

leaf of the dog's tooth violet. But down in the swamp, half buried in wet mosses and decaying wood and fungi, is one solitary rootstalk of the curious *Arisæma triphyllum*, or Indian turnip. Where there is one there will be many, and in another week or fortnight there will be plenty of these strange hooded things that some people will insist upon calling pitcher plants. The Indian arum or the *Arisæma* is a perennial herb sending up in early spring a slender scape surrounded with veiny leaves, and with the hooded spathe turned over, flattened, and often spotted and striped with purple, puce, and brown. We leave this solitary specimen where he is, there being hardly enough of him as yet to carry away. And look as closely as we may this is the extent of our discoveries. Now we cross the road, and passing the open grassy glade that pleased the children so, strike into a low copse carpeted with oak leaves and pine tassels to the depth of a foot and more. We stop and pull away the year's accumulated rubbish and find that we have narrowly escaped crushing to death a delicate specimen of the *Anemone nemorosa*, a poor little stray blossom that stands alone in the wood. And now, scraping away in all directions the mass of decayed and decaying leaves, sticks, and grasses, we find scores of little fluffy, downy points coming up everywhere under the rubbish, each of which means the dainty blue or bluish-white flower of the future. The whole matter is the absence of rain. Let a good rain come, washing down the old decomposing matter into the roads and marshes, and after, let one good day's sunshine light up even the darkest corners of the wood, and we shall have all the anemones we want. And besides the tender trouble of the rain the wind, too, is needed; that kind of freshening, blowing, tumultuous spring wind that shakes the dried white leaves from off the trees and presses open the fast-locked blossoms of the lowest little flower. When it is only sunshine that is at hand to help, the growth will be tardy, the resurrection incomplete. Already, however, the willows make a golden haze when we stand at a sufficient distance from them, and one elm begins to show some feathery fringes in place of the mere pencilled branches of the winter. In the big swamp that goes down to meet the stream the reeds are shooting up, pale greenish-white and hollow, and as the children stand and poke at them, a kingfisher darts out and flies into the wood. Blue against the leaden sky, he is yet dark and dingy compared to a broken egg-shell that has fallen from a robin's nest, and which we pass on the ground as we turn to go home. SERANUS.

## CORRESPONDENCE.

"CYMBELINE."

To the Editor of THE WEEK:

SIR,—The discussion of Shakespeare's text is always a pleasant and invigorating exercise when it is undertaken by honest enquirers, and not by dogmatists. And the letter of E. A. Meredith in your issue of to-day is particularly agreeable, since it deals with so delightful a subject as *Cymbeline*.

I am led, however, to dissent from the correctness of your correspondent's corrections of Shakespeare's text, and beg to give my reasons. In the First Folio (reduced fac-simile. Funk and Wagnalls, 1887) I find the lines emended by Mr. Meredith, to read thus, the punctuation being different to the Dyce text and the copy he quotes:

Qui. Were you a woman, youth,  
I should woo hard, but be your groome in honesty:  
I bid for you as I do buy.

Which means, in my estimation, "Whether you be a woman or a man my sudden affection is so great that I am willing to give as much of it as will buy your love in return, even though it be as great as the greatest of all prices, the love of a man for a woman." Guiderius was evidently smitten as a youth of his age, cut off from the companionship of the other sex, was sure to be, with the evident feminine graces of the stranger. And from the fullness of a sensitive nature was ready to give all to get all, let that all be what it might, and to my mind it is pretty clear, that though he outwardly accepted the statement of the stranger that she was of his own sex, and submitted to the adoption of that statement by his older and younger—consequently less impressionable—companions, in his heart he retained a doubt, born of natural instinct, and cast his throw accordingly.

And if we take the Dyce text, or as quoted by Mr. Meredith,

In honesty  
I bid for you, as I'd buy,

such a meaning as I have stated still holds: "Whatever love you have to give, even so much, I am ready to give too, let the amount be whatsoever it may."

In the second emendation suggested by Mr. Meredith, I am sorry to say I see no improvement on the text. The meaning of "pervert" is evidently, in this case, merely to turn aside—not corruptly but in any way, so that the dire event so plainly foreshadowed by Posthumus' distraction may be warded off. The vile conspirators saw that they had worked enough evil, the result was more dread than even they had anticipated, and they were willing to soften matters. In the terrible agitation into which Posthumus had fallen, to prevent some strong action on his part would have been impossible, but if they could only throw the fierceness of his anger out to another object, they would avert a disaster they feared. Thus they would, of course, as Mr. Meredith writes it, prevent the catastrophe, but the use of the word "pervert" suggests all to the imagination that the poet would express. I am, sir, yours faithfully,

S. A. CURZON.

## RENAN'S HISTORY OF ISRAEL.\*

CONSIDERING the wide popularity of M. Renan's *Origins of Christianity* and his own deep interest in the subject, it is quite natural that he should have carried his researches back into the history of the religion which was, at least, an historical preparation for the Gospel. It has been said that this new work of the brilliant French *littérateur* has met with less success than the *Vie de Jésus* and subsequent volumes of the series on Christianity. How this may be we have no means of knowing; but we see, on the title page of the volume which lies before us, the words *sixième édition*; and we fancy there are few writers who would regard it as a sign of failure if their book came to a sixth edition within two or three months of the day of publication.

