

to these than edifying to the people at large. Jesus knew not where to lay his head, but his ambassadors have their Vatican, their bishops' palaces, their rectories and manse, the ambassador generally occupying one of the best houses in the place and having a good time generally. And as to the Bible, if it "has received no new additions for centuries," it certainly has received many new interpretations of its meaning. Compare some of the old sermons with those of the present day: fifty years ago the devil was peeping out from between the leaves of every sermon and the air was nearly suffocating, while the preaching was going on, from the sulphurous fumes from a blazing hell. In these days ears are too polite to have mentioned to them the name of that unpleasantly warm place. An eternity of punishment is not insisted upon by many preachers and is now more ridiculed than believed in by the majority of those who profess Christianity.

Mr. Mitchell thrusts wickedly at the sceptic and the scoffer, and the thrusts would wound more sorely if they had not the boomerang tendency of falling back on the striker. In one place he likens scepticism to a boat whose anchor is drawn up; the boat acquires motion, but motion does not necessarily imply progress nor the "going into any desired or desirable haven." That may be; but a moving boat has some probability of arriving at the desired haven, whereas an anchored boat has not, so long as the anchorage holds firm.

The old saying, attack is easier than defence, is trotted out; to destroy is easier than to build. "It took a genius to rear the Ephesian dome; it took a torch and a fool to destroy it. But if the 'Ephesian dome' stood in the way of progress, the fool acted wisely in destroying it; if Christianity be now an incubus upon civilization, they labor wisely who are striving to raise the people above it.

"Only a few great souls—you can count them on your fingers—have ever constructed any faith for mankind; but the woods and the plains are full of commoners who have snapped at and spit upon the priceless treasure of the soul's inspiration and the soul's hope." That may be very true; but Mr. Mitchell appears to ignore that sceptics kick more at the hypocritical professions made by the so-called followers of such religions than at the religions themselves; and rebel more at the attempt of those in bondage (*re-ligio*, to bind again) to fasten their fetters upon others than at the holding of any faith by those who are so inclined. Take for example the observance of the Sabbath. Were Christians satisfied with spending the day in any way they chose, and allowed others the same privilege, there would be no kick. But we object strongly against others dictating to us what we should eat and drink and how we are to observe certain days.

And as Mr. Mitchell nears the end of his sermon he asks the stale question,—"Tell me if you can apart from the gospel what one sweet and enduring treasure is ours, what one great and abiding hope is ours?" The question has been answered again and again. In debating, "Is Christianity true or false?" such a question as Mr. Mitchell asks has no part whatever; it is altogether irrelevant. A plea so advanced appeals merely to sentiment, and cannot pass for argument. Most sceptics, I apprehend, wish to follow the scriptural injunction,—"Prove all things, hold fast that which is good." And what lover of "whatsoever things are true, honorable, just, pure, lovely and of good report," wishes for more?

WINNIPESK.

Words without any positive significance are the everlasting engines of fraud.—*Horne Tooke*.

ROBBING MARY.

A VERY curious robbery has been perpetrated at Toledo, famous of old for its sword-blades. During the celebration of the Festival of the Virgin, who has been appointed (probably without her consent) as the patroness of the town, some robbers got into the cathedral and stole all her belongings, valued at something like twelve thousand pounds (\$60,000). Four watchmen, armed with carbines and accompanied by several fierce dogs, guard the Cathedral at night. It is therefore supposed that the robbery took place just before the men and dogs came on duty. The police have absolutely no clue, and the populace are indignant.

The Virgin was decked out for the Festival in her best jewels. One of them was a splendid necklace of brilliants and emeralds, presented to her by the great Cardinal Ximenez de Cisneros, who was Regent of Spain at the accession of Charles V. Another was a ring of pearls with an enormous star-shaped black diamond, presented by Cardinal Mendoza, who went with the Catholic kings to the conquest of Granada. These "precious, precious jewels," as Shylock would say, are gone with the rest, and the poor stripped Virgin is left desolate. The thieves even took away the large silver chain with which she was attached to a railing, leaving her to stand or fall as it happened. They did not mind whether she fell forward, or backward, or sideways. They had her adornments, and did not care twopence about her person.

"Are there no bolts in heaven but what serve for thunder?" What was Providence doing to let those wretches commit that sacrilege? Why were they not blasted on the spot, or turned into pillars of salt, like Lot's wife? Their remains might then have been exhibited as a dreadful warning. People would have paid money to see them, and both religion and the church would have profited by the transaction. As it is, they are off with their booty, smiling at "the One Above," and putting their tongues in their cheeks at his holy priests.

Why did not the Virgin protect *herself* against this outrage? She appears still in some parts of Europe—generally, it must be admitted, to credulous peasants and hysterical females. Are we to suppose that the Mother of God does not share his ubiquity? Is she only in one place at a time? In that case, why was she absent from this special celebration? Had she more important business at that moment in some other part of the universe? This is conceivable, but it is not characteristic. Few ladies would attend to anything else (if they knew it) while a thief was appropriating their jewels.

Jesus Christ himself, who, being God, is ubiquitous, ought to have prevented that robbery. It is a miserable thing for a son to stand by and see a thief walk off with his mother's trinkets.

All this may sound blasphemous enough to believers, who are full of faith and empty of reason; but, after all, it is downright sober sense. We can only go by analogy. We talk of God's wisdom and power, and we mean the same wisdom and power that we possess, only magnified *ad infinitum*; and we should expect him to act as we should act, only without our infirmity and lack of precision. Crying "Blasphemy!" is not argument. If you bawl it till you are hoarse and exhausted, the question remains where it was, and what it was, before you opened your mouth. It only means that you have lost your temper. So cool down, O true believer, and listen to a wise text from your own book: "Come now and let us reason together"—not fight, nor call names, but reason.

If not a single one of the three persons who constitute God will lift a finger while the Mother of God is being robbed to the extent of twelve thousand pounds, what is