to introduce a great variety of arguments and illustrations, and to avoid wearying the reader by too great a demand for sustained attention.

The author's main purpose in preparing

the book has been to present the subject in its different aspects, so as best to meet the difficulties and objections of honest doubters; and the need for such a book has been strikingly illustrated by recent events in France, and by the fact that the first French edition has been so rapidly exhausted that a second is already required.

It will be readily understood that I have found it necessary in various places to translate somewhat freely, so as to render faithfully the thoughts and meaning of the author, rather than his words.

F. A. F.

BRISTOL, *8th March*, 1883.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

WHAT about the future life ?

Is there such a life ? If there is, what are its conditions ?

Of all the questions that engage the attention of the human mind, this question of the future life is undoubtedly one of the most important.

Some may shrug their shoulders at it, and count it among those problems which can never be solved. Yet, as an eminent contemporary philosopher says, ' Never will the human mind abstain from these grand but cruel problems ; never will the heart remain mute before the inanimate body of a wife or a son ; it will make its appeal to the mind, and torment it until some answer is

obtained. That answer may not satisfy everybody; it may hardly satisfy the one who makes it to himself; but to occupy itself with such great problems is a noble and joyous employment for the soul: to seek for immortality is to deserve it.*

Like so many others, I have devoted many an hour to this 'cruel problem.' I have attained, if I may be permitted the avowal, to a joyful and firm conviction, in which I hope to lead all those to share who admit that moral as well as mathematical evidence has its value.

But how am I to induce my readers to accept a sentiment which I believe to be marvellously adapted to explain and to make tolerable the present life, which sometimes is such a heavy burden?

Should I write for philosophers, or for theologians? For those only who are half convinced, or for unbelievers? For the

* Mr. P. Janet, in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, May, 1863.

learned, or for that numerous class of persons who have scarcely time to reflect on the difficulties raised by this question ?

After mature consideration I have determined to adopt the following plan. Instead of learnedly and methodically setting forth the arguments in favour of a future life, I have preferred to let them arise naturally out of the story. In this consists the originality of my book, for I do not know that any previous attempt has been made to apply what I may call the Socratic method to the question of the future life.

It has seemed to me that by this means I might bring the essential arguments which support the belief in a life to come within the reach of every man not quite destitute of mental culture.

* * * *

It can hardly be necessary for me to say that if I have not actually known the old man whom I introduce, I have on the other hand merely borrowed from one and another the