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SATURDAY, JANUARY 13, 1905.

Calendar for Next Week.

- 14—Second Sunday after the Epiphany.
Feast of the Holy Name of Jesus,
Commemoration of St. Felix, Priest
Martyr.
- 15—Monday—St. Paul, First Hermit.
Commemoration of St. Maurus,
Abbot.
- 16—Tuesday—St. Marcellus, Pope,
Martyr.
- 17—Wednesday—St. Anthony, Abbot.
- 18—Thursday—Chair of St. Peter at
Rome.
- 19—Friday—St. Canute, King, Martyr.
- 20—Saturday—Saints Fabian and
Sebastian, Martyrs.

OBTAINING A RETRACTION

Our vigilant contemporary, the Catholic Fortnightly Review, in its issue of Jan. 1, called attention to an article, reprinted in the Scientific American

Supplement from the English Mechanic, and entitled "Imaginings in a Mountain Observatory," by Edgar L. Larkin. This article contained passages of Satanic wickedness against all revealed religion and especially against Catholicism. Here is a sample: "All hierarchies must go soon; and will, except that hideous monster, the hierarchy of Rome. It has its awful clutch on the throat of man, and hangs on with the grip of a tiger." After quoting many more ravings of like idiocy, Mr. Arthur Preuss says: "Can we Catholics be expected to subscribe to scientific papers that insult us thus on account of our religion?"

We have looked up this article and find it to be a long, senseless screed in which there is no science worth recording but a vast deal of self-laudation. The three columns fairly bristle with capital I's; we are told what "I" think, what "I" have seen, what "I" have done, the great people "I" have met, the great things "I" would do, *ad nauseam*. All Mr. Edgar L. Larkin's *imaginings* are based on the unproved axiom, serenely taken for granted, that "the sun has passed the zenith of its glory, is no longer white-hot, and is cooling." Of this the best astronomers fail to find any proof. In fact, Mr. Simon Newcomb, Professor of Mathematics and Astronomy in Johns Hopkins University, says the exact contrary. His words are: "As no actual cooling seems to take place the question arises how the sun's heat is kept up." And on the question—which Mr. Larkin, in his egotistic serenity, settles as an axiom—whether the sun's radiation will diminish in the future so as to affect seriously the activities and destinies of the human race, Professor Newcomb writes: "This



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is a question to which the science of to-day can return no positive answer. All that can be said is that during the two or three centuries of accurate observations of temperature and climate there is no evidence of any permanent change." The future exhaustion of the sun's heat after five or ten millions of years, which Professor Newcomb admits as possible, is nothing but an inference from analogy with other material substances. "The sun," he says, "like a living being, must have had a birth and will have an end."

But this prudent pronouncement of an expert is totally at variance with the flippant cocksureness of Mr. Larkin. Thus there is not in his wild "imaginings" even the excuse of valuable scientific information to atone for the blatant blasphemy of his insults to Christianity. The man is simply a fool, dangerous to those only who have not read history and have no training in logic or psychology. How could such a worthless and wicked production get copied into so respectable a journal as the Scientific American?

This is the question which the Benedictine Father Sittenauer promptly and frankly put to the editors of that journal. His letter and the reply thereto are taken from the N.Y. Freeman's Journal of December 30.

St. Benedict's Abbey,

Atchison, Kans., Dec. 6, 1905

Munn & Co., New York.

Dear Sirs,—I notice with surprise and sorrow that the "Scientific American" (supplement 1561, pp. 25015-16) has defiled its pages with reprinting from "English Mechanic," an article by Edgar L. Larkin, entitled "Imaginings in a mountain observatory." During the many years that I have been reading the "Scientific American," I have become accustomed to look for science in your magazine, and I never suspected the possibility of its stooping so low as to assist in spreading such brutal, vile, and senseless attacks upon religion of every kind, especially the religion of the Catholic Church, which I profess. I hereby protest most vigorously against this insult offered by the Scientific American to all its subscribers who are not downright infidels. For the sake of the "Scientific American's" fair name as a strictly scientific publication I would fain wish that the article in question had found its way into its columns by mistake. If so, I beg you to state it in the next issue and thus restore the shattered confidence of many of your readers.

Most respectfully yours,

P. JOSEPH SITTENAUER, O.S.B.

Scientific American,

361 Broadway, N.Y., Dec. 11, 1905.

P. Joseph Sittenauer, O.S.B.

St. Benedict's Abbey, Atchison, Kan.

Dear Sir,—We have your favor of the 6th inst., and beg to say that the Editor was as much horrified as you were, upon the receipt of your letter, to read the article by Professor Larkin. He is entirely out of sympathy with the "imaginings" of the Mountain Astronomer, and the Editor regrets more than he can say the attack upon the Catholic Church and upon religion in general. The "Scientific American" is orthodox, and prides itself on always having been so. This has been its policy since the very beginning of its publication, over sixty years ago. It is not orthodox, however, from policy, but from principle.

The article was introduced in the Supplement by one of the under Editors.

The Editor thanks you for calling his attention to the matter which he deeply regrets.

Faithfully yours,
MUNN & CO.

This is a fairly satisfactory apology, but a still more explicit retraction was publicly made by the Editor in the Scientific American Supplement for December 23 (No. 1564, p. 25054), seven

days before Father Sittenauer's indignant but charitable protest was published by the N.Y. Freeman, and before protests began to appear in the Catholic press. Under the heading "A Word to Our Readers," the editor prints the following in double-led type on a page where everything else is single-led.

In the Scientific American Supplement of December 2, 1905, is published an article by a well-known correspondent, who has contributed from time to time to the Scientific American and the Supplement. The article in question was copied from an English publication, and was inserted inadvertently by one of the editors who reviews our foreign contemporaries, and without the knowledge or sanction of the Editor-in-Chief.

A portion of the article consists of an attack upon the Christian religion. The Scientific American, during the sixty years of its career, has always maintained a position of orthodoxy. It does not intend to depart from this policy. The attitude and principle of the Editor would not admit of any different course being taken. Its position with reference to religious matters is governed not as a matter of policy, however, but as a matter of principle, and the editor desires to state to the readers, with deep regret, that an article of the character in question should have appeared in the columns of the Scientific American Supplement. (The latter part of this sentence seems to have got mixed in the printing; but evidently the Editor means to express his "deep regret" that such an article should have appeared.—Ed. N.R.)

Many of the sentiments expressed in the article were altogether shocking and under no circumstances would it have been allowed in the columns of the paper had it come under the Editor's notice before the paper went to press.

The Editor entirely disagrees with the author, that the spirit of a true religion can be replaced by any system of modern "ologies" or "isms," certainly not by the three substitutes for the old religion which the author puts forward, namely: first, sexology; second, race culture, and third, the annihilation of creeds.

What adds to the solemnity of this retraction is its appearance as an editorial utterance in the Supplement, which, as a rule, refrains from any editorial expression of opinion, and is generally made up of articles contributed by correspondents and translations or condensations from other scientific periodicals. Another circumstance that corroborates the editor's evidently sincere defence of non-complicity in the insertion of that villainous article of Professor Larkin's is the fact that the latter was not mentioned in the usual weekly announcement in the "Scientific American" for December 2, of articles appearing in the "Supplement" of the same date. Perhaps even the under editor, who inserted that article, may not have read it through. Its harmless, though unscientific beginning and its catchy but not vicious sub-heads may have lulled the hurried sub-editor into a misplaced feeling of security. We venture to think that the Editor-in-chief's horror, shock and outspoken antagonism will make the understrapper more careful another time.

From the phases of this incident there emerges the practical conclusion that charitable interpretation is, after

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