

"THE HOLY LANCE"

AN EPISODE OF THE CRUSADES
AND OTHER
MONOGRAPHS

BY

W. STEWART ROSS,

AUTHOR OF

"JANET SMITH," "ROSES AND RUE," ETC.

*Nihil credo auguribus qui aures verbis divitant
Alienus, suas ut auro locupletent domos.*

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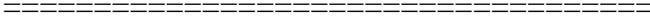
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“THE HOLY LANCE ”

Etc.



“THE HOLY LANCE.”

I.

THE winter of 1097 had darkened down upon one hemisphere of this planet. It was an age of religious delirium, and the vines of the East were trampled by the myriads of the battle-shod feet of those in whose veins throbbed the reddest, wildest, and most turbulent blood in Europe. Far more terribly than of old by the recklessly-driven solar chariot of Jehu, Peter the Hermit had set the world ablaze. After a thousand years of Christianity, the sword which the Prince of Peace had asseverated he had come to bring was stained and reeking from point to hilt. The red cross was on every shoulder, and the reddened steel in every hand. The fruitful plains of France and Germany and Italy lay desolate. The men that should have ploughed them were in Syria, the hands that should have reaped them were by the Kedron, the Jordan, and the Orontes, reaping the harvest of Death.

In their trenches, the Christian host encompassed Antioch. Valiantly, stubbornly, under its venerable emir, Baghasihan, the beleaguered city resisted. In their attempt to starve the garrison into surrender the besiegers had encompassed it for so long that now they themselves

were starving. Hope sank into sullen despair, and, anon, under the fanatical and fiery exhortation of the soldier-monks, from the sodden ashes of despair would leap forth the flame of hope grown frantic.

It was the War of God those Crusaders had come to wage, to rescue the holy sepulchre of his son from the accursed grasp of the infidel Moslem. The Redeemer would not permit them to be repulsed, and perish with his holy grave unredeemed. They watched for supernatural auguries, they kept vigil for divine omens. A hurricane swept down from Lebanon, uprooting the trees, tearing the Christian tents to shreds, and scattering them like chaff. The omen was dismal. An earthquake shook the ground and set the hills shuddering; from this was inferred the dire displeasure of the deity in whose cause they had donned their mail and belted on their swords. Anon, a comet, like some glory-plume fallen from the helmet of the Almighty, would trail its splendour along Night's solemn sky, and, on the banks of the fair Orontes, bring hope to the hearts of men from the Danube, the Garonne, and the Tiber.

The crisis came. Hunger and disease waxed imperative. The hour had arrived when the Crusaders must abandon the siege or by one concentrated and determined attack capture Antioch. The die was cast. It was one of those dark, wild, and tempestuous nights which seem weirdly apposite to deeds of devilry that alter the web of Destiny. The rain fell in torrents. The wind howled in the hills, lashed the river into foam, and rushed and roared through the bending and battling trees. In the thunderous gloom and under the rush of rain, a Christian forlorn hope, with a ladder of leather thongs, left their watery trenches, and, buffeting against the wind, pressed forward to Antioch, to a tower in the charge of a Moslem officer named Phirouz, whom Christian promises had made traitor to his faith and emir.

Picture it. The Christians reach the wall. By the help of traitor Phirouz, the ladder is fixed. The first to step upon it is the ambitious, dashing, and dauntless Bohemund of Tarentum. Close at his heels is Godfrey of Bouillon, then Count Robert of Flanders, silent, grim, and daring, holding, by the middle, his naked sword in his teeth. Then knight upon knight leapt upon the swinging ladder of hides, each eager to be the first Crusader to mount the walls of Antioch. Penalty is exacted for this zealous rivalry. The ladder is laden with armed men—it swings—it creaks—it *breaks*; and, down come its over-load of nobles and knights, an indiscriminate, clanking, clanging mass of swords and mail, from which there rises one hissed and universal “Damn!”

For a moment those who had fallen lay, a confused and intermingled mass of flesh and iron. They felt certain that the warders on the watch-towers above had heard the clash and clang of their fall. But, thanks to the roaring of the wind and the dashing of the rain, no Moslem ear save that of Phirouz had heard the snap of the ladder and the clanking thud of the armour upon the ground below. Regardless of bruises and abrasions, the scaling party, finding that their presence was still unperceived, sprang to their feet, and, knotting their sword-belts together, they repaired the broken ladder, and ascended it, two by two, till sixty of the Christians stood, silent, in the darkness, on the battlements of Antioch.

At an angle of the wall they beheld the sputtering and wind-tossed flame of the warder’s torch. They jammed themselves close up behind a buttress, and waited in breathless silence the sentry’s approach. Slow pacing, he neared the buttress, half-deafened by the shriek of the wind through the turrets and half-blinded by the pelting rain. He came within arm’s length of the sixty desperate Christians. His torch-light flickered, but only for a moment, upon the mass of draggled plumes and dripping

armour. He inhaled a breath to raise the cry of alarm. That breath was his last. On the instant a steel-gloved hand seized him by the throat, tearing away his windpipe, a dozen sword blades clashed in his heart, and armed heels stamped on the fallen torch, which sputtered in his life-blood on the flagstones of the parapet.

Then Phirouz the treacherous led to the spiral staircase of the tower, down which Bohemund and his comrades threaded their way, till they reached one of the gates in the city wall. Then Antioch was doomed. The companions of the sixty rushed in. A signal bugle was sounded which brought up in ferocious and hungry haste the army under Raymond of Toulouse, which had been outside in the darkness, anxiously waiting for the blast of the bugle to announce that Bohemund had scaled the walls and flung open the gate. Then was there *deray* and *din* unspeakable. The blare of the Christian trumpets mingled with the deafening yell of the Moslem *tekbir*. There were shouts and cries, mingling into one storm of nearly every language under heaven. Men sprang from their couches half-armed, and women rushed into the street half-naked. The white night-dress glistened for a moment in the flare of the torches and turned to reeking crimson under the swords that struck for Jesus and his Tomb and spared nothing in human form but cleft the patriarch through his grey hairs and the infant through his toothless gums, and did not spare even the maiden for lust, in the wild onslaught of carnage.

But, fast as the Moslems fell, a fresh supply issued from door and casement; and, to the ankles in blood, over ramparts of their dead and dying companions, they faced and fought the Crusaders with all the force and abandoned energy of despair. At length, beaten back at every point, the surprised but heroic garrison, floundering through the slippery and cumbered streets, and fighting as they retreated, escaped from the doomed city, and fled

to the hills. In delirious triumph, through the darkness and rushing rain, the Crusaders pursued. The sputtering torch gave light to the incarnadined sword which spared neither soldier nor saint nor the half-nude mother flying with dishevelled hair and her babe clasped to her breast.

Hindmost in the fighting and fleeing forces of the Moslem, ever and anon the tossed and swaying torches revealed the black steed, gem-studded armour, keen scimitar, and venerable white hair of Baghasihan, emir of Antioch. Wherever the Christian pressed fiercest that black horse plunged, that armour gleamed like a mirror, that scimitar flashed—and a Christian fell. O stars behind there, invisible in the darkness, never since the world was did you look down upon more picturesque horror than signalised that October night of storm and gloom and torch and sword when the Cross and Crescent agonised on that Syrian hillside, and the Moslem cry of “Allah! Allah!” filled up the intervals of the coarser Christian shout, “*Alleluia! Deus adjuva! Deus adjuva!*”

Now the Moslems' desperate rear is guarded by almost the solitary scimitar of Baghasihan, the emir. Chief after chief has fallen by his side to save him from the thrust of Christian lance or the crashing swing of Christian battle-axe. Now a flare of Christian torches give him light to die the soldier's and the hero's death. His sinking steed, from the shoulder to the fetlock, has a long dark stream of half-congealed blood. In the still proud and arched neck there quivers three feet of a Crusader's broken lance. The erst jewelled and resplendent armour is dented and bloody; still, with unabated valour, the emir protects the rear of the fugitive host, now principally made up of women and children. His fate is sealed, but his soul is undaunted. Once more at bay, horse and man go down before him, this time one of the foremost knights of Raymond of Toulouse. He fights, unconquerable as Fate. Then, at length, the white hair and the black steed go

down under an overwhelming avalanche of Christian flesh and iron. The head is hewn off, and, with the white hair dabbled with gore, is impaled on the point of a spear and borne back to Antioch. Hurrah! the head of the Infidel! So perish Baghasihan and the enemies of Jesus! "*Alleluia! Deus adjuva!*"

Morning dawned on carnage and desolation. Antioch "The Beautiful" had, in its tragic career, been more than once laid in the dust. Pompey had thundered over it with his legions. Fifty years subsequently* an earthquake shattered to ruin the residences of the living and shook the dead in their graves. The Persians, under Sapor, stormed it. The Persians, under Chosroes, left not one stone upon another. Rebuilt, it had fallen a prey to the Saracens. From the Saracens it was wrenched by the Greeks. Recaptured by the Saracens, it had remained in their hands till this awful night of Phirouz the treacherous and Bohemund the indomitable. Persian, Greek, and Roman had been merciful as compared with the incarnate devils who had swarmed from Europe to rescue the grave of their Jesus. Redder than the rising sun that touched the peaks of the Lebanon were the fires that leaped over the proudest turrets of Antioch. In the street the flames lit up streams of gore and numbers of famishing dogs lapping it and tearing the wounds of the slain. And through the wild chaos of conflagration, wreck, and carnage, the soldiers of Jesus abandoned themselves to drunkenness and rape and *Deus vult* and *Halleluia*. Numbers of bare-footed friars ran frantically hither and thither in their devout delirium, with the blood, mingled with the last night's rain, in which they trod, squirting up between their toes, for Christ and his tomb.

The Crusaders, when outside the walls, had had weeks of short rations and semi-famine, and now, the men killed

* In A. D. 115.

and the women violated, they prepared to gorge themselves. But what was their mortification to find that the besieged had been almost as near famine point as the besiegers! Gold they found in abundance, and jewels and silks and the amenities of a civilisation and culture far beyond what was at that period known in Christian Europe; but, all articles of food were extremely scarce, and there were three hundred thousand men of them with the red cross on their shoulder and the sword on their thigh. And, before they had time to bury the dead, throw themselves into an attitude of effective defence and organize supplies, they found the city invested by an army of vengeance — an army immense in numbers, efficiently supplied and equipped, burning for revenge, and under the command of the redoubtable Kerbogha, emir of Mosul.

There, inside the walls, amid the stench of coagulated blood, and unburied corpses, faced by Pestilence, Famine, and Despair, the troops of Bohemund and Tancred and Raymond perished at the rate of hundreds a day. They had left Europe to rescue the “holy grave” of Jesus, and in Asia they bade fair, to a man, to find unholy graves for themselves. Nothing short of a miracle could save them, or what of them still remained. Did they perish to a man, or was that miracle wrought? We shall see.

“THE HOLY LANCE.”

II.

ANTIOCH was completely surrounded. Such as, impelled by hunger, ventured outside the walls to try to get something for their stomach got a few inches of cold steel in it—their last meal; they hungered no more. Those who did not venture on trying to break through the Moslem ring of steel perished of starvation, or succeeded in wresting a shred of famished and diseased horse or dog from some weaker comrade in misery, and died of combined starvation and disease. The slain who had fallen in the streets on the night on which, by treachery, the Cross had overmastered the Crescent, still lay unburied. And, thousands upon thousands, nay, tens of thousands upon tens of thousands, lay beside them, or on top of them, victims of Famine and Pestilence. Of the three hundred thousand Christians who had laid siege to Antioch, only sixty thousand now remained alive, men of that tough and terrible tissue that is almost impervious to the ordinary darts and javelins of Death.

They ate dead and diseased horses, they ate lean and famished rats, they ate each other, they ate the calves off their own legs; and they trusted even yet that from that dread Golgotha of pestilence, hunger, stench, and maggots the Lord would deliver them. Bohemund was gaunt as a skeleton, but determination, fury, and phrenzy still blazed in his eyes. Tancred's sword-belt had been shortened and shortened, as his frame shrank through hunger; but there was yet in him the resolution to fight

to the death. Raymond could with difficulty stand without leaning upon his sword; but, in the wild sweltering chaos of ruin and corpses, his spirit was inflexible, unconquered. He had left the pleasant hills of France to rescue the grave of Jesus; and the grave of Jesus would be rescued, or the grave of Raymond would be dug in the Syrian clime in which Jesus died.

But many of the rank and file and of the lesser officers had lost all heart. Dining off the rump-steak of a besieged rat is not conducive to valour. True, barefooted friars still ran about with their foul feet in the blood and slush of the street, and attempted to awaken the old raptures and visions of religious phrenzy. In vain. The dispirited, diseased, and starving could be incited no more to either piety or valour. The bugle called them to arms to resist a Moslem attack. They did not rally. The bugle blast assailed their ears in vain. They could barely stand, much less lend efficient aid in repelling a fresh, vigorous, and numerically overwhelming foe. They laid themselves down to die.

One quarter of the city in particular failed to attend to the call to arms. The assault repelled, dire retribution was at once visited upon that quarter of the city. Bohemund and his colleagues were not in a mood to be played with. By their orders the offending quarter of the city was set on fire, and every soul in it burnt to cinders. Starving wretches—if they would not fight, they would burn. And burn they did. And their companions looked on almost in unconcern. For, over rescuing the grave of Jesus, death in every violent and terrible form had become so stale and common-place that no excess of horrors could excite more than merely passing attention. The odour of putrefying and of burning flesh rose together through the thick atmosphere—the incense from the battle-altar of the votaries of Allah and Jehovah.

But the last crisis of despair was check-mated by the

first crisis of hope. Late in the gloom of a dismal night that had followed a fearful day, a cowed figure knocked with his dagger-hilt upon the door of the lodgings of Raymond of Toulouse.

"Who goes there?" growls the warder from within.

"I am Peter Barthelemy, the monk," cried the cowed figure. "My business, most urgent, is with Raymond, Count of Toulouse."

"Who come you from?"

"Direct from Almighty God."

"Enter."

The bolts were withdrawn, and the door opened. Peter Barthelemy rushed in, and insisted upon at once being conducted to the couch of Raymond, on business of the most vital import.

"What in the name of the fiends is it, shaveling?" asked the Count, grasping his sword, which lay naked at his bedside, and sitting up, half-asleep and half-armed.

"News from heaven," quoth Peter Barthelemy, gravely.

"Then out with it, or I'll hurl you to hell," snarled the Count of Toulouse.

"Patient, Count, patient," said the monk, as he drew an ebony crucifix from under his cassock, and held it up against the gleam of Raymond's drawn sword. "Patient, the Lord speaks——"

"Then I should advise the Lord to speak quickly, or I'll send him to another world to finish what he has got to say. I am tired of the ravings of you priests."

"Count of Toulouse, you shall hear me, and so big are my words with fate that, down to the end of the world, men shall know that you have heard me. Count, at this moment the Saracen tents are round this city like a ring. So strong is the Infidel that none may smite him save the Lord. But the Lord shall smite, and ere three moons set, not a shred of canvas shall remain of all that embattled cincture, and not one scimitar held by mortal

hand. Three times has the blessed St. Andrew appeared to me from the dead and advised me as to what is to be done to save the remnant of the crusading host and scatter the enemies of God. He was accompanied by a beauteous and sublime figure, who seemed framed of moonlit mist, and yet had about him the stamp and seal of the divine ; and, notwithstanding, blind sinner that I am, it was not till in the third interview when St. Andrew showed me the bleeding brow, the pierced hands and feet, and the wounded side, that I recognized my REDEEMER.”

Raymond drew his hands over his eyes, and, laying his sword across his knees, leant his palms upon it and listened intently ; for it was an age in which the most naturally profane of men received with slavish credence tales of pious prodigy such as the monk was now relating.

“Know, Count of Toulouse,” Peter Barthelemy continued, his voice and manner vitalising into rapt and prophetic impressiveness as he proceeded. “Know, Raymond of Toulouse, that I saw the wound in the side of God, the wound from which flowed the blood that redeemed the world ; and know that, twelve feet down, within the walls of this city of Antioch is the head of the lance that inflicted the gash on the Saviour’s side. It lies buried at the foot of a pillar near the south side of the altar, in what was so recently a mosque of the followers of the Arab false prophet, but which, thanks be to God, is now a church dedicated to the holy apostle, St. Peter. Two great lamps burn there day and night, dispensing a radiance grander than the summer-sun at mid-day. I have never stood near them with mortal feet, I have never beheld them with mortal eyes ; but, in my sleep, which was not a sleep, the holy St. Andrew, with the ever-blessed Redeemer following afar off, lifted me up and set me down on the sanctified pavement under which lies the lance that shed the blood that redeemed the world.”

"Yes, Peter Barthelemy," broke in the Count, eagerly, "and what of this lance? What of it, man? Speak! O that this hand could grasp it—this unworthy hand! I know the red bolts of heaven lie in it ready to blast and to burn the enemies of God. One hour of that lance, and we, gaunt remnant of Crusaders, will smite that Saracen host round Antioch and shatter it, even as, a moon ago, I beheld the lightning shatter a doomed cedar of Lebanon."

"Peace, Raymond. Interrupt me not," said Peter sternly. "I am the ambassador of God. But know, man, unworthy though thou art, that *thy* hand shall grasp the lance that was erst reddened in the Redeemer's gore. It was to *you* St. Andrew commanded me to deliver my message—not to Tancred, not to Bohemund; but to *you* and that sainted knight Raymond of Altapulto, and that holy man, the Bishop of Puy. I have come to *you* first. With twelve holy men, dig where I have indicated. Adieu."

And Peter Barthelemy vanished; and Raymond of Toulouse fell upon his knees and prayed, with great drops of sweat standing like beads upon his brow. Then, calling his squire, he donned his armour, and while the earliest and faintest rays of morning were tinting the towers of Antioch he set out to seek the bishop of Puy and Raymond of Altapulto.

The morning was yet grey when twelve selected and specially holy men, among whom were the Count of Toulouse, his chaplain, Raymond, and, of course, Peter Barthelemy, to whom had appeared St. Andrew and the Redeemer, set forth with mattocks and spades on their errand of exhumation. Near that pillar and in the light of the two great lamps indicated in the vision, the twelve, in relays, set to work to exhume the lance that, on Calvary, had wounded the side of the Son of God. The tidings of the portent had already gone almost through

the Christian host, and, early though the hour was, the church of St. Peter was crowded to its utmost capacity with an eager throng which had assembled to witness the exhumation of the weapon which was to work their deliverance. The marble flagstones yielded to the pick and crowbar, and were lifted and laid aside. And then warriors and warrior-priests, worthy fighters and prayers, but bad navvies, set to work with might and main. They dug and perspired, and perspired and dug, but the earth was as hard as iron; and it proved that St. Andrew and the Lord had set no child's task to the devoted twelve.

The façade of St. Peter's Church had begun to cast the long shadow of evening; and, deep down in the ground the twelve holy men toiled and tugged and prayed and crossed themselves; but all in vain. They found no vestige of the holy lance. Then, having by a loud and vehement prayer, worked himself into a paroxysm of religious phrenzy, Peter Barthelemy denuded himself of everything except his penitential shirt of horsehair, and, seizing a spade, he leapt into the deep and dark abyss which now yawned at the base of the pillar. Down in the darkness he prayed raucously, and toiled like the Cyclops. Now his voice groaned as if in agony, and now his madly-pried spade struck sparks of fire from the stones with which it came in contact. Then there was a sudden and demoniacal yell of triumph. The holy lance had been unearthed! It was brought to the surface by Raymond the chaplain; and the shouts of the Christian host shook the Church of St. Peter to its foundations.

Night fell upon a gaunt and famishing but excited and exultant city: and Peter the monk was again blessed by a heavenly vision, in which it was revealed to him that Count Raymond of Toulouse was to bear the holy lance at the head of the Christian host, whereupon the encircling ranks of the besieging Saracens would be broken, scattered and shattered by the arm of God. Peter the Hermit,

whose coal it originally was that had set Europe in conflagration, was despatched to the camp of Kerbogha to negotiate terms. Kerbogha, certain that he was in a position to utterly overwhelm the remnant of famishing and pestilence-stricken Crusaders, laughed the proposed terms to scorn. His message of scorn roused the devil of fanaticism, defiance, and despair in the councils and in the ranks of the Crusaders. The zealots of the Cross sprang from their litters, from the gutter, from the dung-hills, from the hospitals, from the bed of death, and flew to arms. Waving the holy lance round his head, Raymond of Toulouse rode in the van. The Crusaders crashed forward with the fury of a herd of wild bulls with flaming torches tied to their horns; and an advanced battalion of two thousand Saracens was swept into eternity.

This struck Kerbogha with consternation. Up till this juncture, during the Christian sortie, to show his contempt for it, he had continued to play a game of chess in which he had been engaged. Now he swept the knights and pawns aside, gripped his sword, and placed himself in personal command of his forces. He had seen much of Christian fanaticism and fury, but never aught like this. Even his overwhelming superiority of numbers availed him little against the frantic desperation of the famished horde that had burst forth from the gates of Antioch. The Cross and the Crescent rose and fell and struggled in the palpitating air filled with dust and the reek of blood; and the shrill cry of "*Allah! Allah!*" was answered by the hoarser shout of "*Jehovah! Deus vult!*" To mask a strategic movement of the Moslem cavalry, Kerbogha set the plain of long, dry grass on fire. Amid the smoke and flames, Crusader and Saracen struck and struggled and grappled like fiends, and the hot blood of the East and the furious blood of the West leapt forth from gaping wounds, and hissed in the flames. The

smoke hung in mid-air, here dark, and there illumined by the sun from the sky and the fire from the earth, and heaped itself into gigantic and awful semblances.

"See," shouted a soldier-monk, pointing skyward with his mace, "see the forms in that smoke, see the holy angels and martyrs of God, mounted upon white horses, and, on our side, brandishing the swords of heaven! They fight for us! On! On!" And turning their eyes for an instant in the direction indicated by the battle-mace of the monk, the faithful beheld the angelic host fighting for the Crusaders. Another hoarse yell of "*Deus vult!*" and a fierce spring forward, as the tiger springs from the jungle, another flash of the holy lance over the helmed head of Raymond of Toulouse, and the Moslem ranks broke and fled, and the votaries of the Prince of Peace, their weapons, feet, and garments stained with carnage, pursued the fugitives in merciless massacre. "*Deus vult! Deus vult! Deus adjuva!*" Seventy thousand Moslem dead were left on the battlefield and ten thousand of the followers of the Prince of Peace.

Refreshed with the first full meal they had had for weeks, and heavily laden with plunder, the Christians re-entered Antioch in triumph. The wildest enthusiasm obtained over several days, attended by much pompous demonstration in the churches and much attribution of honour and glory to the holy lance, which was now on exhibition to the entire army. Then, the enthusiasm over, the Christians began to ardently love one another—they quarrelled among themselves bitterly and furiously, Raymond against Bohemund, and Godfrey and Tancred taking sides. Peter Barthelemy, the seer of pious and prophetic visions, got dragged into the internecine quarrels. Although his holy lance had, and at the very crisis of their fate, effected such prodigies, there were those now who pronounced it a fraud, and Peter himself an impostor. He consented—or was compelled to consent—to sub-

mitting his *bonâ-fides* to the ordeal of fire. Peter had to face this ordeal or confess himself a blasphemous charlatan and the holy lance an impious imposition. Raymond of Toulouse had managed to make the lance tend mightily to his personal aggrandisement both in wealth and status ; this roused the jealousy of his compeers, especially that of Bohemund who asserted that Peter Barthelemy had the lance-head cunningly secreted under his hair shirt when he leapt down into the excavation to dig and pray ; and so there was nothing for Peter but to accept of the challenge to the ordeal of fire.

A great pile of dry faggots, four feet in height and fourteen in length, was piled up in the midst of the Christian camp. In the presence of the assembled thousands, the pile was fired. It crackled and smoked, and, in a brief space of time, it groaned and roared, and tossed its flaming forks to heaven. Through the pile of faggots, a path, only twelve inches in breadth, and now absolutely filled with flame, was left to be trod by the inculpated Peter Barthelemy. Pale as death, but with resolute will, the churchman faced his fate. Raymond d'Agilles ceased his prayer ; over the vast multitude there passed an expectant hush ; and, next instant, waving the holy lance over his head, the monk dashed into the flames. His figure in black sackcloth was seen rushing through the gulf of fire. He had almost reached the end of his brief but terrible journey, when, maddened with pain, and blinded through his eyes having been burned out, in his reckless agony he turned round, and, not knowing what he did, trod over again the hell he had already trod. The ordeal was over. The holy lance was well-nigh red-hot, and the monk, burnt out of human shape, expired in agony.

YEE-AW.

As I have placed on record elsewhere,* I, when a boy, met Carlyle at Thomas Aird's, and made a fool of myself, just what Tam of Ecclefechan expected everybody to do ; consequently, I must have come quite up to his expectations. Lord Wolseley has recently put it on record that he saw Carlyle near the end of his life for the first and last time, and chanced to ask, in the course of conversation, what the philosopher thought of the House of Commons. Carlyle answered: "I think that it is a place in which there are six hundred talking asses ! I am old—you are a young man, who, perhaps, will live to see the day when that talking shop down there will be shut up ; and who knows but that you may be the man to go down and turn the key ?"

And those six hundred are the wise ones of the nation (save the mark) the intellectual *élite*, the very elect. In the chaotic darkness all their fellows outside the "talking shop" have to follow where the "gallant six hundred" wave the torch. And yet those outside the "talking shop" may as wisely follow oriflammes of burning hay, tossed on the horns of mad bulls. When man moves he is so liable to move wrongly that I wish he would stand still for a century and thereby try whether his passive were not less ruinous than his active folly. His very act of walking consists in a successive setting of the one foot before the other to save himself from falling. The highest truth he can arrive at is only approximate and relative.

* See "A Visit to the Grave of Thomas Carlyle."

Any coign of vantage he may now stand upon has been reached only by a disastrous series of blunders. And, to me, it often occurs that the greatest blunder of all is the fact of his existence.

Why does he exist? Certainly not for his own individual or collective pleasure or advantage. And it is just here that eschatology comes in. If man exist not for his own advantage, then, for whose? Ay, there's the rub. Answer that, and answer it aright, and the riddle of the universe is read. Answer that, and then call yourself a Gnostic. Till you answer it you have answered *nothing*. Your "science" replies to a few interrogatories about the *How*; but, set your philosophy to solving the *Why*, and, till you have accomplished the solution, be humble, be receptive to every fact, keenly responsive to every intuition. We are in utter darkness, and we know not from which direction the light may come. It may come from the right hand or from the left, from the zenith or from the nadir, from the toil of exoteric research or from the ecstasy of esoteric exaltation. We should not have sat in darkness so long but for our prejudices as to the direction from which light may come. Know, O ye who would read the oracles of God, that light may come from the universities and libraries of the Living, and it may come in spiritual monitions from the ceremonies and sepulchres of the Dead. The world is One, and there is no atom that has not its lesson, no mountain that has not its revelation, no thought that speaks not of its ambassador, no mystic presentiment of the soul that does not link the semi-quaver of the individual with the stave of the universe.

"The natural man is enmity against God;" but his enmity is stronger still against knowledge. The inherent proclivity of the natural man is to have his stomach full and his head empty. His thirst is not for knowledge or

for wisdom. His all but irrepressible foible is to be gulled. He prefers the image to the mage. He leaves the grain and runs after the husks. He feasts on the shell and tramples on the kernel.

Dr. Rock, the quack, was one day standing at his door on Ludgate Hill, when an educated physician passed, who had learning and ability, but not the success in his practice which he deserved.

"How comes it," said he to the quack, "that you, without education, skill, or the least knowledge of medicine, are enabled to live in the style you do? You keep your town house, your carriage, and your country house, while I, allowed to possess some knowledge, have neither, and can scarcely pick up a subsistence."

"Why, look you," said Rock, smiling, "how many people do you think have passed us since you asked me the question?"

"Well," answered the doctor, "perhaps a hundred."

"And how many out of that hundred, think you, possess common sense?"

"Possibly one," answered the doctor.

"Then," said Rock, "that one comes to you, and I take care to get the ninety-nine."

J. Smith deliberately prefers quack medicine, quack literature, quack morals, quack gospel, quack everything. His quack medicine and quack literature go together hand-in-hand—an attached, albeit spurious, David and Jonathan. He gets sixpennyworth of literature for a penny, because, on the wrapper, Girnigo has paid munificently for an advertisement of his pills, and, on the back of the title-page, Napper Tandy has paid, on an equally high scale, for a loud trumpeting of his ointment. And, in the middle of the book, just where you are absorbingly interested in the gaudily-tinted narrative of how Vavasour's wife, Leonore, is being seduced by the Marquis of De Pototaties, your ardour is stayed by a

yellow leaf inserted to tell you how to keep your hair on for 100 years by using Madame Fitzfrump's "Hair Restorer" at 4s. 7½d. a pot, but "worth £2 2s." And this adulterous alliance between quack medicine and quack literature is, forsooth, "one of the most hopeful signs of the times." Then, God help the times! The "Shilling Shocker" and the "Sixpenny Shudder" would not be possible but for the advertisements of the Napper Tandys and Fitzfrumps. It is they who make it possible for the publishers to give such bulk for the money; and Mr. J. Smith and his maid-servant like bulk for their money. When they see a book half the size of a donkey-cart offered for a shilling, it *must* be cheap; and it is purchased.

And yet it would seem that even the "Sixpenny Shudder" is preferable to no shudder at all—such a paradoxically curious problem is Mr. J. Smith. It would appear that even the hireling hack who writes the "Shudder" lifts the man of the street to a higher mental and moral level than that he occupied while he was quite illiterate, and, simply as a demoralised automaton, feared God and honoured the king, and slaved for the squire, and pulled his forelock to the parson. Even the three R's and a few feeble flourishes, are better than the former blank illiteracy. When the parson had popular education in his hands, and loved it so dearly that he kept it all to himself, the gaol and the gallows were more flourishing institutions than they are now. Already, in their quarter of a century of existence, the Board Schools have closed many of the gaols, and, no doubt, broken many a gallowsrope.

In 1870 there were 30,000 people in the prisons of England and Wales; in 1890, with an increase in the population of over 4,000,000, there were 19,000 people in those prisons. In 1870 there were 113 convict establishments in England and Wales; in 1892 the

number had fallen to 57. In 1870, with the names of one in 13 of the population of England and Wales on the books of the primary schools, no fewer than one in 280 were on the books of the police-stations as known or suspected thieves; in 1890, after 20 years of compulsory education, the numbers on the rolls of the primary schools had risen to one in five of the population, while the number known to the police had fallen to one in 513.

The School Board system has been denounced as "a godless system." Well, that matters not; we seem to get along better without deity than with him. This is a bad look-out for those who make their living by him. For the god-idea I entertain nothing save the profoundest respect—a respect so solemn and reverent that I feel it to be desecration to regard it with aught save the homage of humility and silence. But, as regards the deity of Priestcraft, I marvel not that J. Smith gets along better without him, and can manage better in his absence to steer clear of the gaol and the gallows. Of all the quack medicines, the theologian's is the most sinister. Fitzfrump's ointment is a genuine and honest investment when compared with the nostrums of the Rev. Timothy Hellcinder.

By the way, books proper—books that are of too high a scope and aim to stoop to ride into success on a box of Fitzfrump's Hair Restorer—pay no better than ever. As a rule, no kind of literature pays except novels; and, as another rule, no novels pay except bad ones. If a man would, in this age, produce a real book, if he has no private fortune, he must get, say, a steam-roller to drive, or some stones to break, to keep himself alive while he is toiling for the public at a life-task for which they will never pay him, or even throw their cap in the air with an empty "Hurrah!" to his glory. The late John Addington Symonds, whose memoirs have been

published, did not find literature a paying concern. For his two great works on "The Catholic Revival" and "The Renaissance in Italy," he received from his publishers £1,100. He was for eleven years engaged on the work, so that, as he reflects: "I have been paid at the rate of £100 per annum; but I must deduct at least £50 per annum from my gains for books and travel, quite indispensable to the production. This I reckon as really far below the just allowance. Say, then, I have received £50 a year during the eleven best years of my life for the execution of a laborious work, which implied an expensive education and unusual cast of intellect; the pay is about equal to the wages of a third-class merchant's clerk, or a second-class butler, the latter being also found in food and lodging."

Eleven mortal years of toil, entailing a premature death, eleven years at an order of work which not one man in a million can adequately perform, and then the newspapers announce he is dead. "Death of Mr. John Addington Symonds;" and J. Smith yawns, "Who the devil was John Addington Symonds?" reads the obituary paragraph quite uninterestedly when he finds that "this fellow Symonds" did not rob a bank or elope with somebody's wife. Such is fame. At least, such is all the fame that comes to the silently capable and quietly heroic, to men of virile grasp of intellect, mature scholarship, and unwavering fidelity to principle. Fools like to read books by fools; and, as fools make up the only constituency big enough to make a book pay, they who write for that constituency, and they alone, are paid.

But, take it for all in all, when men have to do with the things of earth they are half sane; when with the things of heaven, they are clean insane. The maddest investment man ever made was to pay a parson. A parson is one who, like Ocnus in the fable, perpetually winds out a rope of hay, which is as perpetually eaten up

by an ass, and, consequently, never becomes longer or shorter. The clerical Ocnus, however, does not make his rope of hay, but of chaff, and woefully stale chaff at that! Stale and musty though the material of the rope—or, rather, in this case, the “yarn”—may be, the laical ass eats it as regularly as it is unwound. Go to church—the shed in which the chaff-rope is wound out for the consumption of the assembled asses—go to church for the first time after five or six years of careful and systematic scientific, historical and philosophical reading, and go divested of all prejudice, and, as the chaff rope gets wound and wound and swallowed, you will become mournfully impressed with the conviction that the world is only a vast asylum for idiots, and that, the idiots being in such utterly overwhelming a majority, discretion prompts that you hold your peace, lest you, the *one* sane person, be locked up as a lunatic because your voice will not mingle in the all but universal chorus of “Yee-aw.”

Men who could not possibly make a living in any other “learned” profession, contrive to do so by the spinning of chaff-ropes. The feeblest platitudes, if unctuously snivelled with a whine and with the eyes half closed, and the whites of them turned up after the manner of a dying duck, will pass muster. Words, words, the flimsiest of thin-spun verbiage, if uttered by a Rev. or Right Rev., are singularly efficacious in saving the soul of the ordinary common or garden imbecile. Frequently it would seem that the sole aim of the preacher—that is, the chaff-rope spinner—is to go on speaking for a definite period of time without breaking down, and at the same time to utter nothing that could arrest the interested attention of really earnest and capable sanity.

The anecdote of the Jedburgh preacher on the subject of Jonah and the whale is indicative of a “rhetorical”

method not at all far removed from specimens of "pulpit eloquence" to which I personally have listened during the years in which I devoutly gave the kirk a chance at saving my soul.

"And what sort of a fish was it, my brethren, that God had appointed thus to execute his holy will? Was it a shark, my brethren? No; it could not be a shark, for God could never have ventured the person of his beloved prophet among the deadly teeth of that ravenous fish. What fish was it, then, my brethren? Was it a salmon, think ye? Ah, no; that were too narrow a lodging. There's no ae salmon i' the deepest pule o' a' Tweed could swallow a man. Besides, ye ken, it's mair natural for men to swallow salmon than for salmon to swallow men. What, then, was it! Was it a sea-lion, or a sea-horse, or a sea-dog, or the great rhinoceros? Oh, no! These are not Scriptor beasts ava. Ye're as far aff't as ever. Which of the monsters of the great deep was it, can ye tell me?"

Here an old spectacled dame, who had an eleemosynary seat on the pulpit stair, thinking that the minister was in a real perplexity about the name of the fish, interrupted him with, "Hoot, sir, it was a whale, ye ken."

"Out upon you, you graceless wife that you are," cried the orator, so enraged as almost to fly out of the pulpit at her, "thus to take the word out of the mouth of God's ain minister!"

This pragmatICAL she-ass at the one end of the chaff-rope had knocked the feet from under the he-creature that stood at the other end of it. This creature could have gone on asking, "Was it a herring, my Christian friends? Was it a skate, my brothers in Jesus?" and so on till he came down to the prawn and the winkle, linking on his theology to his ichthyology, thereby saving souls as fast as cleric ever saved them since the world

began, and with the very slightest tension upon such brains as he had, and with no strain at all upon such brains as his congregation had not. Peradventure I, too, am only an ass. But I decline to eat chaff ropes. I turn round and let fly with my heels at the spinners who offer me such ropes. What ass will join me in launching his heels out vigorously with mine at the spinners of the chaff-ropes? Heel to heel, my friends. Let us kick those impostors off the globe they stultify. At least, let us kick them into the pursuit of some sane and honest calling. One united and defiant bray of "Yee-aw," and one combined and desperate launching out of hind-heels! Make the spinners of chaff-ropes spin off the face of the earth!

MORE OF YEE-AW.

"FIRE and smoke of hellish clangour" are eminently in the line of the sons of men. They were wont to burn each other to death over matters anent which neither those who were burnt nor those who burnt them knew anything whatever. And they invented a *post-mortem* and everlasting bon-fire in which, generally speaking, everybody was eventually to be burnt; certainly everybody worth mentioning, everybody except the Elect—a handful of imbeciles set apart from all eternity to an existence of holy humdrum. There is nothing so hellish as the orthodox hell, unless it be the orthodox heaven. From both of them, good Lord, deliver us. But back to our fire and smoke.

We have given up burning each other ; but we have not, by any means given up starving each other. Thousands of victims are offered up yearly on the altar of Starvation by the god "Get On," as he is called for brief, his name in full being "Get On in the World." No joke of a deity this—quite as cruel as Odin or Yahveh. He is sometimes known as "The Golden Calf," and this calf is most devoutly worshipped by the common or garden ass. 'This ass, unlike that of the prophet Balaam, has not spirit enough to inquire, "Why smitest thou me?" He just takes his smittings humbly, knowing that they are administered by his "betters," before whom it is enjoined that he deport himself with due deference and submission. He unlike Balaam's yee-aw, sees no angel, unless it be the kind of "Angel" that is at Islington—the kind of angel under the wings of which he can have a "rum 'ot," "old and a dash," "two three's of Scotch and a split," or "a two-eyed steak and a door-step." This is the only sort of angel he knows. And, unlike the ass of old, *he* is driven by no prophet, or, rather, the prophet that drives him is spelt *profit*, sufficient of filthy lucre to keep his spoon going.

He has now all but given up burning his neighbour in this, and his hell has nearly given up burning him in the next, life ; but he must burn something, so he burns tobacco. He does not burn it that he may warm his feet at the flame or cook his herring upon it. Honestly speaking, what he burns it for, goodness only knows. Even when he cannot get bread to put in his mouth he puts smoke in it, although that smoke costs money. Hungry, too, although he may be, he does not swallow that smoke. He whiffs it out in volumes through his blackened teeth, and occasionally indulges in the extra luxury of whiffing it out through his nostrils. This converting of his mouth into a chimney imparts to his

breath worse than the odours of a fougart.* But Janet endures it and says nothing. Smoke or not smoke, he is a chappie, and that is enough for Janet.

There are, according to the census, not sufficient chappies to go once round ; so Janet cannot afford to wait to pick and choose. She must take what she can get. I knew of a Janet, a strapping Janet she was, and with a cheque book of her own, who took, for better for worse, a chappie who had neither arms nor legs. And, for a Janet to take a chappie who has no head is one of the commonest things in the world. In spite of this, Janet is always grumbling at the chappie ; I will give her a bit of advice. Leave the chappie severely alone for one hundred years, and see what will become of him. He will be scarce, madam, confoundedly scarce, and so will you ; and what created intelligence will care a cent ? Where "the Creator" cultivated manikins he will be able to cultivate carrots. They will give him less trouble. He will not require to write a Book for them ; send down a Deluge to cure them of their "sins ;" and then, over those said sins, have the third part of himself, which was the whole of himself, executed. There will be no cosmology, and no theology, and no penalties of opprobrium visited upon those who, like myself, regard not with a devout tear, but with a bitter sneer, "religious" fables written by knaves for the use of imbeciles.

