

Until this hydra of ultra-fanaticism is crushed we cannot expect to have that *entente cordiale* which should govern our lives; and the sooner the P. P. A. organs die and their promoters return to the obscurity out of which they came, the better for Catholics and the better for Protestants in Canada.

BOB INGERSOLL.

There is only one original Col. Robert Ingersoll; all imitations are bogus. This gentleman has evidently a special mission on earth—and it seems to us that it is to prove the folly of all atheism. At all events were such his desire he could not accomplish it in a better manner than he is doing. There are illogical men, who at times are masters of sophistry; but Bob is illogical without knowing it and he does not even carry the sophist's mask. Last week he went on one of his periodical crusades against religion; in other words the mania came on him accompanied with unusual spasms. He appeared in the Star Theatre in the evening; unlike Lucifer, the "star of the morning," he became an evening, a twilight twinkler; a befall of night. His subject was: "What Must We Do to Be Saved?" A very peculiar question for a man to ask who professes not to believe in salvation. It would take up too much space, and might not prove of any great benefit, were we to trouble our readers with an account of the kaleidoscopic contradictions that throng his lecture; however, we will amuse ourselves with a few of his absurdities. To begin with, let us take the following:

"It is dangerous not to think. There is no subject too holy to be investigated. There is only one worship, and that is of justice. The doctrine of endless punishment I despise and defy. From the aspersions of the pulpit I would seek to rescue the Deity."

There is a sample of wisdom and erudition. Only two classes of people do not think—idiots and atheists. It would be impossible to prevent any other individual from thinking. Even Ingersoll could not check a thought from flashing through the mind of a man. The mind—or soul—is only a breath of God, and yet this creature, who is impotent to prevent the image from thinking, would have the audacity to attempt the destruction of the Creator of that mind. For such men it is often very dangerous to think; because their minds are not evenly balanced and their thoughts may upset their remnant of equilibrium. "There is no subject too holy to be investigated"—he means to be desecrated. He only acknowledges the worship of justice. Mark that well! We will see in a few moments that the man either does not know what he is talking about, or else he does not understand the English language. While despising the doctrine of endless punishment, he proposes to explain how men are to escape it, by telling them what they must do to be saved. "From the aspersions of the pulpit" he would "seek to rescue the Deity." But he says that "God is a non-entity," that "there is no Deity." So he is going to rescue a "nothing" from the attacks of an institution purposely created for the glorification of the same Deity. What a wonderful Don Quixote in the arena of religion! Not a bad beginning for this re-constructor of the universe. But let us proceed!

After slapping at the Catholics, biting at Episcopalians, sneering at Methodists, and ridiculing Presbyterians, the sage says that—

"God is represented on the cross as a man forgiving His murderers, and yet, nineteen centuries afterward, as God, He will, it is said, damn honest men for the expression of their thought. If

there is a God He will be merciful to the merciful; and upon that rock I stand."

A while ago the only religion he recognized was that of *justice*, now it is one of *mercy* that he is ready to stand by. Who ever pretended that God would condemn "honest men" for "the expression of their thoughts?" It is exactly their sincerity and honesty that will save them. Decidedly God will be merciful to the merciful—He has proclaimed it times numberless. But where would be Bob Ingersoll's religion of *justice* if God were merciful to the unmerciful? A while ago the ranting atheist was parading his faith based on justice, and justice alone; now he wants mercy, without justice. Probably he has a slight idea that he will be more in need of mercy some day than of the justice pure and simple.

The next paragraph, in this mosaic of nonsense and contradictions, is really rich:

"When they had God in the Constitution, Col. Ingersoll thought there would be no room for 'other folks.'"

The "other folks" must consist of Col. Robert Ingersoll and a few of his little imitators, for they are the only persons who wish to take God out of the constitution. All other people—Christians, Jews, Mahometans—find that there is lots of room for themselves, even with the presence of the Almighty. Probably Ingersoll is like Lucifer, who considered that heaven was not large enough for God and himself, and as a result discovered that God carved out a place sufficiently large to hold the rebel for all eternity.

We said that we would amuse ourselves with this lecture; it is on a very serious topic, but the absurdity of the statements made and the folly of the man making them, put all serious discussion out of the question. Just read this, as a sample of legislative wisdom; the author of it would be a statesman if he were not affected by the orb of night:

"I would like to see a law," he said, "that no girl could be allowed to take the veil and renounce the joys of the world. In a free country no one should be permitted to keep a penitentiary for God. Wherever there is a schoolmaster to hold a torch there is a priest to blow it out."

Evidently it is in the name of liberty that Ingersoll speaks. He would have a law passed that would so restrict the liberty of conscience and freedom of action in a girl, that she could not make a choice of life—unless that choice corresponded with Bob Ingersoll's ideas. At present no girl is obliged to take the veil; a girl is at perfect liberty to do so or not—just as her conscience, or inclinations, her desires, dictate. If she takes the veil she does it in virtue of the liberty which she enjoys. But the emancipating Bob would have a law passed that would not allow her to select a religious life. There is a sample of this man's consistency. "Wherever there is a schoolmaster to hold a torch there is a priest to blow it out." Who lit the torch for the school-master? Was it not the priest? And what about the torch when the priest is to hold it? As a rule the same man is school-master and priest at once. Excuse the expression, Mr. Ingersoll, but we can find none other to properly characterize your expressions—not ideas, for you have none—ROT!

In all the *potpourri* of words we find the following the nearest approach to something reasonable—and yet it is such a poor imitation of the model that Ingersoll would not dare acknowledge that it seems almost a sin to think of the two in the one moment.

"It is better to understand how to cook," said Col. Ingersoll, "than to understand theology."

