

# THE SOLDIER AND THE HUNCHBACK: ! AND ?

“Expect seven misfortunes from the cripple, and forty-two from the one-eyed man; but when the hunchback comes, say ‘Allah our aid.’”

ARAB PROVERB.

## I

INQUIRY. Let us inquire in the first place: What is Scepticism? The word means looking, questioning, investigating. One must pass by contemptuously the Christian liar's gloss which interprets “sceptic” as “mock”; though in a sense it is true for him, since to inquire into Christianity is assuredly to mock at it; but I am concerned to intensify the etymological connotation in several respects. First, I do not regard mere incredulity as necessary to the idea, though credulity is incompatible with it. Incredulity implies a prejudice in favour of a negative conclusion; and the true sceptic should be perfectly unbiassed.

Second, I exclude “vital scepticism.” What's the good of anyfink? expects (as we used to learn about “nonne?”) the answer, “Why, nuffink!” and again is prejudiced. Indolence is no virtue in a questioner. Eagerness, intentness, concen-