Religion, which should lie on the sublimest, has generally had a tendency to lie on the daftest side of man's nature—not on the rationalist, but the yee-aw side of it. Any kind of creature would not satisfy him, as a dog ; but almost any kind of creature was good enough to serve him as a god. *Teste* :—

The inhabitants of Oxyrynchus worshipped the pike.

* Polecat.

The natives of Syrena attributed divine sanctity to the sea-bream.

On the coins of Cumæ and Agrigentum was stamped the hallowed image of the crab.

American tribes name themselves after the sturgeon, the cat-fish, and the carp.

To pass from fish to fowl, the god of Nineveh was Nisrock, the eagle ; and they also adored the cock and raven.

Xenophon notices the veneration of the Syro-Pheonicians for doves.

In South-western Australia we find a swan tribe.

Among insects the heroes of classic times worshipped the butterfly and the ant.

The Indians revere the kite, the wagtail, the peacock, and the goose.

The natives of India idolise the bull, the buffalo, the deer, and the lion.

The god Amen of Thebes boasted the head of a ram, and his worshippers would not eat mutton.

According to the Samaritans, the Jews—and, according to the Jews, the Samaritans—worshipped the ass.

Ganesh, an elephant-headed divinity, adorns the religious annals and adyta of Cashmere.

Among the African gods, according to Du Chailu, rank tigers, and the ancients worshipped the stag and the rabbit.

“If a black,” says Barbot, in his description of Guinea, “resolves upon important business, he first searches out a god-protector, which is most commonly the first creature he spies—a dog or a cat.”

Oldendorp, in his account of the religion of negroes, tells us “that a pig had by chance, to quench his own thirst, conducted an army of the Mandingoes to a well ; since then none of the species has been killed by them, but all pigs have been worshipped as divine.”

Happy the nation to which the self-same quadruped served as both dog and god! You could, marvellous mark of his divinity, spell his name either backwards or forwards. *God* spelt backwards was *dog*, and *dog* spelt backwards was *god*. How worshipful! Were the sheep permitted to stray when *god* backwards was crunching a bone? Were all the affairs of heaven, earth, and hell allowed to go wrong while *god* backwards was sitting on his haunches and, with his teeth, routing out a flea from the base of his tail? Was dog as much of a god as man was much of an ass?

What a divine swirl the pig must have given his tail when he found he was an object of worship! No doubt, when he dug his face into the ground it was to ascertain of what he had made the world—he having made it some considerable time ago, and forgotten the order of the geological formations he had adopted. What a halo of divine splendour must have irradiated the spot where this dog scratched himself against the fence and pronounced the mystic word, GRUMPH! How the grunt of his indignation must have shaken the earth when this god beheld his own bristles made into a brush! And the sight of a string of pork sausages must have excited him to blight creation. Creation, by the way, is pretty much blighted, and ontologists have not been able to determine why. Perhaps the pig-god's first glance at a string of his own sausages is the key to the mystery. At all events, it is as near the key as has yet been attained by the biped ass who worshipped the pig-god and chanted to him the more than Gregorian anthem of "Yee-aw."

Of one whimsical turpitude they were guiltless: neither the deified dog nor pig wrote a Book for the moral and divine guidance of his followers. This feat was left for a deity who was not grafted on the stock of a decent dog or pig, but who was, from beginning to end, a pure, or, rather, a singularly impure,

invention. The sublime word "GRUMPH" is a good deal more intelligible than many of the words used in the Book to which I refer. This Book seems to have been written to get you into a scrape, and to keep you there; for, from the first, no one seems to have had any idea as to what it really meant and what it would be at. Rabbi Jacob ben Chajim advises us that Ezra and the scribes who followed him, adopted, as far as this Book was concerned, the *Keri velo Kethib* (the read, but not the written) and the *Kethib velo Keri* (the written, but not the read). Blessed Book! You opened it, and read in it what was not in it. Then you opened it, and did not read in it what was in it. No common sort of book this! I wonder if the *Keri velo Kethib* would warrant my opening it and reading into it the word "Yee-aw."

Now, we have an Act of Parliament Version of this said Book, also a Revised Version; but I am not sure you can have your soul "saved" by the use of this latter. If you really have a soul, and you think you would like it saved, use the Act of Parliament Version; Parliament is a great authority on soul-saving. Do not have the presumption to attempt to *understand* the Book. No one has ever understood it. Just read it, and dilly-dally over it, and fiddle-faddle with it, and cant considerably, and whine a good deal, and keep turning up the whites of your eyes, and you stand a pretty good chance of being "saved." If you think you would like to live after you are dead, peg away diligently at that Book; "eternal life" is promised to those who "search" it. There is one man at least, who must, for his sacred diligence, have obtained "eternal life." I do not know his name, but it must be well known and highly respected in heaven.

For the term of his natural existence in this vale of tears, this man laboured so many hours a day over the Book, and he has left it on record that it contains

3,586,489 letters, 773,692 words, 31,173 verses, 1,189 chapters, and 66 books. The word *and* occurs 46,277 times. The word *Lord* occurs 1,855 times. The word *reverend* occurs but once, which is in the 9th verse of the 111th Psalm. The middle verse is the 8th verse of the 118th Psalm. The 21st verse of the 7th chapter of Ezra contains all the letters of the alphabet except the letter *F*. The 19th chapter of 2nd Kings and the 37th chapter of Isaiah are alike. The longest verse is the 9th verse of the 8th chapter of Esther. The shortest verse is the 35th verse of the 11th chapter of St. John. There are no words or names of more than six syllables.

This much pains with what Carlyle called the "Hebrew bundle of old clothes!" And yet the Church, with which this "Hebrew bundle" is a sacred book, has an *Index Prohibitorum*, on which she has placed almost every book which might be of real service to mankind. Among the first acts of this Church on her assumption of power, was the suppression of learning and the exaltation of pious ignorance. The 16th canon of the Fourth Council of Carthage took the official initiative in this line, and inaugurated a thousand years of brainless grovelling in which it was not necessary—see Mosheim—for even a bishop to be able to write his own name! And, pious ignorance is the worst ignorance of all—it is so supremely conceited. Next to no book at all—and the way it has been misused, worse than no book at all—was the "Hebrew bundle of old clothes." The quarelling over what it meant has cost the lives of millions, and has made a perfect hell upon earth. And there are even to-day, at least Protestant schismatics of the Church who regard this "Hebrew bundle," not only as a book, but as a spell, an instrument of incantation. An orthodox paper* lately advised in this wise:—

* *The Bible Reader.*

If you are down in the mouth, read the twenty-seventh Psalm.

If there is a chilly sensation about your heart, read the third chapter of Revelation.

If you don't know where to look for the quarter's rent, read the thirty-seventh Psalm.

If you feel lonesome and unprotected, read the ninety-first Psalm.

If the chimney has fallen down, put it up again, wash your hands, and read the third chapter of James.

If you find yourself losing confidence in men, read the thirteenth chapter of first Corinthians.

If people pelt you with hard words, read the fifteenth chapter of John.

If you are getting discouraged about your work, read Psalm cxxvi. and Galatians vi. 7-9.

If you are all out of sorts, read the twelfth chapter of Hebrews. To which I add:—

If you are an irredeemable fool, read the whole affair, from the Pentateuch to the Apocalypse.

With life so short and so many valuable books now to be read, this feat would be more than foolish—it would be criminal. But Folly and Crime are sisters.

If the feat of laborious “searching” to which I have referred has not obtained the searcher an extra long spell of “eternal life,” what mortal may ever hope to succeed in such an enterprise? How momentous it is to know that there are exactly 3,586,489 letters in “the source of England's greatness”! No wonder England is great! I deny not her greatness. She is very great—as a block-head. On her banner she emblazons the lion. Let her substitute the ass, and for the scroll, *Honi soi qui mal y pense*, the glorious legend, *Yee-aw*.

YEE-AW, EVEN YET.

By the way, among the Yee-aw proclivities of the age, I have no hesitation in enrolling the one which encourages Janet to waste her waist. It is computed by a Janets' paper that in England there are about 3,543,000 corset-wearers, whose united girth should be 95,661,000 inches, which is reduced by compression to 81,480,000 inches, showing the deplorable deficit of $223\frac{2}{3}$ miles in waist, all lost by tight-lacing.

Now, the bearing of Mr. J. Smith, such as he is, is, for him, rather an important matter. When he *is* born he usually finds that, on the earth, although it is over 365,000 miles in circumference, there is plaguey little room for him. This being so, it is a disgrace to give him too little room even before he is born at all. The English Radical mounts platforms, and rants and raves about being robbed of the land by the execrated landlord. He says not a word about his having been robbed of over 223 miles of waist. He strains at the gnat and swallows the camel. Just walk behind Smith on the street and watch him. Show me a man's back, and I will tell you what sort of a waist his mother had.

And, O Sparta, what backs! There goes Smith, squat and feeble, no vigour in his dorsal rafter, no firmness in his pedal foundations. The toes of the one foot are turned out, those of the other turned in, and his locomotion is only a flannel-legged hitch from the in-toed foot to the out-toed foot; and there is no vigour, virility, and character in the mean head and attenuated neck and the ungraceful arms flapping about in apparently half-

empty sleeves. And, look at his pelvic foundations, furtively revealed by the parting coat tails as the in-toed foot in freak makes a step more in-toed than usual. Those pelvic foundations are emasculated and mean. They certainly have not been laid by Nature with masonic honours. Nature, quite evidently, never meant to build a man upon them, only a homunculus.

That poor creature, perky and self-satisfied enough, as all poor creatures are, suffers not so much through the landlord as through the stays-maker. In the year in which he was born, England was swindled out of 223 miles of Janetic waist; and, that pre-natal robbery reached him; and that is what is the matter. Nature made his mother to look like a woman; but she took it into what served her for a head that she would look better like a wasp. And, that shuffling object of pity on the street there is the result. He rubs his eye-glass and inspects all the quack-looking windows he passes. He is on the outlook for pills. He is one of the wretches who practically lives on pills. He was gestated under quack stays, and falls an easy victim to quack medicine, and has no brain or moral energy to throw off the serfdom of quack theology; and he drifts unresistingly into the conventional circle in which, as William Maccall said—

“ They make high God a chapel fixture,
And piety a bloody mixture;
They pray and pray and pray on Sunday,
And prey and prey and prey on Monday.”

Pre-natally cribbed confined, and confined by the stay-lace of his mother, post-natally he is led by the apron string of Mrs Grundy, even as an ass is led by your walking in front of him holding a carrot to his nose. Priestcraft recognises him to be a coward, as all improperly gestated things are; and it threatens him with hell if he does not obey the laws of God—that is, subserve the interests of the priest. Heil, although

very hot, is somewhat indefinite; and it is this very indefiniteness that, to half-wits, invests it with the intensity of terror. For every "sin" you ever committed, and for every "sin" your fathers ever committed, backward even to the third and fourth generation, you are to have a special roasting and a terrible toasting. This sort of thing ineffably intimidates creatures who suffer from that 223 miles of waist having been stolen from their race. Recently a gentleman named Wetzestein was sentenced at Halle. He had been found guilty of the murder of two women, and attempts to murder others. Now, under German law, a separate sentence is passed for every crime, and Wetzestein was accordingly condemned twice to be hanged on the capital offences; while, for the murderous assaults, he was sentenced to fifteen years' imprisonment. But the *post-mortem* punishment of the priest-ridden hell-fireite is far in excess of that of Wetzestein, who had only twice to be hanged by the neck till dead, and afterwards imprisoned for fifteen years. The threat of an exoteric sentence like this would not deter Mr. J. Smith from his "sins," especially if he were permitted to take the second hanging first, and allowed, as the goal-bird's phrase is, to "do" the fifteen years "on his 'ead," seeing he had no "'ead" to do it on—only an ill-shaped bone box, filled with bill sticker's paste.

In our pre-natal life it is quite true we are allowed only one room; but Nature takes care that it is spacious enough for our humble wants and simple tastes. It is Art, not Nature, that pushes the walls of that room in upon us—ay, and began to push them in and lessen the capacity of the room years before we occupied it. Moreover, after we are born, especially if we are born in a large town, we shall again be confined to one room. Home Secretary Asquith, in his speech on the Municipal Reform of London, stated that in London nearly 400,000 people live in homes of one room—a popu-

lation equal to or exceeding that of Leeds—and that double that number are at this moment living, two or more, in two rooms. Now, although one room, if untampered with, is enough for us before we are born, it is, decidedly, not enough for us after we are born, unless, indeed, our ears are long, and the only quotation we can make from the world's literature is the word "Yee-aw." One room with the temperature well kept up is enough for us before we are born; and one room, with the temperature anyhow, is enough for us after we are dead; but one room is not enough for us in the interval between birth and death; and, in this one room, no one who is fit to live would be content to live, even if Jesus himself should come down to the door of it and cry, "Blessed be ye poor."

I should say that, generally speaking, man is never so far from pleasing deity as when he is "worshipping" him. What a happy state of matters it would be if man would only mind his own affairs, and let deity mind his. When man meets the buffeting of Fate as manfully as he may, and when he is at sacrifice to help the lame dog over the stile, he is worshipping God. When he beets the flame of the most divine fire that is in him, and emblazons with poetic illumination the holiest aspirations of his being, he worships God. All life should be worship, and not some specialised antic of it, either cantatory, genuflectory, or corybantic. Whenever man detaches religion from life or specialises it and eliminates it from life's ordinary impulses and obligations, he renders himself absurd, and worse. For instance, his most solemn "religious sacrament" has its exoteric evidence in eating and drinking "the Almighty." He likes beef and eats it; he likes wine and drinks it, and in his concrete impotence before the ideal, he actually eats and drinks his "maker." I shudder to think of his blasphemy when he actually sets it down in a printed manual of

“devotion” how you are to hold your mouth, not when you whistle, mark you, but when you swallow the “Almighty maker of heaven and earth” ! Here are the orthodox words ; and, viewed from the standpoint of good taste—nay, real sanity—a more bitter, biting burlesque upon divine worship than the cleverest unbelieving satirist could ever conceive. For instance, what think you of this?—“At the time of your receiving, let your head be erect, your mouth opened moderately wide, and your tongue a little advanced so as to rest upon your underlip, that the priest may conveniently convey the blessed sacrament into your mouth, which being done, shut your mouth ; let the sacred host moisten a little on your tongue, and then swallow it down as soon as you can, and afterwards abstain a while from spitting. If the host should chance to stick to the roof of your mouth, be not disturbed ; neither must you put your finger into your mouth to remove it, but gently and quickly remove it with your tongue, and so convey it down, and then return to your place and endeavour to entertain as well as you can the guest whom you have received.”*

When, some years ago, the franchise was extended to a multitude of priestridden and squire-kicked yokels, they were disappointed when they found it was not, as they had expected, *something to eat*. With certain not so debased as the yokels, not merely the franchise is associated with something to eat, but even deity is synonym for duodenum. They celebrate his birthday every 25th of December by nearly bursting themselves. They link salvation on to snapdragon, and the wise men of the East with the—fools in England. So rejoiced are they that their Lord was born that many of them get drunk, and are locked up and have to appear before

* “The Garden of the Soul,” the Common Prayer Book of the English Roman Catholics.

“the beak”—a kind of modern Herod. So full are they, not of the spiritual, but of the spirituous, that they can do no regular work for some days; and the doctor’s bill runs up to a figure that can with difficulty be wiped out before next Christmas. The days of Christian martyrdom are not over; every year, on December 25th, there are tens of thousands who do their devout best to burst themselves for Jesus and his birthday.

On the anniversary of the birth of any other celebrity of sufficient popularity his natal day is not celebrated by his admirers attempting to burst themselves. No. They hang out flags and organise processions and make speeches. But, with orthodoxy, Jesus is nothing if not something to eat, and nothing so common as a red-herring will do; you must eat something that will nearly burst you, and leave you in the doctor’s hands for days. It is all a matter of mastication and deglutition. Charles II.’s oath was “Od’s Fish!” Earlier than his time this was “God’s Fish!” and earlier still “God’s Flesh!” Mr. J. Smith not only ate his “maker’s” flesh, but swore by it. How many a goose has died because Jesus was born! And a very appropriate bird to die, and be roasted and eaten under such auspices! Even the workhouse and the gaol go in for alcohol and beef, light head and burst belly, on December 25th over an event which certainly never took place on December 25th, or, possibly, any other day whatever; but which, if it is to be celebrated, should be celebrated on April 1st.

The indigent, no doubt, wish Jesus had been born on each day of the year. On his putative birthday some edible scraps are thrown them by those who have made them indigent. For instance, at Liverpool, on Christmas Day, 4,000 “hot pots” but not of Rider Haggard’s sort, were distributed to poor families of that city. It is calculated that, as, on an average, each family contains five persons, no fewer than 20,000 were thus benefitted.

Each "hot pot" was composed of 3 pounds of beef, 7 pounds of potatoes, and 1 pound of onions. In all, no less than 20 tons of potatoes, 20,000 pounds of beef, and over a ton of onions were required. The committee of the fund also distributed 4,000 four-pound loaves, 4,000 quater-pounds of tea, and 4,000 one-pound jars of jam to hungry persons.

A very religious thing these onions. Their odour of sanctity clings to one for days. Smith might use them appropriately enough in the celebration of his own birthday, but try something else on that of his deity. What bellowing and blood and murder are represented by that 20,000 pounds of beef! The ox is reputed to have looked on and beheld the birth of the orthodox man-god in the stable in Bethlehem. And the ox, in millions, has been butchered to keep going the devout jaws that masticate the man-god's flesh and chant "Peace and goodwill." The ox is our "paur earth-born companion and fellow mortal"; and, what is *his* opinion about the "Peace" and the "Goodwill"? Men have, in their time, fasted and feasted; they have starved themselves for God's sake; and, up to the time of going to press, God has not signified which of the two plans he prefers. Supposing, then, we should go along minding our own business and leaving him to mind his?

YEE-AW *rursus*.

I HAVE shown that even a knowledge of the A B C acts as a spell against crime. But the Church hated A B C, and, where she can, excludes it even yet from the Lord's vineyard. For the moment, leave the Western Church out of sight, and turn to Russia. The Church is still as important an institution there as it was, say, in France or Germany, five centuries ago. No books worth speaking of there; but there is a plethora of that unabated nuisance—plenty of sky-pilots. It has been calculated that there the orthodox Church is rich enough to pay the \$1,000,000,000 National Debt of Russia and yet not impoverish itself, while the common people are literally starving.

A bad enough travesty to begin with, the orthodox faith has been travestied till it has become at length, but for the historical continuity, unrecognisable. As Cardinal Newman reminds us, the "Lord himself was a sort of smith, and made ploughs and cattle-yokes. Four apostles were fishermen, one a petty tax-collector, two husbandmen, one is said to have been a coachman, and another a market-gardener. Peter and John are spoken of as 'illiterate men of the lower sort.' Their converts were of the same rank. They are, says Celsus, 'weavers, fullers, shoemakers, illiterate clowns.' 'Fools, low-born fellows,' says Trypho. 'Men collected from the lowest dregs of the people; ignorant, credulous women; unpolished boors. They do not understand civil matters; how can they understand divine?' remarks Cœcilius. 'They deceive women, servants, and slaves,' says Julian.

The Fathers themselves gave similar testimony as to their brethren. 'Ignorant men, mechanics, and old women,' says Athenagoras. 'They are gathered,' says Jerome, 'not from the Academy or the Lyceum, but from the low populace.' Of meaner sort and more despised than the Communists of Paris."

It was all very well for Thomas á Kempis to write "The Imitation of Christ," but Christ is just the very last person in the world his priests will imitate. Judas with the bag is a good deal more in their line. Only, when they get the bag and the thirty pieces of silver in it, they are not remorsefully conscientious enough to go and burst themselves till all their bowels gush out, as we are assured those of Judas did. No; they have better use for their bowels than, Judas-like, to leave them in the potter's field. They retain them, and deal so generously with them that they develope an abdomen over the convexity of which they are unable to behold their own toes. If, like Judas, *they* burst, it will not be from "falling asunder in the midst," but from eating and drinking till they meet the fate of the frog in the fable. And, smugly over those abdomens of theirs, over which for years they have been unable to catch a glimpse of their own feet, they preach "Blessed be ye poor." And, they have made the poor so poor, so hungry in belly and so feeble in brain, that they credit the infamous statement, and believe a whole string of sacerdotal lies, the very smallest of which is more sinister than that for which Ananias gave up the ghost and got carried out on a stretcher.

The sovereign pontiff had prescience who remarked that, if the Church did not destroy the Printing Press, the Printing Press would destroy the Church. It is to-day where the Church is strong that the Printing Press is weak. "Piety" hates nothing so much as pica. The Mass recognizes its deadly enemy in minion. Purgatory

is terrified for long primer. Priestcraft must feed upon Ignorance or perish. And, thus, that "heavenly kingdom on earth," Holy Russia, with a population of over 100,000,000 people, has only two per cent. of males and one per cent of females who can read or write. That most "religious" country spends only \$6,000,000 on educational purposes, but hundreds of millions of dollars annually on arms and ammunition, to be prepared for an outbreak of Christian love in her own bosom and among the Christian nations of Europe, besides the millions of dollars she requires to send men, women, and children, without trial, to Siberia, to a state of existence to which even the hell of Augustine and Spurgeon would come as a relief,—at least, a blissful change—the brimstone of "the pit" affording a pleasing contrast to the salt of the mines. But the salt of the mines and the sulphur of the pit must be the lot of a nation where only two per cent. of its Johns and only one per cent. of its Janets can read or write. For, of all the curses or plagues that ever flew out of the Pandora box of Fate, Ignorance is the most terrible, and it is only under the shadow of that curse "Christianity" can live. This hybrid and misnamed thing is verily the toad which liveth on the vapours of a dungeon—a dungeon into which the first faint gleam of morning must break in the form of A B C.

The old, old figment has served its time, and served it terribly. Many years ago now, when Burke and Hare and others were plying their calling as "resurrection-men," a printer was in the early morning proceeding on the way to his work, when a corpse was dropped on him from the wall of a churchyard. Uttering a yell of horror, the printer rushed down the street. The body-snatcher on the wall thought the corpse had come to life and had run away, and turning to his mate, who was in the churchyard, said: "Hey, Jim, we'll hae to get anither; that ane's bolted." The whole story with which clericalism

has gulled the nations is the story of a resurrected corpse. That corpse has served its baleful turn from the days of Pilate downward. But now where A B C has penetrated "that ane's bolted," and "we'll hae to get anither." Great Christ, I say with all reverence—Great Christ, how much longer are we to lie prostrate in the darkness, harrowed and racked by the nightmare of a bolted corpse !

Poor patchwork ! Even the "bolted corpse" was stolen from Pagan faiths, and so were, essentially, all the myths and mysteries with which that corpse was enshrouded. "Dogmas, ceremonies, rituals, and symbolic performances were borrowed by the Christian priesthood from Indians (Brahmins and Buddhists), Egyptians, Greeks, Persians, Hebrews, and Romans. The clergy of the Romish Church strove to become, like the Brahmins and Hierophants, the augurs, magi, and bonzes of old, masters of the minds of the ignorant masses, who were kept purposely and systematically in ignorance ; for the greater the ignorance of the people, the greater the influence of allegories, symbols, and mystic things. From the time of Gregory VII. Christianity became hourly more un-Christian."* And what is it now ? It is not the proverbial jackdaw—it is a cormorant—in borrowed plumes. With its voracious and ravenous bill it croaks anent humility ; but it wears on its ugly head the comb of the fighting cock ; its accursed tail blazes with peacock's feathers ; its talons are gilded, but none the less cruel and rapacious ; and its own devilish gizzard is ravenous for blood and carion. It is never happier than when blessing the banners of battle, never more at home than when devouring the portion of the ignorant, homeless, and hungry poor. To Orcus with this foul bird !

There is no cruelty clericalism has not abetted, no

* Dr. Zerffi.

tyranny of which it has not been the ally. In the oldest crown in Europe it had a hand, and an ugly one. The iron crown of Lombardy, let us remember, is so called because into its rim was worked one of the iron nails with which the bolted corpse had been secured to the cross. Clericalism was great on crowns, but its dread malison was on brains. Brains it hated. Shade of Giordano Bruno, witness if I lie. As I sit here in this early morning and consecrate to my hatred of Priestcraft the hours others devote to sleep, in vision the hot ashes of Bruno are, by the wind of a far-off February day, blown in my face. A voice inaudible to the ear, but audible to the soul, cries: "Avenge my ashes! I did my part to free the race. Do yours!"

The enemy of Humanity still lives. Now she dare not *burn*—she can only 'ruin'; and a man who can, if need be, sleep on the floor and live on water and oatmeal, requires a great deal of ruining. Rich the crop that shall yet grow from the wind-blown ashes of that martyred Nolan. For, even in this unromantic and unchivalrous age of hypocrisy and huxtering, there are souls that catch fire from the torch that lighted the flames amid which he expired:

"For he is Freedom's now, and Fame's,
One of the few, the immortal names,
That were not born to die."

This Church, which, as in the case of Bruno, protected itself by fire, has been known to support itself by smoke. A vestry book, extending from 1723 to 1771, of St. John's Church, Hampton, Virginia, is still carefully preserved, having been rescued from some old county records. From this chronicle one can get a glimpse of the then state of society and its economic condition. Ecclesiastical currency, as is well known, was tobacco. For the service of the church each "tithable" was

assessed every year so many pounds. We find such entries as these :—

To Mr. Barlow for 17 sermons at 350lb. tobacco	...	5,590lb
To Rev. John Reid salary	10,000lb.
To ditto for board	1,500lb.
To ditto for clerk	1,000lb.
To Mary Clark, sexton	400lb.

Agreed with James Briggs to keep Eliza Mipet for one year and to find her in clothes for 1,260lb. tobacco.

To widow Lawrence being pore, 500lb. tobacco.

From an entry before the book closes it appears that 16,000lbs. of tobacco sold for £101 11s. 11d. The church expenses averaged about 70,000lbs. of tobacco a year, or close upon £450. The price of tobacco varied ; but, that there should not be an unlimited currency, as it were, the parish was divided into districts, and in each year appeared such records as : "Samuel Davis and William Bridger are appointed viewers of tobacco from the River to Backwater." It was the business of these viewers, or tellers, as they were sometimes called, to estimate and restrict the number of young plants, that there might not be over-production, lest the church income should suffer from too low prices.

Browning sang : "God's in his heaven—all's right with the world." A pleasant variant is : "Smith whiffs his cigar—all's right with the church." What would Jesus have thought had he anticipated that his doctrines, or a travesty of them, would yet have to depend on "bird's-eye" ? What would he have said had he foreseen that his "Eat ye all of it" had to be perpetuated by quids being chewed by a set of devil-may-care and swearing planters and nigger-whippers with black teeth and morals blacker still ? What would he have thought had he anticipated his Church in England here floating to wealth on seas of "old and a dash" ? What would he have said had he foreseen his gospel indebted

to gin, and his litany to lush? But for its income from the liquor traffic, his Church, his "bride" as the preachers call it, would be bankrupt. How would he relish being the spouse of a bankrupt bride? How did he relish his vicegerent on earth, his Holiness Pope Sextus IV., drawing some 20,000 ducats a year from a famous brothel he had erected in Rome, and from which he drew his payments weekly? Jesus has had a good deal to stand from *his friends*. I am barely his friend; but, if I were his friend, I should allow him to go without a Church before I should insult him by carrying on a Church in his name, and supporting it by tobacco, beer, or prostitution.

Not satisfied with this, the Church carried Yee-aw so far as to annually celebrate Jesus' birthday by a service in his Church known as "The Feast of the Ass." The Ass's Festival was held in France for many centuries on Christmas Day. An account of this religious ceremony was published in the year 1807 by M. Millen, a member of the French Institute. It is taken from a manuscript missal belonging to the cathedral of Sens, and details the impious and extravagant mummeries practised in that church on Christmas Day. Pierre Corbeil, the author, was the Archbishop of Sens, and died in 1222. On this festival of Yee-aw, a bishop, or even a pope, was elected for the occasion. The priests were besmeared with lees of wine, and were masked or disguised in the most extravagant and ridiculous fashion. On the eve of the day appointed to celebrate this festival, before the beginning of vespers the clergy went in procession to the door of the cathedral, where were two choristers singing. Two canons were now deputed to fetch the ass, and to conduct him to the table, which was the place where the Grand Chanter sat to read the order of the ceremonies and the names of those who were to take part in them. The Jerusalem pony was clad with precious priestly

ornaments, and in this array was solemnly conducted to the middle of the choir, during which procession a hymn was sung in a major key, the first stanza of which is as follows :—

“ Orientis partibus
 Adventavit asinus
 Pulcher et fortissimus
 Sarcinis obtissimus.
 Hez ! Sire Ane, hez.”

After this the office began by an anthem in the same style, sung purposely in the most discordant manner possible ; the office itself lasted the whole of the night and part of the next day. It was a parody of whatever had been sung in the course of the year at the appropriate festivals, forming altogether the strangest medley that can be conceived. As it was natura to suppose that the choristers and the congregation should feel thirsty during so long a performance, wine was distributed in no sparing manner. The signal for the bibulous indulgence was an anthem commencing, *Conductus ad poculum*, and they who had met to worship the ass often ended in wallowing like the pig. And all for Jesus !

The first evening, after vespers, the Grand Chanter of Sens headed the riotous band in the streets, preceded by an enormous lantern. A vast theatre was prepared for their reception before the church, where they performed not the most decent interludes. The singing and dancing were concluded by throwing a pail of water on the head of the Grand Chanter. The worshippers then returned to church to begin the morning office, and several of them received on their naked bodies a number of pails of water. At the respective divisions of the service great care was taken to supply the ass with drink and provender. In due course a signal was given by an anthem, *Conductus ad ludos*, and the ass was led to the nave of the church, where the laity mixed with the clergy, danced around him, and strove to imitate his braying—his sonorous and

characteristic Yee-aw. When the mad saltation was over, Neddy was brought back into the choir, where the clergy terminated the festival. The vespers of the second day concluded with an invitation to dinner in the form of an anthem, *Conductus ad prandium*, and the festival ended by a repetition of similar parodies to those which had been recited the previous day.*

On Christmas Day now the celebrants, appropriately enough, eat the Goose. And the worship of the Ass still goes on—the worship of the Ass by the Ass. But the worship is not at present, as it once was, overt and ostensible. Nothing is done so honestly and straightforwardly now as in the olden days. Neddy the quadruped is now, on Christmas Day, shut in his stable to munch a carrot, or let out into the field to hunt for a frosted thistle; but Neddy the biped is still to be found in church celebrating the “dy orn wich th’ bybe was bworn.” And, we shall never have sanity among us till Neddy the biped celebrates once and for all the dy orn wich that bybe was buried, never to rise again, and never more to be heard of. Meanwhile—Yee-aw.

* This festival was not suppressed till towards the end of the sixteenth century.

“OUR LADY OF PAIN.”

My old paidogogos set his face like flint against his pupils using any sort of “crib.” He caught me one day poring over Anthon’s Virgil. Anthon, as is well known, is not, properly speaking a “crib,” but is pretty accommodating by way of notes, and for this same he met with the stern disapproval of my grand and grim old dominie, who was deeply impressed with the conviction that there was no royal road to Learning; that the path to the shrine of that austere goddess lay far up the frozen heights, and could be fittingly approached only by those who trod with their bare feet upon the edges of the broken flints, and wound themselves up to a paroxysmal pitch of ascetic valour and self-abnegatory devotion.

Anthon’s Virgil was snatched from me and my head was *daudet** with it till fire flew out of my eyes and my one ear was half deaf and the other sang like a tea-kettle when merry, although the ear, or, at least, its owner, was far from merry. Virgil had a strong leather back, with abundance of hard glue under it, and this leather back of the Mantuan bard inadvertently struck me on the bridge of my classic nose. Then some good Scottish blood, with a ‘Covenanting strain in it, was spilt on Janiculum, on the robe of Queen Dido, on the garments of the sons of Priam, and on the steel-working arms of Brontes and Steropes and naked-limbed Pyracmon. And, when Virgil would hold together no longer, the tatters thereof

* *I.e.*, struck, banged.

were flung into the fire, and I was *daudet* with the *tawse*, fashioned out of the hide of a Galloway stot, and, as a punitive instrument, ten times more effective than Anthon's Virgil.

And, even yet, the worst was hardly over. I had borrowed the Anthon from a boy bigger than myself; and, as soon as we got out for "minutes," this boy commenced to thrash me for being so unguarded, or unskilful, as to be caught using the Anthon, thereby involving it in the fate of Troy, reduction to ashes. I did not feel in a humble and contrite spirit. I felt I had paid pretty dearly already for my crime, and I offered my would-be castigator a desperate resistance. Mutually panting and bleeding, we closed, struggled, and fell together, and, mutually holding on with the benign intention of choking each other, we rolled over and over into a pool of black stercorous slush that had oozed out of the dunghill.

The "minutes" expired. We dragged ourselves out of the worse than Serbonian bog, and, black-eyed, dripping, and malodorous, hurried into the class-room, vowing what terrible things we should do to each other in the wood, in the gloamin', when the school should be dismissed for the day. In school we shrank into as obscure corners as we could find; but we could not elude the vigilant eye of the paidogogos who had burned the Virgil. It was only too obvious that we had been fighting. "Was it a sea-fight?" asked the rector, grimly, as he surveyed our dripping clothes.

"No, Sir, a land fight," said I, in *naïve* explanation; "but we tumbled into the midden-hole."

"And what was it about?" queried the rector, not without a twinkle of humour in his eye, and the ghost of a strangled smile in the lines of his mouth.

This I declined to answer, and, putting on an air of mulish stupidity, looked as if I did not understand the question. If I had said a word about the Anthon, I

should have obtained for my late opponent in the fight as severe a drubbing as, before “minutes,” I had had myself; and, over and above that, he would have the punishment for his share in the fighting. By alleging that the Virgil was his and that he had lent it to me, I would place him in a most unenviable position. The question was repeated; but neither of the parties who had been suspected of having been engaged in a “sea-fight” replied. We each got a stroke or two, rather playfully than otherwise, with the tawse over the backs of our wet jackets, and were told to go to our seats, and not again act like two fools.

The grand old rector discouraged fighting; but it was a boyish iniquity against the suppression of which his sternest canons were never set. At Hutton Hall you had better have been punished for five fights than for one lie. There Joshua could be tolerated, but Ananias was *anathema maranatha*.

Well, the *Moral*? The moral is: I remember most vividly the passage I was engaged upon when I was pounced down upon and my book seized and burned. Even yet I can see the very page, the tone of the paper, the width between the lines, and the breadth of the margin. And here, as I sit, more than thirty years after the event to which I have referred, I have only to place my elbows on the table, close my eyes, and spread my hands over my face to behold, as distinctly as I did on that now far-off day, on the white of that long-burnt page, in the pale gleam of that long-set sun:—

“At Cytherea novas artes, nova pectore versat
 Consilia, ut faciem mutatus et ora Cupido
 Pro dulci Ascanio veniat, donisque furentem
 Incendat reginam, atque ossibus implicet ignem:
 Quippe domum timet ambiguum Tyriosque bilingues;
 Urit atrox Juno, et sub noctem cura recursat.”

Having got so far, “How about the scansion?” thought

I; and, drumming with my fingers on a slate that lay at hand, I went:—

"At Cyther (*dactyl*) ea nov (*dactyl*) as ar (*spondee*) tes nova (*dactyl*) pectore (*dactyl*) versat (*spondee*)."'

Over these lines have I not had three thrashings in one day? First, a dauding, a nasty one, for using the Anthon, caught *flagrante delictu*; second, a black eye from the owner of the burnt book, and a ducking in the midden-hole; third, the tawse over my wet back for fighting. When the day arrives that my pen is laid down to be lifted no more forever, when all I have done and all I have left undone arise in judgment upon me with benison or bane; when kind and loving old faces from the grave look upon me to welcome me among them; when my weary eyes let their lids fall never to be lifted any more, I verily believe that, on the thin and glimmering frontier between time and eternity, they will see these lines, and, seeing them, roam away into the nepenthe, where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest.

The ancients (and our grand old rector was an ancient) believed in the ineradicable depth of impression that could be made by her whom my friend "B. V." was wont to call "Our Lady of Pain." Even yet, in many parts of the country, there are functionaries known as "liners," not penny-a-liners, simply "liners." The business of these functionaries is to trace out and walk round the ancient boundaries of certain properties. The "liners," with white wands in their hands, are usually followed by a gaping and motley crowd, who "want to see the fun." The "fun" consists, or at all events was wont to consist, in, at certain important points, seizing a couple of boys and knocking their two heads together vigorously in order to impress upon their memories the exact localities of those important points in the boundary line at which fire was made to fly out of

their eyes, and cranial bumps were raised that, green, blue, and yellow, lasted for a month or more. This custom of impressing the exact location of boundary lines by cracking the crowns of certain of the witnesses was not peculiar to Scotland. It seems that, on the transfer of real estate, crown-cracking was resorted to in order to give the young a vivid impression which they could transmit to posterity. Professor Menzies* cites an ancient Italian law of A.D. 630, to the effect that “if the purchaser of a property could not obtain a judicial instrument of the transfer, he must proceed to the ground with six witnesses if the subject was of moderate size, three if it was small, and, if large, with twelve, taking along with him also an equal number of boys, and, in the presence of these, he had to pay the price and receive possession, at the same time whipping each of the boys, and pulling the ears of all, in order that, having the transaction thus forcibly impressed upon their minds, their testimony for the future might be secured.”

In my boyhood I knew an old man who was wont to recount how, when an urchin, he had been used by the liners. But they did not *daud* his head against that of another boy; they *daudet* it against a big stone which stood on the boundary line. Against this stone they *daudet* the heads of several boys, but afterwards gave them *saxpence* by way of solatium. Most golfers will remember the story of the man whom a ball rendered insensible. The golfer gave him half-a-sovereign by way of consolation. “An’ when will ye be playing again?” asked the injured man, as, staggering to his feet and recovering his senses, he looked at the coin. It seems abundance of boys were wont to accompany the “liners,” and, after a brief and not over-rapid race, permit themselves to be caught. It was, in the estimation of urchin-

* “Lectures on Conveyancing.”

dom, a very sorely *daudet* head indeed that the possession of two or three bawbees would not cure, just as the golf-martyr I have referred to was prepared to be knocked insensible any number of times at half-a-sovereign a time.

By the way, when, as a little, chubby-faced brat in petticoats I was learning my A B C among the wild, wind-swept hills of Trostan, I came a great deal under the influence of one Kate Bell, an accentuated specimen of the more intelligent type of moorland peasant woman. She, one day, made me sit on a creepie * at her feet, and asked me, "Noo Wully, my dear wee man, in what year was Wallace *murdered*?" I could not answer. "In 1305," quoth she, and as she pronounced the *five* she administered me a sharp blow on the ear with her knuckles. I drew the back of my little, fat, sunburnt hand across my eyes and began to blubber. "Dinna greet! Dinna greet!" urged she; "I just gied ye that crack i' the lug that the date may stick i' yer heid like a burr." She wiped the tears out of my eyes with her apron, and asked: "In what year was the Battle o' Bannockburn?" I did not know. "In 1314," said she, with emphasis; and, as she pronounced *fourteen*, she dealt me a "crack" on the other lug which set it ringing like a bell. And now, having "cracked" each of my lugs, she mercilessly followed up her historical queries with: "Noo, Wully, my wee man, ye'll be a braw chiel yet, and pair auld Scotlan' wull be prood o' ye; in what year o' Gude did Rabbie Burns dee?" This was too much. She had, to improve my memory, "cracked" both my lugs. Over this third question it occurred to me that she meant to "crack" my skull. I sprang from the creepie, and, as fast as my little short legs cumbered with skirts would carry me, made for the door. "In 1796, ye dour wee deevil!" she shouted after me, reproachfully.

* A sort of small, low, wooden stool

Goodness only knows where the woman would have ended had I continued to sit on that creeper. I saw her next day, and she assured me that, had I remained, she would not further have meddled with my lugs. She intimated that she had had some questions to put to me about John Knox. Knox and the Covenant, it seems, were not, with Kate Bell (bless her memory!), a matter of lugs. She plainly informed me that, over the stern old Protestant, she had meant to *skelp* me; and the child-like and simple dress I then wore would have facilitated her operations. Great Fingal, this was one way of getting up Scots history! May be I have not got very far on my path towards the Temple of Learning; but, aiblins, I have taken as queer footsteps towards it as have ever been taken by mortal.