Our readers are well acquainted with that simple and beautiful passage in the

first chapter of "The Imitation," in which we are taught the hollowness of knowledge without virtue. Here is a poor parody of the idea, by a man whose sense of the true and good is entirely deadened—that is to say if it ever had life. But taking Ingersoll's remark as it stands, let us see what the result would be if his ideas prevailed. There is no doubt but that for a cook "it is better to understand how to cook than to understand theology." In fact she or he don't want to know any theology; it would only be an injury. "A little learning is a dangerous thing," as we see exemplified in Ingersoll. But all men and women cannot be cooks—there must be people of other trades and professions. It would be more sensible to say "it is better to understand how to cook than to understand law." And there is need of lawyers as well as cooks in the world. In fact the cook would have a hard time performing the culinary functions if there were no butchers, bakers and grocers to supply the material. On the ground of his own assertion it would be better for Mr. Ingersoll (and for the world) if he knew more about cooking than he pretends to know about theology, and hired with some lumber firm to look after the cookery department of a shanty. He would be doing good, earning an honest living, filling bodies, but not damning souls. Bob evidently has an idea that a good *chef* is superior in every way, socially, morally, intellectually, and even physically, to a master of theology. Now this is a natural conclusion for the Colonel to arrive at. You see, he does not believe in God, so, in his eyes, theology is a very useless science; but he has an almighty belief in and love for his belly, and, of course, the science of cooking is quite a practical one.

There are fully two dozen more such crazy statements—the outcome of a fevered brain—but we will close with his own closing remarks:

"Suppose death does end all? Next to eternal joy is eternal sleep. I will leave my dead where nature leaves them. Whatever flower of hope springs in my heart I will cherish."

Suppose death does not end all? Next to eternal joy is eternal misery. That is the way to look at it, Robert. There is no "supposing" about it. If you are not sure that death ends all—then you are a fool to take it for granted and act as if it were the case. "I will leave my dead where nature leaves them." That is to the worms and the corruption of the earth. The flower of hope that springs in such a heart would need considerable cherishing; for it is set in very sterile soil. So this great humanitarian, this wonderful man who knows nothing about God or eternity, yet who blasphemes the former and ridicules the latter, is content to leave his dead to the fate that nature has in store for them. We would be long sorry to think that our dead were to be a mere mass of corruption and that their's was the sleep of annihilation. If we thought so, no flowers of hope would ever spring in our heart to be cherished. We love our dead too much for that. Cold-hearted, prayerless, remorseless, unnatural man! You not only would rob the world of God and the human race of religion, but individually you would rob us of our greatest consolation. You would steal from us the faith in the happiness of our dead; you would have us believe that the innocent being we cherished more than life is not amongst God's angels; that the dear friends we loved are not enjoying the rewards of well-spent lives! Out on such a man! He is an enemy to God and society! He is the enemy of every father, mother and child in the land! Poor monster; God help him!

A REJOINDER.

LAST WEEK'S "British Canadian" gives us the benefit of two columns and a half on the editorial page. The editor is over generous with her space. We cannot afford that much. In fact all that these two columns and a half contain could be reduced to as many lines. Evidently our notice of that organ in a recent issue was a god-send to the editor, for she makes the most of it, and spreads out the reply to the utmost limit of its elasticity. Considering that we have something more serious to do than attempting the construction of a syllogism, for that lady, out of her confusion of ideas and mixture of quotations and assertions, we will simply reduce the whole article to its natural limits. The only argument is this: Rome classes marriage as a sacrament; a sacrament is a source of grace; her priests are deprived of that source of grace; therefore Rome is wrong in stipulating celibacy of the clergy. Divested of all superfluous language the above contains about the sum and substance of the article. We say, in reply, marriage is a sacrament; a sacrament is a source of grace; but there are sacraments that are necessary and others that are not absolutely necessary, in every case, to salvation. Baptism is necessary for all, because it effaces the original sin; Penitence is necessary for all who have fallen into sin, after having attained the age of reason; Eucharist is necessary as the most powerful source of grace; Confirmation is not absolutely necessary unto salvation, but is a great auxiliary in imparting strength and grace, and is therefore of necessity when it can be obtained; Extreme Unction is not absolutely necessary, but it is a grand security for the soul going forth to meet its Creator, and should be received when such is possible; Holy Orders and Matrimony are not necessary for all. For the one whose vocation is the Church, and who feels that God has called him to the exercise of Sacerdotal functions, the sacrament of Holy Orders is absolutely necessary. For the one whose vocation is the marriage state, and who feels that God has ordained that he should serve Him in that life, the Sacrament of Matrimony is of absolute necessity. But the two vocations conflict; the two sacraments cannot be received simultaneously by the same individual. In certain cases, when death dissolves the marriage tie, Holy Orders may be received by the survivor, but not while the marriage-bond exists. The reason why they conflict, is that the one taking Holy Orders makes a vow of celibacy, and the reception of Matrimony would necessitate the violation of that vow and entail a perjury and a sacrilege. The distinction between a sacrament that is absolutely necessary unto salvation and one that is only relatively necessary must be taken. By the way, the lady editor of the "British Canadian" has entirely ignored the distinction that we drew between the marriage of our own parents and the one that she claims to have undergone. As to the recent apostate, we have nothing to say against his character; we simply reiterate our statement that marriage has been (according even to Mrs. Shepherd) the motive that impelled almost all fallen priests to abandon the Church; and we expect to hear of Mr. Van Lobeck's marriage, in the near future, as another piece of evidence confirming our statement. Unless Mrs. S. induces him not to marry in order to confound us.

The new Government of Newfoundland has requested the British Government to send a royal commission to investigate the colony's affairs.