Any one who had a tolerably extensive acquaintance with the writings of M. Renan could have given an estimate of his present work, before reading it, which would have needed scarcely any revision or correction after a perusal. M. Renan is as charming a writer as ever, as graceful, as witty, as epigrammatic, as he has been any time these twenty or thirty years. But he is also as unscientific, as arbitrary, as unsatisfactory as ever. As it was in his *Vie de Jésus* and his *Origines* generally, so it is here. M. Renan's inner sense, rather his caprice, is the rule for the acceptance, rejection, or interpretation of any portion of the sacred narrative. The critical *prolegomena* are promised to appear hereafter, but no explanation of his principles can bring consistency into a work which indicates results like those which are recorded in the present volume. The whole work, we may remark in passing, is to consist of three volumes, and will contain the whole history of Israel to the time of Christ. This first instalment brings it down to the reign of David.

M. Renan decides that the early history of Israel is, to a certain extent, historical, and he institutes an ingenious contrast between the patriarchal age of the Israelites and the golden age of the Aryans. "It is," he says, "in the patriarchal age that the destiny of Israel begins to be written: nothing in the history of Israel is intelligible without the patriarchal age. This age, like all infancies, is lost in night; but the duty of the historical inquirer into causes is to break this darkness by the help of psychology and philology. It may be said that the Aryan golden age has as much documentary evidence as the patriarchal age; and that the golden age is a mere dream. But there is no real analogy. The patriarchal age had a real existence: it still exists in the countries in which the nomad African life has preserved its purity."

M. Renan's method of treating the sacred records is illustrated by a passage of the Abbé Barthélemy, in which the latter summarizes the history of *Æneas* as given by Virgil: "At that time there lived a man called *Æneas*: he was illegitimate, religious, and cowardly. These qualities procured for him the esteem of King Priam, who, not knowing what to give him, bestowed upon him one of his daughters in marriage. This history begins on the night of the taking of Troy. He left the city, lost his wife on the way, went on board ship, had an amour with Dido, Queen of Carthage, who lived four centuries after him, held very entertaining games at the tomb of his father Anchises, died in Sicily, and finally arrived in Italy near the mouth of the Tiber, when the first object that struck his sight was a sow which had just littered thirty white pigs." . . . "I think, with Barthélemy," says M. Renan, "that we do as great wrong to history by robbing it of such fine stories." Perhaps so; but let us be quite sure that the things we remove from the page of history belong to the same class. It can be no one's interest or business to perpetuate a belief in contradictions and impossibilities. On the other hand, it is a cruel and ruthless thing to ridicule ancient stories which have become dear to many hearts, unless very good reason be given for treating them as legendary or mythical.

The account which M. Renan gives of the origin of the human race would be very droll, but for considerations such as those to which we have adverted. We will only say further, that it is purely subjective and speculative. There is a good deal that is interesting and partially true in the description which he gives of the different tendencies of the Aryan and Semitic races. When, however, he tells us that, while the Aryan religion was polytheistic, the "Semite patriarch had, from the most ancient times, a secret tendency toward monotheism, or, at least, toward a worship that was simple and comparatively reasonable," we know quite well the motive of such a remark. He is insinuating, at this early place, a suggestion of the naturalistic explanation of the Hebrew history. He admits, further on (p. 42) that the causes of the Semitic monotheism were not simple. Perhaps they are to be found in the nomadic life rather than in Semitic blood. Of course, he entirely ignores or explains away the frequent lapses of the Hebrew people into polytheism, and of course believes nothing of their restoration to the true faith by Divine judgments. It was merely the vulgar who fell away into the worship of "gods many." He does not instance the case of the Arabs who were brought out of polytheism and idolatry in the seventh century of the Christian era. As regards a belief in gods in general, he quotes with approval the saying of Petronius: *Primus in orbe deos fecit timor*. It is, he says, a formula which is admirably true. Mr. John Mill held a different opinion of that formula; and thought the belief in question, although he did not show it, had a much nobler origin.

It is curious how, in his chapter on the Sons of Jacob or of Israel (*Les Beni Jacob ou Beni-Israel*), he accepts substantially the account given in Genesis. One wonders how such a destroyer can have anything of a record which he handles so unceremoniously. The reason is partly that

\* Histoire du Peuple d'Israel. Par Ernest Renan. Tome i. Paris, 1887.