In gruesome spirit it was believed a bridge would not stand unless a human being were built up alive in one of the piers. Similarly, in campanology, the thrusting of a young maid into the red, molten metal from which it was to be cast, was necessary to impart to the church bell a divinely fine, clear tone with which to call the saints to prayer. That master-tool, a Damascus sword could not be forged without somebody being sacrificed to the tempering of each blade. A technical contemporary,* on the authority of a MS. recently discovered, gives the following horrible recipe: “Let the high dignitary furnish an Ethiop of fair frame,” the recipe runs, “and let him be bound down, shoulders upward, upon the block of the god Bal-hal, his arms fastened underneath with thongs, a strap of goatskin over his back and wound twice around the block, his feet close together, lashed to a dowel of wood, and his head and neck projecting over and beyond the block. Then, let the master workman, having cold-

* *Illustrated Carpenter and Builder.*

hammered the blade to a smooth and thin edge, thrust it into the fire of cedar-wood coals, in and out, the while reciting the prayer to the god Bal-hal, until the steel be of the colour of the red of the rising sun when he comes up over the desert towards the East, and then, with a quick motion, pass the same from the hilt thereof to the point six times through the most fleshy portions of the slave's back and thighs, when it shall have become the colour of the purple of the king. Then, if with one swing and one stroke of the right arm of the master workman, it sever the head of the slave from the body, and display not a nick nor crack along the edge, and the blade may be bent round about the body of a man and break not, it shall be accepted as a perfect weapon, sacred to the service of the god Bal-hal, and the owner thereof may thrust it into a scabbard of ass's skin, brazen with brass, and hung to a girdle of camel's wool dyed in the royal purple."

Is the son of a woman a tree that will run to riotous brushwood if it be not mercilessly pruned? Must all really earnest impressions be tattooed upon the sensitive facets of the soul with the puncturing needle of Pain? Can the divine Ideal of Good be hewn from the marble only by the cruel chisel of Evil? Is the hideousness of the devil necessary as a hateful background against which to fling forward the sublime lineaments of God? Would the throne of Heaven lack in glory were it not built upon the clinkers of Hell? Is no religion sacred until it has been baptised in blood? Is no doctrine sanctified till its champion has by chains been lashed to a stake in the fires of martyrdom?

Can no child enter the portal of Life without the mother being brought to the gate of Death? Is there no prospect in the revolving æons that the dread gorgon who bears the key of Death and Hell shall vanish from the world? Shall we not have, in the far future, the

developed man a “liner” who will recognise the real limits of being without having his head dented against the stones of Fate? Towards such millennium let us dare and dream, towards the Golden Year in which man in his prime will say with pride and truth :—

“ He sunned me with his ripening looks
And Heaven’s rich instincts in me grew,
As effortless as woodland nooks
Send violets up and paint them blue.”

COCK-SCRAPINGS.

IN the ninth century mention is made of weathercocks. The cock was intended as an emblem of clerical vigilance. In the ages of ignorance the clergy often styled themselves "the Cocks of the Almighty," whose duty it was, like the cock that roused St. Peter, to call the people to repentance, or at any rate, to go to church and put something into the plate—with the birds of pray an incalculably more important thing than repentance. The Cocks of the Almighty, as they dubbed themselves, like the ordinary Cocks of the Midden, were born devils to fight; and they had other distinctly cockly qualities, in regard to which I shall be silent. The Knights Templar, for instance, were an order of military monks who were excellent exemplars of more than one distinctly gallinaceous characteristic.

The Cocks of the Almighty—always humbugs—it will be remembered, had a spiritual aversion to the literal "shedding of blood;" but they found no Scriptural edict fixed against the breaking of bones; accordingly, on the field of battle, they were armed, not with swords or spears, but with clubs or maces. It was, no doubt, an honour in its way, for a poor wight to lie on the stricken field with his back broken by one blow of the terrible spurs of some fiercely fighting Cock of the Almighty. How glorious this would be compared with a mere flesh wound from the pike of the kern of the secular baron. Old Anthony Beck, Bishop of Durham, is one of the best Cocks of Christ of whom I remember.

Towards the end of the thirteenth century he went picking and scraping and strutting and kuck-kaying into Scotland to knock that bleeding country into smithereens with his spurs and bill. Wallace waited for the bird, and, in the High Street of Glasgow, caught him, and pulled the best feathers out of his tail. The Cock of Christ fled with a scream, and did not dare to wait and draw breath and crow till he found himself back in his own old cathedral hen-coop on the banks of the Wear.

When I was a young student in Glasgow University, in the old days when the buildings were in High Street, before they had been removed to Gilmore Hill, I have often trod that High Street with a patriot's pride. In retrospective vision I have beheld the wild, desperate, and closely-linked dance of death, the pounding mace of Beck, the resistless sword of Wallace, the wynds bristling with spears and choked with dead, banners and bannerets streaming and rustling, sinking and rising, the sunlight glimmering through the dust upon faces red and alight with valour, or pale and writhed with agony, and the blood rolling down in streams to the Trongate. And I have caught a glance of Beck, the Cock of the Almighty, with torn wattles and broken spurs, fighting, fleeing; fleeing, fighting; turning ever and anon round on his horse to break the skull of his foremost pursuer; and then, at sight of the Wallace, Wight, plunging his rowels into the flank of his steed, leaning forward with loose reins, flinging away his mace, and, with clanking armour, incessant and ferocious "Gee-up!" and the clashing of hoofs, fleeing as if hell were behind him.

And another fighting cock of the Almighty cukays himself into the pale of my recollection. This Cock was Archbishop Beaton, the chief priest and liar of that bloody tulzie in the High Street of old Edinburgh, and known in history as the "Battle of Clear the

Causeway." It was during the minority of James V. ; and the two most powerful nobles in Scotland—Douglas, Earl of Angus, and Hamilton, Earl of Arran—had each come up to Edinburgh to attend the sitting of the Scottish Parliament, each attended by hundreds of his vassals armed to the teeth: that was the only *safe* way to attend a Scottish Parliament in those days. The Douglasses and the Hamiltons were dying to cut each other's throats. Eventually, however, the Douglasses discovered that the Hamiltons were overwhelmingly more powerful than they; and they sent Gawain Douglas, Bishop of Dunkeld, the principal Cock of the Almighty on their side, to negotiate for peace with Beaton, Archbishop of St. Andrew's, the principal Cock of the Almighty on the side of the Hamiltons.

Ready for the slaughter, Beaton had already donned his armour: but, over it, he had robed himself in his canonical vestments. Douglas interceded for peace, promising that the Douglasses would leave Edinburgh in the hands of the Hamiltons if they, the Douglasses, were only permitted to depart unmolested. Beaton pretended complete ignorance of any design on the part of the Hamiltons to attack the Douglasses. He protested, "Upon my conscience, my Lord Bishop, I know nothing of the matter!" and struck his hand against his breast to emphasise his assertion; and this unguarded act drew forth a metallic rattle from his corslet. "Ha," remarked Douglas significantly, "I perceive, your grace, that your conscience *rattles*." He left the presence of the lying archbishop, and warned the Douglasses that all overtures for peace were useless, and that there was nothing left them but to fight to the death. By a masterly strategic movement on the part of Angus, the Hamiltons were defeated. The terrified Beaton fled through wynds streaming with blood, and hid himself behind the altar of Blackfriars Monastery. From behind the altar this

lying Cock of Christ was dragged by the victorious and avenging Douglasses, who would have torn him to pieces but for the intercession of his brother Cock, the Bishop of Dunkeld.

But I must not here follow up the fighting records of the Cocks of the Almighty. Back through the vista of the ages, from the Milvian Bridge to the Battle of the Standard, and from the Battle of the Standard to the Battle of Dunbar, they rush upon my memory, strutting and crowing in multitudes. But one thing it would be culpably remiss on my part to neglect to mention. There were nunneries as well as monasteries. The monks styled themselves the Cocks of the Almighty; may I venture to suggest that the nuns were the Hens of Heaven? All our records must be false if the Cocks of the Almighties did not often tread on their wings before the Hens of Heaven, as a rule in private, but occasionally with audacious publicity. The Hens, too, poor things, seem to have been no better than they should have been. By the way, Luther's Kate Von Bora was one of the Hens of Heaven. She, fine plump fowl, had a nest of her own and chicks. Most of the other Hens of Heaven had no nest, only chicks. They should, by their vows, have had neither nest nor chicks. But, as the Latin poet has said:—

“*Naturam expelles furca, tamen usque recurret,
Et mala perrumpet furtim fastidia victrix;*”

and as the English poet has said:—

“*Mary had a little hen,
Was feminine and queer;
She laid like fun when eggs were cheap,
And stopped when eggs were dear.*”

But I must stop short; for, far be it from me to be hard on the shortcomings of hens, whether heavenly or otherwise.

All the world knows about the fighting of the Cocks of the Almighty, and with that I have dealt often and else-

where. Now I will leave their fighting, and even their wing-treading, and take a look at their scraping.

They were born furies to scrape. They scraped for gold till a heavy proportion of the wealth of Christendom was theirs. It was little to them that thousands of the world's common Johns and Janets should die of cold, hunger, and avertible disease, if there could only be enough gold obtained for altars and shrines of saints. To give you some idea of how gold would be expended over the corpse of a saint, I may mention that about the close of last century public curiosity and excitement were roused to fever pitch in Germany in consequence of a remarkable discovery which was made in the neighbourhood of a small village some few miles out of Ham-burg, where, in the midst of a thick copse, some workmen discovered a miniature tower of pure gold. This strange monument, which, it subsequently transpired, had been erected to commemorate the martyrdom of a famous saint, was fully fourteen feet in height, with a maximum circumference of two feet, and was modelled after the style of the old Gothic towers. It was composed of virgin gold, and was valued at a fabulous sum, so great that no one was found rich enough to purchase it *in toto*.

The ornamental tracing was illustrative of a long-bearded man being tortured to death at the stake, which distinction he had, quite likely, done his best to deserve; while a few inches from the base was the effigy of a beautiful woman with outstretched hands and flying hair. From base to summit the whole structure was solid gold, and had evidently been erected on a cleared space, and trees planted closely round it. The owner of the land claimed this magnificent "find," but the Government stepped in and confiscated the tower without payment of any compensation—a measure which led to long and costly litigation. Eventually, the landowner was awarded twenty-five thousand florins, while the Government con-

signed the tower to the melting-pot and transformed it into current coin, and people bought tape and tin-tacks and such like with coins minted out of the statue of the tortured saint and the Janet with outstretched arms and, literally, golden hair.

By-the-bye, how is it that, in representations of martyrdoms and other occasions where men put their best leg foremost, they so cleverly contrive to have a fascinating Janet introduced just at the proper juncture, appropriately draped, or undraped, and throwing herself into a most striking attitude to give high dramatic effect? I remember hearing that, when Marshal MacMahon was President of the French Republic, an incident of the following order occurred:—

A French soldier sat on the summit of a hill overlooking a garrison town; his horse was picketed close by; the man was smoking leisurely, and from time to time he glanced from the esplanade to an official envelope he held in his hand.

A comrade passed by and asked: "What are you doing here?"

"I am bearing the President's pardon for our friend Flichmann, who is to be shot this morning," replied the smoker, calmly, without changing his comfortable attitude.

"Well, then, you should hurry along with your pardon," admonished his comrade.

"Oh, no!" exclaimed the other in some indignation; "see, there is hardly a soul yet on the esplanade, and the firing-platoon has not even been formed. You surely would not have me rob my appearance of all dramatic effect, my friend!"

Somebody imbued with the dramatic spirit of this French soldier seems to have taken care to be present at all notable executions, from the days of Mary Magdalene and Calvary down to the days of the young lady who, in 1746, died at Kennington Common just at the right

instant to allow her spirit to accompany, to wherever it might be bound for, the spirit of Dawson the Jacobite, to whom she had been affianced. It is so obliging of a long-haired, bare-armed, semi-bare-legged, tearful-eyed, cherub-mouthed, lithe-waisted, high-bosomed female to always come near enough the executioner's fiery brand or blood-stained axe to render the martyr's, or miscreant's, or martyr-miscreant's exit picturesque. This is a digression; but the road I tread is not so particularly well-defined and macadamised that digressions are easily recognised, unless I have the candour to point them out.

The Cock of the Almighty kept crowing away about heaven, but busily scraping and scraping away for gold. He, poor fowl, was satisfied with the base gold of earth. He took all of it he could possibly get, just to keep it out of the way of the laity; for, it being "the root of all evil," he sadly feared it might injure them; so he, as far as in him lay, kept it from them. There was other gold, not of earth, which he left for them, and plenty of it. This gold was in heaven. There the gates were made of it, and the harps—yea, the very streets were paved with it. It is, according to the bird of pray, as common there as mud is here. And it was quite easily got. The way to get the gold in heaven was, without a murmur, to let the bird of pray get the gold of earth. The drawback was that you had to die before you could get it, and you had to take the bird's word for it that you would get it then. But, for long centuries the Tree of Ignorance grew so rankly that nobody doubted the bird's word; and everybody was, of course, quite certain of a *post-mortem* strut in golden sandals, arrayed in a long-tailed golden night-shirt, and eating manna cooked in a golden kettle. Everybody who allowed the priest to have the gold of earth and things in general quite his own way was entitled to all this and more. He who did *not* let the priest have it all his own way was not quite sure of the

mineral, gold ; but he was quite sure of a certain other mineral, brimstone. Living, you were very much of a vegetable ; and, dead, you were certain to inherit one of two minerals.

O Judas with the bag, how the Cock of the Almighty did scrape and scratch for gold—the counter of power ! His very dreams and visions and portents and prodigies were auriferous. For instance : “At the end of the sixteenth century terrible excitement was caused by a report that a golden tooth had appeared in the jaw of a child born in Silesia. The rumour, on being investigated, turned out to be too true. It became impossible to conceal it from the public ; and the miracle was soon known all over Germany, where, being looked on as a mysterious omen, universal anxiety was felt as to what this new thing might mean. Its real import was first unfolded by Dr. Horst. In 1595 this eminent physician published the result of his researches, by which it appears that, at the birth of the child, the sun was in conjunction with Saturn, at the sign Aries. The event, therefore, though supernatural, was by no means alarming. The golden tooth was the precursor of a golden age, in which the Emperor would drive the Turks from Christendom, and lay the foundation of an empire that would last for thousands of years. And this, says Horst, is clearly alluded to by Daniel, in his well-known second chapter, where the prophet speaks of a statue with a golden head.”*

May I tell the bird of pray that in these days of rationalism we have no such persons as Harold Goldtooth and this prodigy-child of Silesia ? And, I do hope, in the interests of humanity, that even in the Dark Ages, when the bird of pray whooped owl-like in the gloom, no human being was really born with golden teeth. If he were, it is quite certain that he did not wear them long.

* *Buckle's "History of Civilization,"* vol. i., p. 240.

“COCK-SCRAPINGS.”

The Church would have them wrenched out of his jaws and made into sacerdotal candle-stick, pyx, or patine. If the victim objected, he would have his brains hammered out as well as his teeth, for the bird of pray was not particular to a shade. If he gloried in having his whole set of teeth torn out with pincers and given to the birds of pray—well, he might be permitted to live. He would not crack nuts, but he might live on soup, and be permitted yearly to behold the shrine that gleamed and burned and glowed with the glory of his teeth, wrought into curious, artistic, and cunning workmanship.

But now, since people have stopped growing golden teeth, and confine themselves to bone ones, generally of indifferent quality, I venture to give the bird of pray a modern hint as to how to avail himself of a modern industry. A writer in *Le Temps* has been travelling in America, and, of course, relates his “impressions.” What struck him particularly was the “fillings” in American teeth. He has consulted statisticians, and finds that the amount of gold annually pounded into American dental cavities reaches the respectable figure of 800 kilogrammes, representing a value of half a million dollars. All this precious metal is buried with the Yankees when they die, and, consequently, at the end of three short centuries the cemeteries of the United States will contain gold to the value of £30,000. He thinks this will prove too tempting to the practical mind of the future American, and foresees the day when companies will be organised to mine the cemeteries, and recover the gold secreted in the jaws of diseased ancestors. My suggestion is that after this buried gold the bird of pray descend into the grave, and—that he may stay there.

WEIGHING THE EARTH.

IN ancient times, before as yet he had retired from business, and left Carlyle to say of him bitterly, "He does nothing," "the Lord" "was wont to weigh the mountains in scales, and the small hills in a balance." No doubt a superlative effort this in the region of weights and measures. But, since "the Lord" gave up weighing the earth, or indeed the taking of any concern in it, leaving the whole affair to go to the dogs, there is one Professor Boys who has taken to weighing, not the mountains and the small hills, but the earth, even with you on it, gentle reader, and with me and my pen and my ink pot. And, if "the Lord" will be good enough to stand upon the planet for a jiffy, Professor Boys will weigh him too, so mercilessly irreverent is science. The weighing of you and me, my reader, has, it seems, been going on for some time; and I know not whether you have been aware you were being weighed; but, to tell you the truth, I had no idea I was being weighed till the other day, when a scientific journal apprised me of the fact.

Professor Boys, it seems, has been engaged for some years past making observations in his underground laboratory at Oxford for the purpose of determining the weight of the earth. He was busy at this work on the night when the earthquake occurred at Bucharest; and while so occupied he experienced a serious disturbance, which, though unperceived by anyone on the surface, was sufficient to greatly disarrange the delicate apparatus

set up in the underground chamber. The disturbance Boys at once set down to an earthquake ; and, in a day or two, the news from Bucharest confirmed his presumption, the scientific records of the occurrence showing that the vibration of the earthquake had taken five minutes to travel from Bucharest to Oxford.

The delicacy of the apparatus by which the Professor is working is one of its marvels. The mere presence of himself in the room is sufficient, by warming the air, to induce a current strong enough to affect the oscillation of the mirror. The delicate apparatus has, therefore, to be protected by a screen of wood and felt, a window of talc being provided to allow of observation. This screen is also needful against the presence of dust, because the balancing of the mirror is so delicate that a force equal to the millionth part of a grain applied to one end of it would suffice to send the measurement of its movement right off the nine-foot scale, by which such movements are measured. The work has to be done at night, because the traffic on the earth during the day causes vibrations which lead to error of measurement ; and it is only at times, when traffic is suspended and the earth still, that really accurate results can be obtained. The weight of our planet, as at present determined, is five thousand eight hundred and eighty-two million, million, million tons ; but whether this is absolutely accurate is the object of Professor Boys' painstaking observations to discover.

As long as we had the old flat earth, peopled by old and young flats, nobody thought of weighing it. Study then took a different turn. Speculation exerted itself to ascertain whether, being created, and not born, Adam had a navel. On the old flat earth the "precession of the Holy Spirit" was a far more pressing matter than the weight of the planet ; and the sage, Thomas Aquinas, did not concern himself as to how many ounces the

world weighed, but was profoundly absorbed in determining the exact number of angels that could stand on the point of a needle. Nothing was then ascertained of what is now known in science as the constant G in physics—that is, the amount of the attraction of gravitation exerted by one body on another.

By the way, Professor Boys' apparatus essentially consists of two gold and two lead balls, weighing fourteen pounds and sixteen grains respectively, suspended by quartz fibres. The gold balls are hung to an oblong mirror in a tube. The slightest motion of the lead balls moves the gold ones, and they move the mirror. A force, as I have said, equal to a millionth of a grain will move the mirror, so that it no longer reflects the scale by which its movements are measured, and the hundred-millionth of a grain will set it swinging. The observer has to sit eighty feet away from it and watch the oscillations thereof through a telescope. I wonder how the whole thing appears from heaven in the eyes of the gods, who were wont to look down upon the old flat earth. The principal objects on it then were castles and abbeys—the one for the thralldom of the body, the other for the bondage of the soul. All that is changed. The gods look down now, not upon a flat, but a spherical earth; and they behold girls dancing on it and Boys weighing it.

I should not feel surprised if Professor Boys has yet to add to or subtract an ounce or two from his present sum total. I wonder if the earth is always the same weight. Gentle reader, *you* are not. Your *rôle* here is both comical and tragical, and you weigh lighter when you are acting comedy than when you are acting tragedy. Sighs weigh heavier than laughter. There is something literal in the figure, a *heavy* heart; and a *light* heart tells when you step upon the scale. Temperamentally I fluctuate but little now; I am subsiding

into that settled sadness which sicklies o'er with the pale cast of thought, and furrows with the scars of suffering all those who have become even acolytes in the fane of Wisdom. I have learnt in sorrow what I teach in song, and oftener in simple, strenuously and desperately plain, prose. But, time was when I was, relatively, more foolish. Toil and sorrow have ridden me hard since then. On my hollowed back their saddle has worn in to the bone; and their cruel bit has given a hardness and a sternness to my once delicate and girlish mouth. I am mostly of one mood now; but I was formerly of several moods in one day; and I have had the idleness and folly, weighing appliances being convenient, to weigh myself in my altered moods.

The forenoon was bright and balmy, brighter and balmier than forenoons ever are after one has passed twenty-five. I had not as yet outlived that most ecstatic of all the visions "Love's young dream." I escaped from the then not so desperate environments of life to woo the maid on the Nith and the muse from Helicon. I mingled evanescent gleams of present bliss with daring day-dreams of future renown. I knew not the world was such a terrible oyster to open; and I vowed to open it with my pen. I have found my mistake. That oyster may be opened with a pen, but it must be by a pen that takes the bivalve by guile, not one that drills at it by storm. It will open for the lispings of a pleasing lie, never at the summons of an unpleasant but salutary truth. Let that pass. The lesson was then unlearnt. I strolled through a fragrant and sun-illuminated hay field, with the laverock singing over my head; and, rapturously happy, I jingled as follows to a then big school-girl, who has now, for long, been another man's wife.

A sheen of golden lustre
Hung round the setting sun,

WEIGHING THE EARTH.

And told to cradled Nature
That the Summer day was done,
Though a dying glory lingered
On the ever-sounding sea,
And she who sat upon its shore,
The fair young Rosalie.

I wot she was a peerless flower,
So lovely and so young ;
And the flush of ripened cherries
That in red clusters hung,
'Mid the hush of Summer gloamin',
'Mong the green leaves on the tree,
Were nothing to the coral lips
Of bonnie Rosalie.

Oh, her breath was sweeter far
Than the meadow's scented air ;
And wand'ring sunbeams lost themselves
Among her shining hair ;
And there they burned the brighter
As they felt the bless to be
Enmeshed among the wavy curls
Of bonnie Rosalie.

And my heart was throbbing, throbbing
As it never throbb'd before,
As, beside that fair-haired maiden,
I sat upon the shore,
'Mid the plashing and the dashing
Of the ever-sounding sea,
With my angel—with my darling—
With my bonnie Rosalie.

Oh, sweeter than the scented birk
That gleams at even's close,
" 'Tween the gloamin' and the mirk,"
'Tween the eglantine and rose,

'Tween where the swallow twitters
And where hums the belted bee,
Is my dearest—is my darling—
My bonnie Rosalie !

Her eye of sunny azure
Let him describe who can ;
The daisies kissed her ankles
As through the mead she ran—
She ran to bring her kisses
And her maiden love to me,
My stainless dove—my plighted love—
My bonnie Rosalie !

But, in the afternoon, Criffel put on her hood of mist, and looked sadly to dim Skiddaw on the other, the English side of the Solway frith. A soft, sad wind moaned down the Vale of Nith. Now it was low and solemn as a lullaby over a dying child ; but ever and anon, at intervals, it blew the white caps of the tide against the green woods of Kirkconnel, and whistled through the rain-wet hedges of Caerlaverock. The sky became ashen and sober, and the weary Wardlaw had a far-away and melancholy look, premonitory of storm and night. I am, and ever have been, the victim—nay, the slave—of the influences of sunshine and shadow, of flying cloud and trailing mist, of the flutter of leaves and the plashing of rain. The sunshine, brightness, and buoyancy of the morning had gone ; and the weight of the dull, misty, and vacuous afternoon lay upon my soul. I could not write a love lyric now to save my life. I was sad as sad could be, and a nameless and indefinable sorrow lay upon my heart with a pressure which amounted almost to a physical pain. Filled with involuntary premonitions of evil, I wandered out alone into the gloom of the woods. I could think of no Rosalie now, of no lass or lad that was living ; the change of sun and air had

fixed me among skulls and epitaphs and worms. As an active release to passive pain, with my blue bonnet drawn down over my brow, I paced round and round a gloomy cluster of holly-trees, and sang thus to keep my heart from breaking.

In the Summer sky I behold her eye,
In the deeps of celestial blue,
Who folded her hands on her high, white breast,
And went to a frigid, rigid rest,
For a heart so warm and true.

Dim Death, the immortal eidōlon,
'Turned my blood to ice and my heart to stone ,
And over the form of the saintly dead
Not a sigh was drawn, not a tear was shed ;
There were only weirdly-beautiful dreams
Of fadeless flowers and eternal streams ;
And, far from the rim of eternitie,
The flashing skirts of my Eulalie—
From the shore never trod by man or by God,
The wine-red locks of my Eulalie.

On her breast fell cold the graveyard mould,
Hollow sounding in dolour and dole ;
For severed for aye was the silver thread,
And broken the golden bowl.

The pale moon shimmers, the east wind blows
O'er a desolate world of blight ;
And the earth swung round as the stars arose
On the brow of the dusky night.

The cold from the hand of my Eulalie
Has struck me with chill to the core,
And the fringe on the pall of my Eulalie
Shall lie on my heart ever more.

The vestal eye of the snow-white rose
Is wet with a dew-cold tear,

And the red rose weeps where the maiden sleeps,
Weeps, weeps, o'er the rest of my Eulalie,
The maiden I held so dear ;
On the grass o'er the breast of my Eulalie,
The maiden I held so dear.

The earth sounds hollow wherever I go,
And the gibbous moon looks down,
And the sun is of blood in the weird west, low,
And the red stars arise with a frown.

In Night's dread noon I stand 'neath the moon
And read, while the wild winds rave,
A word down deep in that dreamless sleep,
The word "EULALIE," in the grave,
The word "EULALIE" on a shining plate
That can shine no more in the grave.

Into that grave my heart and a rose,
Blinded with tears, I flung ;
Since then no flower in the wide world blows,
And pain has my harp unstrung.
And, "Eulalie," sings the weeping moon,
And the stars waft the wail to the sea,
And the sea writes deep on the sand, in rune,
The sad, dear name of my Eulalie—
With murmurous roar, from shore to shore,
Echoes the dirge of my Eulalie—
O awful Sorrow, O awful Death,
And awful dirge of the roaring sea !

With the dash of grim phantasy and the quest of the transcendental in physics from which I am never able to shake myself clear for any considerable time, *I went home and weighed.* I was five ounces heavier than when, full of life and light, in the morning, I had sung of

Rosalie.* And, oh, if the earth, like some of us poor, too highly sensitised humans who live upon it, is morbidly susceptible of alternations of sorrow and woe, what hundreds of tons it must vary in weight, even while wheeling through one diurnal course! And, who *knows* in this enigma of existence, where feeling ends and where it begins? The dogmatism is shallow that will concede sensation to the microcosm and deny it to the macrocosm. Who can predicate the limits of the *Anima Mundi*? If a poor mortal such as I am psychically affected by the flutter of a leaf or a sigh of the wind as it blows the white beard off the thistle, what sensations too subtle and ethereal for my neurotic and psychic susceptibilities may throb and thrill and burn through the arteries and nerves of the universe? It may be a heresy and a dream, but I yearn to believe that the sorrow and the joy, the pathos and the passion, of all the worlds meet and focus in the heart of GOD.

* A Spiritualist friend advises me that the scientist, Professor Crookes, made accurate experiments *re* the weight of a *medium* under influence, and found it vary appreciably in the course of a single *séance*.

BIBLIOMANCY.

I.

ONE reason why men often attach an altogether extravagant value to books lies in the fact that deity once wrote a book. He created the universe and wrote the bible. I do not know that he has done anything else ; but this is, in itself, a good deal. In the latter work (through Moses) he describes *how* he created the former ; but no really sane creature now believes him ; such is the great disadvantage of real sanity.

One great evil of deity's book is that it has required many, many tons of men's books to explain it. And the more books it has got to explain it, the more it requires. It is more mysterious now than when the explanations began. And, before apologies began to be written for it, the vast mass of mankind never dreamt that apologies were required for it. If we are to believe deity's own Jews, the book was not meant as a book proper so much as a sort of repertory of talismans and conjuring tricks. According to the Talmud and the Kabbala, when Moses was up on Mount Sinai the Lord gave him a good deal more than the Ten Commandments ; but he seems to practically have said :—

“ And aye keep something to yourself,
Ye'll hardly tell to ony.”

“ It is well-known,” remarks a writer on the Kabbala, “ that, in addition to the laws, during his protracted stay upon the Mount Sinai, all doctrines, explanations, mysteries, holy names of God and the

angels, and particularly how to apply this knowledge to the best interest of man, were entrusted to him. All these doctrines, which God pronounced good, but which were not generally made known, and which in the course of time were called the Kabbala, or Traditions, Moses communicated, during his life, to Joshua, his successor. Joshua handed them over to the elders, the elders gave them to the judges, and from the judges they descended to the prophets. The prophets entrusted them to the men of the great synagogue, and these gave them unto the wise men; and so the Kabbala was handed down from one to the other—from mouth to mouth—to the present day. Therefore do we know that in the Thora are many names of the Most High and his angels, besides deep mysteries, which may be applied to the welfare of man, but which, on account of the perverseness of humanity, and to guard against their abuse, have been hidden from the great mass of human beings.”

Therefore, you see, according to the very people among whom it originated, the Bible is a receptacle of deep mysteries, committed by the Lord to Moses, transmitted by him to the Kabbalists, but, “hidden from the great mass of human beings.” The Christians have the impudence to appropriate to themselves this Jewish book, and to regard it in a fashion entirely different from that in which the Jews regarded and regard it! It is as if a man stole a coat, but insisted that the said coat was a pair of trousers, and, against all precedent and remonstrance, strove to push, not his hands, but his feet through the sleeves! It is as if the Christian stole a wheelbarrow from the Jews, but insisted that it was a mouse-trap, and desperately, through many centuries, tried to catch mice with it. The despised Jews were not supposed to understand their own literature; those who *did* understand it were the uncircumcised Philistines

—the Gentiles ! Well may you be admonished not to tell this in Gath !

The custody of the meaning of the book was confined to the more learned of the Rabbis ; the ordinary lay Jew was not able to understand it. But the book falls into the hands of an altogether alien people ; and every half illiterate gossamer, ignorant of Semitic thought, speech, and symbolism, is competent to explain it ; and every Protestant cheesemonger is invited to read it, and try it by the standard of his own *private judgment*. Fancy *his* private judgment on such a subject ! *His* private judgment hardly extends beyond a recognition of the distinction between Cheddar and Stilton. No wonder that there are a multitude of Protestant sects, in this country alone !

We Europeans have attempted the reading of the book and tried to make sense of it. Those who did understand it, those among whom it originated, and through centuries of whose strange and exclusive thought and history it grew up to be what it is, may also have read it ; but with them it was essentially not a book to be read, but a charm to be conjured with. Reading certain portions of it with a certain emphasis on certain Hebrew spell-words, not translated, but in the original, were calculated “to cast out evil spirits, to relieve deep melancholy, and to cure grievous diseases ; to set free prisoners who have been unjustly imprisoned ; to arrest and resist enemies, opponents, murderers and highway robbers ; to quench the fiercest fires ; to resist floods of water ; to defend innocence and to reveal it, and to foster good fortune, well-being, and peace in a general manner.”

The Christian stole this talisman of magical conjurations, and thought it was a book ! In gratitude for it, they betook themselves to mercilessly murdering the Jews, from whom they stole it ; and, over varying opinions upon what it means, they have, during the last thousand

years, slaughtered and burnt each other in millions. If this is the sort of "book," or whatever it is, deity writes, let us hope he will never write another. His world-making is wonderful ; but from his literary performances, good Lord, deliver us !

I make a few brief extracts from the "Sepher Schimmusch Tehillim" to show to the Gentile reader how the Hebrews used the Psalms. The "Sepher Schimmusch Tehillim" is a fragment out of the Kabbala, and with some indebtedness to the Talmud. Now for the use of the Psalms with those among whom they originated, and who surely should know best. Is Janet at death's door, and has the chappie run for the doctor? Prescription :—

"*Psalm i.*—When a woman is pregnant and fears a premature delivery, or a dangerous confinement, she should write, or cause to be written, on a piece of parchment prepared from the pure skin of a deer, the first three verses of the above Psalm, together with the hidden holy name and appropriate prayer contained therein, and place it in a small bag made expressly for that purpose, and suspend it by a string about the neck, so that the bag will rest against her naked body.

"The holy name is called Eel Chad, which signifies great, strong, only God, and is taken from the four following words : Aschre, verse 1 ; Lo, verse 4 ; Jatzliach, verse 3 ; Vederech, verse 6."

Are you like to go cracked, and are you quite in the dumps? Prescription :—

"*Psalm xv*—Against the presence of an evil spirit, insanity, and melancholy, pray this Psalm with the prayer belonging to it, and the holy name Iali, which means : 'My Lord !' or, 'The Lord, too, is mine,' over a new pot filled with well water that was drawn for this express purpose, and with this water bathe the body of the patient,"

Are you at sea, and bidding very fair to go to the bottom? Prescription:—

“*Psalm xxxi.*—During an existing storm at sea, when there is danger at hand, mix rose-oil, water, salt, and resin, pronounce over it slowly this Psalm and the holy name Jehaen, and then pour the consecrated salve into the foaming sea while uttering the following prayer: ‘Lord of the world! Thou rulest the pride of the foaming and roaring sea, and callest the terrible noise of the waves. May it please thee, for the sake of thy most holy name, Jehach, to calm the storm, and to deliver us mercifully from this danger, Amen—Selah!’

“The letters of this holy name are contained in the words: Jehovah, verse 2; Duma, verse 14; and Ki, verse 13,”

Are you troubled with an evil spirit? Prescription:—

“*Psalm xxxix.*—This Psalm is highly recommended for casting out an evil spirit. The manner of proceeding is as follows: Take seven splinters of the osier and seven leaves of a date palm that never bore fruit, place them in a pot filled with water upon which the sun never shone, and repeat over it in the evening this Psalm, with the most holy name of Aha, ten times with great reverence; and then, in full trust in the power of God, set the pot upon the earth in the open air, and let it remain there until the following evening. Afterwards pour the whole of it at the door of the possessed, and the Ruach and Roah—that is, the evil spirit—will surely depart.

“The two letters of this holy name are contained in the words: Jehovah, verse 11, and according to the alphabetical order called Ajack Bechar and Habre, verse 2.”

Have you a law suit on, and do you wish to be successful without going to the expense of retaining counsel? Prescription:—

“*Psalm xxxv.*—Have you a law suit pending in which

ou are opposed by unrighteous, revengeful, and quarrelsome people? then pray this Psalm, with its holy name Jah, early in the morning for three successive days, and you will surely win your case.

“The letters composing this holy name are contained in the words: Lochmi, verse 1, and in Wezianna, verse 2.”

Have you been up Fleet Street to “Ye Olde Cheshire Cheese” and got as fu’ as a fiddler? Prescription:—

“*Psalm xxxvii.*—If anyone has drunken so much wine as to lose his reason, and, in consequence, fears are entertained for his safety, then quickly pour water into a pitcher, pronounce this Psalm over it, and bathc his head and face with the consecrated water, and give him also to drink of it.”

Have you a row on with Janet? Has she accused you of attentions to another Janet? Is she neither to hold nor to bind? Will she neither dance nor hold the candle? Prescription:—

“*Psalms xlv. and xlvi.*—These two Psalms are said to possess the virtue of making peace between man and wife, and especially to tame cross wives. The saying is, namely: Whoever has a scolding wife, let him pronounce Psalm xlv. over pure olive oil, and anoint his body with it, when his wife, in the future, will be more lovable and friendly. But, if a man has innocently incurred the enmity of his wife, and desires a proper return of conjugal love and peace, let him pray Psalm xlvi. over pure olive oil, anoint his wife thoroughly with it, and, it is said, married love will again return.

“The holy name is Adojah (this name is composed of the first syllables of the two most holy names of God, Adonia and Jehovah).

“The letters are in the words: Elohim, verse 2; Meod, verse 2; Jehovah, verse 8; and Sela, verse 12.”

N.B.—Olive oil is made up in moderate-sized glass

flasks, protected with a coating of plaited rushes, and the neck is not corked, but plugged up with a little quid of cotton wool. This you can purchase for about 6d., and it will be found sufficient to anoint Janet all over, leaving a little with which to dress your salad. If Janet be in a really cantankerous mood, it will be well for you to go to the Tower and borrow a suit of armour, and carefully array yourself in it before you venture to begin to anoint her.

Are you about to move on term day, and are you not quite sure as to the state of the drains in your proposed domicile? Prescription:—

“*Psalm lxi.*—When you are about taking possession of a new dwelling, repeat this Psalm just before moving in, with a suitable prayer, trusting in the name of Schad-dei, and you will experience blessing and good fortune.

“The letters composing this name are taken from the words: Schimmu, verse 2; Ken, verse 9; and Jom, the last word of this Psalm. It should, however, be remarked that both the last letters are selected according to the alphabetical order of Ajack Bechar.”

N.B.—If you have taken the premises on a repairing lease, in spite of the above, look out.

Then there is the long 119th Psalm, which, by the way, I had been taught to repeat before I had as yet learnt to read. Its divisions contain certain remarkable nostrums, which, if only duly attended to, should close the Royal College of Physicians, and put up the shutters on the windows of the Royal College of Surgeons. For instance, is there something up with your kidneys? Prescription:—

“*Teth.*—The division of the letter Teth, verses 65 to 72, is an easy, quick, and tried remedy to cure the severest case of kidney or liver complaints, or to take away pains in the hips. Pronounce these eight verses properly, specially and reverently over the sick person and he will convalesce.”

N.B.—Spurgeon died of kidney disease. Had he attended to *Teth*, he need not have “entered heaven at 11.5,” as his secretary announced he did. He might still have been at the Tabernacle preaching the brimstone which, let us trust, he has escaped.

Have you a boil in the right ear? There is a Psalm to cure that. Prescription :—

“*Resh*.—Are you burdened with a painful, constantly running boil in the right ear, pronounce the eight verses of the division of the letter Resh, verses 152-160, in a low and conjuring voice, over onion-water or juice, and let one drop run into the ear, when you will experience immediate relief.”

Do your thighs trouble you, and your arms drive you distracted? Prescription :—

“*Psalms cxlii. and cxliii.*—Praying of the first of these two Psalms will remove pain in the thighs, and praying the other will remove tearing pains in the arms.”

So you see there are thigh psalms and arm psalms. There are fire psalms and water psalms, drunken psalms and lunatic psalms, psalms to be used with olive oil and others to be used with onion water. How little we Gentiles understand the real meaning of the songs of that mysterious race whose wild harp rang joyfully on Mount Zion, or hung wofully on the willows by the waters of Babel.

BIBLIOMANCY.

II.

HAVING abandoned, or, rather, being too lazy and insolent to find out, the meanings the Jews attached to their own Scriptures which we adopted, we have, each Protestant sect of us, if not each Protestant individual of us, attached meanings of our own, according to the canons of our private judgment, and, oftener still, according to the canons of our private prejudices and private interests. Those, however, who arrived at wrong judgments—that is, judgments at variance with those agreed to by the majority—were, by this majority, easily reasoned back to the true faith. There were various effective arguments, but all of the *ad hominem* type. For instance, Servetus arrived at a wrong judgment; but Calvin at once kindly stepped forward to put him right. Once, having determined on the proper argument to use under the circumstances, he set himself to use it. The argument was to burn Servetus to death in a fire of green wood, which would burn slowly, and thereby prolong the agonies of the party to be put right. Calvin, taking Servetus to be rather dull of intellect, adopted the plan of convincing him gradually. The argument was effective. Servetus never after contradicted Calvin. These were two Protestants—and you see how they protested.

