SOME NEW BOOKS.

Swedenborg's Account of Heaven.

Curious people, who desire to know what EMANUEL SWEDENBORG says about the condition of the blessed in the other world, will find it briefly and compactly set forth in a little volume entitled *Heaven* (Claxton, Remsen & Haffelfinger), which constitutes the second number of "The Swedenborg Library," now in course of publication by the aid of the Swedenborg Publishing Association of Philadelphia. It is condensed from the author's larger work, "Heaven and Hell," with a few supplementary citations added from his other writings, and may be read through by almost anybody in an hour.

The title page tells us that the book is the report of an eye witness. This assertion, we must say, is not calculated to produce a favorable impression. The very nature of the subject is such as to throw suspicion upon anything professing to treat it as a matter within positive human knowledge. We read with respect, if not with interest, travellers' accounts of remote and to us unknown regions of this earth, because we believe that such regions are accessible to explorers, and that, therefore, descriptions of them may be true. But when Swedenborg or any other man offers to tell us about what he saw in heaven, our first impulse is to refuse him a hearing, for, we say to ourselves, it is impossible for him to have been there. Certainly nobody that we know has been there, nobody that has died and gone there has come back to us, and there is no prospect that any one ever will do so. All our habits of thought are against Swedenborg's claims, and it is difficult for us to overcome them.

Swedenborg himself evidently foresaw this objection, for he mentions it at the outset, and very adroitly presents it as the occasion of his book. His opening paragraphs are these:

> The arcana revealed in the following pages are those concerning heaven, together with the life of man after death. The man of his church at this day knows scarcely anything about heaven or hell, nor yet about his own life after death, although these things are all treated of in the Word. Nay, many even among those who were born within the church deny these things, saying in their hearts, "Who has ever come thence and told us?"
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> Lest, therefore, such a negative principle, which rules especially among those who possess much worldly wisdom, should also infect and corrupt the simple in heart and faith, it has been granted me to associate with angels and to converse with them as one man with another, and also to see the things which are in the heavens as well as those which are in the hells, and this for the space of thirteen years, so that I can now describe them from what I have myself seen and heard—which I do, in the hope that ignorance may thus be enlightened and incredulity dissipated.

He here assumes what he elsewhere more fully explains, that heaven is not a locality in this material universe, but a spiritual region, existing within and above matter, and, therefore, everywhere and at all times accessible without change of physical situation. Hence, he insists, his visits to it are not to be treated as travellers' journeys to a foreign country, but simply as the seeing of things which lie within and about every one of us, but to which we, unlike him, are blind. In support of this assumption he cites the cases mentioned in the Bible, of visions of heaven by men still in the body, and of appearances to them of heavenly beings, all of which are described as occurring without bodily locomotion:

> They saw such things when heaven was opened to them; and heaven is said to be opened, when the interior sight which is the sight of man's spirit, is opened. For the things which are in heaven do not appear to the bodily eyes, but with the eyes of the spirit; and these are opened when it pleases the Lord; and then man is withdrawn from the natural light in which he is by reason of the bodily senses, and is elevated into spiritual light in which he is by reason of his spirit. In that light I have seen the things which exist in heaven.
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> It is, however, to be observed that angels cannot be seen by man with his bodily eyes, but with the eyes of the spirit when is within him; because the spirit is in the spiritual world, and all things of the body are in the natural world. Lest, therefore, this should be a cause of doubt, it has been granted me to see and be sure that I saw and heard angels speaking with me, and also that I saw the places where they are, and also the things which are in their houses, and also those things which are in the heavens as well as those which are in the hells, and this for the space of four