Queen Elizabeth had an argument which has fallen into disuse in our dialectical societies and schools of debate. With her the best way to convince a Papist

that he was in the wrong was to take his inside out. This gave him new light. Her theory evidently was that Romanism was an error which lay in the bowels. Literally millions have had their heads taken off, have been burned to cinders, have had their insides taken out, or have been "mown in battle by the sword" in exegetical attempts to expound and arrive at a decisive opinion in regard to the meaning of the Jewish Scriptures. So much for deity's Book. Is it not a mercy that he never wrote another? If he had written as many as Sir Walter Scott, where should we have been?

The sane among us have given up the expounding of the Scriptures, and do not care the skip of a cur what they mean. But those who still interest themselves with expounding are still at loggerheads; only the sane people keep them from burning each other to emphasise their differences. A story is told of a cleric and his clerk in a certain Protestant village, who mutually took to expounding, but they failed to arrive at the same conclusion. On one occasion they had a long and heated discussion, in which the cleric, with words of wondrous length and thundering sound, defeated the semi-illiterate clerk, who however, remained unaltered in his opinion. On a subsequent Sunday morning the preacher chose as his text, "And unto him that smiteth thee on the one cheek offer also the other." When he had concluded a very soul-saving discourse on this subject, he brought the service to a close, and proceeded on his way home. The clerk, whose route lay also in the same direction, took a short cut across the fields, and thus met his old adversary, the professional soul-saver. Thinking that the opportunity had at last arrived for avenging past injuries, he confronted that worthy, saying: "Let us see if you can practise as well as you can preach." He then gave his reverence a smart slap on the right cheek.

The cleric determined to act on his text rather

than allow the clerk to deride and sneer at him, so he offered him the left cheek, upon which the clerk, thinking his adversary thoroughly cowed, promptly administered a heavier blow than before.

“Now,” said the cleric, who was a man of rather large dimensions, “there is another text which runneth thus : ‘For with the same measure ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again;’” and, suiting the action to the words, he gave the clerk such a devout drubbing as he had never before received in his life, and never wished to receive again.

The squire of the parish, happening to pass in his carriage, and desirous of knowing the cause of the scuffle between the professional soul-saver and his professional *Amen*-sayer, sent his footman to ascertain.

The footman quickly returned, and, touching his hat, said : “Oh, sir, it is only the parson and the clerk expounding Scripture to one another.”

Scripture seems to have been specially written to be expounded after this fashion ; for you never can pick out a text to specially support *you* when your opponent cannot quote a contra text to support *him*. And, before scepticism became general, texts were always discussed with thumbscrews and debated with swords.

Even in grim Scotland during the illustrious epoch in which I, her son, was a Presbyterian saint, the bible was still, to a certain extent, a book to conjure with, thing of horoscopes and divination. My mother, in common with the mothers of her locality and cult, made exact note of the day of the month on which each of her children was born, and compared that date with the corresponding number among the thirty-one verses of Proverbs xxxi. Having first seen the light of day on this questionable planet on March 20th, my verse was : “She stretcheth out her hand to the poor ; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy.” Somehow this

verse has never been particularly applicable to me. True, I have, and always have had, a burning desire to reach forth my hands to the needy ; but I have so reached with but little effect. The needy are not benefited by the stretching out of hands with nothing in them. It is cruel to naturally endow one with the will, and not the way. I am a sort of bird with an irrepressible desire to fly ; but I have never been gifted with more than the mere rudiments of a wing.

That my hands are empty when I have to stretch them forth to the poor has long been to me exceeding pain. The little that hands that are empty, or nearly so, can do for the poor my hands have done—my soul does not reproach me on that score ; but, oh, how impotent and futile have been my efforts ; and how my heart has bled as a human brother or sister has gone down under the brute hoofs of somebody's "success," and I have had to look on, helpless to save ! My brother's blood has cried from the ground, and I have given no reply ; indigence has struck me dumb. I have seen the human go down in the great sea of our social and political inhumanity while I have had to stand on the shore helpless ; I had not a boat to launch, no life-belt—no, not even a broken spar to fling to the rescue of the perishing. Oh, that men would think more of the blood that circulates in human hearts, and less of the gold that circulates in human hands ! One drop of the red tide of our common brotherhood is a diviner thing than all the gold that has ever been dug from "California's pathless world of woods."

The two purest gems out of heaven are the lofty soul which poverty cannot debase, and the love of woman which gold cannot buy. And, alas, I have lived to see both go down to the vile dust, unwept, unhonoured, and unsung. I have seen both, associated with squalor, through the pauper's shell and quicklime, pass away

from human remembrance. But I know, if I know aught, that the virtues of the hero and the saint are not forgotten, that temporary Injustice forgets, but eternal Justice remembers! And, daily, in this Babylon in which I live, there succumb to worry and disease, super-induced by poverty, men who have no fame, who have not even a tombstone; and yet Leonidas, amid the gory gulches of battle, never fought more resolutely, never died more bravely; and Nelson was only a more picturesque, not a more genuine, hero when he fell upon the bloody and shot-shattered deck at Trafalgar.

It may be a high thing to fight in flashing uniform in the field with all the world looking on; it requires more dauntless mettle to fight in rags and in a garret when the world's back is turned upon you, when disease, with the auxiliary of hunger, is gnawing at your vitals, when those who were your associates have "cut" you, and those you helped remember you only to asperse you. I know of such; and, O God, why did you give me hands to stretch forth to the destitute, leaving those hands empty!

And once or twice, I admit, I *have* with some effect stretched out my hands to the needy. In Glasgow and elsewhere I was wont to prowl in the lowest—that is, the poorest—streets to see life, and set my soul fairly atune with the dirge of Human Misery. More than once or twice in my pilgrimages of mingled curiosity and philanthropy I have been assaulted by five or six assailants at a time. Those were days when no one depended upon me, and I set little value upon my life. I placed my back to the wall, and, to some purpose, reached out my hands to the poor—presumably, however, not quite so poor as I. I had always a pair of hands that were worth reaching out on an occasion of this kind.

So I have in some way verified the verse that was

supposed to predict my fate ; and, if I have not been able to reach forth my hands rather better than most people, the said hands might long ago have been only a pinch of churchyard dust.

Still, the prediction of my fortune through the 20th verse of the 31st chapter of Proverbs has come nearer the mark than have many horoscopes cast laboriously in the occult and exalted "science" of Cardan, and even Kepler. For instance, take the case of William Gonzaga, Duke of Mantua, who had grave doubts as to the practical use and veracity of the speculations of the learned. On a certain occasion he summoned Sarpi, the erudite friar, who afterwards became celebrated under the name of "Paul the Friar," to his chamber, and requested him that very night to go to the observatory to take accurate note of the position of the heavenly bodies, and draw up the horoscope of one just born in the palace, the offspring of a noble mother and a plebeian father. Sarpi, who had not neglected astrology, then almost universally cultivated and credited, did as he was ordered, and drew out his scheme with all the care and elaborate accuracy which so important a case deserved. The duke sent copies of the document to many of the most celebrated professors of the science in Italy, begging their interpretation of the omens as set forth by the observations of his astrologer. The replies varied, as might be expected; but all agreed in predicting some high fortune to the issue of a noble mother born in the Gonzaga Palace. Some made him a marshal, others a bishop, while others ventured to predict that he would wear a cardinal's hat, and one intrepid toady asserted that the child was assuredly destined to become Pope. Gonzaga looked gravely over the learned horoscopic castings of the various astrologers. Then he divulged the fact that the party who had been variously predicted to turn out to be a marshal, a bishop, a cardinal, and a pope, was a

mule born in the palace stables. His noble mother was a mare, his ignoble father an ass!

Divination and conjuring with books were not by any means peculiar to the Jews and their perverse and ungrateful plagiarists, the Christians. The classical nations of antiquity had, among other rites of divination, one which consisted in opening at random a book, and, from the first sentence which met the eye, or, from the sentence which began one of the two opened pages, divining the future, or giving answers to doubts of the understanding. "Annali dello Spiritisme," in referring to this rite, mentions that the volume first used was Homer's "Illiad" and Virgil's "Æneid," and says in substance: "Publius Elius Adrianus (Hadrian), a Spaniard, born in Rome, dear to the Emperor Trajan, inasmuch as he had married his grandniece, desiring very much to succeed him on the imperial throne, consulted fate on his projects, opened his Virgil, and these lines having reference to Numa in the Sixth Book of the 'Æneid' met his sight: 'Quis procul,' etc.—'Who is he who afar off comes distinguished by the olive branch bearing the sacred utensils? I recognise the hoary hair and beard of a Roman king who will be the first to found a city governed by laws, though brought into a great empire, from the small *cures* and a poor land.' And he saw thereby pronounced a prophecy that he should hold the sceptre and obtain the fame of a law-giver. In fact, no sooner did Trajan die than the army saluted him emperor at Antioch; and likewise later, through the distinguished jurist, Salvius Julianus, he caused to be compiled the "Edictum Perpetuum," which remained the fountain of the excellent Roman law in the Code of Theodosius, and became the foundation of the Pandects of Justinian.

This particularity of bibliomantic prophecy is well

attested for us by Spazianaus, his biographer, in the "Scriptures Historeæ Augustæ." The historian, Julius Capitolinus, relates that, interrogating in this way the "Æneid," Clodius Albinus had a true response with the lines :

"Hic rem Romanam, magne turbante tumultu,
Sistet equus, sternet Pœnos Gallumque rebellem."

(When, in the midst of a formidable insurrection, he supports the Roman State, and subdues the rebellious Carthaginians and the Gauls.)

And the historian Lampridicus relates two other examples respecting Alexander Severus, who, at one time, inquiring in regard to his own destiny, received the fateful answer: "Te manet imperium coeli terracque marisque"—(The empire of sky and land and sea awaits thee). And another that, thinking of applying himself to Art rather than affairs of State, he was dissuaded by the following: "Excudent alii spirantia æra.....Tu regere imperie popules, Romane, memento," from the 847th line of Book vi. of the 'Æneid'—(Let others mould the breathing brass. To rule the nations with imperial sway be thy care, O Roman!). But this practice of divining did not cease with Paganism, inasmuch as the Christians continued it, changing the names (*sortes sanctoruum*), and interrogating the works of Homer and Virgil, as well as the Scriptures.

Saint Augustine notices and reprehends this divination; one of the councils of the Church discussed and condemned it, but, with little effect, inasmuch as in Gregory of Tours ("Hist. Franch."), in Book iv., verse 6, may be read: "Three books of the clerk being placed on the altar—that is, the Prophecies, Apostles, and Gospels—they prayed God to show Christianus what should happen to him. The Book of the Prophets being opened, they lighted upon: 'I take away his affliction'; and, further, in Book v., verse 49.—Having entered into the oratory,

sorrowful and dejected, I take the book of the Psalms of David, in which is written : ‘ He led them out in hope, and they feared not.’ ”

But divination and conjuring by books was, upon the whole, confined to big events and big people. The poor and *very* ignorant had to depend on less literate aids than bibliomancy. Fate spoke through books to the king, the general, the statesman, on issues which involved the fate of nations. But the gods, through book leaves, had nothing to say to the ditcher or even the cheesemonger. They were simply the pawns on the chess-board of Doom with which the king, the general, and the statesman had to play their portentous game. But no man, however humble and abject, and however unimportant to the State, but is of great importance to himself, and he, too, in his way, has his types and symbols of good and evil auspices. Thieving on an imperial scale is the business of kings, generals, and statesmen ; but there are the small and shabby thieves who do not steal empires, but only spoons and the like. Such minor thïeves, even to this hour, have their vaticinatory assurances. They have no *Te manet imperium cæli terræque marisque* ; but they carry about as talismanic omens pieces of coal, eel-skins, hares’ feet, and old nails.

Only recently several thieves were found to have in their possession little balls of an unknown substance. They turned out, on examination, to be cut out of carrots ; and on inquiry it was ascertained that they were procured from a woman, who sold them guaranteeing that the purchaser would, as long as he carried them, “blind the peels”—that is, escape the policeman. Pieces of the hair of a certain notorious thief were eagerly sought for, and carefully carried about by many of his admirers, in the hope of participating in his luck. One man was found to have in his pocket a human finger, wrapped up in a piece of paper. It seemed to have belonged to a

woman's hand, and had been cut off at the knuckle. This was regarded as having been preserved as a "luck bringer." There are big thieves and little thieves, small fleas and smaller fleas to bite them ; but they are all "John Tamson's bairns"—they must each and all have their luck-omens. The big ones augustly rely upon oracles from the writings of Homer and Jehovah, and the little ones squalidly rely upon a hare's foot and a carrot.

DIDDLING THE DOLTS.

THIS is, indeed, a world of incessant worry, toil, and turmoil. Look at its history. God made it in six days, and then rested; then he made man and rested again; then he made woman, since which event neither God nor Man has rested. It has been a case of praying and preying ever since—the former to no purpose whatever, and the latter to direful purpose indeed.

The principal worry of the vast majority of us is to get something to eat. And, after we have worked our fingers to the bone or sinned our soul to perdition to get this something to eat, we are to consider that deity has *given* it to us, and to thank him sincerely before we eat it, and thank him again after we have eaten it. The grace before meat and the grace after meat are, like most else connected with us, a mere formality and sham. I never hear the one or the other without thinking of a certain prandial incident. They were at dinner—he, she, and it. "It" was a little nephew on a visit, and during the pious prelude "it" became uneasy. "Oh, what a long grace, Uncle George." "Is it longer than that which your father says?" "Oh, yes; pa just lifts the cover and says, 'Da——'" "Bertie!" "Dash auntie." "So your father says 'Dash,' does he?" "Yes, uncle." "And what does he say dash to?" "He says dash to the dish." "Why does he say dash to the dish?" "Well, you know, he doesn't *really* say dash." "Then what?" "He says, 'Damn! Is this all we've got for dinner?'" Now, I do not approve of the unnecessarily forcible

language "its" father used when he lifted the dish-cover. And yet I should approve of his "grace before meat" rather than of many a less explosive one to which I have listened. It may have the ring of blasphemy about it; but that is to a degree extenuated by its unsophisticated honesty and blunt sincerity. Any such God as I should care to worship should prefer the "grace" of "its" father to the long-drawn-out maundering of sneaking, fulsome, and formal cant that is, on state occasions, said by the professional spinner of yarns for heaven.

If your repast is only a herring and three potatoes, or some homely fare of that sort, you can say grace yourself; and, if you really feel sincere about the matter, it is no honest man's province to object. But, when there are turtle soup and champagne, and there are those present who have boiled soap successfully, or have been able to swindle over bogus silver mines without the law being able to put salt on their tail, something more than the little umbling grace of an honest, thankful, and plain man is required. The professional creature with the white necktie is present in considerable numbers. You always find him where there is something to drink; you seldom find him where there is something to think. The one professional creature says grace before the mastication and deglutition begin; the other says grace after they are finished. A hedger, sitting down on a stone-heap, and saying, "God bless that of which I am about to partake," before tasting his bread and cheese out of the red cotton-handkerchief, is infinitely grander than worldfuls of the public orgies and public graces of our "betters." I am agnostic, and cannot predicate God, the Absolute, in the terms of the Relative; and yet, if I might venture to assign one attribute, and that negatively, I should assert: *God is not a sham.*

The custom of inviting birds of pray to the table and honouring them by requesting them to bring your

sirloin and your wine under the attention of Jah, with the view of inducing that deity to bless them, is one of the most contemptible shams of our mock civilization. One of the best snubs this sham has received was administered to it not long ago at a dinner in the suburbs of London. The host, one of the vulgar rich, had invited, among his usual sycophants, several persons whom he had heard of as gentlemen of more or less distinction, but whom he had never seen. One of these was an exceptionally grave-looking person, and wore an exceedingly clerical-looking necktie—peradventure he was one of Spiers and Pond's waiters. Making sure that he was a bird of pray, mine host looked down the table straight at him and said, "Sir, might I ask you to be good enough to say grace?" He of the clerical aspect did not seem to hear. The host again looked straight at him, and, in a firmer tone, repeated his request anent saying grace. The clerical-looking person remarked in a loud, rough, and raucous voice: "Sir, I perceive you are speaking to *me*; but the truth is I am so deaf that I cannot hear one damned word you are saying." This settled the matter. A more clerical, although less clerical-looking, person was applied to, and laid the grace off like a tether, reminding deity, among other things, of "the blood of thy dear Son," and assuring him that "all the glory" would be his; and then he said *Amen*, lifted a spoon, and set his jaws to work for Jah's glory and his own good.

To this hour, tell it not in Gath, the House of Commons has a special chaplain kept for the express purpose of edging in the moribund Jah amid the everlasting jaw. I have watched this personage perform his incantations with that air of smug and bland self-assurance which suggests: "Yes; the constituents may return you; and you may stand up and blether away in what you call your debates till you are as limp as a yard

of pump-water ; but, unless I intervene and ask the old deity that the Jews cadged about in a box in the wilderness to give you a bit lift here and there, there might as well be no Parliament at all. Where would you and your motions and bills be if I did not arrange beforehand that deity should be good enough to take you under his wing? Without me an effective Parliament would be impossible. Indeed, as long as I am in the House, and can prevail upon Jah to attend to the affairs of Great Britain and her colonies, it does not matter a jot whether the cities and boroughs return members or not. Members are utterly useless, or worse, unless I can prevail upon Jah and his Son, with the large S, to attend to the Bill 'For the Better Utilisation of Potato-peel,' and for the Bill brought in by the hon. member for Hungrykite, 'That, after the first of April next, it shall be illegal to manufacture sausages less than 2·854 inches in diameter.' Paul may plant and Apollas water, but God alone (through me) giveth the increase."

Do I exaggerate the bird of pray's estimate of himself? Let us see. I extract from a volume highly recommended by the late Dr. Pusey:—

"What language of man can speak the dignity of the priesthood (*sacerdoce*) and the greatness of the priest? The first man was great who, established as king of the universe, commanded all the inhabitants of his vast domains, and was docilely obeyed in it. Moses was great, who, by a word, divided the waters of the sea, and made an entire people to pass between their suspended masses. Joshua was great, who spake to the sun, 'Sun, stand still!' and the sun stayed, obeying the voice of a mortal. Kings of the earth are great who command vast armies and make the world tremble at the sound of their name.

"Ah, well! there is *one* man greater still. He is a

man who, every day when he pleases, opens the gates of heaven, and, addressing himself to the Son of the Eternal, to the Monarch of the worlds, says to Him : 'Descend from your throne. Come!' Docile at the voice of this man, the Word of God, He by whom all things were made, instantly descends from the seat of His glory, and *incarnates Himself in the hands of this man (s'incarne entre les mains)*, more powerful than kings, than the angels, than the august Mary. And this man says to Him : 'Thou art my Son ; this day have I begotten thee. Thou art my victim.' And he lets Himself be immolated by this man, placed where he wills, given to whom he chooses ; this man is the *Priest !*

"The Priest is not only all-powerful in heaven and over the natural body of the Man—God—he is all-powerful on earth, also over the mystical body of Jesus Christ. Look ! a man has fallen into the toils of the devil ; what power can deliver him ? Call to the help of this wretch the angels and archangels, St. Michael himself, chief of the heavenly militia, conqueror of Satan and his rebellious legions. The holy archangel can well drive away the fiends who are laying siege to the unfortunate, but not the one within his heart. He will never be able to break the chains of the sinner who had put his trust in him. Whom, then, will you ask to deliver him ? Call upon Mary, the mother of God, the queen of the angels and of men, the terror of hell. She can well pray for his soul, but she would not know how to absolve him from any fault, however small : the Priest *can*.

"Nay, more. Let us suppose that the Redeemer is descending in person, visibly in a church, and establishing Himself within a confessional to administer the Sacrament of Penance at the same moment that the Priest is seating himself in another. The Son of God says, 'I absolve thee,' and the priest, on his part, says

'I absolve thee;' and the penitent finds himself *equally* absolved by the one as the other.

"Thus the Priest *powerful as God*, can, in an instant, snatch the sinner from hell, render him fit for Paradise, and make of a slave of the devil a son of Abraham. *God himself is obliged to adhere to the judgment of the Priest*—to refuse or to accord His pardon as the Priest refuses or accords the absolution, if the penitent be worthy of it. The sentence of the priest goes before; God does nothing but to subscribe to it. Can a greater power, a higher dignity, be imagined?"

Perhaps, before you read the foregoing, you had no adequate idea as to what a truly tremendous ornithological specimen was the bird of pray. Peradventure, it did not occur to you that "every day," with his bill and talons, he "opens the gates of heaven." Perhaps, in your unregenerate ignorance, it may have occurred to you that his cracked and canting voice had not the qualities to command respect or obedience from even a mangy terrier pup. You see how mightily you have been mistaken. Terrier pup, indeed! The Son with a capital S of the Eternal with a capital E has to be on his most obsequious *p's* and *q's* when that voice commands him. And, I presume, he would have to do the same were he the son of fifty Eternals. The Son with the big S is, apparently, very small potatoes under the croaking of the bird of pray. This Son, even were his S ten feet long, and were he sitting ever so comfortably on his throne and vowing to himself, "Hang me if I stir a peg to-night!" has, evidently, to cringe like a kicked spaniel if the bird of pray only croak at him.

The bird has only to croak, "Descend from your throne. Come!" and "come" he must. Nothing for him but to pull on his boots and leave the right hand of his Father with a very large F, and who, having "neither body, parts, nor passions," has no right hand or left one

either, and hurry down to earth and see what the scissors the bird wants with him. He finds that the bird has a wafer which a dupe who would swallow anything is prepared to swallow. "Son with a large S, get into that wafer," croaks the bird of pray. And the Son, however large his S, has no alternative, but to take the halo off his head and the boots off his feet, and jump into the wafer. "He incarnates himself in the hands of this man." And the man—that is, the bird—looks at the Son with a big S in the wafer with a small w, and says: "Thou art my Son (with a large S); this day have I begotten thee." And this said bird is said, in spite of his celibate vows, to have, in his time, begotten more than one son with a small s, besides a daughter or two with only an ordinary d. His vows of celibacy mean that he must have no wives of his own, and must content himself with the wives of other men.

And, it seems the bird of pray is quite a dab at absolution. What says this manual recommended by Dr. Pusey?—"The son of God says, 'I absolve thee,' and the priest on his part says, 'I absolve thee,' and the penitent finds himself *equally* absolved by the one as by the other." This is a glimpse of the God's truth at last. The absolution in each of the two instances is exactly equal. Always rejoice when you find one grain of truth in a whole bushel of priestly falsehood; but, know that the truth has got there by accident. In this authoritative volume we read: "God himself is obliged to adhere to the judgment of the priest." Then, merciful Satan, help poor God, for he cannot have the life of a rat.

I, for one, am *not* "obliged to adhere to the judgment of the priest." No; dear to me as is the light of the sun, dear as is to my vision the dewy grass of morn and the stars gleaming down from the dome of night like the eyes of gods, dear as is to me the sight of

man, doubly dear as is to me the beauty of woman, I should go down to the abyss of the blackest dungeon in Europe and close my eyes upon the light forever rather than I should be, like God, "obliged to adhere to the judgment of the priest." Well for me I was not born a century earlier ; for the terror of neither axe, nor rack, nor wheel, nor fagot would have taught me the docility to submit, nor the wit to hold my peace.

Considering that this is the end of the nineteenth century, there is more lunacy in Brompton Oratory in a day than there is in Bethlehem Hospital in a year. Till the teeth of Priestcraft be utterly shattered there is no hope for real social or political reform. Before you can make a people free it is necessary you should make them sane.

THE FATHER OF THE GODS.

JOHN SMITH was not always precisely the kind of homunculus he is now. There has been a good deal of controversy as to what sort of a creature he originally was. His "maker" says he was only "a little lower than the angels;" but Science asserts he was a little lower than the hydatid—so much for the diverse statements of Bible and Biology. And, sad to relate, only the ignorant and prejudiced now believe **what** the Bible says anent their origin. It is only the dolts now who were created a little lower than the angels; those with something in their head are inclined to the hypothesis that they were once a little lower than a nucleated cell of protoplasm. Deity and Darwin are in conflict; and when they meet in a fair field with no favour deity has to sing small.

Said deity to Darwin: "I made you, Sir, out of the dust of the ground, and I made Janet out of one of your ribs." "With all due respect," retorted Darwin, "you did no such thing. But, when I was an unlettered savage, I made you; and, to tell you the truth, I am now somewhat ashamed of you, and would like to unmake you. Your account of how you made Janet was once suited to the capacity of adults; now it is really too puerile for the nursery." True, anthropologists never put their doctrines precisely in this shape; but this is what in terse, unvarnished, and non-euphuistic English they amount to. Like draws to like, and miserable man cowers before a wretched god. There

is an adage, "A man is known by the company he keeps;" yes—especially the deistic company he keeps. Show me a man's god, and I will show you the man; show me the man, and I will show you his god. Undoubtedly, on the evolutionary acclivity, we have passed through a period when we had no god at all, just as a tom-cat is utterly godless, and a three-legged stool gets not down on its knees before any deity.

With humans, I should say a god and a spoon were invented and adopted about the same time. The spoon would be of wood; and the god, too, would be very wooden. It is not at all likely that man found his god till he had lost his tail. I question whether any creature has rejoiced in both a tail and a god at one and the same time. Tail-wearers may have their follies, but not the folly of taking their tails to church. It is not till they have lost the tail that, on the part from which the tail once hung, they sit down on that *sedile* for imbeciles, yclept a pew. Man may have been man after a fashion for some time before it entered into anyone's head that he might be able to live upon his neighbour's fear and ignorance. The person who first conceived this idea was the first *priest*.

I am not quite sure as to the shape this first priest's doctrines assumed, and I am ignorant as to the ritual adopted; but, of one thing I am quite certain—*there was a collection*. There was, in some guise, a collection in the first church, and there shall be a collection in the last. Hell, heaven, Jehovah, Jesus may all go to eternal disuetude, and, in fact, are doing so; but, if the collection remains, the priest will remain. Practically, in this England to-day, hell, heaven, the father Jehovah, the son Jesus, are all played out; but the collection is not played out. Christianity centres not now round the communion cup, but round the collection plate. The priest makes his living by this latter; but,

the layman who puts into it also takes out of it, or hopes and expects to do so. Putting into the plate makes him so "respectable," and all the week he can sand his sugar with less chance of being suspected, and sell oleo-margarine for butter with increased security from detection.

And, there are eligible male mediocrities round that plate who look through their eye-glasses at Kate and Cary, and suck the heads of their dudes' walking-canes. And Kate and Cary are the muffed and stuffed and civet-scented daughters of him of the sanded sugar and the oleo-margarine, and he wants them off his hands; and the la-di-da imbeciles sucking their sticks might oblige him in that way. Thus Godliness is, or likely may be, great gain. How convenient it is to have a church. Priest and pew-holder alike find the thing profitable. The Kingdom of God cometh not with cash. What saith Carlyle? "And now what is it, if you pierce through his cants, his oft-repeated hearsays, what he calls his worships, and so forth—what is it that the modern English soul does, in very truth, dread infinitely, and contemplate with entire despair? What is his hell? after all these reputable, oft-repeated heresays, what is it? With hesitation, with astonishment, I pronounce it to be: The terror of 'not succeeding,' of not making money, fame, or some other figure in the world—chiefly of not making money."

And the spell-word of all this orgie of sham is "Jesus." The last glow of what was once the huge aureole of sanctity lingers over the head of this Jesus. As I have said, hell is almost gone, and heaven too, and men are ashamed of Jehovah, the father of Jesus; but they nail their colours, inscribed with the word "Jesus," to the mast of their sinking ship, and swear that, with that pennon flying, they can defy the rocks and conquer the storm. It is admitted that the Father, Yahveh, was an ignorant and truculent savage; but then he had such a

gem of a son. They admit that the Father was a black-guard; and they do not take the Son at his word when he says: "I and my Father are one." You can now, when you find him good-natured, get the pictist to laugh at every sanctity in his creed, except Jesus; and, this name, he tells you, the very infidel venerates, and quotes to you Mill and Renan. What matters it if ten thousand Mills and Renans were unable to break off their limbs every fetter of the old slavery that had degraded their fathers for a thousand years! I should as lief tie myself to the coat tail of Paul or Peter as to that of Mill or Renan. "The thoughts of men are widened by the process of the suns." The fathers are ashamed of Jehovah, the sons shall repudiate Jesus; but, even when *he* is repudiated, if Priestcraft can devise any other pretext for setting up a collection-plate, we shall still have a church, and swindle everlasting.—*Amen.*

By the way, it is only the old, old Jesus with the defective and contradictory biographies that will answer the purpose—only the ancient fraud that will support the modern imposture. New Jesuses spring up constantly, especially in the more pious and ignorant parts of the world; but they generally end in getting locked up in lunatic asylums. England, too, has had its Jesuses without having to go as far as Palestine to look for them, and through perfect cloud-fields of forgery and interpolation. The last Jesus of importance we had was in Puritan times—not a bad time, you would imagine for a Jesus to start business. In the year 1656 a religious flapdoodle, named James Nailor, made a public entry into Bristol, through Bedminster, as Jesus Christ: He was attended by several men and women, representing the disciples, Mary Magdalene, etc., who marched along up to their knees in slush, crying: "Hosanna to the son of David!" etc. Nailor, being apprehended, was brought before the Mayor of Bristol, who said to him: "Art

thou the Christ?" to which he answered, in the words of the other Christ, "Thou sayest it." An account of this Jesus being transmitted to London, he and his companions were ordered to be sent up for examination. The Parliament passed sentence on Nailor to stand in the pillory two hours, and then to be whipped by the common hangman, his tongue to be bored through with a hot iron, and his forehead to be marked with the letter *b*; he was then sent to Bristol, and there publicly scourged.

So much for Jesus Nailor, or any other Jesus whatever, that could not pass round as heavy a collection plate as the Jesus at present in vogue. No discreet person could take to Jesus Nailor and give up the other Jesus. By shifting from the one stool to the other he might, between the two, fall to the ground. There were two lies, but the prudent stuck to the lie that had had the longest start, as, of the two, it was the more difficult to kill. It was not difficult to get to Bristol and unmask Jesus Nailor; but it was difficult to get to Bethlehem after the other Jesus; and, if you did get to Bethlehem, you would not find him; you would find that he was said to have been there, but several centuries previously. And thus he had the advantage of Jesus Nailor.

All our "religions" are antiquated and out of date. They are each many centuries old; and the essential ideas and principles that underlie them stretch away back for thousands of years into the gloomy and indefinite mists of time. The immaculate conception, the virgin mother, the "fountain filled with blood," the rising from the dead, *et hoc*, are conceptions immeasurably anteceden to the era of the Jesus of the Synoptics. He, revered myth, is immensely older than his mother, Mary, or than his father, whether you take his father to be Joseph or the Holy Ghost—there is, by the way, equal Scriptural support for either paternity, so you can take your choice.

(It is not everyone who has the advantage of two fathers to select from—one a carpenter, and the other a ghost.) Or, if it please you, you have a perfect right to invent him yet another father; and, whoever you fix that distinction upon, you will be quite as near the truth as are any of the pseudonymous fabulists who wrote the Gospels.

Jesus, is, indeed, infinitely older than the days of Herod, I should say that, in his rudimentary lineaments, he was born, not "from the womb of the Virgin Mary," but from the brain-pan of the Missing Link. The essential features of the Jesus idea, divested of theological glosses and metaphysical metaphors, are sufficiently crude, rude, and brutal to point to a parentage so remote and a parent so archaic. "And, the birth of Jesus was in this wise": the *Pithecanthropus Erectus* invented him, and called him not "Jesus," but some inarticulate gurgle in the throat, commensurate with the then rudimentary development of the vocal organs. And, who was *Pithecanthropus Erectus*, the real father of Jesus and the entire vampire brood of truculent horrors and blood-dyed myths with which Theology for chiliads has stultified, stunted, and degraded the world? Well, a publication was recently issued from the local press of Batavia* which gives an account of *Pithecanthropus Erectus*, the ancient gentleman who begat *us* from his loins, and Jesus from his brain—such as it was.

This Batavian essay contains the detailed description of three fragments of three skeletons which have been found in the early pleistocene strata of Java, and which introduce to us a new species, which is also a new genus and a new family, of the order of primates, placed between the Simiide and Hominide—in other words, apparently supplying the "missing

* "*Pithecanthropus Erectus*. Eine Menschenanliche Uebergansform aus Java. Von Eng. Dubois, Militärarzt der Niederland. Armee."

link" between man and the higher apes, which has so long and so anxiously been expected, The cubic capacity of the skull is about two-thirds that of the human average. It is distinctly dolichocephalic, about seventy degrees, and its norma verticatis astonishingly like that of the famous Neanderthal skull. The dental apparatus is still of the simian type, but less markedly so than in other apes. The femora are singularly human. They prove, beyond doubt, that this creature walked constantly on two legs, and, when erect, was quite equal in height to the average human male. Of the various differences which separate it from the highest apes and the lowest men, it may be said that they bring it closer to the latter than to the former. One of the bearings of this discovery is upon the original birthplace of the human race. The author believes that the steps in the immediate genealogy of our species were these, Prothylobates, Anthropopithecus Sivalensis, Pithecanthropus Erectus, and Homo Sapiens. This series takes us to the Indian faunal province, and to the other aspects of the great Himalayan range, as the region somewhere in which our specific division of the organic chain first came into being.

Depend upon it, it was Pithecanthropus Erectus who was the father of our popular gods; they proceeded from his head, and that head's cubic capacity is only "about two-thirds of that of the human average." The gods and theologies, with their wild and bloody legends and phantasmagoria, are worthy of their parentage. And the parentage is worthy of them. But is it worthy of us, the so-called *Homo sapiens*—*sapiens* indeed!—to hold on by old deities, and fatuous and immoral legends born cut of the dolichocephalic skull of an ape who had just begun to walk upon his hind legs instead of upon all four, and who still retained some five or six inches of his tail. And we—*we* with our boasted enlightenment—still hug the old monstrosities that, in prehistoric days,

the jabbering simian invented! And why? Because Priestcraft and Statecraft have heavy vested interests in the olden and barbaric lies, and Priestcraft and Statecraft have lorded it, and still lord it, over generations of slaves and nations of fools. How long, O Lord, how long? How long shall the object of our worship be a son born of the mean, simian brain-pan of Pithecanthropus Erectus, and subsequently bedevilled by mythology and mystified with metaphysics?

Have we no brains of our own that we should continue to worship the issue born of the brain of Pithecanthropus Erectus? Out of our developed brains we have borne only clothes for him, and attributes and halos and aureoles. We have bedizened and bedecked the brat till his old dad, Pithecanthropus, would not know him. We have made a grotesque guy of him and sublime fools of ourselves, and this not because there is divinity in him, but because *there is money in him*. If you want a deity round whose neck you can hang a good collection plate, he is the best deity in all the Pantheon. And the "Saviour" of Christian nations is the theologic Christ—a strange Hebraic hybrid, half god, half man; a church monster, shapen, by the old ecclesiastic fathers and Roman bishops, from the most worthless portion of the cast-off scrapings of pagan traditions."* But he pays.

* J. M. Peebles.

A PAINLESS HELL.

ACCORDING to the Church, there is only one magnificently superior person, to compare Plato or Shakspeare with him, to print their names on the same page, is blasphemy—and blasphemy, mind you, not against Plato and Shakspeare, but against the superior person. This superior person was far too excellent a character to be permitted to leave the earth altogether. True, he had to leave for heaven to sit on the right hand of a father who, being “without parts and passions,” has no right hand or left one, or ought to sit down on a throne with, even if he had a throne to sit on. It was urgent, it seems, about eighteen centuries since that he should go and sit down at the right hand of his father, who has no right hand. And he has been busy sitting there ever since ; but, as I have said, he was far too excellent a personage to be allowed to leave the world altogether ; so, when he took to sitting on a throne in the New Jerusalem the Popes took to sitting on a chair in Rome, and successively representing him as his vicegerents.

And pretty vicegerents those Popes made. On looking back on them, one would think that, upon the whole, if they were the vicegerents and representatives of anything, that thing must have been the devil. Just let us see. There have been some two hundred and ninety-seven representatives of this superior person, of whom forty-four were anti-Popes, who left Rome and represented him from Avignon—and Avignon cursed Rome, and Rome cursed Avignon ; thirty-one were declared

usurers and heretics ; sixty-four met violent deaths, but, possibly, no more violent than they deserved, eighteen being poisoned and one strangled ; twenty-six were deposed and banished ; twenty-eight were maintained on the chair of St. Peter, fisherman and lug-lopper, by the aid of foreign swords ; six, in spite of their celibate vows to eschew Janet and all her wiles, were each Pope in at least one sense—that of daddy. In this respect the six, and who knows how many more than the convicted six, did rather more than represent the superior person, for he, for the life of him, could not have represented them, if Origen is to be trusted, and if certain divines have put the correct construction upon Matthew xix., 12. Leo IV., it is said, was a woman, and died in childbirth ; and, if she did, hers is the most honourable death ever a Pope has died.

Why does the Salic law obtain in regard to the Popedom ? If ever we are blessed with a female Pope, let us hope she will occupy her time in bearing children, rather than in issuing bulls. In spite of all that the Neo-Malthusians have been able to urge, I endorse the dictum of Count Tolstoï : “ It will always be a pity to see a young woman fit for child-bearing, and occupied by man’s labour. To see such a woman is the same as to see precious vegetable soil covered with stones for a place of parade or for a walking-ground. Still more a pity because this earth could produce only bread, and a woman could produce that for which there cannot be any equivalent, higher than which there is nothing—man. And only she is able to do this.” Yes, only she is able to do this, and she seldom does ; she produces wasters, with a real man in about 50,000 of them ; but better bear even wasters than issue encyclicals.

Why cannot we have alternately Pope and Ma ? We have had enough of old women of the masculine gender ; let us have a young woman of the feminine. If Janet

set her Bull loose from the Vatican, gallantry, if not piety, would induce even a heretic like me to receive the taurine animal with respect and courtesy. By all means let us have Janet on the chair of Peter. By all means let us have another Leo IV., or Pope Joan. There will be some hope for Europe when we have the keys of Peter in the hand of Her Holiness, Janet I. Janet, with her thousand foibles, is a tender, kind-hearted creature. True, her fur muff is a token of pain, and the broken wing on her bonnet a trophy of agony; but Janet, poor thing, wears these not from want of heart, but from want of thought. I feel confident that when Janet III. should sit on the Papal, or rather Mammaic, chair, she would abolish hell. The early fathers gloried in it; the late mothers would abhor it. I have said the early fathers gloried in it. Justin Martyr was glad it burned so fiercely; and so was Athenagoras. Irenæus was prouder of nothing than of his hell. Tertullian was quite cheered by the glare from the combustion of lost souls, and those souls stuck into organised bodies, for he speaks of "weeping" and "gnashing of teeth," and asks triumphantly, "Whence shall come the weeping and gnashing of teeth if not from *eyes and teeth?*" This early saint fancies himself sitting on a gilt and richly-cushioned chair in heaven, and enjoying himself exceedingly in beholding the writhings of torture and listening to the cries of eternal misery. "I shall have," exclaims he, "a better opportunity than of hearing the tragedians louder voiced in their own calamity; of viewing the play-actors more 'dissolute' in the dissolving flame; of looking upon the charioteer all glowing in his chariot of fire; of witnessing the wrestlers, not, in their gymnasias, but tossing in the fiery billows." *

St. Cyprian delights in the fact that "hell ever burning will consume the accursed, and a devouring punishment

* "De Spectaculis," chap. xxx.

of leaping flames; nor will there be that from which their torments can ever receive either repose or end. Souls, with their bodies, will be saved into suffering in tortures infinite." You see this saint appears to have thought that you have "souls with their bodies," much as you can have oysters in their shells; and how, in anticipation, he gloated over the rapturous spectacle of his fellow man, body, and soul, hard shell and succulent mollusc, being agonisingly cooked forever and ever on a brimstone stove! These are the sort of saints from whom we have had our theological doctrines. Can ye gather grapes off thistles? Can ye bring a clean thing out of an unclean? What think ye of a Church founded upon the utterances of "saints" immeasurably more savage and ignorant than the lowest rough in White-chapel?

Hell appears to have been specially invented for the refined delectation of the he-saints. St. Chrysostom—that is, the saint with the golden mouth—used his golden mouth in uttering this sentence: "But, if you are speaking against luxury and introduce discourse, by the way, concerning hell, *the thing will cheer you and beget much pleasure!*" This from golden mouth! Damned mouth would be a great deal nearer the mark. But, whichever way, he was only mouth.

Origen tried to carry on hell without the expense of brimstone, and to make its torments simply separation from Yahveh. The Church knew better. They do not seem to have considered separation from Yahveh as much of a punishment—in this they were certainly right—so they insisted on their brimstone and branders, and at the Council of Carthage, (A.D. 398) denounced Origen as a heretic. This settled that the brimstone was the correct thing, and that soul and body—the oyster and the shell were to be devilled forever and ever to delight the occupants of the front balcony of heaven—hell being

simply the hell of suffering, and heaven the hell of debasement. The most formidable opponent of Origen's heresy, and the stickler for burning brimstone, squirming souls, and broiled bones, was none other than the august St. Augustine !

With all Janet's faults, I believe, if she had matters theologic in her own hands for a decade or two, she would abrogate roast sinners in Avernus, and be satisfied with roast apples in the kitchen. Janet is just the very person whom hell has all along burnt most savagely. For, befool and deteriorate Janet as you may, she loves her child—that last strand of “carle-hemp” in her soul can never be broken. And, the thought of her baby in hell—her “twa span lang wee unchristened bairn” frizzling on a brander—has lacerated her heart right down the dread succession of the centuries. As if to horrify and outrage Janet into abject slavery, the Church laid special and flaming stress upon the eternal torment of infants. A work,* issued *permissu superiorum expatiataes* thus : “Perhaps at this moment, seven o'clock in the evening, a child is just going into hell. To-morrow evening, at seven o'clock, go and knock at the gates of hell, and ask what the child is doing. The devils will go and look. Then they will come back again and say, *The child is burning !* Go in a week and ask what the child is doing ; you will get the same answer, *It is burning !* Go in a year and ask, the same answer comes, *It is burning !* Go in a million of years and ask the same question, the answer is just the same, *It is burning !* So, if you go forever and ever, you will always get the same answer, *It is burning in the fire !*”

The next Pope Joan or Pope Janet we have will stop all this, and no baby will be sent to hell “at seven o'clock in the evening,” neither at half-past seven, nor at any other time. Pope Janet will consider “it is burning

* Father Pinamonti's “Hell Opened to Christians.”

in the fire" a burning shame, and stop it, in the name of man—or, rather, in the name of woman—and let deity and the devil—*arcades ambo*—go hang themselves. Victoria Woodhull Martin aims at being President of the United States. I should rather see her Pope—or, rather, Mamma—of Rome. She would take the "twa span lang, wee unchristened bairn" out of hell, even if, in the effort, she should knock hell itself into smithereens and break up the papal or mammaic chair so that no successor could sit upon it for fear of being impaled on the splinters and fragments into which she had smashed it. Put one imbued with the spirit of noble womanhood and tender motherhood into the chair of the choleric Galilean fisherman, and she will, indubitably, humanise priestcraft off the face of the earth.

Hell abolished, the Church might gather the heathen, and even the "infidel," into her fold; for, hell abolished, heaven would go too; and, with both hell and heaven gone, I think even I might enter no vehement objection against the microscopic *residuum* that would remain. Hell is the keystone of the arch. Remove that keystone and let the arch collapse, and then nobody will object to the arch—it will be non-existent. It is owing to that keystone being in it that the humane pagan cannot risk his weight upon it. Some time ago, a Japanese missionary wrote thus to the *New York Sun*: "They grieve over the fate of their departed children, parents, and relatives. and often show their grief by tears. They ask us if there is any hope, any way to free them by prayer from that eternal misery, and I am obliged to answer there is absolutely none. Their grief at this affects and torments them wonderfully; they almost pine away with sorrow. They often ask if God cannot take their father out of hell, and why their punishment must never have an end. I can hardly restrain my tears at seeing men so dear to my heart suffer such intense pain. Such thoughts, I imagine

have risen in the hearts of all missionaries in all churches." And yet "all missionaries in all churches" carry with them a brazier with hell blazing away in it merrily, for, if there were no hell, what would be the use of their "redeemer" from its penalties—and, what would be the use of they themselves?

In another place I have put forth an effort, such as in me lay, to knock the bottom out of the bottomless pit. Now I will make an effort to take the pain out of the said pit, even should the bottom remain in it. St. George Mivart contended for "happiness in hell;" let me be noted and remembered as the founder of a Painless Hell—painless, at least, after the first few minutes' experience. Hell, and the scheme to save us from it, were both invented in days of the densest and direst ignorance. Pathology was utterly unknown. I apprehend that, before you are five minutes in hell, you can quote to the fiend told off to pile red hot cinders on you:—

"Lay on, Macduff,

And damned be he who first cries, Hold! enough!"

You may as well try to empty the Atlantic into a soda-water bottle as attempt to torture indefinitely by fire. How long can one suffer from fire? A prominent medical practitioner in America * writes:—

"A case came under the observation of the writer which affords us a correct means of determining this point, so far as one case can determine. A little girl four or five years old, in the farm district of the State of Illinois, had her clothes set on fire while standing near the coke stove, which was out of doors near the kitchen. The mother had gone for a bucket of water a few rods away. The screams of her child hastened the mother's steps, and the burning clothes were at once extinguished.

"I was immediately called to visit the unfortunate.

* A. S. Hudson, M.D., Stockton, Cal.

Thinking she must be in terrible suffering, all reasonable haste was made. Nearing the house, I listened to hear the cries of the child, but heard nothing. To my great surprise, on arriving at the bedside of the patient, she was found lying quietly in bed, without the least sign of physical suffering. The burnt surface had been covered over with wheat flour. But it is doubtful if this has or had any effect whatever. The pulse was beating over one hundred and twenty a minute. This indicated a profound shock upon vitality. The accident occurred about five o'clock in a windy October afternoon, and the poor child died at eleven o'clock that night, and gave no more evidence of pain.

“Here was an instructive case. The length of time of actual suffering of the child as stated by the mother—that it ceased crying as soon as the flames were extinguished—could not have been over one or two minutes, say three minutes at most. The girl's hands, arms, face, breast, and other places were burned and blistered so that the cuticle peeled off. Here death followed six hours after the accident. Hence the absorbing question of interest is, How long did the agony of burning last?—Not how long the child lived after the pain ceased. Now, why did not the child make any outcry of pain after the flames were extinguished? There is but one reason; it is this: the extensive burning destroyed a great deal of surface or skin integument. From this there followed a profound shock to vitality, which overpowered the sensorium. Then all sensation was benumbed. She died in this shock of paralysed sensation.

“The brain is the great centre of nerve sensation. The skin is the great surface of sensitive nerve expansion. Therefore, it is my conviction that, when the great skin surface of nerve expansion had been destroyed, the resulting shock overpowered the brain sensorium and obliterated further sense of feeling, and that, if the

child had continued to burn in the flames for a longer time, she would have suffered no more pain. The disabled skin surface and the disabled brain sensorium were now functionless, and well nigh dead. Hence it is an immense relief to believe and know that those unfortunates in flames, whether by accident or at the stake, suffered less, and not as long a time, as we had supposed. Their agony of pain, severe as it must have been, continued but one or two minutes. Of course a slow fire would extend the time and prolong the agony."

Once destroy the skin, infinitely threaded with the plexus of sensory nerves, and then, Satan, you may burn away ; if it amuse you, it does not hurt the "sinner," or possibly, as you may prefer to call him, the *cinder*. Theology, in her truculence, may reply, But Smith in hell will not have skin. He will be made up of sensitised asbestos. Very well, then, sensitised asbestos is not Smith. Burn away at it as long as you like. Smith, if he can stand the sight of asbestos burning, may look at you, and laugh in derision. Saturn, according to Ovid, swallowed stones which his Janet had, in bed, substituted for his children. He swallowed the stones, thinking he had swallowed the children, and never found out his mistake. Is the devil, analagously, through all eternity, to burn an asbestos statue of Smith, and think he is burning Smith ?

A SAD WORLD, MY MASTERS.

THERE are still people in the world who live a long way off from anywhere—at least, from anywhere in particular. Thomas Carlyle did not know anything about Titian, and did not want to know anything about Titian; and Thackeray branded this nescience as “a lamentable fact” in regard to Thomas Carlyle. But on this planet there are still kindreds and tongues and peoples who, never to speak of Titian, have not heard even of Jesus, and do not want to hear about Jesus, whether or not this may be “a lamentable fact” in regard to those kindreds and tongues and peoples. You can be in the world, and not of it. You can erect round yourself a great barbaric wall of ignorance, and all your life never look over that wall or through it. During the whole of the period in which the tread of Napoleon shook the world there was an old lady living within a few miles of Paris who had never heard of the Man of Destiny and his campaigns till after he had been banished to St. Helena. It is not the vast extent of the world that enlightens you, but the scope of your own vision. Many a man has taken no more interest in things mundane after a rifle bullet had passed through his head. But I have known men who have had the world pass through their head—and it is over 24,000 miles in circumference—and have assimilated the world as it passed through, and have continued to take absorbing interest in affairs mundane and hyper-mundane.

It matters not to us what the world may be *per se*, or

whether indeed there be any world *per se*; the world for us is simply what of it we assimilate or asself. I have met persons to whom the earth is not more than ten miles in circuit, to whom it is made up of about a score of farm-steadings and peak-stacks and middens, and for whom the world did not begin till about twenty years ago. No palæontology for them, no Herodotus—nay, no Hume and Smollett. It was a pity the elohim took the trouble to “create” the world some sixty centuries ago; for, all the same, each one has to create a world for himself, spinning it out of the entrails of his own head. Some of us spin macrocosms, and some spin microcosms. Some spin great worlds of magnificence, sublimity, and mystery. Some spin a puny world with no height in it higher than the flitch of bacon hanging on the joists, no depth in it deeper than the bin of port in the cellar.

We jostle even in the streets of London, dwellers in this *little* world—mere mites in a cheese, in spite of the fact that they wear breeches. Here we have individual little-worldites among us; but there have been, and still are, whole communities and peoples of little-worldites. Take, for instance, the Moquis Indians. What remains of this tribe inhabits the mountains of Arizona, about one hundred and fifty miles from Fort Wingate, the nearest military post. So ignorant of matters outside of their own little villages are the Moquis that they believe they are the only people on earth, with the exception of the four companies of United States cavalry that appeared on the occasion of their last outbreak. The appearance of these soldiers at that time simply astounded the Moquis, and they had no idea there were so many white people in the world. Their Governor, Solomai, made a visit to Washington, with two other Moquis, some years ago. The sights which the old chief saw then were marvellous to him and his companions, and the

existence of the Washingtonians seemed so ideal that, on his return, his ambition was to introduce some of the ways of the white race into his own tribe. He commenced by describing to his people the wonders he had seen, the immense numbers of persons, the railroads, and the gigantic buildings, and he hereby gained a reputation to which he had previously been a stranger—the reputation of being a liar. He could not convince the tribesmen that he was telling the truth, and they finally thought him crazy, and decided that the proper thing to do was to confine him in a hole, in which he was kept some time ; and, when finally released, he resolved that it was prudent to hold his peace. His two companions were afraid to corroborate his statements ; and, with a view to their own safety, they ostensibly joined in the view that their Governor was insane.

By-the-byé, it is this terror which men have for telling the truth that, for the masses, keeps the world so miserably small. Illustrative of this principle, I remember how Max O'Rell relates that William Redmond, M.P., was sometime ago touring in America and Australia. In Sydney, O'Rell goes on to say, the celebrated Home Rule advocate was holding forth at Centenary Hall. There was the wildest kind of enthusiasm when he had finished addressing the great mass meeting. The chairman of the meeting was a very meek, mild man—very meek and very mild. Very well. The chairman arose when quiet had been restored, and said : “Gentlemen, I am requested by Mr. Redmond to say that, if anyone present wishes to ask him a question, he will be glad to answer it.” A man rose from the body of the meeting, and ascended the platform. “Mr. Chairman,” he said, but he never got any further. He was recognised at once as a notorious Orangeman ; and, quick as a flash, a great, big specimen of an Irishman sprang at him, and struck him a blow on the temple. The man fell like a log, and

it was thought he was killed by the blow. They had to send for doctors, and to carry off the man on a stretcher. Imagine the excitement all this time, continuing for a quarter of an hour. Finally, the chairman—don't forget how meek and mild he was—tapped gently on the edge of his desk, advanced to the front of the platform with his eye-glasses poised on the end of his fingers—so—and it became at once as quiet as you could imagine. Then very deliberately the chairman said: "Gentlemen, is there anyone else who would like to ask Mr. Redmond a question?"

It is just this penalty attached to asking Mr. Redmond a question that has made the world so small and so dark—this hostility men have to all views save their own. Albeit, no man has any views which are really his own, unless he has brought them into free and fearless contact with views which are not his own. The views, and the views alone, which he may bring out of such an ordeal are his own. And every man, if he be a man, should have views of his own, and should be as ashamed through life to wear his father's old views as he would be ashamed through life to wear his father's old trousers.

There are no new things which meet with such stubborn hostility as new ideas. Hence the microscopic measure of the world to most individuals; for their world is made up of ideas; and, for ideas they have only a handful of hereditary traditions and prejudices. To such an extent does this conservatism persist that, even to this hour, the whole of Europe has not adopted the Christian faith. A European community that is not Christian—neither, indeed, ever has been—only recently was thrust into publicity by a barbarous "religious" murder, nearly equalling in culpable superstition that which occurred only more recently still near Clonmell, in Christian Ireland. The scene of this other "religious" horror is near the city of Kazan, the intellectual metropolis of a

considerable part of Russia, in the valley of the Volga. The murder took the form of a religious sacrifice. A beggar traversing the village was seized and offered up on a stone altar hidden within the depths of a forest to the ancient, but not over-reputable, gods whom these Russians adore. The priests and others chiefly responsible for the crime were arrested, but it is thought likely that they were allowed to escape punishment, as the Russian Government has always hesitated to antagonise the million or so of their subjects who remain non-Christian, and who have stubbornly resisted all efforts at conversion.

This very considerable body of pagans, dwelling almost within sight and sound of one of the most frequented cities of the world, pursue the religious customs of the ancient Finns. In all matters save those relating to the ceremonies of their cult they are good subjects of the Czar, "showing themselves docile in everything," to quote the official records of the Russian Government. The recent sacrifice, which some foreigners resident in Kazan prevented from being hushed up, attracted general notice to these people. But their existence and their customs have long been well known to all students of ethnography. At the International Congress of Orientalists in Stockholm, the savant Dozon read a paper on their typical ceremonies that attracted much attention at the time; and only lately M. Rabot sojourned for a season in one of their villages, and learned the whole story of their persistent conservatism.

But let not Exeter Hall send its hirelings thither. Ireland has been Christianised, intensely Christianised, from time immemorial, and the sacrifice of the beggar man at Kazan is not so cruelly and revoltingly horrible as the fiery murder of Mrs. Cleary near Clonmel, in which she, a woman, a wife, a mother, was, on the imputation that she was a witch, robed in her chemise only,

held over the flames by her own husband, her own father, and a number of pious neighbours till the tegument of her abdomen was burnt away and her entrails exposed. They were good Papists all, the burners and the burnt. And had not the Papacy fixed its canon against sorcery? On December 7th, 1484, Pope Innocent VIII. sent forth his bull, "*Summis Desiderantes.*" Of all documents ever issued from Rome, imperial or papal, remarks Professor White, this has, doubtless, first and last, cost the greatest shedding of innocent blood. Yet no document was ever more clearly dictated by conscience. Inspired by the Scriptural command, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live," Pope Innocent exhorted the clergy of Germany to leave no means untried to detect sorcerers, and especially those who by evil weather destroy vineyards, gardens, meadows, and growing crops. These precepts were based upon various texts of Scripture, especially upon the famous statement in the Book of Job; and, to carry them out, witch-finding inquisitors were authorised by the Pope to scour Europe, and they scoured it.

And, conformably with an edict said by somebody—nobody knows who—to have been given by Yahveh, an old tribal god of the Jews, a sept of ignorant and unimportant nobodies, the air of Europe stank with the burning flesh of living women, burnt for God's sake! And this mockery of a thing known as "the Reformation" did not reform Exodus xxii. 18. out of the orthodox fetish-book, but the God-fearing got together their straw and brushwood and tar-barrels, and burnt to the old demon-god of the Hebrews their own mothers, and sisters, and sweethearts, and wives. James I., "the British Solomon," was a prominent Reformation king. The Jewish Solomon, according to a tale with which we are all acquainted, determined to which of two women, who each claimed to be mother of a certain child, that child really belonged. "The British Solomon" gave

evidence of *his* wisdom in quite another way. He, quoting Exodus xxii. 18., boiled women alive and claimed that, by tasting the water in which any woman had been boiled, he could tell whether she had been a witch or no. If the taste of the water indicated that any particular woman had *not* been a witch, then—*she had been boiled by mistake*, that was all! A trifling error of this kind was a mere nothing when attempting to carry into effect Exodus xxii. 18.

Was not “the Impregnable Rock of Holy Scripture” with Exodus xxii. 18. in it, dedicated to this “High and Mighty Prince James, King of Great Britain, France, and Ireland, Defender of the Faith”? and was not he, by boiling women alive and tasting the water in which they had been boiled, defending the faith? And was not the statement that he was king of France a lie? And was the placing of a lie thus in the very front of the bible a most appropriate thing to do? He had not a foot of land in France, and France believed in neither him nor his bible, but continued to take her time of day from the old clock at Rome—the old clock that had been standing for a thousand years, and, if permitted, will stand stock still for a thousand years more, pretending all the while that it is keeping excellent time. This, I say, this old clock at Rome will do for a thousand years more, if somebody of my disposition do not take up a stone and break the face of it and fling its works into the depths of the Atlantic, and kick its pendulum to hell.

Once a friend of mine, and a Scot too, remarked to me that it would have been far better for Scotland had she lost, not won, Bannockburn. I never spoke to that Scot again. I have no brain to consider such a proposition, for, against its being so employed, every drop of blood in that brain rises in hot and indignant repudiation and rebellion. But I often venture to speculate as to whether

it would not have been better for France, better for Europe, better for the world, had the Saracens been victorious at Tours, and had the life-blood of Charles Martel, not that of Abderahman, dyed that terrible plain on which, under the Cross on the one side and the Crescent on the other, the iron surges of death, for seven mortal days in succession, clashed and clanged and reeled, and ended in leaving the red spectre of "Christ and him crucified" omnipotent to debase the finest territories and the noblest races on the globe.

Looking back through the floodgates of the tide of past time, we can discern in which direction that tide surged, what it did, *and what it might have done.*

As far as the past is concerned, it is irrevocable; but it is, naithless, replete with fateful monitions for the present and the future. And, nowhere in human annals do we stand face to face with a crisis more momentous than that in the middle of the thirteenth century when Christian orthodoxy closed and grappled with Averroism.

"They tug, they strain, down, down they go,"

the Papacy above, Averroism below. For, somehow, in the history of the world we find that, almost invariably, the under dog in the fight is the best dog, that the wrong thing has happened, that Destiny has determined that, for some thousands of years at least, mankind must remain slaves and fools, and the dice of the kosmos is loaded so far as to prevent a throw in their favour. The Papacy flourished on a terrestrial throne hedged round by celestial sanctions. Averroism languished in the dungeons of the Inquisition. And only now at this late hour does what is practically Averroism emerge out of the night of repression, ignorance, and blood, and stand before us modified and modernised, but in all essentials the same as when Khalif Hakem II. ruled in Andalusia, before Averroes had been expelled from Spain, and the works of Rambam committed to the flames. Then, as

now, the collision was between philosophical freethought and sacerdotal dogmatism, an irrational priestcraft and a scheme of metaphysic that will support at once the emotion of religion and the speculation of philosophy. The trend of educated thought is, to-day, towards such a scheme of metaphysic. But, in this respect, from the Dominicans overmastering the Averroists, and from the action of the Holy Inquisition, we have lost seven hundred years of time !

In the same connection, we may speculate as to how different would have been the subsequent colour of the destiny of the world had Ferdinand and Isabella been in 1496 repulsed before the the gates of Granada. With the fall of Granada and the expulsion of the Moors, the splendour of one of the grandest civilisations our race has ever known rapidly fade away into the gloom of the Dark Ages of Ignorance and Faith, and "three millions of Moors were banished between the fall of Granada and the first decade of the seventeenth century ; and, in the and where science was once supreme, the Spanish doctors became noted for nothing but their ignorance and incapacity. Where once seventy public libraries had fed the minds of scholars, and half a million books had been gathered at Cordova, such indifference to learning afterwards prevailed that Madrid possessed no public library in the eighteenth century. The 16,000 looms of Seville soon dwindled to a fifth of their ancient number ; the arts and industries of Toledo and Almeria faded into insignificance ; the very baths were destroyed, because cleanliness savoured too strongly of rank "infidelity." The land, deprived of the skilful irrigation of the Moors, grew impoverished and neglected ; the richest and most fertile valleys languished, and were deserted ; most of the populous cities which had filled every district of Andalusia fell into ruinous decay ; and beggars, friars, and bandits took the place of scholars, merchants, and knights "

and, to this hour, "Religion" is the staple industry of Spain, and Spain is the gabberlunzie of Europe.

Are not the peoples who live a long way from anywhere in particular in an enviable position as compared with this "feudal realm of old romance," lying prostrate among her vines and olives, black in the face, and half-strangled with the garter of Mother Church? She, and not she alone, has been priestridden, till she dare not call her soul her own, and the spirit of mental independence is dead. When, for dark and ignorant century upon century, honest inquiry and research have been suppressed with the dungeon and the rack, it is tolerably safe for the arch-tyrant to step to the front and query, as did a certain chairman: "Gentlemen, is there anyone else who would like to ask Mr. Redmond a question?"

PROFESSIONAL SOUL-SAVING.

NUMEROUS profane jibes have been flung at the head of the Holloway of his time, who invented a pill to cure, or, rather, to prevent, earthquakes. There are but few jibes, as yet, at the quack who has invented a form of prayer to cure, or, rather, prevent, earthquakes. And yet the time is not so far in the future that will recognise that earthquakes are impervious to pills and prayers alike—to Professor Seismology's earthquake pills, only 1s. 1½d. a box, and the Rev. Thadeus O'Thunder's prayers, admission free—but, a collection at the door.

The earthquake pills have been discarded, but the earthquake prayers still obtain. *Teste*: In March of the year of our Lord, 1895—I often wonder if we had reckoned instead, "in the year of our Devil," if things had been quite as stupid—the old volcano of Orizaba, in the State of Vera Cruz, Mexico, broke forth. For one hundred miles around, the earth was shaken with subterranean vibrations. The volcano is in the heart of the most improved coffee district in Mexico. Masses were said in all the churches in the vicinity to ward off the impending danger. Just fancy earthquakes being amenable to prayer! It is as scientific to imagine them amenable to mustard, or to pitch and toss. On Pricstcraft's theory, Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboim, and Zoar might all, at this hour, have been standing on the Plain, if somebody or other had only prayed properly and at the proper time! If prayer could have saved them, cannot prayer restore them? Set all the prayer power, united

to all the horse-power, of Europe to the task, and see whether, in their combination of the precatory and the equine, they can bring back and place upon the solid ground even the little town of Zoar.

The man who makes his living by praying certainly makes it by preying. The deity who will give you what you want because you pay the Rev. Jabez Jabber to ask it for you is a contemptible pander, who, instead of being prayed to, should have his neck twisted. You pay this Jabez Jabber a "screw;" for this he screws for you favours out of Jehovah. Jehovah had not from all eternity resolved to extend those favours to you. In fact, he had made up his mind to bestow them upon Brown and Higgins; but, then, he little anticipated how he should be importuned and dunned by your paid advocate, Jabez Jabber; so he changes his unchangeable mind, and bestows them upon *you*. If this be not a fair statement of the case, pray tell me in what respect it is not. If Jehovah had resolved to bestow those blessings upon you, what was the use of Jabber asking him to do so? If Jehovah had resolved to bestow those blessings upon you, what need was there for you to bother him by setting Jabez upon him? Can Jabez, by his praying, alter the decrees of Fate? If not, why does he pray? He cannot alter the decrees of Fate; but he prays because you pay. Soul-curing is a business, just as bacon-curing is—only not half so honest. Any rough sort of a "bloke," who is not drunk and incapable more than three days a week, can be a bacon-curer. Albeit it takes a polished "bloke" to be a soul-curer; but he may be drunk—or, at least, incapable—every day of the week; the more incapable the better soul-curer he will be. Proverbially, middle-class parents with sons train the capable ones to secular professions, and dedicate the dunce to the Church.

True, the young soul-curer is sent to the University,

while the young bacon-curer is sent, say, to crossing-sweeping. And much benefit accrues from sending a dunce to college! I have been to the University, and have been made aware of its atmosphere of erudite nescience. While the populace was as yet wholly illiterate, one who had been to college was looked upon as if he had been elevated above the rank of mortals. "Latin names for horns and stools" stun the sacerdotal dupe into reverence, and "words of wondrous length and thundering sound" chloroform the "sheep" while the "shepherds" are shearing off their fleeces. There is no narrower man than your ordinary "varsity man," and no more unmitigated cad. I should be the last writer in the world to underrate the discipline and culture involved in real classical lore; but I decry the ordinary college classics of the ordinary college homunculus. The mere grinding of Greek verbs will not make a man, any more than will the grinding of scissors. If souls be, how is their curing linked on to the second aorist or the paulo-post future? How few are capable of rising to the divine enthusiasm of the Hellenic ideal? How few are gifted with the poetic ecstasy to unclothe the peplos from the chaste lines of the Greek Art goddess, letting it reveal—

"The grand cool flanks,
The bossy hills of snow"?

The vast majority in any college of which I have ever been a student, or of which I have in any way become cognisant, are not there for their love of learning, or through their thirst for knowledge; but are there simply to "grind" sufficient to pass the "exams." necessary to the profession they have selected, or which has been selected for them. Take your ordinary *alumnus*; his most distinguishing characteristic is his ignorance. He has some lamp learning, but no sun thought. He is a harmless drudge without a solitary idea that has not per-

colated down through the stale academia of the ages. His whole mental equipment is blue-mouldy. He is a blear-eyed and humpbacked thing of declensions and trochees, of asymptotes and surds—and absurds. The truth is, at college you do not learn soul-curing, except in the wide sense of learning to be good for nothing. If you go to learn to be a tailor, you are taught how to sew on buttons; if you go to learn to be a soul-curer, you are not taught how to refute even the most elementary arguments of the educated unbeliever. Preaching is possible only when it is legally protected against attack, and while open, a verbal criticism of a sermon is liable to be punished as "brawling." How molluscously vulnerable your bird of pray is when he dares to step outside of that coward's castle—the pulpit.

I have not half the antipathy to preaching in itself that I have to preaching as a profession. If a man is to rise to the dignity of being "a watchman on the watch-tower of the living God," and all that kind of thing, let him take a biscuit and a bottle in his knapsack, and do the watching and vigil as long as he likes. If he has the ignorance to think that God wants watching, and the impudence to think he is the man to do that watching, why, let him watch till he is black in the face, but always sustained by his own biscuit and bottle which he earned by honest mundane work before he took to bottling moonshine and to clipping the rainbow with his pocket scissors.

I have a sympathy with fanatics, even with stark, staring mad ones, when they are honest; when they are prepared to be at sacrifice for their fad, not make their living by it; when they are prepared to ride their hobby horse, and not disposed to ask somebody else to find corn for it. But I abhor the sordidness that will not keep watch on the watch-tower of the living God without the *douceur* of a negotiable-cheque and a penny stamp upon it. It is honourable enough to make a living

even by blacking boots, but it is absolutely dishonourable to make a living by being a watchman on the watch-tower of the living God. The bare contemplation of such sordid blasphemy is enough to make old Simon Magus turn in his grave. A man who would make his living by doing odd jobs for his God should require a fee to induce him to attempt to save his mother from drowning. Perhaps it may be demurred, I am hardly the person to decide as to what is Christian and what is not ; nevertheless, I assert that this hyper-Simony which is so "respectable" in our rotten midst is not Christian. Christ was offered no stipend if he would devote his life to doing odd jobs for God. He gave up his joinery, which had kept him in bannocks, and, for God's sake, submitted to be "an hungered." This was genuine, this was manly. It does not prove he was right, but it proves he was in earnest. To no man is it given to be right ; but to each man it should be possible to be earnest in regard to what appears to him to be right.

It is a divine feather in the cap of Jesus that he, presumably, had a comfortable sack stuffed with pine shavings, on which he was privileged to sleep while he confined himself to the making of three-legged stools ; but, that, when he left off the three-legged stools and took to preaching a three-pronged deity, he had not where to lay his head, although the foxes had their holes, and the birds of the air their nests. All honour to you, Jesus, and it requires the like of me to be in a position to do you honour, Sir. This is not a trait of your character upon which your priests and ministers dare dilate. You were noble enough to follow your convictions and starve ; they are mean enough to follow you in order that they may make a living. Shame upon them ; burning and unquenchable shame ! They do *not* follow you. They have turned their backs upon you, and are going in the exactly opposite direction. One *servant* (!) of yours

here among us has got £15,000 a year where you had not a shirt, and, when you died, had to borrow even a grave.

And, Lord Jesus, to keep up this £15,000 person and the system he represents, even I have to pay out of my modest earnings or have my books sold, and, possibly, the basin out of which I eat my oat porridge, and the spoon with which I eat it; I have to pay tithes to a church dedicated to St Sepulchre, and situated in Newgate Street. Can you tell me who the devil this St. Sepulchre was? I have not met anybody who knows, and yet I have to pay towards keeping up a church in his honour, a church I have never entered, nor ever will enter unless its functionaries may at length take my dead body inside and bury it under the flagstones by way of giving me some sort of value for my money.

I wonder, Lord Jesus, how your £15,000 servant can look even your poor, sad, lean, weary picture in the face. I am only an "infidel," but I can look it in the face, for I have not £15,000; but what I have to buy oatmeal and a herring with I have earned honestly, and right in the teeth of the way men earn money; for I cant not, I go to no church, I assail all churches, I do not take even the slightest pains to be "respectable;" and I drag my pen like a perfect hell-harrow over the hurdies of all the sorts of quacks and shams which you in your day inveighed against as "scribes and pharisees," I, too, have not had where to lay my head, and have slept in a haystack. A yokel came in the morning with a cart, and, I being yet asleep and covered over with hay, he was within an ace of inadvertently driving his hay-fork into my chest, and thereby introducing me to the world beyond the world of which I have no proof, but of which I have many an ecstatic dream. No one with sad eyes, and with a heart through which the surges of sorrow have swept, need turn aside from gazing on thy pictured face, O Jesus,

There is a mystic affinity between it and the soul of him who has played his earnest part in the tragedy of the world, who has recognised the eternal fruition of duty and the mocking hollowness of renown, and that—

“The rust will find the sword of fame ;
The dust will hide the crown :
That none shall nail so high his name,
Time will not tear it down,”

and works for the never-ending cosmic result which shall still obtain and advance when the concept of time has been superseded, and the postulate of space is no more.

But, how can worldly minded charlatans look in thy sincere and tragic eyes, O Jesus ! Men who, in thy name, make a living by dealing with the things of the spirit, the deep things of God, are ironically blasphemous to a degree, the contemplation of which would make Simon Magus shudder, and a worse reprobate than Iscariot despair and hang himself. Centuries ago Thomas à Kempis wrote “*De Imitatione Christi* ;” but, in all the centuries since then, who has imitated Christ even in the rudimentary gist and plainest lesson of his example? Follow him indeed, ye sacerdotal hypocrites, ye “generation of vipers,” as he would have called you ; ye imitate him by doing your best to have your brow resplendent with a mitre where his bled under a crown of thorns. Verily, as Ruskin observes, “only those who have left their means of living that they may preach, and whose peace follows them as they wander and abides where they enter in, are of God’s ordaining ; and, practically, until the church insists that every one of her ministers shall either have an independent income or support himself for his ministry on Sunday.....no word of the living Gospel will ever be spoken from her pulpits.”

A venal and hypocritical sacerdotalism poisons all with which it comes in contact and vitiates the very well-springs of social life. Godliness is great gain in the

pulpit, and the observant and greedy take care that it is also great gain in the market. In one of our suburbs there died the other day a well-known and respected citizen, who had successfully failed in business four times, and whose widow, it is believed, is in consequence pretty liberally provided for. He was a pillar of the Church—in fact, an ostentatious and highly ornamental pillar, and the Church accorded him an elaborate funeral, tricked out with all the expensive panoply of woe. And he was committed to the dust “in the sure and certain hope.” You can always rest assured you will be entombed in the certainty of quite a “glorious resurrection” if you leave sufficient to pay the glorious parrot to chatter over your remains.

A curious coincidence, if coincidence it was, made specially notable the burial of this worthy, who had been four times bankrupt, and who each time had got “white-washed,” and had recommenced swindling and canting on a bigger scale than before. As part of his obsequies, the audience sang the hymn, “Failing, Still Failing,” followed by “Jesus Paid it all”!

CRUELTY RESTRAINING CRANKERY.

IF you be a well-read and fairly sane person, you would pass the door of a licensed gospel-shop, just as, if you be a total abstinence person, you would pass the portal of a licensed gin-shop. And, you can pass the one with the same impunity with which you pass the other. If you desire neither gospel nor gin, there is no compulsion that you take either. But, time was, when you were compelled to enter the gospel-shop, whether you wanted gospel or no. For not duly patronizing the regular Sunday oral moonshine and ritual incantations, you were fined on earth and burnt in hell ; hard lines indeed for him who objected to go and listen to the croakings of the State bird of pray. His breeches pockets were emptied, in this world, the region of his breeches' pockets was blistered in the next !

In 1559, the second year of Elizabeth's reign, an Act of Uniformity was passed, by which the fine for not attending church was one shilling for the first offence, equal to 10s. in present value. The fines might be coupled with imprisonment, and even death. In 1661, the second year of the reign of Charles II., the anti-Puritan party passed the Conventicle Act, compelling attendance at the parish church, forbidding the assembling of more than five persons for religious exercises at one time or place, excepting at the parish church. The punishment for non-compliance included imprisonment ; and payments ranging from £100 to £1,000 were enforced. These Acts were partly repealed in William and

Mary's reign, some in that of William IV. ; and the remainder were swept away in the ninth and tenth years of Victoria.

For persistent non-attendance at church, Elizabeth took your inside out. For persistently keeping bad time, a watch has its inside taken out. But the watch's inside is examined, rectified and restored. Your inside, however, was not examined, rectified and restored. The blue flies had a banquet off it, and the dogs might have a snack at it, before it was burnt or buried. If, persistently, you would not go to church, Elizabeth, by the grace of God queen of these realms, knew that your inside must be irreparably wrong, and she took it out of you, not to adjust and replace it, but to have done with it, once and for all, that you might go to the place prepared for you. It was a practical maxim of early Protestantism in England that a persistent non-church-goer, should, primarily, have his pockets rifled, and, ultimately, his abdomen. A person who would not go to sermon was first to be deprived of such coins as crowns and nobles, and, next of such enterics as the duodenum and the colon-transverse. You may not see the connection between non-church-going and evisceration, but that is only because you are in Egyptian darkness and crassly ignorant of the mystery of godliness.

Elizabeth herself was a Papist. She had, on the occasion of her coronation, invoked the earth to swallow her up if she were not a Papist to the back-bone. The earth did not gape and swallow her up, being, I presume, quite satisfied that what she said was true. During the reign of her brother Edward, she had been a Protestant, during the reign of her sister, Mary, she had been a Papist ; and, during her own reign, she had vowed to be a Papist ; but, something occurred which led her to change her mind, led her to be a Protestant, and to cut the insides out of Papists.

What was that something? Well, when she, according to custom, notified to the powers of Europe that she had been crowned queen, coming to the throne *by hereditary right*, the Pope's comment was that he failed to understand the hereditary right of a person *not born in lawful wedlock*. This comment of his Holiness roused Elizabeth's dander to the boiling pitch. She resolved to abjure and antagonize a Church, the head of which denied her right to the throne of England. True, she was Ann Boleyn's daughter, and the Pope had never sanctioned her father Henry's philanderings with the said Ann, which philanderings he stigmatized as adultery. Still, a more politic Pope would have held his peace about Elizabeth's not being born in wedlock.

His Holiness had fairly put his foot in it. By opening his mouth he had established the Church of England, a Church with, peradventure, the most feculent origin of any institution on the face of the earth. It was conceived in adultery and cradled in bastardy. England was not Protestant.* The faith that had served her for nine hundred years was sufficient for her still. There was, among the masses of her population, no spiritual awakening, no intellectual renaissance, that warranted ecclesiastical revolution. The Pope had affronted the red-haired frump, Elizabeth, who had so recently invoked the earth to

* She, evidently, never has been sincerely Protestant; and now that she is, to a great extent, left to her option in the matter, she is unmistakably, returning to Popery. I quote, from the *Tablet*, the following figures as to the increasing number of Anglican churches which have adopted Roman doctrines and practices:—

	1882	1888	Per cent. increase.	1896	Per cent. increase.
Daily Eucharist.....	123	200	63	474	137
Eastward position...	662	2,690	62	5,964	122
Altar lights	581	1,136	95	3,568	214
Vestments	336	599	78	1,632	172
Incense.....	9	89	888	307	212

swallow her if she were not his dutiful co-religionist.
But,

“ Earth hath no rage like love to hatred turned,
And hell no fury like a woman scorned.”

Might the earth change its mind, and now open up and swallow Elizabeth if she were not a Protestant !

The nobles who had had slices of Church lands were Protestants to a man. Acres are a very convincing argument when you have to decide on the rival claims of such claimants as Anglicanism and Romanism. The Church that gives you acres is sure to be doctrinally correct. Of course, there were not sufficient acres to go round among all the pike-men and halberdiers necessary to establish “the glorious Reformation” in England ; but, fry of that kind are always at the beck and call of those with the acres or the cash. Moreover, the pike-man of Elizabeth’s time, stupid though he was, could see how the cat was likely to jump ; and, like all the unheroic, he elected to be on the winning side, the side on which he would be most likely to retain his inside ; for, even a pike-man does not like to part with that ; and Elizabeth was a disemboweller, the result of she herself having no bowels of compassion.

But, inside or no inside, there were large numbers who stood true as steel to England’s ancient faith, true to the creed of Augustine, of Bede, of Alcuin, and Caedman. Thousands of such, with their insides taken out, had to get along without them as best they might. For my own part, I cannot see the connection between having your liver extracted and the adoption of Cranmer’s Prayer-Book. But, Elizabeth could see the connection ; and, I admit, I am no theologian. The “good” Elizabeth saw the connection between gospel and gutting-knife far more clearly than “Bloody” Mary did. She was far bloodier than “Bloody” Mary. The Church of England has, of course, told you quite a different story ; but then what

Church could thrive that could not tell a good round lie? For the founding of a Church, the most important personage mentioned in holy writ is Ananias.

If the Romish was a priest-ridden, the Anglican was as emphatically a monarch-ridden sacerdotalism. Says Macaulay, "The Church of England magnified in fulsome phrase the kingly prerogative, which was constantly employed to defend and aggrandize her, and reprobated, much at her ease, the depravity of those whom oppression, from which she was exempt, had goaded to rebellion. Her favourite theme was the doctrine of non-resistance. That doctrine she taught without any qualification, and followed out to all its extreme consequences. Her disciples were never weary in repeating that in no conceivable case, not even if England were cursed with a king resembling Busirus or Phalaris, who, in defiance of law, and without the pretence of justice, should daily doom hundreds of innocent victims to torture and death, would all the estates of the realm be justified in withstanding his tyranny by physical force."

But, this by the way. What I set out to show was that, in Elizabeth's reign, it was compulsory that you should, hebdomadally, partake of a stated cut and dry dose of state-regulated drivel, doled out in church and yclept "divine service." This regulation dose was not an unmixed evil. Till people really can and will think for themselves they should have their imbecility regulated for them. Lunacy is more easily coped with when it is all reduced to one pattern. Crabbed, cracked and crazy although the State regulation of "religious" lunacy is, it is certainly preferable to the eccentric and motley Bedlamisms which result from encouraging each half-baked wastrel to "worship" as seems to *him* best; as if anything that seems to *him* best could be anything but worst. By keeping the noses of the masses on the grindstone of the Book of Common Prayer, you keep

the said masses *comparatively* sane. When you permit every irresponsible dolt to save his damned soul after his own fashion, his fashion is apt to take a course that is mad and outrageous far beyond anything that Pope or Parliament ever enjoined or sanctioned.

For instance, a year or two ago a small party of American religious cranks, tired of the civilization of the present day, left their homes in Kansas, and journeying to a small deserted spot among the sand-hills of the Indian Territory, founded what is probably the most curious religious crankery in the world. There were, at first, only seventy settlers, but at the present time that number is almost double, and twenty log-houses and two store depôts are barely sufficient for the requirements of the sanctified.

The beliefs of this community are exceedingly simple. Whatever property they possess is held in common, any one using any particular thing he sees fit to desire at the time. It is deemed a sin to accumulate property or valuables of any kind. The doctrine of the cranks forbids them to look upon the face of any human being. Men and women alike, therefore, constantly wear dark red masks, and never by any chance do they gaze upon the face of one another by day or night. The two sexes dwell in separate localities, their homes being about two miles apart. Each of these communities subsists independently of the other; and, each possesses ten houses and one storehouse, from which to draw supplies. The work is done regardless of sex, the females engaging in all the labours necessary for the welfare of their own particular village. There are several married couples in the colony, but John and Janet live apart, and meet only at the daily religious service, which is held in the open air, summer and winter alike, at a central point between the two villages.

There is one member of this strange sect, John Walrond by name, who conducts all communications with the out-

side world. When he undertakes his periodical journeys for provisions to the nearest towns, El Reno, and Kingfisher, he lays aside the unsightly red mask ; but, upon his return, he buries himself in absolute solitude for ten days, as an expiation for his sin of going among mankind uncovered. The chance visitor to the colony is treated kindly and courteously, and should he wish to rest on his journey, he is given lodging in a hut built for his reception. He is, however, never asked to stay, nor do his hosts ever give him a hint to leave. The wearers of the red mask converse without hesitation and express themselves as being perfectly happy in their solitude. They say that they could not be induced to return to the ordinary mode of life ; and, so distasteful is such an idea to them, that they refuse to listen to any details of the outer world, but talk simply and earnestly of their spiritual state, its beauty and blessings, never to mention its lunacies.

Another "religious" crankery exists at Ottawa, Canada. The members of this organization number a dozen all told, but Jesuitical rule is not more severe than theirs. Their one garment is a loose, brown robe. They wear neither hats, shoes nor stockings, and each day they perform a little of the task of digging their own graves. Every morning at dawn, be it fine weather or foul, each monk takes the iron spade from his cell, and wends his way to the garden, where he solemnly delves in the dewy ground and slowly raises a quantity of earth from the spot where one day his own body is to be laid. Day by day, shovelful by shovelful, each brother digs his grave, and if he do not die by the time the grave is finished, he begins, shovelful by shovelful, to return the cast-up soil.

Should death come while the grave is unfinished, the dead man's comrades complete the task for him. Then, after hours of silent prayer, the uncoffined body is lowered into the ground, clad in the garments the dead had worn during life. After breakfast, each member of the sect

slings two cotton bags over his shoulder and starts out on his regular tour of begging. The rules of the society forbid its members to do any sort of worldly labour. They are not permitted to own a penny's worth of anything, and none can eat any comestible which is not received by begging. The brothers pass almost their entire time in begging and praying; but, as praying too is begging, these worthies have really only two functions in life, begging, and digging their own graves. Why don't they dig their own graves and get into them and leave the begging alone?

The Book of Common Prayer, with all its banalities is decorous compared with, for instance, this call to public "religious" service:—"Music! Don't miss this treat. It will surpass all previous efforts. There will be avalanches of music and salvation melody. Instruments galore! Instruments brass, reed, string and other, including piano, cornet, drum, jewsharp, banjo, bones, harmonica, flageolet, ocarina, zobo, mandoline, guitar, concertina, accordeon, bottlephone, lipograph, autoharp, piccolo, comb, etc. There will be solos, duets, trios, etc., sung in long, common, short, tall, and broad metres. It will be a grand time, a joyous time, a time of speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs and singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord. Come, drunk or sober, rich or poor, black or white! Come one! Come all! Bring the baby."

This is an invitation recently issued by that *Vox Præterea Nihil*, the Salvation Army. I am almost tempted to wish that Elizabeth had had two months to devote to bringing round that Army to its senses. Gramercie and Marrie-come-up, she would have made these howling dervishes of the Victorian era sing their doggerel in solemn silence. Peradventure she would not have taken their inside out, for, I should think, from the noise they make, that it is out already—empty vessels make the

greatest sound. She could not have taken their brains out, on the principle, "Ye canna tak' the breeks aff a Heilan' man." It is in a skull that contains no brains that you are most apt to find crude junks of credulity and empty sounding-space through which to reverberate the dithyrambs of devilry which the idiotic call "hymns," and with which they horrify Man, but are supposed to glorify God.

FRONT AND REAR.

PAUL JONES (John Paul) and myself have this in common that we were both born in Kirkbean, and that within a gunshot of each other. We have, moreover, this in common that we have both been prayed at. Heaven has heard of me. It might have been ignorant of my existence but for the fact that the Rev. B— — recently brought me under the celestial attention by politely referring to me in his prayer as a “strong wolf of Satan let loose among the weak sheep of the sheep-fold of Christ.” Well, a wolf any day is as respectable a member of the earth’s fauna as is a sheep. By the way, “sheep” is a peculiarly apt description of the creatures in the “fold” the bird of prey refers to. A sheep is certainly one of the most brainless of brutes, and it follows any lead, however stupid. Let one sheep go through a hole in the hedge, and the others will follow pell-mell in scores and hundreds, even if it only be to, in succession, break their necks over a precipice. It is surprising that Heaven did not take some way to lead the rev. gentleman to recognise that he himself, not I, was the wolf. He has his living off the sheep, I have not. Thanks to him and his teachings, I get nothing from his “flock” except nasty buttings from their horns. Wolf, indeed! It is the cleric, not I, that has the ovine victims and the lupine carnival.

But as to Paul Jones and his being, like myself, prayed at and brought under the direct attention of Heaven by one of those sacred functionaries down on earth here,

and whose business it is to bring the like of Jones and myself and other sinners from Kirkbean and elsewhere directly under the attention of deity. This Jones, finding no opening for his undoubted talents and energy in the navy of his native country, during our war with America, took the part of that nation "rightly struggling to be free," and proved himself to be a veritable thorn in our side. He has been rightly credited with being the founder of the American navy. The fact of his audacious landing upon St. Mary's Isle, for the purpose of capturing the Earl of Selkirk, is well known. Less notorious is the fear and consternation he occasioned by sailing his terrible ship *Ranger* up the Fife coast till plainly seen from "the lang toon o' Kirkcaldy." It was on that occasion he was quaintly and vehemently prayed at. The folk of the "lang toon" did not know what the devil to do, so they applied to the Lord. This they did through the medium of their own paid soul-saver, the Rev. Mr. Shirra. No sooner did the *Ranger* come fairly within sight than Shirra seized a strong arm-chair and, carrying it on his head, hurried down to the beach. His flock followed him in scores, bleating piteously, few even of the tougher tups having any fight in them or resolution to bury their horns in the stomachs of the invader. They readily recognised that their terrible and renegade countryman, Jones, would be too much for them; and they had only the gruesome prospect of having their bawbees taken and their throats cut.

One resource remained to the folk of Kirkcaldy, and a desperate resource it was—a stirring appeal to the Lord. Had they felt that they had a chance in a stand-up fight they would have gone down to the shore with fowes,* graips,† scythes, hewkes,‡ flails, and blunderbusses, and not have troubled the Lord. But, as it was, the Rev.

* Fowes = hay-forks.

† Graips = muck-forks.

‡ Hewkes = sickles.

Mr. Shirra planted his arm-chair on the shingle, and, with his flock around him, mounted it, drew the attention of heaven to the white sales of the *Ranger* and the desperate plight of the townsfolk of Kirkcaldy.

Tradition has preserved Mr. Shirra's prayer; and it runs thus: "Noo, Lord, dinna ye think it is a shame for ye to send this vile pirate to rob oor folk o' Kirkcaldy? For ye ken they are puir eneuch already, and hae naething to spare. They are a' fairly guid, and it wad be a pity to serve them in sic a wey. The wey the wind blaws, he'll be here in a jiffy, and wha kens what he may do? He is nane owre guid for onything. Muckle's the mischief he has done already. Ony pocket gear (money) they hae gathered thegither, he will gang wi' the whole o't, and maybe burn their houses, tak' their claes, and strip them to their sarks! And, wae's me!—Wha kens but the bluidy villain may tak' their lives? The puir women are maist frightened oot o' their wuts, and the bairns skirlin' after them. I canna thol't! I canna thol't! I hae been lang a faithfu' servant to ye, Lord; but gin ye dinna turn the wind about, and blaw the scoonerel § oot o' our gate, I'll nae stir a foot, but just sit here until the tide comes in and droons me. Sae tak' your wull o't, Lord!" The Lord it seems did not care to drown this holy haverel; so he good-naturedly listened to his Doric and drastic prayer, changed the direction of the wind, and blew "the scoonerel oot o' our gate."

It was, no doubt, very courteous and obliging of the Lord to change the wind and blow away the "scoonerel." But I expect that the hostile ships of the future will be blown away from our littoral without our placing an arm-chair on the beach and perching a bird of pray on it to croak to heaven. In the past, deity has been more pestered and importuned about weather than about any other topic. The inconstant, conflicting, and irritating

§ Scoonerel = scoundrel.

nature of meteorological prayers is perhaps the reason we have, as a rule, such shockingly bad weather. But, at last, there is some prospect of our taking the weather into our own hands, and making a kirk or a mill of it, most likely with the result of our having a more equable climate and a less pestered and, consequently, better tempered deity. I read in a scientific contemporary that Professor F. B. Crocker thinks that the time is not far off when, by means at our own human disposal, we shall be able to effect a considerable modification of climate. It has already been suggested to utilize the heat of the tropics for tempering the harshness of colder zones, by transforming the sun rays into electricity. In the tropics the solar energy develops a force of about one horse-power to each square yard of the surface exposed, and, as there the sun's action is almost continuous during the day, the force would be fairly reliable. But Professor Crocker's idea is much simpler than this; he proposes to pipe the air from a distance, as we now pipe water, oil, natural gas, milk, and even wine. A thin steel tube of five feet diameter would carry an enormous quantity; much more than anyone would realise who had not figured it out.

Such a pipe line as this would not be very expensive, and would present much less material difficulty of equipment than a railroad. A pipe 3,000 miles long would stretch from the tropical to the arctic zone. In spite of the apparent wildness of this suggestion, Professor Crocker regards it as not half so daring as was the idea of laying a cable under the Atlantic. The difficulties to be overcome then were greater than any obstacles which this enterprise would encounter. Science has brushed aside so many hindrances and probed so many secrets that it is very hard to define its limit. The time may come when we shall be quite as anxious and just as active in providing means for a fresh air supply for our cities as we are now to have pure water available. In all proba-

bility, the experiment will first be tried on a small scale, such as the piping of the air from the nearest seaside resort ; but the extension of the system to long distances is perfectly feasible.

We should thus be able to draw cold air from the north and warm air from the south. This may also suggest a means of controlling rainfall. A cold blast could be turned on when the rain was needed, and a hot blast when it was desirable to keep it away. This idea may possibly be worked out eventually ; but, in the meanwhile, some electric central stations are proposing to supplement their regular business by supplying to their customers cool air in summer and warm air in winter, for use in their houses and offices, and in all probability this less ambitious scheme will be the first to be put into working shape. And all the *Zeit Geist* and trend of the age is in this kind of direction, and not in the direction of mounting a creature with a white necktie on an arm-chair and paying him to hollar at heaven.

Formerly there were, and even yet there are, in certain out-of-the-way regions, persons who seem to have a contract with "The Prince of the Power of the Air" to sublet winds for so much cash down. For so much cash down your ordinary bird of pray gives you wind and nothing more. But, let that pass. Let us turn from the wind for saving souls to the wind for propelling ships. My readers will remember Norna of Fitful Head in "The Pirate." Filey fishermen will not allow passengers to whistle in their boats, and they do so themselves only "while the wind is asleep," as they put it. French sailors once thought it necessary only to flog a boy at the mast, and a fine breeze would soon be forthcoming. In the Hebrides a favourable wind was supposed to be procured by suspending a he-goat's skin to the mast-head. Sardinian sailors obtained a good breeze by sweeping a chapel after mass and blowing the dust from it after

departing ships. A Fiji mode of getting a wind was to wish aloud for it, after taking a drink. Chinese sailors believe they can produce a favourable breeze by beating gongs, exploding fire-crackers, and burning incense-sticks to their divinity, and by casting food offerings into the water. It was long a superstition among seamen that the Finn had some magical control over the winds. The original belief was that the people of Finland and Lapland had it in their power to sell favourable gales. Scott refers to this in "Rokeby":—

"What gales are sold on Lapland's shore!"

The mariner going to a Finland wind-merchant would obtain, for a consideration, a cord or handkerchief with three knots in it. Each knot, as it was untied, caused an atmospheric commotion. The untying of the first knot brought a moderate wind, the second a small gale, and the third a hurricane.

There is still a good deal of what is misnamed "religion"; but there is very little orthodoxy now-a-days. The fresh breeze of the new world is blowing away the dust and cobwebs from the windows of the old and letting in the light of science, and its concomitant, heresy. Every thinking man is now a church unto himself. Recently, a ruling elder in a somewhat enlightened district was asked by an outsider how his kirk got along. The elder replied: "Aweel, we had four hundred members. Then we had a division, and there were only two hundred left; then a disruption, and only ten of us left. Then we had a heresy trial; and now there is only me and ma brither Duncan left, and I hae great doots o' Duncan's orthodoxy." We are fast approaching the day when no man will be prepared to answer for his brother's orthodoxy, nor even be quite cock-sure about his own.

And, further, as to the air. There may have been more than met the eye in the fact of the wild ass snuffing the east wind. "The Prince of the Power of the

Air." is referred to in Holy Writ. Quite an uncanny personage is signified ; but it seems as if, in the not remote future, "The Prince of the Power of the Air" will be no uncanny personage, but only Mr. J. Smith who, for chiliads, prayed for wind, but who now supplies himself with it in pipes, cold from Nova Zembla, and hot from Lima, at so much per cubic foot, and not an inch of praying in the whole matter. Smith has recently discovered that there is *argon* in the air ; and God only knows what else is in it. I should not be surprised if scientific but prayerless Smith experiment with it till he blow up the universe. Already, and not by prayer, Smith has found out the following facts :—

If all the air in an ordinary room were subjected to a temperature of 180 degrees below zero, the result would be a drop of bluish liquid. This drop, suddenly exposed to heat, would explode like dynamite. A slow exposure means so much force which, like steam, has to find elbow room. Air will, therefore, in all likelihood, be the motor power of the future ; and although to an Englishman (every extra clever Englishman is, of course, a Scotsman) belongs the credit of first liquefying it successfully, yet already a German scientist is seeking to put Professor Dewar's labours to a practical use. He has constructed a model of an engine, with reservoir for the liquid oxygen, one drop of which would be sufficient to propel a locomotive and four cars for a mile. He had previously planned a nitro-glycerine motor ; but there were so many accidents in his workshop that he had to temporarily abandon the idea. Very few persons would suppose there could be any danger in the liquid air, yet it was as powerful a medium of destruction as molten lead, as Professor Dewar found to his cost during the progress of his experiments. He nearly lost the entire flesh of his right thumb through contact with the frozen oxygen. Cold is just as intense

as heat. A drop of air at a temperature of *minus* 180 degrees would freeze a hole right through a person's hand, quite as effectually as the same quantity of molten steel or lead would burn it through.

The mechanic of the future will not bore with a gimlet, but with a drop of liquefied air. This drop he will carry in a bass basket among his other tools, and suspended over his shoulder from the handle of his axe. He will, when sober, keep it pretty well apart from the box of matches used in lighting his pipe. When he is not sober, he may, "beyond all daring brave," have mercy on the poor little drop, blue with cold, and light a match to warm it. Better warm a cartload of cold snakes in your bosom than warm one little drop of liquefied air with a lighted match. After the snake bite you may be what the crone who comes to dress you calls "a lovely corpse;" and you will go to heaven and have a harp, or to hell and have a gridiron; but, after the exploded drop, you have simply no corpse at all; and you can have neither a harp to play on nor a gridiron to lie on; you will simply have nothing and be nowhere.

So much for the eschatological aspect of the case; but what will, peradventure, seem of more direct importance to the man of the not remote future, his Life Insurance policy will be lost. The law has already decided that point. Recently an employée in a large chemical work in Germany entered one of the departments with a lighted lantern, with the result that an explosion occurred, followed by the bursting of the acid tanks. He was never seen again, nor was there ever discovered even a shred of his clothing. The insurance companies refused to pay the policies on his life, claiming there was not proof of death!

We have arrived at impious times. In pious times research lay, not in the direction of liquefying air, but

in the direction of liquefying the blood of St. Januarius. Man, who was wont to go down on his knees and howl at heaven for help, is developing a tendency to stand on his feet and help himself. Deity was wont to take care of him; but now deity, at all events the ancient tetragrammatonic deity, cannot take care of himself. A Scots nobleman of the olden times was in the habit of indulging too freely at the hospitable tables of his friends. He took the precaution to have always with him a trustworthy retainer, who never failed to avoid all temptation to excess, in order to make sure of taking his master safely home. On one occasion Donald had been induced to join in the festivities of the servants' hall, and, feeling himself quite overcome, managed to stagger upstairs and whisper to his master, who was in the full swing of enjoyment at the table, "My lord, ye'll hae tae tak' care o' yersel' the nicht, for its a' owre wi' me." Ere a long time pass the archaic deity whom our fathers swore by—never to speak of the many things they swore at—will have to come to every educated and honest man among us, and say: "My dear Sir, ye'll hae tae tak' care o' yersel' the nicht—and a' ither nichts—for it's a' owre wi' me." And yet Humanity, educated or uneducated, does not take kindly to athiesm. I do not believe any one would ever have repudiated deity in the abstract if theologians had not insisted upon such an incredible deity in the concrete.

But Humanity makes a very big army. That of Xerxes was a mere drop in the bucket to it, and there is a tremendous distance between the front and rear. In the front they are making their own weather, and when they have succeeded in obtaining a ton of liquefied air they may, if they like, apply a match to it and blow up creation; and, if the Elohim be left intact, burden them with the duty of doing creation over again in six days, or more, or less. So much for the front. But the rear is

still where it was in the Dark Ages. Presbyterianism knows nothing of Darwin; it still squares its conduct by Leviticus. The late Rev. Dr. Andrew Bonar used to tell with much pawky humour a story of a farmer in the Carse of Gowrie who was a select specimen of the unco guid, which term includes the unco unenlightened. The farmer arrived home late on a Saturday night with muddy boots. Requiring the same pair on Sabbath, that he might put them on his pious feet and walk in the way of the Lord, he set his housekeeper to clean them at once. 'Twelve o'clock striking, he loudly called upon her to stop! "But," said she, "there's only one of them cleaned." "Never mind," said her master; "it's Sabbath morning." And to kirk he went next day with one shining and one muddy boot! Dr. Bonar used to add, with a twinkle in his eye, that the best of it was the farm clock was half-an-hour fast.

But the rear proper is brought up by the more credulous of the lemen of the Scarlet Lady of the Seven Hills. *Teste.* To the Realm of the Almighty Dollar there has just been exported the dried-up carcass of one of the saints of Almighty God. To the faithful St. Peregrinus and Good Friday last came together—the latter in the course of time, and the former in a German Lloyd steamer. Good Friday came in as silently as any other decent day. St. Peregrinus came in a six-foot pine box, secured with two iron padlocks. St. Peregrinus is dead. He died a martyr. Commodus, the emperor, slew him in the year 185. So far as is known he has been dead ever since, and pious folks have for these ages fallen down and worshipped him. He had been stretched on the rack, beaten with clubs, scorched by burning torches, lashed with leaden scourges—a martyr of the martyrs. And he died. What else could he have done under the circumstances? But the worst of it is a dead saint is more lively than

fifty living ones. They put Peregrinus in the catacombs ; but, after a while, resurrected him, and took him to Bavaria. At every town on the transit his genuineness was sworn to by his custodians. At Neustadt, in Bavaria, a silken robe with four hundred rubies, pearls, and emeralds was presented to him, a silver crown with precious stones crowned him, and he was laid on his bed under the altar. Poor saint ! he came near being cremated in 1854, when everything about him was burned up except the blessed sacrament—nothing of the church left but himself and the wafer.

And, now he has gone off to the land of wooden nutmegs, in order to be a sacred marvel to such as have wooden heads. America has never had before this year a full-sized dead saint to worship. She has one now. Count von Lowenstein, a rich Bavarian, has very benevolently, at his own expense, supplied her lack, and St. Peregrinus is to have his rest down in the wilderness of Harlem, N.Y., at St. Anselm's Church. Rouse ye, relic-mongers and relic worshippers, and hasten to Father Speilman's church, and test whether, at miracle-mongering, St. Peregrinus is worth the money he cost Von Lowenstein. Those of ye who do not now think of making your own wind and weather, Go to St. Peregrinus. So much for the distance between front and rear !

ZOOPHILY.

IN large towns at least, and in the centres of comparative intelligence, you can go to church or stay away, just as it pleases best yourself. To the credit of our species, most now elect *not* to go. Most do better than go, and few can do worse. The church is a "public-house" in which you can indulge in any amount of mental prostitution and moral dissipation. It is *the* institution of the time that is utterly and absolutely out of harmony with the intelligence of the time. Its doctrines, even its forms and ceremonies, were fixed centuries ago—fixed by our forefathers, adjusted to the standard of their superstition, and forced into line with the highest tide-mark of their ignorance. A fourth standard boy at a Board school knows more than the best of our sainted Church fathers, pious founders, and doctors of divinity knew. And yet, we go through the execrable sham of sending our youth to universities to educate them for the express purpose of preaching a gospel that was framed by the uneducated, which claims that its founder was an illiterate and itinerant carpenter, and his early proselytes "unlearned and ignorant" fishermen in an obscure and God-forsaken corner of an ancient Roman province.

What has the learning of Oxford and Cambridge to do with the narrow and provincial ignorance of a maker of three-legged stools in Judæa 2,000 years ago? What has Modern Science, which, under the vast oceans of the globe, speaks to the furthest shores, to do with ten or a dozen dolts who caught flat fish in a miserable little

duck-pond of a place in Galilee? The whole thing is a ghastly burlesque. But it is a burlesque that pays the persons who perpetrate it; and there the whole secret of its perpetuation lies. When our fathers were little more than barbarians, they attached liberal endowments to their barbaric embodiments of theology, and stereotyped these embodiments; it never occurred to them that their descendants would be wiser than they. And, for the cash attached to them, the modern cleric endorses the stereotyped barbarics and subscribes to the Thirty-nine Absurdities. Then, if he live and move and have his being in a district which has been reached by the modern spirit, his whole professional life is one desperate and despicable quibble, one disingenuous attempt to make it appear that the old darkness is the modern light, one miserable effort to reconcile the irreconcilable.

As long as the Church was able, it compelled your attendance. If you declined to go and listen to the story of a woman being made out of a rib, of a prophet praying in a whale's inside, and of a drove of devil-possessed pigs committing suicide, woe betide you. You could be fined till Lazarus was rich compared with you, for you had not a doorstep to lie on, nor a dog to lick your sores, although you had plenty of sores ready for the licking. All the pence out of your pockets, the effect was tried of hammering tenpenny nails through the gristle of your ears. He that hath ears that will not listen to barbaric lunacy, let him have tenpenny nails in them. And, still impenitent, you were banished—you were not good enough to be allowed to remain in England if you did not go to hear about the pigs being drowned in Galilee.

But in those "good old times" the Church was better worth going to than it is now. Not only had the march of civilisation not left it so far behind; but it had

sundry, to the multitude, attractive features, of which it has since been shorn. Cruelty and bloodshed have ever been dear to the affections of uncultured and unregenerate man. In recognition of this the crucifixion tragedy was invented, and "the blood of the lamb" was poured about everywhere in copious libations. To this hour the mob will have nothing to do with either a theology or a literature that has not abundant blood and thunder in it. Dear to the "bloke" is the theological penny horrible, plenty of incredible marvels, enough of blood and blazes. Besides giving the "bloke" a gospel redolent of these two latter ingredients, the State further provided a supply of truculence and gore in the sports it sanctioned and encouraged. Bulls were actually baited within the precincts of Wells Cathedral on Sunday, and the sport was enforced by law, for it was considered that it made the flesh of the ox more wholesome. Accordingly, we find that in 1612 a butcher of Wells was summoned before the city magistrates for having slaughtered a bull "not first bayted," and punished accordingly.

And yet many of the zoophilists of the present day indulge in a nauseating cataplasm of Christian cant, and claim that Christianity is on their side when they plead for kindness to animals. Christianity is nothing of the sort, and it is just because they have (unconsciously) outgrown Christianity that they stand up as the evangelists of a more true and tender humanity. In the East to this hour it is not unusual to cut a slice out of a living animal to be used as a meal by the animal's owner. If Jesus did not keep his eyes in his pockets, he must have been aware of this. Where has he uttered one word in denunciation of it? He cursed a fig-tree. Had he not better have left the fig-tree alone and cursed the knife that would cut a meal out of the flank of a living steer? The common mass of mankind are, apparently, prepared

to hear anything of this Jesus—except the truth. He is the last strain of carl-hemp in their infernal figment, the dread gonfalon round which the battalions of superstition will make their final and most desperate rally. A bull was tortured within the precincts of the cathedral of this Jesus at Wells. What word could be quoted from this Jesus or his apostles that might be construed into an appeal for mercy to the tormentors of the writhing and agonised beast? The laws of this England, a special preserve of this Jesus, enacted that a bull *must* be tortured before being killed, and, mind you, this in Protestant times! What words could you quote from Jesus, what syllable from his father, Jehovah, that would discountenance an enactment so revolting and horrible?

The "House of God" was the House of Torture. Did not the congregation owe their chance of eternal happiness to the torturing of a man-god upon a cross; and, consequently, what was more appropriate than that the churches of this man-god should be associated with torture—with the tormenting of bulls and bears? An Act of James I. in 1617 insisted that the "sports" of the congregation, bull and bear-baiting, should take place *after morning prayer*. First of all, address some puerile flatteries to the bull's maker, and then stick prods and dog tusks into the bull's self. First, wash your soul in the blood of the lamb, and then dye your goad with the blood of the ox. First, listen to the story of Elijah flying to heaven, and then, from the bull's horns, watch the dog being hurled as high as Haman. The god you were praying to made dogs; it was your business to unmake them. See one tossed canine after another come to earth with a yell and a sprawl. In church you were chanting anent the horn of your salvation. He, however, poor dog, on the same "blessed Sabbath," has had the horn of his damnation driven through his jecur. The infuriated bovine kneels down and gores him into a jelly. But

you have been to morning prayer, and have put it all right with deity, and with the "High and Mighty Prince James" to whom deity's book is dedicated. The dog is done for, butchered to make a Christian Sabbath day; and the bull is lacerated and bloody from the tail-tip to the eye-holes, and he is absolutely frantic with pain and rage. Glorious! Truly Christian. No more agonised than Gethsemane, no bloodier than Calvary. You can wash the gore and mud and excreta splashes from your clothes and hands and face. You can bury the dog or dogs; you can knock the bull on the head and eat him. You can be severely fined if you eat him before you have tortured him. Your soul was saved by agony; your body is to be nourished by agony: your creed and your deed harmonise. You are in good old Protestant England of the open bible—in good Christian England, when Christianity was genuine and unemasculated; there was not in all the land, from Carlisle to St. Michael's Mount, one solitary "infidel" of my type—one who has mercy for the bull, but no mercy for your creed.

York is a holy city, hardly less so than Canterbury—is, in fact, a sort of English Mecca. It had, till down into the second decade of this century, a regular anniversary of holy cruelty. In sacred fiction there is one Luke, said to have been a physician; but, quite likely, if he ever existed at all, a bungling bore, with his fingers all thumbs, and who could not extract a tooth without breaking a jaw. Be this as it may, this Luke had—still has—a day; not a day out, like Sarah Jane, but a day in which you were bound to perform fatuous incantations in his memory. This St. Luke's day was, in York, known also as "Whip-Dog Day." On this day it was the custom for the devout to whip, kick, stone, and generally maltreat all dogs that came within their reach.

This was for Jesus' sake. In pre-Reformation times, in one of the city churches, mass was being said, when the

priest inadvertently dropped the "pax" after consecration, when it was at once devoured by a dog which had strayed into the sacred edifice. The dog was speedily killed, and his offence was visited upon all his kind in future years down to the third and fourth, yea, down possibly to the twentieth or thirtieth generation; for it was not till 1819 that the dogs of York had immunity from the dire retribution visited upon their ancient ancestor for having eaten the pax. John Smith, the man, eats the pax, and is thereby blessed; Rover, the dog, eats it, and he is thereby cursed, even down the long line of his yet unwhelped posterity.

If Smith liked to make an ass, and worse, of himself over his pax and other flapdoodlery, he was, possibly, quite right in so doing. But he had no right to drag poor Rover into his incantations of sinister sanctity. He may have been right in swallowing his deity, hair, bones, saw, and jack-plane; but he should have left Rover out of the matter. Will Josephine Butler, Frances Power Cobbe, and other well-meaning persons who cannot preach kindness without cant, tell me, through these long ages, how many dogs, as St. Luke's day, October 18th, came round, had their legs broken for Christ's sake, and how many dashed through Bootham Bar with tin-kettles tied to their tails tearing along like Jehu—and all for Jesus—all because a hocus-pocused bit of this Jesus had once, long ago, been gobbled by Rover the dog, instead of having been nibbled by Smith the manikin?

I can hold no parley with a "religion" based upon the cruel murdering of a dog; I should reject a creed that should involve even the murdering of a dog. A faith founded upon blood, crucifixion, and cruelty is not from heaven—it is from hell. Our creed, with its horrid "fountain filled with blood," has demoralised and brutalised us till our very pastime is murder, and our "sports" involve some creature's wounds and agony.

There sits the gentlest maiden in all the church ; and, even she wears on her bonnet a broken wing from which “chemicals” have with difficulty cleansed the stain of blood.

“Just in front of my pew sits a maiden—
A little brown wing on her hat,
With its touches of tropical azure,
And sheen of the sun upon that.

“Through the bloom-covered pane shines a glory
By which the vast shadows are stirred ;
But I pine for the spirit and splendour
That painted the wing of the bird.

“The organ rolls down its great anthem,
With the soul of a song it is blent ;
But, for me, I am sick for the singing
Of one little song that is spent.

“The voice of the curate is gentle—
‘No sparrow shall fall to the ground’—
But the poor broken wing on the bonnet
Is mocking the merciful sound.

“Close and sweet is the breath of the lilies
Asleep on the altar of prayer ;
But my soul is athirst with the fragrance
Far out in the bountiful air.

“And I wonder if ever or never,
With white wings o’er-weary and furled,
I shall find the sweet spirit of pity
Abroad in the heart of the world.”

O where shall I find a faith that is not associated with nails hammered through agonised hands, with hot, red drops of pain raining down from a thorn-pierced brow ? And where shall I find worshippers whose “sport” is not the torture of some helpless creature, or whose adornment is not the broken wing which some poor bird fluttered over its defenceless young, left to perish of cold and hunger, in order that that dainty little hat might be “lovely” enough to appear in the House of Prayer ?

JANETRY AND HELOTRY.

IN this age and country, all that Grundy allows a man in the way of celestiality and domesticity is one God and one Janet. But, if he be rich and prepared to do a little double shuffling, Grundy will, *sub rosa*, allow him to have no God and several Janets. As one with experience, and one who speaks with no fear of Grundy before his eyes, I say deliberately, One god if he be a worthy one, and one Janet if she be a good one, are enough for any man. From other pen than mine, I believe, this would be a good theological and moral maxim, and insistence on it would go far to qualify me for candidature as an elder of the kirk. But the kirk does not like the way I thunder my decalogue from my Sinai. There is not enough of 'mediocre "respectability" about my manner. Even when I endorse a Grundy maxim I do not adopt a Grundy fashion of endorsing it.

I admit that, to me, the Grundy of Literature is nearly as reprehensible as the Grundy of Priestcraft. In current literature what are called the amenities are only the mediocrities. No man who has not only his own thoughts to express, but his own mode of expressing them, has any business to express them at all.

The writer who asks himself the question, Will Smith like this, and will Brown like that? deserves that Smith should snub him, and that Brown should kick him. He has to ask this question if he be writing for bread. But why should he write for bread? There are plenty of other vocations—take stone-breaking, for instance—in

which bread can be made without such terrible sacrifice. At stone-breaking you may get a blister on your hand ; but, in writing with an express view that Smith may pay you, you get a blister on your soul. You can break stones and be true to yourself, true to Truth, and to the divinest aspiration within you ; but, if you write that Smith may pay you, you must write to please him—you must respect his prejudices, be most merciful upon his iniquities, and generally get round to the blind side of him in order to pick his pocket. Whatever your contempt for them, you must evince hypocritical respect for the sham sanctities, the subsidised frauds, and the “ Nonconformist conscience.” Out upon you and your “ success ” and your villa and your cheque-book ! You are a pimp and a Pander and a sycophant. You may have talent ; but what of that if you lack principle ? You dare not write down aught because it is the truth, unless it be such a truth as will pay. And, thus you make your purse heavy. Out upon you ! By not less sinister means Judas, surnamed Iscariot, made his purse heavy ; but, sordid traitors, ye cannot ascend to the heights of his remorseful heroism : he went out and hanged himself.

After this bout of righteous kicking of the money-changers and thieves in the Temple of Literature, let us return to business. We were discussing the all-sufficiency of one God, and one Janet ; the former the best of heaven, the latter the best of earth. *Pro aris et focis*. By the way, Jehovah could not brook a rival. In this he was amazingly like Janet. Her edict is : “ I, thy wife, am a jealous Janet ; thou shalt have no Janet besides me.” Besides being like Jehovah in her jealousy of a rival, Janet is like that deity in the marvellous accomplishments of sacrifice and devotion she has evoked from their common votary, Smith. There have been more human lives sacrificed over Janet than over anything else, deity alone excepted. There is nothing

too mad, nothing too desperately yee-awish, for Smith not to do for the pout of a lip or the sly twinkle of an ankle beneath a petticoat. For instance, look at this duel over a Janet in the year 1808.

The rival chappies were M. de Grandpré and M. le Pique, who had quarrelled over the possession of the affections of a singer at the Imperial Opera, Paris. Mademoiselle Tirevit was the name of this Janet. They agreed to fight a duel to settle their respective claims, and the Janet promised to bestow her smiles on the survivor. After mutually waiting for one month in order that the duel should have none of the elements of undue haste, the two chappies had two balloons constructed exactly alike. On the day set apart—June 22nd, 1808—each chappie, accompanied by his second, entered each the car of his balloon, and in sight of an immense concourse of spectators the air-ships were set afloat. The duellists were not to fire at each other, but each at the balloon containing his antagonist. To make destruction sure, blunderbusses were provided. When about half a mile above the earth, at a preconcerted signal, the firing began. M. le Pique missed, and M. le Grandpré fired and sent a ball through the gas-bag of his less fortunate adversary. The balloon collapsed, and, descending with fearful rapidity, dashed Le Pique and his second to pieces. De Grandpré continued his ascent, and successfully terminated the thrilling aerial voyage at a distance of twenty-one miles from Paris.

Just fancy those two idiots getting up and up, half way to God, to knock each other to the Devil over a trumpery petticoat! De Grandpré came down entire; and Le Pique was dashed into pieces too small for cat's-meat; and these small pieces do not seem to have lain heavy on the soul of this girl, Tirevit—only a fine compliment to her fascinations, only a feather to her cap, only a buckle to her garter.

Man would be, in all conscience, mad enough if he stood on his own feet and relied on his own judgment ; but this he does not do. What matter is it what he rules when woman rules him ; and this she always does, effectively when he knows it, and more effectively still when he knows it not. Verily,

“ The hand that rocks the cradle
Is the hand that rules the world.”

In this country, through holding on deftly to a petticoat, and that an illicit one, men have been exalted to the leadership of armies—ay, and even to the archbishopric of Canterbury. But, most conspicuous instance of gynocracy: in the middle of the eighteenth century all Europe may be said to have hung from an apron-string, and that the apron-string of a courtesan. Jean Antionette Poisson was the most famous among the mistresses of Louis XV. of France. She was created Marquise de Pompadour, and for twenty years she swayed the whole policy of France. She filled all public offices with her own nominees, and made her own creatures Ministers of State. She it was who brought Belle-Isle into office, with his vigorous policy, and introduced the Abbé de Bernis into office to work her own pleasure. Previous to 1756 the policy of France had been to weaken Austria by alliance with Germany. This she arbitrarily changed because Frederick the Great lampooned her ; and, because Maria Theresa wrote her a courteous letter, she entered into an alliance with Austria, resulting, as it turned out, in the Seven Years' War. She, moreover, corresponded with the generals in the field, prepared all business for the king's eye, and daily examined the letters sent through the post. The king was a mere puppet, who assisted at the spectacle of his own reign, and the people for the time being “ bowed down and worshipped ” her. The grey mare was the better horse. And the world had seen many grey mares of this kind, which is one of

the reasons that it still lies under the heavily-shod hoofs of a nightmare. This nightmare is Priestcraft.

It is Janet who has been mainly instrumental in keeping this nightmare alive, neighing insanely and, where it dare, kicking savagely. Janet has been the friend of the Church, and the Church has been the enemy of the race. She arrested the shadow on the dial of Civilisation—nay, she sent it back like that on the dial of Ahaz. Let us glance at the course of a pre-Christian day in Athens. Books were the least part of the education of an Athenian citizen. Let us for a moment transport ourselves in thought to that glorious city. Let us imagine that we are entering its gates in the time of its power and glory. A crowd is assembled round a portico. All are gazing with delight at the entablature, for Phidias is putting up the frieze. We turn into another street ; a rhapsodist is reciting there ; men, women, children are thronging round him ; the tears are running down their cheeks ; their eyes are fixed ; their very breath is still ; for he is telling how Priam fell at the feet of Achilles, and kissed those hands—the terrible, the murderous—which had slain so many of his sons. We enter the public place ; there is a ring of youths, all leaning forward with sparkling eyes and gestures of expectation. Socrates is pitted against the famous athiest from Ionia, and has just brought him to a contradiction in terms. But we are interrupted. The herald is crying, “Room for the Prytanes !” The general assembly is to meet. The people are swarming in on every side. Proclamation was made : “Who wishes to speak ?” There is a shout and a clapping of hands ; Pericles is mounting the stand. Then for a play of Sophocles, and away to sup with Aspasi.*

Now glance at the course of a day in England after she had been Christian for a thousand years. Through

* Macaulay.

filthy alleys, unpaved, mid leg deep in slush and offal, splash a ghastly and ill-favoured crowd of dirty and half-naked barbarians, who can neither read nor write, as ignorant as your pig at the trough, except for their knowledge of a mass of immoral dogmas and wild myths from which the pig is happily exempt. Several of them are lepers, and even the dirt cannot quite conceal the scars and scabs and blotches, nor the vermin-swarming rags quite hide the physical deformities of men and women littered amid conditions of pestilence, filth, and squalor now all but inconceivable. A number of clerics are in front bearing a pyx, a cross, and other insignia of sacerdotal imposture, darkness, and tyranny. In an open space there is a halt. A fellow creature stands in that open space, lashed to a stake, and a cart-load of fuel, mixed up with staves of dilapidated tar-barrels, is piled around him. The victim has, somehow, said a wrong word or made a wrong gesture in regard to the dread Jesus of whom the ancient civilisations knew nothing; and he must, in consequence, suffer earth-fire now, and hell-fire for all eternity. He shrivels in the flames, his agony cries drowned in the blast of bugles and the rub-a-dub-dub of drums. Half blinded with smoke and half choked with the overpowering stench of burnt flesh, the multitude, with rude horse-play and lewd and brutal banter and bandinage, return to their homes; and an English pig would now turn up his nose in disdain at the home which then had to shelter an Englishman. And the abbey bells clanged and banged, and the cathedral organ groaned forth its thunder of praise to the Jesus in whose name the man had been burnt, till other men were half blinded by the smoke and half asphyxiated with the stench.

This was England, this was Europe, under the auspices of the Church. And it was to this Church that Janet gave, as it were, the milk of her breasts. She gave this

Church her credulous and slavish support. She gave the priests thereof her conscience, and history lieth like a very Ananias if she did not give those "celibate" priests her virtue. They had no wives specially their own, for all men's wives were theirs. And, Lord have mercy on the man who, in defence of the sanctity of his home and hearth, refused to condone the priest's concupiscence. The slightest breath could raise the hue and cry of heresy. And, what would allay that cry? Let those blackened bones lying at the foot of the stake, and with strips and shreds of burnt flesh still adhering to them, answer as to the fate of the heretic. How often did a man's heresy lie at the door of his wife's chamber, when the charge was manipulated by the priest so as to make his death lie at the door of Jesus!

And, only now are we recovering from the bite of the sacerdotal asp. We are, comparatively, sane and emancipated. But, even yet, our mothers are the slaves of priests. They dandle us in dogma and suckle us in myth. Even yet, what are we? A nation of greedy and huxtering traders, with callous morals, undeveloped æsthetics, and no aspiration after spiritual life:—

"Greece fell. Her poets sang, her sculptors wrought
Divinely; none had ever heard before
Such wondrous lessons as her sages taught—
Greece is no more.

"Rome fell. From east to west, from north to south,
Grandeur and glory followed where she led,
And conquered lands learned wisdom from her mouth—
Great Rome is dead.

"And England? She of Nature's charms possessed,
Her message far from pole to pole doth send—
'Plum's soap is good, and Howler's pills are best'—
Is *this* the end?"

And what are our women? The best gift a merciless Fate has left us; but, alas, they bear the brand of having come down to us through long ages during which they

were, soul and body, prostituted to the Church. With an exception here and there, they are colourless and inane. Plastic wax, they wait to take the impression of the husband they are to marry :—

“Nothing so true as what you once let fall,
 ‘Most women have no characters at all.’
 Matter too soft a lasting mark to bear,
 And best distinguished by black, brown, or fair.”*

Feckless slaves for ages, they are prone now to be pceevish and querulous. To affect ill-health is genteel. Nurtured for ages on a lie, they lack in the virtue of stern sincerity. The performance of common-place duty is apt to fatigue them ; but, when they are “slowing off” before chappies and rivals they are indefatigable. Many Janets profess to be unable to walk a mile without fatigue ; they little realise how much ground they cover without grumbling at any ordinary ball. The average waltz takes a dancer about three-quarters of a mile ; half a mile is covered in a square dance. A Janet whose programme is well filled will generally go through about a dozen waltzes, and at least four other dances. Altogether she will have travelled not fewer than eleven miles ! She would skip on tiptoe eleven miles for the inane smile of a brainless dude ; but, if she has to go half a mile to do something sane, she must call a cab.

The Church that has done much to make Janet the silly thing she is—but has been unable to rob her of her sweetness and indefinable fascination—despised her, nay, detested her ; but it used her, ay, and abused her. The Church’s holy of holies was too sacred to be profaned by the touch of her foot. Take, for instance, the monastery of Le Grand Chartreuse. The other year Queen Victoria was admitted by the special permission of the Pope ; but hers was the first petticoat that ever, overtly at least, had entered the hallowed precincts. And

* Pope.

why? The ukase of the founder of the monastery, St. Bruno, still exists. It bears date 1084, and is as follows:—
 “Nous ne permettons *jamaïs* aux femmes d’entrer dans notre enciente, car nous savans que ni le sage, ni le prophète, ni le juge, ni l’hôte de Dieu, ni ses enfants, ni même le premier modèle sorti de ces mains n’ont pu échapper aux *caresses* ou aux *tromperies* de femmes. Qu’on se rappelle Salomon, David, Samson, Loth, et ceux qui ont pris les femmes qu’ils avaient choisies, et Adam lui-même; et qu’on sache bien que l’homme ne peut cacher du feu dans son sein sans que ses vêtements soient embrasés, ni marcher sur des charbons ardents sans se brûler la plante des pieds.”

I have complained that our having been so long fed on a cardinal lie, and the subordinate lies that buttress it, has played sad havoc with our general sincerity. The pudding of our life is stuck full of the plums of sham and the currants of make-believe. Lately a preacher, in holding a sort of test meeting, asked the congregation questions bearing on their conduct. “Now, brethren,” he said, “all of you who pay your debts will please stand up.” In response to this there was an apparent unanimous uprising. “Now,” said the preacher, asking the others to sit down, “all those who do not pay their debts will please stand up.” One man alone arose. “Ah, brother,” said the preacher, “why is it that you, of all this congregation of brethren, should be so different?” “I don’t know, parson,” replied the man slowly, as he looked around over his friends and acquaintances in the meeting; “I don’t know, unless it is that I ain’t a liar.”

It is not always that, as in this instance, there is even one unconventionally sincere person to be found in a congregation. And, is this to be wondered at, seeing that the congregation congregates to hear a falsehood—a falsehood which, backed as it has been by ecclesiastical machinery, has demoralised the world?

BARREN !

DID you ever observe what a perverse creature Janet is ? Her sins of commission are notorious, and her sins of omission exasperating. As the cat in the fable had only one trick, so she has only one talent, and that one talent she exercises most capriciously. As a rule, if you are a ditcher, she exercises it on your behalf till, on the Lord's Day, you hobble off to the chapel with your brood around you, so numerous that a stranger might conjecture that, in the production of it, you had had the active co-operation of an entire seraglio. These are your works, in ever so many volumes, all bound in skin, but bound in very little else, as pick and shovel can hardly produce corduroy for such a multitude—several of them twins, or double volumes, and so like each other that, unless you have the two close together and compare them carefully, you cannot tell which is which, and when, you have spanked, you find you have spanked the wrong one—at least, the spanked one assures you that you have done so, and surely he ought to be an authority.

The males you call John and Tom and the like, till such names are exhausted, and, in desperation, you rush off to the Bible for names for the ever-increasing productions of Janet's genius, and finish off the list with such names as Rehoboam and Habakkuk ; and, as for the girls, when you have run through all the Janes and Marys and the like, you have recourse to Jezebel and Rahab ; and also recourse to the rates to bring up these worthies o emulate the virtues of the sacred heroines whose names

they bear. And ——, of New Cross, considerably sends you a list of “neo-Malthusian” apparatus; but the prices are above your means. Janet finds it cheaper to have children than to have appliances—especially as the rates will subsidise her in the former investment, but will make no contribution towards the latter.

But, say, by a fling of the die of Doom, you are not a ditcher, but a duke. Then, far more likely than if you had been a ditcher, your Janet will turn out to be as sterile as was Lot’s wife after she had been turned into a pillar of salt. Your blood is no ditch-water. It has come down to you in one patrician jet from a Norman tailor whom William ennobled after Hastings, or from a bastard of “ye merrie monarch,” or from a more modern plutocratic brewer. But, egad, the illustrious line from him of the Norman button-holes, or him of the English mash-tub, has come to an end! Your acres are fruitful, but you are barren. It pains you to pass through the little village near your castle. There the poor shoemaker, with “Blakeys” stuck on a card, a whole cardful for 1½d., and cork soles, only 4d. a pair, exposed in his miniature apology for a window, has children for every day in the fortnight. An irritating man, that nasty little cobbler! There he has a brat sitting on a three-legged stool eating a cold potato. Here he has another brat who has been eating bread and treacle; his face is all over with the latter, even to the very eye-holes; and the tears are coursing down the treacle on his cheeks, because he has been denied the tail of a red herring which his fifth sister is eating as she sits on the door-step.

And, there the penultimate child is yelling with evidence of a pair of lungs Stentor might envy, because it is not allowed to eat the piece of cobbler’s wax which lies among daddy’s awls and pincers and hammers and knives and lasts. And, there is the cobbler’s wife clanking the eldest boy over the head with a ladle for eating both his

own dinner and that of his twin-brother, Abinadab. Moreover, it is interestingly evident that this fruitful vine which the Lord has planted in the valley of Ashdod repents naught of the bunches that hang from her already—she is not weary in well-doing. In a few weeks more there will be another mouth—perhaps two—dependent upon that cobbler and the craft he possesses of transmuting ben-leather into bread. Mrs. Crispin believes that God never sends a mouth but he sends bread for it; and she, on her part, provides the mouth and lets God, at his leisure, provide the bread. This arrangement of division of labour between Mrs. Crispin and God would work very well if God would only attend to his part of the contract as faithfully as Mrs. Crispin does to hers.

But, be this contract between Mrs. Crispin and deity as it may, the sight of that cobbler's little shop in which flourishes the fruitful vine and all the olive branches is an interestingly terrible object-lesson to his barren grace, my lord duke. Drat it! if that brat sitting on the three-legged stool refreshing himself with the cold potato were only *his*, he would be Lord Highdumdurdum of Reductioadabsurdum, and other rich demesnes in the vale of Yokelurdum? That brat who, with treacle, has turned himself into a moist Red Indian would be Master of Hounds in Canorabbiesshire, would keep a stud of horses at Hippogastrium, and a harem in the Grove of the Evangelist. And, oh, for that chit of a child that sits on the door-step discussing the tail-fin of the herring! Before she was seven she should be the instrument of a most advantageous family alliance; she should be betrothed to the elderly Marquis of Highdiddlediddle, and be trained in a continental monastery to deport herself with dignity in the exalted social circle of the Catandthefiddle she was destined to adorn! And that penultimate brat that wants to eat the cobbler's wax—Great Jerusalem, it would have a coronet, and be high-

flying flunkey to one who had a crown, but no head in particular to put inside it!

“O midwives of Midian,” thinks his grace; “O that anyone of the fourteen of those ben-leather brats could be found under the silken coverlet of my nuptial couch, and no mortal could tell how the Beelzebub it got there if not in the way it should get there! In spite of all that Eton and Oxford could do for it, in spite of gold and acres and culture (or at least *culchaw*), would it, all its life, smell of resin and have a ben-leather look about it? Well, I care not if it smelt of brimstone if it only proceeded, or was believed to have proceeded, in legitimate issue, and could thereby inherit my title and estates. When I shuffle off this mortal coil must all go to my detested nephew, Timothy, who sits waiting in his stocking-soles to step into my shoes, and, who, among his roistering, riotous companions toasts me thus: ‘To the health of Sir Eunuch and his Bride;’ and, as the word ‘health’ is pronounced, each roisterer ‘winks the other eye;’ for, with him, ‘health’ is a euphemism for *death*? To perdition with the world and all that is in it! I hate the light of the sun! Above all, I hate the village cobbler; I hate the tailor with eight children hardly less; and I would give up all I possess, reserving only three acres and a cow, to be my own under-butler with his family of seven.

“Dukes, under such circumstances as mine, have been popularly, not legally, known to have done desperate things. Under the vague nocturnal shimmering of the stars, a red-bearded laird in the north was rumoured in the servant’s hall to have entered my lady’s bower, and to have personated the red-bearded peer who, for entry into that bower-chamber, held the sole legal prerogative. Driven, as I am, to desperation, unknown to his spouse, he exercised that prerogative by proxy; and the estates and titles remain

in his family (save the mark!), and the world, except in so far as servants' gossip is concerned, is none the wiser. Shade of Zacharias, this is a pertinent idea. Angels of the Lord—or of the Fiend, I care not—have helped men out of predicaments such as mine, and baulked the ripe expectations and forecasts of nephews such as mine, who, in drinking my 'health,' refers to me as 'Sir Eunuch,' and with him 'health,' is irony for *death!* D—— it! He shall have no guinea or acre of mine if—if—if—Phew!"

And, with his hands clasped firmly behind him under the tail of his coat, and full of the gall of bitterness, and meditating the bone of iniquity, his grace struts homeward to his castle, more miserable than any one of his hinds trudging home to his hovel. The midges of the mild evening bite his brow. He puts up his hand and crushes three or four of them into indistinguishable grey specks. Then he repents the deed, and soliloquises: "I have killed you, poor devils, for sipping an infinitesimally small quantity of my blood. Come, ye flickering myriads, drink it all. To what better purpose can it be applied? This is the end of it, although in the course of the gay and gallant centuries it has surged in the veins of kings. It was mantled in rosy blush in the cheek of the Queen of the Tournament as she placed the laurel chaplet on the unhelmeted head of the brave but battered gallant and victor who knelt at her feet and kissed the jewelled buckle of her Cordovan shoe."

The goose, with her most majestic maternal waddle, crosses the lane with a dozen yellow and callow goslings waddling behind. The proud patriarch, the gander, brings up the rear. He extends his neck till it resembles a white serpent; and, serpent-like, he hisses at the duke. "Ay, well may you hiss, Sir Gander. There troops your offspring; but where is mine? Great Ceres, I should be ready to change places with you! Better be a fruitful

gander than a barren duke. Your dam has reproduced you, has passed you down immortal to the unhatched generations. Mine, with empty arms and milkless breasts, has left me to perish everlastingly.

“Ha! there he stares at me over the hedge, the only creature on all my estates whose lot is as contemptible, as pitiable, as mine. There is Neddy, *the mule*. Hail, sad brother in barren misery! And yet you have not the cue for wretchedness that I have. Were I to nail golden shoes on each of thy four feet, eight nails in each shoe, and each nail-head studded with a diamond; were I to, over thy long ears, place a ducal coronet; and, were I to take thee to the summit of yonder hill and bid thee look around—round and round the circle where blue sky dips down upon dim and distant earth, and were I to say, ‘All that thou seest is thine,’ and duly infest thee in all that thou sawest bounded by the perimeter of the horizon, infest thee, and *thy seed after thee to all generations*, and wert thou keenly and intensely conscious of the glory of thy heritage, and then to recollect that thou wert a mule, that thou hadst no seed, neither indeed could have, *then* thou mightst be half as miserable, as desperate, as damnable as I am! Had you all this estate and pride of place, and had you a distant relative, an ass, an ass who despised you, and whom you in turn detested, and because you were a mule and had no offspring, neither indeed could have, this detested ass your relative got, as soon as the breath was out of you, all that had belonged to you! Had you a second cousin who sarcastically toasted, ‘Your health, Sir Eunuch!’ Oh, horrible! horrible!”

In how many instances the tragedy of human experience has produced *dramatis personæ* like this sterile, desperate, and devilish duke! I have room to furnish only one concrete instance. It is connected with what is known as “The Curse of Cowdray.” Sir Antony

Browne, standard-bearer and executor of Henry VIII., and an intimate friend of that monarch, was the only courtier who dared to tell the dying tyrant of his approaching end. He was granted Battle Abbey, and other estates, at the Dissolution. He destroyed the splendid church of the abbey, and formed a garden on the site, planting two rows of yews down the aisle. But the spoliation and sacrilege herein involved were not to pass unavenged. He inaugurated the opening of the abbots' hall with a great and sumptuous feast. The wine was red in the cup, and the sonorous song and rattling peals of laughter shook the rafters of the desecrated house of God. But, when the wine flowed freest and the laughter pealed the loudest, a monk, gliding like a ghostly visitor from the dead, moved up the hall through the midst of the riotous guests and advanced to the daïs. There he shook his lean index finger right in Sir Anthony's face, and, with deliberate and prophetic bitterness, cursed him and his line. He wound up with the minatory prophecy: "*By fire and water thy line shall come to an end, and it shall perish out of the land.*"

Years rolled away, and, although the prophecy remained unfulfilled, it was not forgotten. In 1793 the suspended curse took effect. In the same month the young Viscount Montague, Sir Antony's descendant, was drowned at Schaffhausen, in the Rhine, and Cowdray, the English seat, which had been wrested from the monks, was reduced to ruin by fire. The messenger bringing the news of the death crossed another bearing the news of the fire.

The title then passed to Father Browne, a friar in France. He hastened to England to take possession of Cowdray. Fairly installed, it occurred to him that he would like to transmit the estates and title to his posterity. But he was a priest, and, as such, could have no posterity, at least none that could legally succeed him

in Cowdray. Eligible Janets were all around in eager scores ; but, what were eligible Janets to an ecclesiastic who had taken the vows of perpetual celibacy? Where there is a will there is a way. He obtained from the Pope a dispensation absolving him from his oath ; and, with all the conventional strewing of garlands and ringing of bells, the ex-friar conducted his bride home to Cowdray. Fire and water, as the monk had predicted, had played havoc, but the line had not “perished out of the land.” Had it not though?

In spite of the dispensation of his Holiness ; in spite of the priest’s benedictory “Be fruitful and multiply ;” in spite of the title and estate the first son would be born to inherit, the first son was never born, or the first daughter either—the lady of Cowdray was childless. The prophetic curse of the disinherited monk of the sixteenth century was fulfilled to the letter ; the race of King Henry’s Sir Anthony became extinct.*

If you are a ditcher, with next to nothing to eat, a hundred to one Janet will provide you with ten children to help you to eat that nothing. If you are a duke, and have sufficient to keep 50,000 mouths going, you incur a serious risk of, in the next generation, not one of those 50,000 mouths belonging to even a solitary individual that inherits your blood and bears your name. Such are the mysterious caprices of Janet.

* Cowdray is, at present, the property of Lord Egmout.

ALTRUISTIC

THE dogmas of the popular faith came down to us from a period when the world was in its non-age—a period vastly antedating the Christian era. They are the expression of primitive and barbarous speculation on subjects that baffle the equipped and disciplined intellects of to-day; well might they stagger that of the man of the neolithic period. The uninstructed find little or no difficulty in reaching conclusions at which the instructed fail to arrive after the most prolonged and strenuous efforts. Theology was a science in which ancient ignorance was deeply versed; it is a science of which modern enlightenment can make nothing whatever. It is intelligible to a Salvation Army captain or a preaching Methodist shoemaker, but not to Herbert Spencer or Professor Huxley. It was virtually crystallised when the whole world was a baby, and it is applicable still to babies. It is for babes and sucklings, not for the wise and prudent.

But, in this last decade of the nineteenth century, it is surely time that we were men. It is surely time that we laid some just claim to wisdom and prudence, and put aside childish things, puling and lactation and crowing and playing with our toes. The dread deity of the bible of the vulgar is just such a monster as terrified and untutored savagery would invent. I know where and how this deity was born. He was born in a cave on the pre-glacial earth. On the floor of that cave, on a bundle of dried fern, lay our savage sire. His unkempt and fierce dam lay in his arms. It was night. There, with

thousands of tons of rock and soil over him, slept our sire as in the bottom of the grave. There was a peal of thunder, a crash, sudden, violent, terrible. It shook the cave, and the suspended axes and boar-spears audibly clattered against the rock. Black Terror! He awoke and sprang to a sitting position, half-strangled by the arms of his dam, which were yet round his neck.

Death! what a glare athwart the mouth of the cave. The dam screams in terror, with her arms still more fiercely locked round his neck. The young human cubs cling to his knees and shriek with terror. Another thunder-crash, and a great mass of stone becomes detached from the roof and plunges into the black pool of water on the cavern floor. Another glare of lightning reveals the pool on the floor blood-red and churned into foam, and a great white splinter of the pine which sheltered the entrance has been hurled to the savage's feet with a power that human and mortal foeman never wielded. Unmanned with fear, trampling down his shrieking dam and cubs in his flight, he fled to the deepest, dimmest depth of his anthronic home, where the glare of the lightning could not reach him, and the thunder-crash died away into a dull growl; and there, that night, in the deepest depth of the cavern's gloom, from his phrenzied brain and palpitating heart, Theology was born.

Yes: amid the terror and thunder, and levin flash and Cimmerian horror of that pre-glacial cavern, the monster, Theology, was born from the pornogenic womb of a pre-scientific human brain. And Sacerdotalism was the monster's wet nurse. From Sacerdotalism's adulterous dugs the mis-shapen horror sucked its aliment. She, for a consideration—a heavy one—licked her blear-eyed and sinister cub into shape. She has been licking and licking at it for thousands of years. Here she has licked it into Om, there into Isis, there into Zeus, there into Ormuz, there into Jehovah, and there into Allah, *arcades ambo*,

et omnes. They are each and all the spawn of the cave, ignorance and fear.

Down into the present, certain of the abortions have been conserved by adroitly draping them in a veil of hermeneutics. To-day even the way-faring man, though a fool, could detect them one and all to be very closely related, and to be a family of hideous shams. But as, bludgeon in hand, he pursues them to shatter them to pieces, Sacerdotalism throws a veil of esoterics over them as effectively as the net of the *reticulas* was wont to foil the Roman gladiator in the arena. Each god becomes a sort of Veiled Prophet of Khorassin, the veil hiding his hideousness. Here a bludgeon is raised to break the skull "of the father." The would-be iconoclast is assured that the father is not the father at all, but a fearful, unspeakable God-knows-what. And the would-be iconoclast is unmanned. The bludgeon drops from his palsied grasp, and he sinks down upon his knees with mutterings of servile contrition. Here a thinker ministers courage to challenge "the son;" but he is at once, as if by incantation, transmuted into the neo-Platonic *Λογος*, and the thinker shrinks back from the appalling will-o'-the-wisp. Here a scholar would attack "the ghost;" then Sacerdotalism, as if by magic, transforms him into something unghostly, into the esoteric paraclete, into something as impervious to attack as is the arc of a lunar rainbow. And, by the cuttle-fish obscuring of the vision of the pursuer, the Church has managed, but not with impunity, to escape to this hour.

Fellow-mortals, what miserable slaves ye have been to figments tacked on to the monster that was born in the cave on the bed of Fear! Slaves, sycophants—nay, in the words of your own pietistic jargon, "worms of the dust"! Your poor shiver houseless in the cold, while the noblest edifices on the planet are dedicated to the saints and fetishes of your superstition. In winter,

the great cathedral at the top of Ludgate Hill stands empty, empty as your heads, cold as your hearts ; and the homeless poor, of which ye say your Christ was one, freeze to death on the stone seats in the recesses of Blackfrairs Bridge. Why is that huge edifice dedicated to the dead Saul of Tarsus, while there is naught save his rags and the inclement night for the living 'Arry of Southwark ? Who was Paul the Jew that, in our midst, he should have such an edifice where there is only a frigid door-step for 'Arry of England ? You make great fracas about the blood that was shed for you. What about the blood that is freezing for you ? Shift not the responsibility ; for, as God liveth, ye rich, that blood is upon your heads.

Ye Christians, over the great dome that surmounts your city, ye have reared a gilded cross. Dread omen of your cruelty ! On that cross ye are crucifying thousands of your fellows. Under the auspices of that cross ye have done and are doing deeds of damnation that throw into insignificance the tragedy associated with the name of your Galilean. Have done with Galilee, and begin with England. Your deity was a carpenter, and your premier saint a tent-maker. Return to your own best traditions. Be yours the gospel of the poor. Abandon your pomp, ritual, and dogma, and return to simplicity, spontaneity, and loving kindness. Thrust the mummeries out of St. Paul's, and admit humanity. The fane was a Pagan temple before your Jesus was heard of, and it is an exceedingly Pagan temple still ; never a more impervious response to the cry of mercy came from the throne of Isis, or from those of Dagon or Odin. Reverse the order of things. The gods have heaven, and their priests have earth. Let them step down from their pride of place, that, at length, a fettered and debased Humanity may struggle upward from the dust.

Away with cant anent breaking the bread of life while thousands are perishing for the bread which perisheth. Throw open the great west door of St. Paul's at night and let the hungry and homeless enter. Ye call that cathedral the house of God ; then, let God's children in. The act will not disgrace your pious living who frequent the pews, nor insult your mighty dead who moulder in the crypt. Let in the halt, the lame, the blind, the hungry, and the naked. Let in the veterans wounded by the keen knife of want and scarred by the sabre of vice. O England, the pious, the "respectable," the worshipful, that knife and that sabre alike were sharpened by you. Let in the penniless and destitute. And, the very stones of your fane shall rejoice, and acknowledge this admission to be the first really religious deed they have ever witnessed. Help man. God can look after himself. Can you appease him with your prayers and placate him with your psalms, while your brother is lying hungry at your gate, the dogs licking his sores? Here in London is Gethsemane with its bloody sweat, and even here is Calvary with its agony.

As far as the heaven is from the earth, so far, in this England, is the rich from the poor. Perhaps never in the social evolution of the race has the line of demarcation been so deeply and desperately drawn between Dives and Lazarus. The man who has to wage an incessant struggle for bare existence has no opportunity to be a man at all. Against him all opportunities for mental and moral discipline, for research in the realm of physics, all speculation in the region of psychics, are inexorably closed and guarded by a more formidable guard than an angel and a flaming sword. No brute of the field has to drudge in debasement for the mere necessities of mere existence as the brutalised human being has to do in order that his more fortunate brother may have leisure and culture, have opportunity to build up a body

and develop a soul. But, this advantage is won at fearful sacrifice. He who wins it in the factory or down in the coal-pit can afford only a rag-and-dirt-covered abortion of a body for himself, and a soul absolutely latent.

On the other hand, as Emerson phrases it, "to be rich is to have a ticket of admission to the master-works and chief men of each race. It is to have the sea by voyaging; to visit the mountains, Niagara, the Nile, the Desert, Rome, Paris, Constantinople; to see galleries, libraries, arsenals, manufactories. The reader of Humboldt's 'Cosmos' follows the marches of a man whose eyes, ears, and mind are armed by all the science, arts, and impliments which mankind have anywhere accumulated, and who is using these to add to the stock. 'The rich man,' says Saadi, 'is everywhere expected and at home.' The rich take up something more of the world into man's life. They include the country as well as the town, the ocean-side, the White Hills, the Far West, and the old European homesteads of man, in their notion of available material. The world is his who has money to go over it. He arrives at the seashore, and a sumptuous ship has floored and carpeted for him the stormy Atlantic, and made it a luxurious hotel, amid the horrors of tempests. The Persians say; 'Tis the same to him who wears a shoe as if the whole earth were covered with leather.'"

Is St. Paul's Cathedral too good for the poor? Nay, it is not good enough. It has been consecrated to pomp and ceremony; re-consecrate it to humility and human sympathy. It has been dedicated to the worship of a god, whom we know not; re-dedicate it to the service of Man, whom we know. My appeal is not altogether hopeless. As the kingdom of heaven recedes, the brotherhood of earth advances. Man does not, with as much heartless scorn as formerly, exclaim: "Am I my brother's

keeper?" As the age of dogmatism dies, the age of altruism lives. As we care less for a man's creed, we care the more for his need. While creeds which have long had prescriptive privileges are in peril of being disestablished and disendowed, there seems to be more vital activity than ever in helping the helpless, in visiting the widow and the fatherless. The income of merely the principal charitable institutions having their headquarters in London amounts to over seven million pounds per annum. That represents a sum equal to half the whole capital invested in the Bank of England. It exceeds the total revenue of all the British colonies together in 1884, and it is as much as the present total annual revenues of all the British colonies, excluding New South Wales, Victoria, and Canada.

This is more creditable to our native land than all her commerce and all her armaments. There may be those already born who will live to see service to Man recognised as the only worship to God. The time may not be so far off when the strong is strong only that he may help the weak. The hour may be drawing nigh when even a cup of cold water given to one who thirsteth may be holier than ever was the chalice wine of sacerdotal sacrament—when a crust of bread, given in love, may be reckoned as the most sacred eucharist.

THE FOOTSTOOL

THE highest compliment you can pay Shakspeare, the greatest terrestrial author, is to read and appreciate his works. The highest compliment you can pay "the author of the Universe" is to depreciate his works—so sharply and saliently does the author of the Universe stand out against the author of Hamlet. Shakspeare is known by his works, by his works alone. By what else could he be known? By what else is he distinguished from Mr. J. Smith, churchwarden and vestryman? But, "the Lord," as the other author to whom I have referred is designated, desires that he should not be known through his works, but through something else. What that something else is I am utterly unable to determine. Man is his principal work—only "a little lower than the angels;" and yet, according to his author, he is "dust and ashes," "a worm of the dust," and all his "righteousness is as filthy rags," "there is none righteous—no, not one." Then, as to the earth, the heavens, and the like, the author of them insists that you regard them as a mere nothing. At best, heaven is only his "throne," and the earth his "footstool." Of the heaven on which he sits I know nothing; but of the earth, the footstool, I know something.

As for us, we are simply the vermin that crawl upon this footstool, only "worms of the dust." You would think that, for the comfort of his poor feet, he would exterminate these worms. But, he does not. He takes some interest in worms, just as Sir John Lubbock takes interest in ants. We are the worms; and, for his interest in us,

we are expected to take absorbing interest in him. As for myself personally, I am a worm that is considerably interested in him. I verily believe that this earth is his footstool; for I have been here several decades, and he has never lifted his foot off me. And that foot has been hard and heavy indeed. It would long ago have burst me, only I have been so thin that I am not easily burst. Those who eat three meals a day, or more, are more easily burst than is a creature to whom meals, even when he can get them, are only a subordinate consideration, and who, from absorption in a book, has often forgotten all about a meal.

As I have said, "the Lord" takes considerable interest in the worms and vermin on his footstool. It is as a helminthologist and entomologist that we know him. Originality is not the *forte* of "the Lord." He is mimetic rather than idiosyncratic. He took a hint from India:—

"In those three persons the one God was shown,
Each first in place, each last—not one alone;
Of Siva, Vishnu, Brahma, each may be
First, second, third among the blessed three."

Copying from Brahma, "the Lord" split himself up into an esoteric and metaphysical rule-of-three, and sent the third part of himself, which was at the same time the whole of himself, down to this footstool to die for the vermin thereupon. The vermin did for him. But, eventually, he did for the vermin, by getting somehow or other out of the sepulchre in which they had put him, and subsequently by flying to heaven from two different places, and at two different times. This metaphysical quibble of "the Lord" was expected to have great effect on bettering the condition of the vermin on his footstool. But it had no such effect. The best laid schemes of mice and men and deities gang aft agley. Far from the effect being beneficial to the vermin, it was the very reverse. It set

them to quarrelling over *homoiousian* and *homoousian*, *filio-que* and no *filio-que*, Tweedledum and Tweedle-dee, and the like, and to murdering each other in millions upon millions through many centuries.

Peradventure, the reason why "the Lord" sent the third part of himself, which was at the same time the whole of himself, down to the footstool was to mature a scheme by which the worms could be made to be self-extminating, leaving him a clean, sweet footstool on which he could rest his feet in comfort. If such was his scheme, he was disappointed, for, although the slaughtering went on most desperately, the breeding went on as desperately; and, as fast as the sword mowed them down, the secund womb of Janet supplied fresh holocausts for the Draggons and Crusades, and for such occasions as that—

"When Roland brave and Olivier,
And every paladin and peer,
On Roncevalles died."

As fast as the earth drank blood under the sword of John, the slain man's successor drank milk from the bosom of Janet. This was all done "under God," and how it was done God knows. One little incident, however, persists in hinting to me how the thing was done—how the supply of men for the sword was balanced by the supply of men by the womb. One of the fiercest of the clan battles of the Scottish Highlands was that in Glen Fruin between the Colquhouns and MacGregors in the reign of James VI. The MacGregors slew over 200 of the Colquhouns. The widows of the slain, to the number of 220, each in deep mourning, riding on a white palfrey, and carrying in her right hand a spear to which was attached, flag-wise, the bloody shirt of her husband slain, rode into Stirling—one of the most romantic cavalades ever witnessed, and invoked the vengeance of King James upon the clan MacGregor. James acceded to the

prayers of the petition of the eleven score widows with the bloody shirts ; the MacGregors were outlawed, and their very name proscribed.

“ The moon’s on the lake, and the mist’s on the brae,
And the clan has a name that is nameless by day ;
Then gather, gather, gather, Grigarach !

“ Our signal for fight, which from monarchs we drew,
Must be heard but by night in our vengeful haloo !
Then haloo, Grigarach ! haloo, Grigarach !

“ Glen Orchy’s proud mountains, Coalchuirn and her towers,
Glenstrac and Glenlyon no longer are ours ;
We’re landless, landless, landless, Grigarach ! ”

In consequence of that fight in Glen Fruin, the MacGregors became “landless,” and you might imagine that the Colquhouns of Luss became manless, or nearly so. But that is just where you are mistaken. Within a year, eighty of those widows who had each borne her husband’s bloody shirt into Stirling town, gave birth each to a man child ! So provident had those husbands been that, although their own blood dyed the heather of Glen Fruin, their clan blood yet pulsed in the veins of the clan Colquhoun ! And thus, I apprehend, through the interminable and exterminating “religious” wars, caused by “the Lord’s” attentions to the worms on his footstool, the dead soldier had always taken the fecundating precaution which was taken by the victims of the vengeance of the MacGregor.

The astonishing thing is that “the Lord” had not, long ago, applied the divine equivalent for Keating’s Insect Powder, and thoroughly cleaned his footstool of the vermin that infest it ; for, of those vermin he has placed it on record that “there is none righteous—no, not one” Cold water is of no use, he has tried that. “The windows of heaven were opened,” and the water of heaven poured down in jugfuls upon the vermin for their “wickedness.” He drowned them in millions ; but the smell of their

water-bulged and sun-baked corpses was awful, and must have rendered his footstool so offensive that he could not with comfort set a foot upon it for a year or two. And, worse, in his amiable weakness, he had allowed some choice specimens of the worms of the dust to survive by floating in an ark of gopher wood. True, the few specimens he allowed to escape the dredging with cold water were not sufficient to annoy him by tickling his soles when he made use of his footstool.

But there were several Janets preserved in this ark; and, as soon as the deluge was over—nay, most likely not waiting till the deluge was over—they set vigorously to work in the direction in which Janet's talents lie, and always have lain—the rapid reproduction of Mr. J. Smith. "The Lord" must have bitterly repented him that his gallantry had prevented his drowning all the Janets; for, thanks to the talents and industry of the few he had spared, the footstool was soon where it had been before the cold-water cure had been tried upon it; it was shortly again covered with great cities, with murdering and murdering, and with marrying and giving in marriage, so that there might always be somebody left to be murdered. And, the worms on the footstool sinned and sinned; they were born in sin, and in iniquity did their mother conceive them. They infested the deity's footstool, just as moths infest a lady's muff.

Water evidently would not do. And, the proprietor of the footstool had already tried fire and brimstone, not on a colossal scale to be sure, but, all the same, on a scale sufficiently extensive to have visited red ruin upon Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboim, and Zoar. By-the-bye, in this fire-and-brimstone attempt to cleanse and deodorise his footstool, the proprietor turned a Janet into a pillar of salt. It is, peradventure, presumption on my part to offer a suggestion on a subject so significant; but it occurs to me that, had he turned Noah's wife and Noah's sons'

wives, singly and collectively, into pillars of salt, his footstool would have given him less trouble during the last thousand years or two. Of course, I should not have been here ; and much toil, insomnia, and degrading spoon anxieties I should have escaped by these ladies having been turned into salt.

This is not by any means my individual verdict. *Homo sum : humani nihil a me alienum puto.* I am a specimen of the worms of the footstool, and all that applies to me applies to the rest of the worms. To be down here infesting the footstool, and causing deity to have recourse in succession to fire and brimstone, cold water, and then blood, in vicarious sacrifice, does not satisfy my ineffable longings, worm of the dust though I be, and irritating pedicular tickler of celestial soles. I am here, and half happy because I dream that this is not all. I am in the *larval* or grub stage of development. I dream that before me there is limitless karma of ascent, through glorified *chrysalis* into immortal *imago*. But for this dream of normally progressive development, life is not worth living ; and, that it is, at best, not worth living is the solemn and tragic pronouncement of numbers among our highest, from Cato to Chatterton.

The whole trend of our theology is in the direction of insisting that we are only vermin, and very nasty and despicable vermin, on "the Lord's" footstool. From the womb of Janet to the grave in Woking, we are abominable. We are full of wounds and bruises and putrifying sores. From the sole of the foot to the crown of the head there is no soundness in us. The devil is in us before we give our first puling cry to announce to the footstool that a new individual specimen of the normal worm of the dust shall henceforth infest it. Even before a rag of clothing has been put upon us, we are full of sin. Inside us we have the fiend, before inside us we have as yet a drop of mother's milk. Hence the devout exorcism :

“ I command thee, unclean spirit, that thou come out and depart from this infant. Thou cursed spirit, remember thy sentence, remember thy judgment, remember the day to be at hand wherein thou shalt burn in fire everlasting prepared for thee and thy angels.”* Through life we remain accursed. By the verdict of theology, they have always been the holiest who, as troglodytes, have retired to caves and dens and lonely fastnesses to escape the contamination of their fellow worms, and thereby help to make his footstool more endurable for the feet of deity.

Even yet there are abundant specimens who deem it sanctity to keep well away from contact with the other moths on the footstool, and to eschew contact with them as contamination. In the Wyoming Territory, in the United States, there is a colony of one hundred and thirty souls in the Cheyenne Reservation, who deem it a mortal sin to look upon the face of any human being. Both men and women wear masks day and night, and never by any chance do they gaze upon the faces of one another. They teach morality in the severest manner, not permitting the two sexes even to dwell in the same valley. This custom is also observed in the islands of New Britain, where a man must not only not speak to his mother-in-law, but it is considered sinful for the son-in-law or mother-in-law to look each other in the face. If by any chance the son-in-law meet the lady in question, he must hide himself or cover his face. Suicide of both parties is the outcome if this rule be broken. The White and Silent Nuns, known as Bernardines, a religious sisterhood at Bayonne, in the south-west corner of France, close to the Pyrenees, founded by L'Abbé Cestac, hold no converse with human beings. Within the Buddhist monasteries there are frequently ascetics who, for years

* Form of exorcism from the Church of England Prayer-Book (Edward VI.'s edition) to be used at the Baptismal Service.

together, have no intercourse with the outside world, but sit in constant silent meditation, receiving their food through a hole in the door. Hermits, in China, tear out their own eyes, with the idea that, by closing the two gates of love, they open the gates of wisdom.

From this it would seem that it is the aggregation, not the segregation, of the vermin on his footstool that is so distressing to "the Lord." Theophily is only possible in conjunction with misanthropy! If "the Lord" is annoyed with vermin on the throne on which he finds a seat, as he is on the stool on which he places his feet, I, one of the footstool vermin, sincerely pity him. A beggar in an old blanket moving with fleas *et hoc* must have a comfortable and scratchless time of it compared with him.

Great Timon, what a view to take of the human's life and the human's deity! Let us waken from the hectic slumber of theologic distortion and vow that we shall be ridden by "religious" nightmare hags no more. Let us look upon the footstool with clear, loving, and reverent but fearless eyes. Let us picture no more an irritable and mean gorgon with his feet among vermin, and possibly his seat also, as in his sight we are assured the very heavens are not clean, and that he chargeth even his angels with folly. Let us have done with a god that is exalted above all hyperbole, while his work is abominable and contemptible, and sinful beyond all expression. Let us have no more of a god whose name is above every name, who has heaven for a throne and earth for a footstool, the latter noisome with vermin, and likely the former also, in order that, by contrast with the vermin, he may stand out the more ineffably exalted.

Apart from our theological horrors which for chiliads have been burnt into our very bones, this earth is not a vale of tears, nor a mangy footstool for a petulant tyrant. The subjective and the objective world are one dulcet

lute which the rift of theology has afflicted with harrowing discord and irremediable jar. Our earthly and heavenly hope lie in human union and federation, not in the den of the ascetic and the cavern of the anchorite. Let us have done with the owls and the vampires and the evil spirits of the Night, for the Day dawns, and, envisaged in the light, the Vale of Tears is the Mount of Joy :—

“O Earth ! thou hast not any wind that blows
Which is not music ; every weed of thine,
Pressed rightly, flows in aromatic wine ;
And every humble hedgerow flower that grows,
And every little brown bird that doth sing,
Hath something greater than itself, and bears
A living Word to every living thing,
Albeit it hold the Message unawares.
All shapes and sounds have something which is not
Of them ; a Spirit broods amid the grass ;
Vague outlines of the Everlasting Thought
Lie in the melting shadows as they pass ;
The touch of an Eternal Presence thrills
The fringes of the sunsets and the hills.”

IMMORTALITY.

LYRE of the gods, peal forth the hymn
In glory and in gloom,
Before the host, with banners dim,
That trample o'er the tomb ;
Ring to their clanking armour's clang
And the chorus of the stave
That high in deathless triumph rang
In the empire of the grave.

March on across the valley's smiles
And o'er the mountain's scars,
And tramp across the ocean isles
And o'er the moon and stars ;
Call through the open gates of God,
Through Saturn's belting rings,
And down the road by seraphs trod
Where pallid Venus swings ;
Herald that man is more than man
When mundane life is o'er ;
Proclaim that man is never man
Till he is man no more.

Yea, Life with all its fevered hours,
And all its loves and wars,
And Day with all her sun and flowers,
And Night with all her stars,
And all the pomp of all the kings,
The pride of all the braves,
The lustre the regalia flings,
The gloom of all the graves,

IMMORTALITY.

Are visions of this psychal plane,
Are dreams, and nothing more ;
But we shall wake with GOD again
When all those dreams are o'er.

Fear not, fear not we shall not live ;
Doubt that we're living now,
And hail the life that Death can give,
And Being's vestal vow.

In steadfastness possess thy soul
When passing through the gloom,
For far more holy and more grand
Than the red rose in thy infant hand
Is the white rose on thy tomb ;
And only through the spears of Gath
Thy arm must hew its way
To tread on the transmortal path
Through the immortal day.

In the death-rattle in thy chest
A choral seraph sings,
And the last heavings of thy breast
Are fanned by angels' wings.
Break of Death's door the iron hasp,
And, like a bridegroom, go :
There lieth in thy latest gasp
The last of all thy woe.

Yea, manful cry unto the Lord
To end the desperate Now ;
Fear not thy armour-bearer's sword
On red Gilboa's brow ;
For all the trail of glory-clouds
O'er Aidenn's golden floor,
And all the sheen of all the shrouds
Are thine for evermore.

Break this dream within a dream
With the murmur of its trees,
The ripple of its limpid stream,
The thunder of its seas—
Delusions all, and spun from thee
As a spider's web is spun :
'There is no You, there is no Me,
'Neath the circuit of the sun—
No azure on the rainbow's rim,
No verdure on the sod ;
There is an awful, nameless Him—
There is an only GOD.

The rolling Earth, the evening star,
Are dreams of you and me ;
But we shall wake nor wander far
To reach the boundless Thee.
He is in us, and we in Him—
But One, and not allied ;
A Him that mortal cannot limit,
And there is None beside.

Await the mandate of the Lord
To quit this slumbrous Now,
Wake on the armour-bearer's sword
On glad Gilboa's brow,
And all the trail of glory-clouds.
O'er Aidenn's golden floor,
And all the sheen of all the shrouds,
Are thine for evermore.

DREEING THE WEIRD.

GEOGRAPHICALLY, hell is in the centre of the earth. The earth goes rattling round, crowded with mitigated sinners on its surface and unmitigated sinners in its centre. Surely the centre must not contain sinner in the gross, but only Liebig's extract of sinner. Crowding full-sized sinners into it in millions upon millions during all these thousands of years, would, I apprehend, before this, have burst up the concern, and have sent the fragments flying over the universe. Be this as it may, up till now, the infernal fires have been used exclusively for the burning of sinners. Now, however, it would seem that we are about to tap the internal blazes, and read our *Herbert Spencer* in the light of hell, and boil our tea-kettle in the heat of it.

An ingenious engineer, says a scientific contemporary, has published a scheme for tapping and utilising the earth's internal heat for the generation of power by boring a deep hole. The deep-bore hole at Wheeling, W. Va., shows a temperature of 135 degrees Fahr. at a depth of 5,000 feet, the increase in temperature down in the lower part of the bore being about one degree for every 75 feet of depth. This was a more rapid increase than appeared at lesser depths; but, assuming this rate to be uniformly continued, it would require a depth of about three and a half miles to obtain a temperature equal to that of steam at 100lb. pressure. Just what results might be obtained in volcanic countries does not appear, but surely in such regions steam ought

to be producible by natural sources of heat much nearer the surface. Long before the available coal supply is exhausted we may be drawing from Vesuvius, or other natural source of energy, beside which the already paling brilliancy of natural gas shall be as the flickering tallow candle of past days.

Good! How comforting to, from, say, a volume of Spurgeon's sermons, to read your charter to life in the skies by light tapped from the burning soul of your grandfather, paid for quarterly, as you now pay for gas! When you complain that the light is bad, there will be some way of giving the said grandfather a turn on his brander that will so intensify the light as to enable you to read long primer, solid, quite clearly at the distance of ten feet. If your grandfather had been a good, or, rather, a goody-goody, man, and had gone to heaven, how should you have been off for light? You might, of course, have had "the divine light of the spirit," and all that sort of thing; but, such a light is of little use in reading long primer. Lights within you, "illuming the heart," irradiating the liver, lighting up the kidneys and the like, are theological lights, *alias* Tartarean darkness.

I have seen little good come of the "spiritual light" about which priest-craft prates. I know of districts where there are all sorts of "Houses of God," from the spired Anglican edifice to the corrugated sheet-iron howling-house of the Ranter, and there is in the district only degradation, and vice and indecency. But, light up the district with street-lamps, and moral and social conditions are at once ameliorated. Our street morals depend much more upon coal-gas, as the police will testify, than upon "spiritual light" such as is supplied by all the priests and ministers of all denominations. And coal gas is *cheaper* than "spiritual light" as supplied by our pastors and masters. For coal gas you pay so much per thousand cubic feet, and there you are; but, between

tithes and pew-rents, and deodands of multiform kinds, you are never done paying the purveyors of "spiritual light"; and, in spite of this, if there be no gas lights near, John will have his purse snatched and his throat cut against the church wall, and Janet will be outraged against the church door. I call God to witness what I say is true; and, that being so, I care little that what I say is palatable.

Man, as well as God, knows that what I say is true; but I care little for the former's verdict. He has, by priest and king, been stultified so long that he is now, hereditarily, a *stultus*. And he is far from being an honest *stultus*. Sacerdotalism has undermined his morals as well as crazed his intellect. Not only has his intellect been outraged by the dogma $3 = 1$, but his morals have been intimidated by the asseveration that he would be eternally burnt if he did homologate and endorse this mental outrage. What can you expect from the helots of eighteen centuries of such mental and moral outrage? You can expect ill-developed and cringing serfs, and you get them. They stand in the living present; but, terrified to break with the dead past. They knew priestcraft; and they know enough of science to know that science and priestcraft cannot both be true—that, indeed, they are fiercely antagonistic; but, poor *slaves*, they dare break with neither; and so they attempt a reconciliation—an eirenicon. They sit on both sides of the fence at once. They dabble in what they dub "the higher criticism"—that is, the infatuatedly erudite criticism of matters really beneath all criticism—crude, mythical meanderings of a dead past that should, long ago, have been permitted to bury its dead, and certainly would have been so permitted but for priestcraft's heavy vested interests in keeping the corpse above ground and, in spite of its malodorous putrescence, swearing that it lives, and moves, and benignly influences the world.

"The higher criticism" is mere tentative pedantry. The theologian, like the cuttle-fish, emits a black and opaque excretion of ink, and hopes behind it to escape from the unlettered man in the street, who is inclined to deem that what appeared to him only archaic nonsense and worse must have something in it after all, since the learned and venerable Dr. Dryasdust has written upon it three big, unreadable volumes, formidable with Latin citations and Greek foot-notes, and every alternate page conspicuous with great, black, square, Hebrew, Chaldean, or Phœnician horrors. But, ere a long time pass, even the man in the street will see through the pedantic subterfuges of learned ignorance. Then, for the first time, God will be praised with the voices of freemen, their divine pæan sung to the accompaniment of a harp, its strings fashioned out of the entrails of the last priest. I know of nothing so "irreligious" as religion.

Such chronic shams are we that our creeds and our decalogue have, in practice, become something alarmingly like the very reverse of what they are in theory. In the following version of the Decalogue, by Clough, tact and cynicism are in equal parts.

"Thou shalt have one God only ! Who
 Would be at the expense of two ?
 No graven images may be
 Worshipped, except the currency ;
 Swear not at all ; for, for thy curse
 Thine enemy is none the worse ;
 At church on Sunday to attend
 Will serve to keep the world thy friend.
 Honour thy parents, that is, all
 From whom advancement may befall ;
 Thou shalt not kill ; but need'st not strive
 Officially to keep alive.
 Do not adultery commit ;
 Advantage rarely comes of it ;
 Thou shalt not steal ; an empty feat,
 When it's so lucrative to cheat.
 Bear not false witness ; let the lie
 Have time on its own wings to fly.
 Thou shalt not covet, but tradition
 Approves all forms of competition."

In theory we have two antagonistic principles underlying the moral cosmos—to wit, Good and Evil, Ormuzd and Ahriman, God and Devil. This God and Devil are partners, and parents, as it were, of that bantling, the world. But the bantling is, practically, left to the tender mercies of the one parent only, and that the latter. A brief colloquy between a woman and her lazy husband is reported, which hits off the division of parental care of deity and fiend respectively. The woman was busy, the baby was crying, and the man, so far as appears, was doing nothing. "John," she said, "I wish you would rock the baby." "Oh, bother!" was the answer; "why should I rock the baby?" "Why, because he isn't very well, and I have this mending to do. Besides, half of him belongs to you, and you ought to be willing to take care of him." "Well, half of him belongs to you, too; and you can rock your half and let my half holler." The Devil sedulously rocks his half of that child, the world, and allows God's half to holler.

As Carlyle lamented, God "does nothing"; and his half hollers agonisingly, and without ceasing. There are nine Muses, nine daughters of Mnemosyne; but, only one of them, Melpomene, with her sobbing tragedy is *the* muse of the world. The weak and flaccid strings of the lyres of the others emit a strain that is but fitfully and faintly heard in the long, deep, and harrowing groan. Of a verity, man that is born of woman is of few days and full of trouble. He knows not—neither, indeed, can know—why he is here; he knows only that he suffers. Practically, that he suffers is the only proof he has that he lives. He is here, the effect of an uncaused Cause, and Whence did he come, and Whither does he go? The question is unanswerable. To the riddle there is no reply from a sibyl of the living or an oracle of the dead. From the turmoil, the sordid bread-winning, the heart-ache, we at length lie down in the dust. Away in

the cemetery, away from the tramp of feet and the roll of wheels, away down under the roots of the grass, it seems restful, cool, and calm.

It *seems*; but the seeming is shallow, and on the slightest probing of it, it is horrent with the most momentous and terrible possibilities. No energy or gymnastics of reason will ever tear out from man's essential essence the conviction that he *has* or *is* a soul. The air is redolent of scepticism, but scepticism of the higher order tends to confirm rather than to doubt that, under the metamorphosis of the phenomenon, the noumenon remains imperishable. Futhurmore, we take it as our axiom that probation opens up to advancement. Here we have been seven times heated in the furnace of affliction; here we have been remorsefully hammered on the anvil of pain. To what end? Let us hope, if we cannot predicate, the end a higher, subtler and nobler existence on a plane to which we have been elevated by our abasement, to which we have been exalted by our sorrows. In the mystery let us possess our souls in patience. We are not the spinners, but only the fibre, in the thread of Doom. We are not the potter, but only the clay; and we are fashioned to honour, or dishonour, or neither, for these *our* relative terms and conceptions may be—nay, are—utterly inapplicable to the impersonal and theurgic Energy with whom we have to do. There is nothing so blasphemous as our conventional devotions, nothing so sacreligious as our worship that finitises the Infinite, and anthropomorphoses the Eternal. The fling of the die of our destiny has fixed that we earn and eat the bread of sorrow. Quoth the octogenarian :—

“ I've seen yon weary, winter sun twice forty times return,
And every time has added proof that man was made to mourn.”

And, if this be the fiat of mortal destiny, then why do we make our misery more by an infatuated denial that misery is, on this plane at least, our irrevocable doom?

If we have no wings with which to fly, casting ourselves from the housetop into the empty air because we fondly dream we ought to have been able to fly, is mad and ruinous. Let us find out, as far as in us lies, our place and function in the cosmos, and reconcile ourselves to the incontrovertable facts. The facts will preach in utterances of thunder that Sorrow is a reality and Happiness a dream. To such as may question this dictum, I appeal in the words of Byron:

“Count o’er the joys thy years have seen,
Count o’er thy hours from anguish free;”

And, when you have computed the true tale of your “hours from anguish free,” tell me if anguish is not the warp and woof of your life’s web, and joy only a fitful stitch or two of filigree work on the hem—a ray of light introduced to render the darkness visible. Sorrow is a reality, Happiness a dream. But, may not the dream be ominous? Hope whispers that it is, and that we may yet reach a sphere in which happiness will be the reality, and sorrow be forgotten or remain only as a dim and distant memory. Let us accept the dream for all the dream is worth. Meanwhile, let us philosophically and heroically face our sorrow.

Recently I read that Pip, King of the Lotolies, a tribe in Madagascar, had invented a new musical instrument, or, rather, had adapted and applied an exceedingly old one. The king, the story goes, devised some time ago a human harp. He had been visiting the place of punishment in his village, and witnessing the bastinadoing of his captives, he was struck by the tonal difference of their groans. At once he commissioned the royal carpenter to construct a series of stocks, in which he placed eight captives, whose howls of pain when the soles of their feet were struck by the rod were so carefully arranged that they made a perfect octave. This seemed such a success that he had a second frame constructed for the feet of

eight more wretches, whose average groans ranged a full octave higher. The harp was now complete. On it he proposed to play melodies, and commenced to practise the national air. His project was to regulate the length of the note by the violence of the blow on the feet of the sufferer. At first, the scheme did not succeed at all, for the reason that the captives, hitherto used to hard hits alone, howled loudly each time, and with little difference in force. At last he arranged, however, so that the groans became proportioned to the blows.

Who is he who has drunk deep of the cup of life, who has even jocundly, as he thought, warmed both hands before life's fire, who will decline to admit that the entire race of man bears a resemblance only too striking to this human harp in Madagascar? From this world the anthem that rises to God is a dirge? The thoughtless and the shallow laugh, but their laugh mingles mournfully with the dread diapason of woe. The sadness of the feeling and thoughtful is terribly real; and the laughter of the fools is only as the crackling of thorns under the pot. Let Destiny have her way. If here and there she decree that the wail of the dirge drown the laughter of the comedy, who and what we to question the irrevocable fiat?

Whatever is here, happiness is not. What we are being fashioned to we know not; and, apparently, it is no business of ours to know. We are being heated in the furnace, and, red and flaming, we lie between the obdurate anvil and the ringing hammer. We cannot run away from Fate. Let us gird up our loins and fight, for we cannot flee. "Norse Odin, immemorable centuries ago, did not he, though a poor heathen in the dawn of Time, teach us that, for the Dastard, there was, and could be, no good fate; no harbour anywhere, save down with Hela in the pool of Night! Dastards, knaves, are they that lust for Pleasure and tremble at Pain!" *

Carlyle. "Past and Present."

THE SPOON.

I WONDER what sort of world this would have been if men had been constructed so as to be incapable of feeling hunger. How different the whole human polity had been had all that was required to keep man going been that he should be regularly wound up, like an eight-day clock, and had he carried, in the tail-pocket of his coat, the necessary key for winding himself up. The horse is driven round the hippodrome of the threshing mill with a stick. Hunger is the stick that drives Mr. John Smith round the hippodrome of the world. There are a thousand things he may do, or leave undone, as he likes; but eating is not of these—it is *the* thing he *must* do. Shakespeare could not write “Hamlet” with his pen till he had first put the play into himself with his spoon. Nay, Almighty God himself condescended to broiled fish and honeycomb, and ascended from Olivet to Heaven with specimens of these inside him.

Seeing that all who would have even a day or two of this serio-comic phantasia of mortal life *must* eat, you would think that eating would be made easy. Well, if you think so, get born and try. I, for instance, for one, have, mine enemy admits, at least average brains; and, from measuring myself with my fellows, I have found that I have *more* than average strength of bone, muscle, and sinew; but, take my life as a whole, I have never for long consecutively found eating quite easy; for years, if I ate to-day, it was seldom without grave apprehension as to how I should eat to-morrow. Or, more definitely, it was not *How* I should eat, it was *What* I should eat, that

troubled me. And this same trouble has troubled millions upon millions. Archimedes alleged that, if he had only the lever and fulcrum, he could move the globe. The lever that moves the globe is the spoon; and the fulcrum is a loaf of bread. The desideratum of this planet is not soul, but soup—in fact, it is only those who have soup who can, in consequence, afford to keep a soul. Soul-keeping is a luxury for the comfortable, or those comparatively so. The sweated East-end tailor can keep no soul; it is only by the most desperate endeavour he can keep a body, and this he does by wearing his body away. Poor, over-worked, half-starved wretch, with the whole round of his being laid out on the disc of a button,—Do you expect him to keep a soul? It would be quite as reasonable, perhaps more so, to expect him to keep a carriage and pair and a pack of hounds.

You have not over much soul at best, and you can easily labour it into a negligible quantity. There is nothing that more nonsense has been raved about than labour—always by those who have never tried it; those who sing the praises of it, while others are subjected to its degradation and curse. It has become so conventionally fashionable to rant about “the dignity of labour” that, if I hint at its indignity, I presume I will add one more to my numerous heresies. Thomas Carlyle, who, honestly enough, imagined himself the smasher of shams, joined his great, rough, but resonant and notable voice, in the tyrant’s chorus anent toil. “There is,” wrote he of Ecclefechan, “a perennial nobleness, and even a sacredness, in work. Were a man ever so benighted, or forgetful of his high calling, there is always hope for him who actually and earnestly works; in idleness alone is there perpetual despair. Consider how, even in the meanest sorts of labour, the whole soul of a man is composed into real harmony. He bends himself with

free valour against his task ; and doubt, desire, sorrow, remorse, indignation, despair itself, shrink murmuring far off into their caves. The glow of labour in him is a purifying fire, wherein all poison is burnt up ; and of smoke itself there is made a bright and blessed flame. Blessed is he who has found his work ; let him ask no other blessedness ; he has a life-purpose. Labour is life. From the heart of the worker rises the celestial force breathed into him by Almighty God, awakening him to all nobleness, to all knowledge. Hast thou valued patience, courage, openness to light, or readiness to own thy mistakes ? In wrestling with the dim brute powers of Fact, thou wilt continually learn. For every noble work, the possibilities are diffused through immensity—undiscoverable, except to Faith. Man, son of heaven ! is there not in thine inmost heart a spirit of active method, giving thee no rest till thou unfold it ? Complain not. Look up, wearied brother. See thy fellow workmen surviving through eternity—the sacred band of immortals !”

This passage is frequently quoted, and you are looked upon as a brainless and eccentric good-for-nothing if you do not endorse it with your approval. It is beery. Its cadences would be appropriately emphasised by a clanking of pint pots, accompanied by a rattling of fetters in the not remote distance. Did Carlyle consider whacking the Shorter Catechism with a stick into “the chief end of man,” or rather of boy, in the school-room at Kirkcaldy a “purifying fire,” in which all his poison was burnt up ? In his uncongenial spoon-driven task among the Fifeshire urchins, I know not that he had produced any “real harmony ;” but it is known that he elicited many a howling specimen of real discord—discord the shrill misery of which could be matched only in the school-room of his gifted and cracked fellow Annandale youth, Edward Irving. This latter

worthy sent such a volume of combined sobs and groans and yells from his sweet Grove of Academia that, one day a carpenter, with his sleeves up and a heavy axe over his shoulder, opened the door of that sweet Academia, and significantly asked, "Mr. Irving, can *I* be of any assistance to you"?

The truth is, both Carlyle and Irving felt within themselves powers and ambitions far above the stale drudgery of pedagogy. In spite of all his rant about the "perennial nobleness, and even sacredness, of work," you may take my solemn assurance that, of the pedagogic work, Carlyle liked no part but the whacking. By the way, dominies are very frequently soured and disappointed men. I have on my own scalp more than one scar on which no hair will grow. The original wounds were placed there by a dominie named Porteous. He has long been dead, and those scars on my scalp, and possibly similar kephalic hieroglyphs on certain other heads still knocking up and down the world, are his only monument, and his record that he was, in his own opinion at least, far too big and able a man to be a rural dominie.

No, no, Tam Carlyle. Labour in 999 cases out of a 1000 is *not* noble—it is basely ignoble. Quite true, if you find a man with real grit and "go" in him, and he is able to put the grit and "go" into the very sort of work for which his soul longeth, that man is happy if mortal man can be happy—nay, he is more than happy, he is blest. But, there is not one man in a thousand so blest. There is not a man in a thousand doing what he wants to do, doing what he could do best. The vast mass of men are born poor, and all are born hungry. They are not fifteen minutes in the world till they want something by way of food. Yea, before, properly speaking, they were in the world at all they required food, and laid the umbilical cord under contribution *in re* their com-

missariat. Well, most men are good for something, and they want to get at that something. But there's the rub; they cannot. They had not the choice of their parents. If a man could have the privilege of selecting his future father and mother, and then in bringing them together nuptially, labour might be all the blessing claimed for it in Carlyle's ranting panegyric. If a man could only select and adroitly bring together his own future father and mother, invite them to a garden party, and arrange that they mutually gravitate to a secluded little arbour all to themselves, where they may do the preliminary billing and cooing under the fragrant screen of the honey-suckles and the roses, all might be well. If he could contrive to get his future father to propose there and then, and his future mother to accept on the spot, felicitous natal circumstances might be thereby obtained for him. He would do well to select a father who was heir to a dukedom, and a mother who was the daughter of an earl. Then, when he was born, he could, leisurely, and as haughtily as he liked, look around him, and see what manner of work he would like best to do. Having judiciously selected his life-duty, he would be happy to the extent he became enthused by it and absorbed in it. He could go through all the preliminary training and education essential to the due discharge of the career he had undertaken, and his spoon would be all right while he fagged through the necessary training and education, however protracted and expensive.

But even this *fin de siècle* civilisation, illumined as it is by the press and platform panacea of "The New Woman," has not hit upon an expedient by which a man may be enabled to select his own parents. And, when the vast majority of us are born into the world, we find that it is not under the auspices of a coronet or a mitre, but only of a spade, or a shovel, or some banal implement.

of that sort. There may be some sepulchral kind of comfort in the fact that multitudes of us are born only to die before we have reached the dignity of breeches, if we be of the sex proper to that bifurcated garment. But, such of us as do not require grave clothes require food. If you escape the coffin, you must have coffee. Now, where and how is this coffee to be had? Your paternal parent of the spade and shovel, and your maternal parent of the dolly and wash-tub, find great difficulty in getting coffee for themselves. You become alarmingly aware that the British Empire is going to pot, and you have an inkling, tantamount to a divine inspiration, that you are the one man who could arrest its disintegration.

You want to enter the House—the House of Commons at Westminster; but you drift into the Workhouse at Camberwell. There you get work, Carlyle's glorious, "sacred" work, awakening you to "all nobleness and knowledge"! You have got some stones to break. Peg away. Be not "forgetful of your high calling." Nice hard stones, and you have got a capital hammer. Remember Tam of Ecclefechan; bend yourself "with free valour" to your task—that is, off with your coat, up with your sleeves, knot your braces round your loins, and go at that stone heap like the devil let loose. Hit that big, amorphous flint boulder; hit it hard; take care you do not hit your own shin. Hit it fair in the centre; "the possibilities are diffused through immensity; undiscoverable"—very! Your hands are blistered; never mind that. Wrestle "with the dim brute powers of Fact"—with a capital F! Gad, there you have missed the stone and cracked your shin. "Complain not. Look up, wearied brother." And, if you "look up," heaven knows what you may hit next, possibly the governor's groin and finish him, and, for your pains, get finished yourself by Ketch, sent off from a rope's end to "the sacred band of immortals." Sacred band of

fiddle-sticks! In a worldful of flats, humbugged by a handful of sharps, how a bag of bombastic bunkum will occasionally "catch on!"

You get out of the Workhouse by-and-bye—kicked out, and that with a cruel official foot that, in kicking you out of the Workhouse door, would kick you clean off this planet, if it could, and send you wheeling and spinning away into unfathomed space. You are ragged and spoon-driven. You take a look, in passing, at the Houses of Parliament, in which you *could* say such glorious things,

"The applause of listening senates to command,"

if you could only get in. Get in! But you may as well think of there and then overcoming the power of gravitation and levitating into the Kingdom of Heaven. Get in! You are not allowed to look at even the outside of the building. You are a seedy and shady-looking customer, with a Work'us cut about you. "Move along, there!" expostulates Peeler, X.374. He has his eye on you, and feels inclined to have his hands ditto.

But, hurrah! here is a job. A gas main has gone wrong, and a trench requires to be dug twenty feet deep, right down into the very viscera of the street. You are spoon-driven, hungry as a hawk. Your father gives you a start in life—all the start he can give you, poor man—he lends you an old spade. And, you hammer and pick and shovel and thump and sweat and swear, away down in the dirt among the dim, lead pipes, the dismal earthenware drains and rusty iron tubes, down, down, in the dirt, among the stenches and the mud. Now you are "wrestling with the dim brute powers of Fact"—with a capital F! What about "surviving through eternity," and all the rest of the Carlylean rhodomontade? Eternity be ——! You are dirtier than a winter door-mat. There is gravel down your neck, and gutter in your boots. You have inhaled sufficient microbes to give you twenty doses of diphtheria. Against a ragged piece of piping you

have knocked the skin off your best knuckle, and your "mate" pseudo-sympathetically advises you in the coarsest form of banter as to what to do with it; and, for his vile gibes, you would break his jaw, only that he is big enough and brutal enough to break your back. Is there any "blessedness" in this, any "sacredness," or anything of that sort? As well look for the grace of God among the gridirons of hell. Labour, unless it is labour of your own choice (and not one man in five thousand is at the labour of his choice), is a curse, "the primal eldest curse." It was not choice, but the utterly inexorable spoon, that drove you down there among the malodours—down there among the entanglements of the lead and iron intestines of the street. The work is hateful. It is not undertaken for its own sake, but for a little dolement of bread, bloater, and baccy.

Carlyle is read; there is a writer called Hiller who is not yet read, who, nevertheless, sanely tells the truth where Carlyle goads on his pen to mendacious extavaganza. Writes this Hiller*: "Apart from the physical necessities of humanity, labour, in the restricted sense of toil (and it is toil wherever it is not voluntarily and joyfully undertaken), is an unmitigated evil; it exhausts the bodily functions without gratifying the intellect. The 'village blacksmith' is all very well as a product of fancy; but he is absolutely untrue to the 'essence of things': he exists only in the brains of poets; he is an amiable fiction. If his innermost subjectivity were questioned, it would vigorously anathematise the hammer, anvil, and everything else inanimate in the smithy. It would anathematise these unoffending objects because they all spell labour. His subjectivity would tell you that it loathes all these things dependent on the smithy. These things are beer, beef, and bread. Everybody wants occupation; nobody wants labour. That man to work must live is, immedi-

* In "Ideal Justice."

ately to the man, no more a good thing than is the fact that, if he stand in the way of an advancing locomotive, he will soon need a coffin."

Man would not, through all those past generations, have, for man, made a busy brute of himself had not "God" been blasphemously lugged into the iniquity as sanctioning—nay, approving—of the toiler's degradation and helotry. "Blessed be ye poor" was unctuously quoted by those who took the utmost care that they themselves should not, by becoming poor, become "blessed." The cleric promised a fine white night-shirt in heaven for those who were satisfied in wearing ragged and seatless breeches on earth. If, for the benefit of your "betters," your shoulders would only bear extra burdens here, the cleric did not mind those shoulders having an extra yard or two of wings in the hereafter. And millions upon millions of shoulders have borne the earthly burdens in anticipation of the heavenly wings.

THE SLEEP OF THE JUST.

EVEN I, who, all my life, have had difficulty in sleeping in my bed, have over and over again, experienced an almost irresistible tendency to sleep in my pew. The ministrations of the late minister of Caerlaverock, honest man, never stimulated thought, and never wafted away the worshipper into the region of spiritual ecstasy ; but I can bear witness that they brought solace to many, and an hour of that sleep which, according to the hymnologist, deity giveth to his beloved. Take it for all in all, the kirk was the best dormitory in the parish. Sleep, there, to the praise and glory of God, was, as a rule, open-mouthed and stertorous, as well as stercorous. But all felt, it is good for us to be here. Better sleep in the house of God than keep awake in the tents of sin.

Speaking one Sabbath of the Church, his church, I presume, the minister remarked, "'Tis like a little heaven below." I had often wondered what heaven could possibly be like, and here, at last, was my chance to obtain the information of which I had long been in quest. Here, at last, I had it on the authority of a duly ordained minister that heaven was like Caerlaverock kirk—only bigger. So I reverently looked all round to see what Caerlaverock kirk was like. Two of the three elders were asleep ; and the third one, the Argus-eyed pædagogus, was severely watching myself and other hobbledehoys with the view of selecting some four or five of us after the kirk "scaled," and, for our sacrilegious feats, including cutting our initials on the pews, making us dance a non-jubilant jig with the tawsee walloping round our legs,

writhing and coiling like the snakes round the head of Medusa.

There was Byres, who had attempted to take snuff that he might keep awake and avail himself of the blessings of a free gospel and an open bible, but who had fallen asleep with the open snuff-box in his hand. Jean Mitchell, when the psalm was given out, having an extremely shrill voice—such as a she-cat uses before flying at a terrier—made all the rafters ring “to the praise and glory of God”; and, I have no doubt, much “praise and glory” God experienced from Jean’s untrained and metallic caterwaul. Well, Jean, somnolent in the absence of her own noise, had had recourse to smelling-salts; but, overcome by the soporifics of the sermon, she had fallen asleep with the unstoppered bottle in her lap, and the escaping ammonical vapour was bringing tears (of repentance, of course), to the eyes of several adjacent sinners who were blinking and winking with their drowsy wits half among the sweet fields of Eden, and half among the turnip fields of the Blackshaw.

Auld Jamie Hastie, who confessed to me: “There are, Wully, twa things on the yirth I enjoy, the ane is a diabolical pretty lass, an’ the ither is a diabolical fine sermon.” We boys were wont to refer to Jamie as “Old Diabolical.” “Diabolical” was his almost sole adjectival attribute; but, after six glasses of whiskey, it melted into d—d. Well, Jamie was sitting bolt upright in his pew, enjoying a diabolical fine sleep. Johnnie Toll, the only man in the kirk who sported a white waistcoat, was asleep. He had, furtively, tried a wee drap o’ whuskey from a flask in the inside pocket of his dilapidated swallow-tail; but neither “whiskey jill nor penny wheep” had been sufficient to save poor Johnnie from following his petticoated friend and neighbour, Katie Jardine, into the Land of Nod, where Cain obtained a wife, a ques-

tionable luxury which, by the way, never fell to the lot of Johnnie Toll.

Jamie Geddes, the grave-digger, was sitting nid-nid-nodding beside Joe Craik the souter. Ever and anon their nodding heads came into collision; and they mutually started up to swear at each other; but, observing, just in time, that they were in the kirk and not in the smiddy, they prudently reserved their objurgations. You could see from Craik's face that each time he wakened up, from his nurg* coming in contact with the hard nurg of Geddes, he was under the impression that somebody had given him a yumph† on the head with his own lapstone; and, as for Geddes you could see that, each time he wakened up it was under the impression that somebody's coffin had tumbled on him. And so it was through all the kirk; and, over it all, from the pulpit, proceeded the eerie, dreary drone anent "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might"; and, this was "a little heaven below." "*Ex pede Herculem*. I multiplied this "little heaven below" by 7893.9088 and the result was the big heaven above—and, I did not wish to be there.

Then two of the elders wakened up, like giants refreshed, from no common sleep, but a sleep in the house of God, under the full influence of a free gospel and an open bible. They two, and the ever-vigilant elder, each seized a long pole with a little box on the far end of it, and went solemnly round the pews to collect bawbees for Christ's sake. They reached with the long pole into the most obscure corners in the sanctuary, and rattled the bawbees in the box under the noses of those who were dilatory in dropping their tributes into the sacred treasury. But, such as had no bawbee never heard

* Head.

† Feggy Pew.

the rattling. They looked up to the roof with that fixed, sublime idiocy of expression which characterizes a duck when she is listening for thunder. They would, you know, have dropped a bawbee into the little box on the end of the long pole, had they not, at the time it was in their immediate vicinity, been quite unable to descry it or any other earthly object, owing to their absolute absorption in the most sublime religious contemplation. Those divine visions I observed always fell upon persons in Caerlaverock kirk, who either had no contribution to give, or, who had a contribution, but who did not wish to give it. And this was "a little heaven below." The larger heaven above would, of course, have collecting-ladles with longer handles and bigger bowls; and, instead of bronze bawbees, the collection would be made up of gold sovereigns. And the elders who went round with the collecting ladles would be at least twenty feet high, and have puce wings on their shoulders and yellow haloes round their heads. Of course, Caerlaverock kirk was only "a little heaven"—very little, very.

By the way, the very clergy themselves, the very elect, appear to have been apt to find themselves on the lap of Morpheus when they should have been, as they sometimes sign themselves, "yours in the Bowels of Jesus." At Winchester, for instance, there still exists a suggestive evidence that, although the spirit of the cleric be strong, yet his flesh is weak. In St. Philip's Chapel you may still observe the ancient stall-seats affixed to the wall of the ante-chapel. These had seats so arranged upon hinges that those who sat in them could maintain their position only by balancing themselves with care and resting their elbows on the seat arms, so that, if the monks who used them dropped asleep during soul-saving cantrips, the seats came forward and pitched them headlong on the floor; nay, if they only dozed and nodded, the hard oaken seat clapped against the hard oaken back, and made a noise

loud enough to attract the attention of the whole congregation.

Nobody, you see, could sleep for sorrow, or laziness, or impiety, or aught else, in St. Philip's, Winchester. Supposing that type of seat had been adopted in Caerlaverock kirk, what manifestations of divine grace we should have had, what pentecostal enthusiasms as ponderous Davie Stoba lay on the floor, while still more ponderous Wully Muirhead lay beside him, or across him, in helpless holiness, like one of the unhorsed, heavy-armed knights of the Middle Ages. I behold these two, in sublime vision, their struggle to rise disturbing the graceful disposal of the garments of the prostrate Betty Scott and playing the deuce with the bonnet of the sanctified but irate Katy Jardine whom one of those tell-tale seats had flung upon the floor, in its detestation of the said Katy venturing to sleep anywhere except in the arms of her ain guidman.

Anglicans and Papists have not nearly the opportunity for obtaining the good, pious sleep which falls to the lot of the Presbyterian. Your Anglican and Papist, in the act of having their souls saved, have to go through an incessant series of beckings, and bowings, and crossings, and canting of "Amen" and "Miserable Sinner," and have, ever, as Jesus or his mamma are mentioned, to have recourse to a supple neck or a pliant knee. Sleeping under such divine screechings, scrapings, head-duckings, and general cock-a-bendies is difficult, although some born with a special talent for sleeping can sleep through all the standings and sittings and *Amens* and *Gloria tibi, Domines*.

But the Presbyterian has excellent opportunities for pious sleep, for the sleep of the just. He sits like a bag of salt, except when he prays; and, then he stands up to show the Almighty his full height and the kind of person it is who wants sun for the wheat and rain for the turnips, as well as grace for his soul; but, above all, sun for the

wheat and rain for the turnips. Grace for his soul is, no doubt, a fine thing in its way, but it never helps him to pay the rent to the laird; and, he can do without it, if he only obtain the desiderated sun and rain. There is, often, only a dry stone dyke between the wheat and the turnips, and the Lord is, practically, asked to send a battering rain to the one side of the dyke, and a blazing sun to the other side of the dyke—a feat, apparently, difficult for the Lord; at least, I have never yet seen him attempt it. Folk who are not Presbyterians kneel when they pray. But the Presbyterian is rather too *dour* to bend his knee to ask anything whatever from either God or Man. He uses his knee for other purposes. He throws his bairns across it and spansks them over their carritches;* and, over it, he occasionally breaks sticks for the fire. In the Highlands, he is wont to go with the knee naked (but not ashamed), but, in kirk he will not bend it in prayer, nor at the mention of the name of God, nor of that of Beelzebub.

But, the long sermon ending with, “And now, twenty-thirdly and lastly, my brethren,” is the Presbyterian’s golden opportunity for holy sleep. In his dreams about bonnie corn-stacks, and sony lassies playing bogle among them, and as the bonniest of them all, with her yellow hair flying behind her like a sheaf of sunbeams, bounds into his arms, he feels, “This is the house of God, this is the gate of heaven.” And, in the excess of joy, he wakes up to find that, instead of being at “the gate of heaven,” he is only on a hard seat in Caerlaverock kirk, and he swears—not loud, but deep. What it was to behold the blue eyes and feel the warm breath of that daft young gilpy and open your eyes only to discover that you were sitting in an atmosphere of somnolent and repressive primness, such as is to be found nowhere else in the world!

* Shorter Catechism.

Caerlaverockites, a quarter of a century ago, whatever they do now, did not work out their salvation with fear and trembling, but with nodding and napping. I once asked Diabolical if deity could save the soul of a sleeping worshipper. "He could," said Diabolical; "but I question if he would." If he would not, there was, I fear, but a poor chance for Diabolical, and it is only too easy to conjecture as to where he must be now. But he will have the company of large numbers of his fellow parishioners. Since my day, since I was a queer, studious, harum-scarum lad among them, how many of them have gone to the "Land o' the Leal"; or, if Diabolical's theology was correct, to the Land o' the Deil. One by one they have gone to the auld kirk yaird, through which my boyish steps often strayed. Simple, honest souls, light lie the turf on your breasts in that quiet God's Acre among the fields. The grass-hopper chirped louder there than elsewhere, the grass was of darker green, the buttercup was larger and brighter, the sourock* was rank, and, on the blazing disc of the dandelion, the wild bee lighted with dismal hum.

There lie now almost one and all of those who were my boyhood's elderly or middle-aged friends and neighbours. Anon the lettered headstones recall their long-remembered names. But, other names I miss. I enquire, and am pointed to "where heaves the turf in many a mouldering heap." There, an elongated grassy mound, without stone or memorial, is, of Jamie Neilson, all that the world holds now. Poor, kind old Jamie, stern, rugged, yet wildly imaginative type of the Scottish peasant that was commoner formerly than now, the type that, for conscience's sake, defied principalities and power and might and dominion, and dourly drawing its blue bonnet down on its brow, with bible and broadsword took to the hills.

* Wild sorrel.

THE SLEEP OF THE JUST.

And there, under the daisies, lies my old comrade, Margaret Dalglish, dear old grey-haired Margaret, a perfect encyclopædia of ballad, legend and romance. How many golden hours of boyhood I spent with Meg, as she was locally called, a balladist to the heart, and a patriot to the heart's core. Ah, Meg, since I parted with you, I have met women, not noteless like you, but receiving the social homage due to literary distinction ; I have watched them keenly, I have tested their talent's compass, I have diagnosed as to whether the ray of genius was there ; and, Meg, in comparison, you have rarely appeared to disadvantage. And yet, Meg, in the great outside world your name has never been heard ; and, peradventure, none save myself pauses with a melancholy pride over that obscure little mound, under which a gifted and good woman rests, at least, for a while ; for, it is hard for us poor mortals to believe that all the unripened and all the repressed potentialities of being are darkened forever and ever by the shadow of the wing of the Angel of Death.

But—I can say no more, In that auld kirkyard are graves, graves which kinship sanctifies, and which affection hallows. To-day, I must leave them as too tender for words, too deep for tears. *Ye fathers and mothers of the farm and the hamlet who erst slept fitfully in the kirk, sound be your sleep in the kirkyard. “Our life is but a sleep and a forgetting.” Sleep in that green God's Acre. Sleep under the buttercups that exult in, from the east, the wafted sigh from the heather, and, from the west, the deep sob from the sea. Sleep.*

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